

# 2.11 - Date

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Having discussed the [authorship](#) and [acceptance](#) of the book of Revelation, we now turn our attention to an examination of the various dates proposed for when the book was written. Dates for the book have been proposed from as early as A.D. 41 to as late as A.D. 117, although the majority of scholars have placed it between A.D. 54 and A.D. 96.<sup>1</sup> Our treatment of the date the book was written is intended mainly to acquaint the unfamiliar reader with the significance of the topic and the major arguments presented in support of the most popular dates. The works cited here provide additional background for those who are interested in delving into this matter further.

### 2.11.1 - Significance of the Date

The significance of the date of the book of Revelation depends to a great degree on the [interpretive system](#) one holds. The [Preterist Interpretation](#) requires that the book be written during the reign of [Nero](#) before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. If the book proves to have been written after A.D. 70, then the entire basis of the [preterist](#) interpretation collapses. Other systems of interpretation are not so sensitive to the date of writing, since their interpretive frameworks do not connect the events of the book as directly to the events attending the fall of Jerusalem. The reason the preterist position is intent on dating the book before A.D. 70 is twofold: *First*, they insist that the theme of the book centers on the near-term destruction of Jerusalem prophesied by Jesus (Luke 21:22).<sup>2</sup> *Second*, modern preterism is often associated with the Christian Reconstruction movement which holds to [Dominion Theology](#) which cannot accept a worldwide rejection of Christ and a time of global judgment prior to His return. Those who accept the teaching that the book of Revelation predicts a future time of judgment coming upon the earth are seen as 'defeatists,'<sup>3</sup> so there is significant motivation to try to prove an early date over against the traditional late date.<sup>4</sup> The reader should be aware of the major weakness of those who *depend upon* an early date for their interpretation: "The danger of dependence on a particular date for the writing of Revelation is aptly stated by Howard Winters: 'When the interpretation depends upon the date, the interpretation can never be more certain than the date itself—if the date is wrong, then, of necessity the interpretation is wrong.'"<sup>5</sup>

In a review of fellow preterist David Chilton's commentary on Revelation, entitled *The Days of Vengeance*, Kenneth Gentry observes, "If it could be demonstrated that Revelation were written 25 years after the Fall of Jerusalem, Chilton's entire labor would go up in smoke." Another preterist, R. C. Sproul, observes, "If the book was written after A.D. 70, then its contents manifestly do not refer to the events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem—unless the book is a wholesale fraud, having been composed after the predicted events had already occurred."<sup>6</sup>

For systems of interpretation other than the preterist, the date is not critical. Either an early or a late date for the writing of the book of Revelation will not significantly affect the understanding of the book. But if the book of Revelation proves to have been written *after* the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, then the preterist interpretation can be rejected. Hitchcock has noted the narrow date range which modern preterism depends upon for its interpretation of the book. He also observes that many of those who support an early date do not necessarily support a date as early as is required by the modern preterists:

While it is true that many scholars do hold to a pre-70 date for Revelation, it is critical to observe that the preterist position requires more than just a pre-70 date. According to Gentry, Revelation anticipates the destruction of Jerusalem (August A.D. 70), the death of Nero (June A.D. 68), and the formal imperial engagement of the Jewish war (spring A.D. 67). Therefore, for preterists, the earliest Revelation could have been written . . . is the beginning of the Neronian persecution in November A.D. 64, and the latest possible date . . . is spring A.D. 67. The date Gentry favors is A.D. 65. . . . the problem Gentry faces is that almost all of the scholars he lists in support of his position do not actually support his position at all. These early-date advocates hold an early date, but not an early-enough date to support the preterist position.<sup>7</sup>

Although there are other early-date advocates, the most vocal advocates of our time have a specific agenda: to localize the prophetic content of the book of Revelation in both time (prior to A.D. 70) and place (events surrounding Jerusalem and within the boundaries of the historic Roman Empire). This agenda provides two key results: *First*, the future judgment of the "[earth dwellers](#)" and tribulation upon the earth is moved to the past clearing the way for Christian Reconstructionism and dominion. *Second*, the events of Revelation are poured out specifically upon the *Jews* rather than the entire disbelieving world. In concert with [Replacement](#)

[Theology](#), they believe the nation of Israel has been irrevocably *replaced* by the Church in the program of God. It is our belief that when all the evidence is taken into account, the traditional late date is supported. But even if the early date turns out to be valid in the end, it still would not prove that the events of the book are found exclusively in the events of the past. In other words, the early date is *necessary* for the preterist interpretation, but not *sufficient* to prove that the text applies *strictly* to the immediate readers of John's day.

## 2.11.2 - The Nature of Internal Evidence

As we saw when discussing the [authorship](#) of the book, there are two primary sources of evidence available when analyzing a biblical text: *internal* and *external*. We also noted that the interpretation of internal evidence is especially subject to subjective bias. External evidence has the advantage of being less subject to the bias of the interpreter.<sup>8</sup> Those who favor an early date for the book of Revelation, and who wish to minimize the external evidence in favor of a later date, would have us place a greater emphasis on internal evidence than external evidence. "Conservative Christianity must recognize that the essential and determinative evidence ought to be drawn from the *internal* testimony of the scriptural record itself, when it is available."<sup>9</sup> The key point of contention in regard to the use of internal evidence is found in Gentry's last phrase: *when it is available*. Leaving aside the interpretation of internal evidence which has its own problems, the determination of what *constitutes* internal evidence is highly problematic. Most often, the selection of internal evidence is driven by the *a priori* stance of the interpreter. What one interpreter sees as being "determinative" and "conclusive," another interpreter sees as indicative of something else entirely. For example, Hemer understands Revelation 6:6<sup>+</sup> as being significant internal evidence of a late date: "We adduce reasons for accepting the view that Rev. 6:6<sup>+</sup> alludes to an edict issued by Domitian in AD 92 to restrict the growing of vines in the provinces . . . and connect this with the contemporary setting of the Philadelphian letter."<sup>10</sup> Here lies the problem: who determines when a textual artifact is connected with a historical situation approximate to the time of writing? Hemer is sure that Domitian's edict restricting the growing of vines is the source for John's puzzling statement in Revelation 6:6<sup>+</sup>. Yet many other interpreters see no such connection and understand the passage in an entirely different light. The crux of the matter is determining when historical *similarity* equates to textual *dependence* or *identity*? This involves a huge amount of subjectivity on the part of the interpreter. It is also frequently the case that the internal evidence results from the view which the interpreter has brought to the text, which is then used in support for the view: "As we will see . . . the book of Revelation is primarily a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. This fact alone places St. John's authorship somewhere before September of A.D. 70."<sup>11</sup> Here we see half of an "interpretive circle" which operates in the interpretation of internal evidence by early date advocates: the book is obviously a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem and therefore *must* have been written prior to the event. The other half of this circle is as follows: the book was written before A.D. 70 and therefore *must* have the destruction of Jerusalem in view as its major theme. Internal evidence which contradicts this conclusion is minimized or reinterpreted.<sup>12</sup> The main problem with internal evidence is that it is subject to too many conflicting interpretations. What one person believes is "significant" internal evidence for their particular view is often possible to explain in totally different ways. The identity of the seven kings and seven heads of Revelation 17:9-11<sup>+</sup> is one such commonly-used piece of internal "evidence." "[Gentry takes] the contemporary reign of the sixth king in Rev. 17:9-11<sup>+</sup> and the integrity of the temple and Jerusalem in Rev. 11:1-13<sup>+</sup> to exemplify arguments that are 'virtually certain' proof of a date some time in the sixties."<sup>13</sup> But, as Mounce observes, it is inadvisable to utilize something as evidence which is subject to such a diversity of interpretations. "The interpretation of the seven heads of the beast set forth in Rev. 17:10-11<sup>+</sup> is also presented as favoring the early date. Here again the divergence of opinion regarding this figure precludes the advisability of attempting to build a chronology on it."<sup>14</sup> It is our position that internal evidence is highly overrated in the field of biblical studies as is evident from its fruitlessness. This is plainly evident in the conclusions drawn from academic considerations of internal evidence drawn from the four gospels.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.11.3 - Evidence for an Early Date

### 2.11.3.1 - Internal Evidence for an Early Date

Aspects of the text of the book of Revelation have been understood by some as being indicative of an earlier date. Chilton holds that since Scripture teaches that all prophecy would be complete by the end of the 70th week of Daniel (Dan. 9:24-27) and since the book of Revelation contains prophetic material, therefore the book must have been written prior to the end of Daniel's 70th week:

We have *a priori* teaching from Scripture itself that all special revelation ended by A.D. 70. The angel Gabriel told Daniel that the "seventy weeks" were to end **with the destruction of Jerusalem** (Dan. 9:24-27); and that period would also serve to "seal up the vision and prophecy" (Dan. 9:24). In other words, special revelation would stop—be "sealed up"—by the time Jerusalem was destroyed. [emphasis added]<sup>16</sup>

We concur with Chilton's basic premise: prophecy and vision *will* be sealed up at the conclusion of the 70 weeks of Daniel. But Chilton assumes the 70th week is completed with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70—a view which is fundamentally flawed. <sup>17</sup>

This is the interpretive equivalent of “two wrongs don’t make a right.” Here is revealed another Achilles heel of reliance upon internal evidence: it is too easily subject to cross-correlation which seems supportive, but is not necessarily related. Chilton misinterprets the meaning of a passage in Daniel to “prove” his interpretation of John’s passage, but both interpretations are in error. Edersheim held that the many allusions in John’s Gospel and the book of Revelation to aspects of priestly service in the [Temple](#) inferred that John had close association with the priestly line (John 18:15-16) and that the Temple was still in service at the time both books were written.

These [allusions] naturally suggest the twofold inference that the book of Revelation and the Fourth Gospel must have been written before the Temple services had actually ceased, and by one who had not merely been intimately acquainted with, but probably at one time an actor in them. . . . it seems highly improbable that a book so full of liturgical allusions as the book of Revelation—and these, many of them, not too great or important points, but to *minutia*—could have been written by any other than a priest, and one who had at one time been in actual service in the Temple itself, and thus become so intimately conversant with its details, that they came to him naturally, as part of the imagery he employed.<sup>18</sup>

While we might concur with Edersheim’s observations concerning John’s knowledge of priestly duties and the allusions found in his works, all that seems to be necessary is for John to have had such knowledge at some point during his life. Clearly, the Temple was in operation during the times recorded by John’s Gospel (John 2:14-19). But does John’s acquaintance with the Temple *necessitate* that its service was contemporaneous with the *writing* of the book of Revelation? The obvious answer is, “no.” Any writer’s knowledge is cumulative: it is often the case that a writer expresses knowledge gained from an earlier point in his life. This is not at all unusual. Further, there is no reason why direct revelation from God, as is the case with the book of Revelation, might not convey details not previously known to the prophet. Let the reader pause to make note of this frequent pattern involving internal evidence: what *could possibly be true* is asserted as being *requisite*. The former interpretation of the evidence is nearly always admissible, but the latter conclusion does not necessarily follow. This leap from “would seem” to “must” is commonly found in arguments based on internal evidence. An entire category of internal evidence surrounds the assertion that the [Beast](#) of Revelation (Rev. 11:7+; 13:1-18+; etc.) is to be understood as a veiled political reference to [Nero](#). At least three aspects of the life of [Nero](#) are said to be found in John’s description of the [Beast](#): *First*, Nero’s persecution of Christians (Rev. 13:7+); *Second*, the myth that after his death Nero would come to life again (cf. Rev. 13:3+, 14+; 17:8+, 11+); *Third*, the “number of the name” of the Beast (Rev. 13:16-18+) matches that of “Caesar Nero.”<sup>19</sup> While it is true that similarities can be found between the final Beast of world history and Nero (or many other anti-Christian leaders of history), similarity does not prove identity. The major problem with interpreting Nero as the Beast is that Nero doesn’t even come close to fulfilling numerous details of the text—not the least of which is being killed, resurrected, and then cast *alive* into the Lake of Fire at the *Second Coming* of Christ (Rev. 19:20+). Nero committed suicide never to rise again. We discuss these issues in greater depth in our discussion of [Nero](#). What is probably considered to be the most significant internal evidence for a pre-A.D. 70 date by early date advocates is John’s mention of a Temple in Revelation 11+: “We wholeheartedly concur with Adams’s [*sic*] assessment that the fact that the Temple was standing when Revelation was written is ‘unmistakable proof that Revelation was written before 70 A.D.’ ”<sup>20</sup> While we would concur with the last portion of Gentry’s statement. *If* the Temple were standing when Revelation was written, then it is indeed unmistakable that Revelation was written prior to the destruction of the Temple. The problem is with the first part of the statement. Gentry equates John’s *mention* of a Temple as being equivalent to the *fact* that the Temple stood at that time.<sup>21</sup> His statement goes beyond the demonstrable facts. Gentry continues, “How could John be commanded to symbolically measure what did not exist?”<sup>22</sup> Here again, the assertions of the early date advocates go far beyond what can be reliably concluded (or proven) from the text itself. As many have observed, a similar pattern has been established within the book of Ezekiel where the prophet is given a vision of another Temple at a time when no Temple stood<sup>23</sup> and Ezekiel’s temple is also measured. Clearly, Ezekiel’s mention of a Temple, including not only measurements as in John, *but myriads of details far in excess of John* stand as unassailable evidence against the claim that mere mention of a Temple by John proves a *fact* that he wrote prior to the destruction of Herod’s Temple in A.D. 70. Not only is this pattern of prophetic revelation concerning a future Temple found in Ezekiel, but also in Daniel (Dan. 9:27; 12:11):

The chief preterist argument for the Neronian date from Revelation is the mention of the temple in Revelation 11:1-2+. . . . this interpretation fails to take into account the Old Testament prophetic parallels. . . . especially Daniel and Ezekiel. In both of these Old Testament prophetic books a Temple is mentioned that is not in existence at the time the author is writing. . . . Ezekiel received news of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in Ezekiel 33. However, after receiving the news, in Ezekiel 40-48, Ezekiel, like John, receives a vision of a Temple that, if taken literally, has never existed up to this day. Moreover, Ezekiel, like John, is told to measure the Temple he sees in his vision.<sup>24</sup>

Even *if* Herod’s Temple were to have been standing at the time John wrote, the Temple he mentions in Revelation 11+ could still have been a future Temple. After all, Zechariah, writing *during the Second Temple era*, described a Temple future to his day.<sup>25</sup> Significantly, Zechariah also mentions measurement in association with the revelation he was given. The internal evidence which early-date advocates assert as *proof* of a pre-A.D. 70 date for the book of Revelation falls short. In each case, the interpretation of

the evidence is either flawed or overstated. At most, the evidence makes a case for the *possibility* of a pre-A.D. 70 date, but cannot be taken as objective evidence of this as a necessity.

### 2.11.3.2 - External Evidence for an Early Date

We now turn to the external evidence for an early date. This evidence tends to be less subjective and therefore more significant than the internal evidence. Johnson cites several early documents which suggest that Paul borrowed from the pattern of these seven letters in the book of Revelation in writing his epistles: "Some external evidence for the early date exists in the Muratorian Fragment (170-190) and the Monarchian Prologues (250-350). These documents claim that Paul wrote to seven churches following the pattern of John's example in Revelation. But this would date the book before the Pauline Epistles!"<sup>26</sup> This is not very strong evidence because it really is just an early form of the sort of arguments which characterize textual criticism (internal evidence). As we have mentioned, similarity does not prove identity.<sup>27</sup> It has also been held that Papias indicates, in relation to Jesus' prophecy of Mark 10:39, that John was martyred *contemporaneously* with his brother James. Since James was martyred in A.D. 63, this would make a late date for the book of Revelation impossible.<sup>28</sup> Papias' statement is preserved in the writings of "George the Sinner" of the 9th century:

After Domitian, Nerva reigned one year. He re-called John from the island and allowed him to live in Ephesus. At that time he was the sole survivor of the twelve disciples, and after writing the Gospel that bears his name was honored with martyrdom. 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 he was killed by the Jews, thus clearly fulfilling, together with his brother, Christ's prophecy concerning them and their own confession and agreement about this.—George the Sinner (9th century), *Chronicle*<sup>29</sup>

Papias' statement simply says that like James, John was "killed by the Jews." It does not necessarily follow that they perished at the same time. It appears that George the Sinner understood John's martyrdom to have been after his return from Patmos at the conclusion of Domitian's reign. Thus the statement of Papias does not necessitate an early date for John's death. Moreover, church tradition relates that although John came to Ephesus in A.D. 66,<sup>30</sup> he survived at least until the time of Trajan (A.D. 98 - 117).<sup>31</sup> The major external evidence offered by early date advocate Gentry involves a forced and unconvincing reinterpretation of a key late-date testimony. This in itself is an indication of the dearth of external evidence for an early date. The controversy surrounds the interpretation of an important statement made by Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 180):

We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign.<sup>32</sup>

Schaff comments on the statement of Irenaeus: "The traditional date of composition at the end of Domitian's reign (95 or 96) rests on the clear and weighty testimony of Irenaeus, is confirmed by Eusebius and Jerome, and has still its learned defenders. . ."<sup>33</sup> Even though Schaff's own views concerning the date differed from the "learned defenders" he mentions,<sup>34</sup> it is clear that he understands the statement of Irenaeus in its straightforward sense. Irenaeus is stating that it was *the apocalyptic vision* which was seen toward the end of Domitian's reign. Early date advocates, such as Gentry, attempt to obscure the plain statement of Irenaeus by casting a shadow over its interpretation:

The most serious potential objection to the common translation has to do with the understanding of ωρόθη [eōrathē], "was seen." What is the subject of this verb? Is it "him who saw the Apocalypse" (i.e., John) or "the Apocalypse"? What of these two antecedents "was seen" "almost" in Irenaeus's time and near "the end of the reign of Domitian"?<sup>35</sup>

Gentry wants to insert doubt where none exists in order to perform his *preterist* 'sleight of hand.' He reverses the plain sense of the text, having us understand that it was *John* which was seen towards the end of Domitian's reign, not *the apocalyptic vision*. Gentry goes to great lengths in his attempt to undermine the obvious reading of Irenaeus. If he is not successful at this, he suggests that the Latin translation is in error. And if that doesn't persuade the reader, he spends several more pages convincing the reader that Irenaeus isn't a reliable witness anyhow: "If Irenaeus's famous statement is not to be re-interpreted along the lines of the argument as outlined above . . . it may still be removed as a hindrance to early date advocacy on [other] grounds."<sup>36</sup> Hitchcock counters Gentry's attempt at reinterpreting Irenaeus:

There are four simple points that render Gentry's position highly suspect. First, the nearest antecedent to the verb "it was seen" is "the apocalypse" . . . David Aune observes, "Further the passive verb eorathe, 'he/she/it was seen,' does not appear to be the most appropriate way to describe the length of a person's life. . ." Second the verb "was seen" fits perfectly the noun apokalupsis. . . Third, if John were the intended subject . . . Irenaeus . . . would have surely said that John lived into the reign of Trajan, a fact that Irenaeus knew well. Fourth, the vast majority of scholars . . . have accepted the fact that this statement refers to the time the Apocalypse was seen.<sup>37</sup>

It should also be recognized where early-date advocate Gentry is eventually headed with his argument: an identification of [Nero](#) as the [Beast](#) of Revelation. He conveniently omits the statements of Irenaeus immediately following those in question which clearly indicate that Irenaeus had *no such notion of Nero as the Beast*.

But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that “many coming from the east and from the west should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”<sup>38</sup>

A few commentators have suggested that “it was seen” should be translated “he [John] was seen,” so that the phrase does not mean the Apocalypse was written during Domitian’s time but only that John was seen during Domitian’s time. But “the Apocalypse” is the closest antecedent, and the Latin translation of Irenaeus supports this understanding of the clause. The majority of patristic writers and subsequent commentators up to the present understand Irenaeus’s words as referring to the time when the Apocalypse “was seen.” In the same context, Irenaeus discusses various possible identifications for the number of the “beast” (666). **But he does not entertain the possibility that the beast is to be identified with Nero, and he even rejects the possibility that the beast is to be identified with any Roman emperor at all.** [emphasis added]<sup>39</sup>

Here is a man writing approximately 110 years *after the death of Nero* and infinitely closer than us to the culture and events of that time who understands the Beast of Revelation to be *yet future*. No wonder Gentry fails to mention this, because the *full context* of Irenaeus’ statement undermines the main thesis of the preterists! Irenaeus understands the Beast to be a future world figure who will reign for a literal three and one-half years (Rev. 11:2<sub>+</sub>; 13:5<sub>+</sub>) and be destroyed *at the Second Coming of Christ* ushering in the [Messianic Kingdom](#) (predicted by the [OT](#)) upon the earth. Gentry is trying to bend the simple statement of an early church [futurist](#) to serve the modern-day [preterist](#) agenda.

## 2.11.4 - Evidence for a Late Date

Having examined the main evidence in support of an early date for the book of Revelation, we turn now to the evidence supporting a late date, near the end of the reign of Domitian (A.D. 95-96).

### 2.11.4.1 - Internal Evidence for a Late Date

As with the evidence for an early date, we will examine both internal and external evidence. We repeat our previous caution concerning the nature of internal evidence. Most of it is highly subjective and very tentative in nature and should be regarded with a suitably skeptical eye.

#### 2.11.4.1.1 - Changes since the Writing of the Epistles

An entire class of internal evidence falls into the general category of differences which have been noticed between the epistles and the book of Revelation. These differences are thought to provide evidence of a significant span of time between the time the epistles were written and the writing of the book of Revelation. Some of the epistles are thought to have been written near the time of the early date suggested for the book of Revelation (e.g., A.D. 66-67 for 2 Timothy; 67-68 for 2 Peter). If the book of Revelation was written at approximately the same time as the epistles, how do we account for the differences which have been observed? In the book of Revelation, John writes about the conditions prevailing in the [seven churches](#) of Asia. In two of the churches (Ephesians, Laodicea), the conditions described by John seem to differ from that described by the epistles:

If John wrote Revelation in A.D. 64-67, then the letter to the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-7<sub>+</sub> overlaps with Paul’s two letters to Timothy, who was the pastor of the church when Paul wrote to him. . . . Yet Paul makes no mention of the loss of first love or the presence of the Nicolaitans at Ephesus in his correspondence with Timothy. Neither does he mention these problems in his Ephesian epistle, which was probably written in A.D. 62.<sup>40</sup>

On the question, *When* the Apocalypse was given, we have a certain amount of implicit evidence here (Rev. 2:4-5<sub>+</sub>), in this reproach with which the Lord reproaches the Ephesian Angel; such as has its value in confirming the ecclesiastical tradition which places it in the reign of Domitian, as against the more modern view which gives the reign of Nero as the date of the composition of this Book. It has well been observed that in St. Paul’s Epistle to the Church of Ephesus there are no signs, nor even presentiments, of this approaching spiritual declension with which the great Searcher of hearts upbraids it here. . . . Those who place the Apocalypse in the reign of Nero hardly allow ten years between that condition and this—too brief a period for so great and lamentable a change. It is inconceivable that there should have been such a letting go of first love in so brief a time. . . . Place the Apocalypse under Domitian, and thirty years will have elapsed since St. Paul wrote his Epistle to Ephesus—exactly the interval which we require,



exactly the life of a generation. The outlines of the truth are still preserved; but the truth itself is not for a second generation what it was for the first.<sup>41</sup>

Similar changes have been noted in the Laodicean Church:

The church at Laodicea was the only one of the seven churches (and possibly Sardis) that did not receive any commendations in Revelation 2+3+. In his letter to the Colossians, probably written in A.D. 60-62, Paul indicates that the church was an active group (Colossians 4:13). He mentions the church three times in his letter (Col. 2:2; 4:13, 16). It would certainly take more than two to seven years for the church to depart so completely from its earlier acceptable status such that absolutely nothing good could be said about it in Revelation.<sup>42</sup>

Another significant difference between the book of Revelation and the epistles concerns the [Nicolaitans](#). At the time of the book of Revelation, the [Nicolaitans](#) appear to be a well-established and distinct heretical sect with a well-known title. For all their prominence in the letters to the seven churches (Rev. 2:6+, 15+), absolutely no mention is made of them in the epistles which otherwise spend considerable time warning against heretical tendencies.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps even more significant is the lack of mention of Paul within the book of Revelation. Paul had a profound and lengthy ministry at Ephesus—the church addressed by one of the letters of the book of Revelation (Rev. 2:1-7+). If Paul ministered in Ephesus for almost 3 years beginning in A.D. 52<sup>44</sup> and John wrote within just 12-16 years of Paul's ministry (as held by early date advocates), it seems very unusual that there was not the slightest inference about Paul in any of the letters to the Asian churches. But if John wrote much later, near the end of the 90s, then something more than 40 years would have passed and the generation which saw Paul's ministry would no longer be living.

Revelation 2:1-7+ makes no mention of the great missionary work of Paul in Asia Minor. On his third missionary journey Paul headquartered in Ephesus for three years and had a profound ministry there. If John wrote in A.D. 64-67, then the omission of any mention of Paul in the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor is inexplicable. However, if John wrote 30 years later to second-generation Christians in the churches, then the omission is easily understood.<sup>45</sup>

#### 2.11.4.1.2 - Emperor Worship

There has been much discussion and disagreement concerning the significance of emperor worship in relation to establishing the date of the book of Revelation. As we mentioned in our discussion of the internal evidence for the early date, there are those who consider the worship of the Roman Emperors to be one of the keys to identifying the [Beast](#) of Revelation with [Nero](#). So much so that they understand the events of the book as primarily centering around the Emperor Cult associated with the Roman Caesars, thereby interpreting it to be a veiled political document of John's day. The primary problem with understanding emperor worship at John's time as a major contributor to dating the book lies in the assumption that much of what is described within the book relates to Rome and the Caesars of that time. But this is not as obvious as some would assume. *First*, the persecutions which the [seven churches](#) are said to be undergoing are not *necessarily* a reflection of the emperor cult. *Second*, the association of the Beast with the current emperor of Rome is uncertain. *None* of the Roman emperors are known to have fulfilled the specific predictions set forth by John, unless God be accused of the extensive use of [hyperbole](#) throughout the prophecy. In fact, none of the specifics revealed concerning the activities of the Beast can be definitively assigned to any of the Roman emperors. Therefore, it is our feeling that any allusions to emperor worship thought to be in the text are dubious and of only secondary value in establishing a date with any reliability. The main argument in favor of the late date in relation to emperor worship is found in the belief that at the time of Nero, emperor worship (where the emperor was regarded as god) had not fully come to the fore: "He was not tempted like his predecessors to imagine himself divine, preferring to gain credit for brilliant endowments of a human type. He shrank from the title of *Divus* and the erection of temples in his honour, because they seemed to forebode the approach of death, and Nero loved life better than a shadowy immortality."<sup>46</sup> At a *later* date, under Domitian, emperor worship is said to have developed more fully,<sup>47</sup> "It is known that Domitian went beyond his predecessor in asserting his own divinity."<sup>48</sup>

More important for the [dating] issue here is that Nero was not deified, though there is some evidence that he wished to be. However, there was no widespread demand that he be recognized as such. . . . the coins of the 90s prove Domitian's megalomania; they show even his wife was called the mother of the divine Caesar. . . . the imperial cult was apparently much more developed and prominent in Domitian's day than it was in Nero's time.<sup>49</sup>

Under Nero and his successors down to Domitian, the emperor-cult continued as one of the established religious institutions, but its progress is not signaled by edicts enforcing it, or by notorious persecutions arising from it. It is in the reign of Domitian (81-96) that we reach an insistence upon the cultus more vehement and more threatening for the future. . . . Clement of Rome, contemporary with Domitian, refers to his course in the quite general words 'the sudden and repeated calamities and adversities which have befallen us.'<sup>50</sup>

We are told by ancient Roman writers that toward the end of Domitian's reign there was more chaos in the cultural and social

spheres of the Empire than in any prior time. Furthermore, we are informed that Domitian insisted on greater divine titles than earlier emperors in order to increase his tyrannical hold on the reigns of government. Those refusing to acknowledge these new titles were persecuted.<sup>51</sup>

Whatever the case may be, it is our feeling that the state of emperor worship at the time of John is not a reliable indicator of the date of the book, whether early or late, because it cannot be clearly shown that the events within the book which *appear similar* are in fact *truly related*. Especially given the global and eschatological focus of this last book of the Bible.

#### 2.11.4.1.3 - Other Evidence

A handful of other lines of evidence are seen as supporting the late date. Some have seen the independent spirit of the Laodicean church in Revelation 3:17<sup>+</sup> as an allusion to the city's unaided reconstruction after a severe earthquake during the reign of Nero.<sup>52</sup> The completion of the reconstruction, undertaken without assistance by Rome, is seen to have required more time than a Neronian date for the book of Revelation.<sup>53</sup> The mention of opposition to the churches at Smyrna and Philadelphia from "synagogues of Satan" (Rev. 2:9<sup>+</sup>; 3:9<sup>+</sup>) is seen to be more likely under Domitian than Nero. Under the reign of Domitian, Christianity was increasingly no longer viewed as a sect within the umbrella of Judaism, and had the advantage of being a legally-permitted well-established faith. Also, in A.D. 90, a curse was inserted into the synagogue service with the intention of flushing out any believers in Jesus as Messiah.

An explanation is offered of the 'synagogues of Satan' at Smyrna and Philadelphia (Rev. 2:9<sup>+</sup>; 3:9<sup>+</sup>) which links them with conflicts operative under Domitian. It is further argued that the occasion was provided by the conjunction of that emperor's policy with the insertion of the curse of the Minim in the Shemoneh 'Esreh in about AD 90. The aftermath of the controversy may be traced in a problem passage in Ignatius (ad Philad. 8.2) as it affected one of the very churches under discussion.<sup>54</sup>

Although we recognize the weakness of internal evidence in general, we note that Hemer, one of few who has studied the cultural allusions of the book of Revelation in great detail, concludes:

I started with a provisional acceptance of the orthodox Domitianic dating, and have been confirmed in that view by further study. . . . We accordingly reaffirm the Domitianic date of the letters in the light of the kind of evidence here considered, while recognizing that many of these indications are uncertain. Cumulatively they align themselves with the case widely accepted on other grounds that the Revelation was written about AD 95.<sup>55</sup>

#### 2.11.4.2 - External Evidence for a Late Date

##### 2.11.4.2.1 - Early Testimony

As mentioned previously, a major early testimony to the late date of the book of Revelation is found in the statement by [Irenaeus](#) (ca. 130-200) to the effect that John's apocalyptic vision was seen *towards the end of Domitian's reign*:

We will not, however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign.<sup>56</sup>

As we mentioned above, a straightforward reading of the statement of Irenaeus indicates that it was the *vision*, not *John*, that was seen during the reign of Domitian. [Eusebius](#) (b. ca. 260) certainly understood it in that light. "In the *Chronicle*, Eusebius lists these events in the fourteenth year of Domitian: 'Persecution of Christians and under him the apostle John is banished to Patmos and sees his Apocalypse, as Irenaeus mentions.'<sup>57</sup> Eusebius also records that "ancient Christian tradition" held that John had been banished under Domitian:

But after Domitian had reigned fifteen years and Nerva succeeded to the empire, the Roman Senate, according to the writers that record the history of those days, voted that Domitian's honors should be cancelled, and that those who had been unjustly banished should return to their homes and have their property restored to them. It was at this time that the apostle John returned from his banishment in the island and took up his abode in Ephesus, according to an ancient Christian tradition.<sup>58</sup>

It appears that Eusebius drew some of his material from Hegesippus:

Eusebius says, "After Domitian had reigned fifteen years, Nerva succeeded. The sentences of Domitian were annulled, and the Roman Senate decreed the return of those who had been unjustly banished and the restoration of their property. *Those who committed the story of those times to writing relate it*. At that time, too, the story of ancient Christians relates that the apostle John, after his banishment to the island, took up his abode at Ephesus." The key phrase here is, "Those who committed the story of those times to writing relate it." To whom is Eusebius referring? The context indicates he is referring to Hegesippus, whom he has just

referred to twice as a source for his information.<sup>59</sup>

Although there is no doubt that subsequent testimony within the early church was influenced by Irenaeus, nonetheless it will be seen that this view has strong support, which would seem unlikely if a *bona fide* alternate view of an early date also had currency in the early church. [Tertullian](#) (ca. 160-220) and [Origen](#) (ca. 185-254) support the late date.<sup>60</sup> Although they do not specifically say that John was banished by Domitian, Jerome and Eusebius interpreted Tertullian as holding this view:

While Tertullian [c. A.D. 160-220] does not specifically say that John was banished to Patmos during the reign of Domitian, he is credited by Jerome with doing so. In addition, Eusebius quotes Tertullian's *Apology 5*, which was written in A.D. 197, and then follows with his own statements that reveal he interpreted Tertullian as following the prevailing tradition of placing John's exile under Domitian.<sup>61</sup>

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215) in his *Quis Salvus Dives (Who Is the Rich Man That Shall Be Saved?)* cites the story handed down of John being removed from Patmos to Ephesus upon the death of "the tyrant." The "tyrant" is likely Domitian rather than [Nero](#) because Eusebius cites Clement with Irenaeus as a witness to the Domitian exile.<sup>62</sup> The late date is attested to by the mid-second century *Acts of John*,<sup>63</sup> and Victorinus (d. ca. 304) who wrote the first commentary on the book of Revelation:

Victorinus [d. c. A.D. 304], who wrote the first commentary on Revelation . . . at Revelation 10:11<sup>+</sup> notes: "He says this, because when John said these things he was in the island of Patmos, condemned to labor of the mines by Caesar Domitian. There, therefore, he saw the Apocalypse; and when grown old, he thought that he should at length receive his quittance by suffering, Domitian being killed, all his judgments were discharged. And John being dismissed from the mines, thus subsequently delivered the same Apocalypse which he had received from God." Commenting further upon Revelation 17:10<sup>+</sup>, Victorinus states, "The time must be understood in which the written Apocalypse was published, since then reigned Caesar Domitian."<sup>64</sup>

Jerome, writing around 390, continues the witness of the late date:

In two places, Jerome stated clearly that John was banished under Domitian. First, in his *Against Jovinianum* (A.D. 393), Jerome wrote that John was "a prophet, for he saw in the island of Patmos, to which he had been banished by the Emperor Domitian as a martyr for the Lord, an Apocalypse containing boundless mysteries of the future." Second, Jerome's most specific statement is found in his *Lives of Illustrious Men*, where he writes about John's banishment: "In the fourteenth year then after Nero, Domitian having raised a second persecution, he was banished to the island of Patmos, and wrote the Apocalypse, on which Justin Martyr and Irenaeus afterwards wrote commentaries."<sup>65</sup>

Although opponents of the late date would have us understand this abundant witness as a single statement by Irenaeus uncritically echoed by those that followed, it stands to reason that if there had been a significant historic witness otherwise, there would necessarily be more indication in the historic record.

#### 2.11.4.2.2 - Nature of Christian Persecution

We discussed previously the bearing which [emperor worship](#) might have as internal evidence on the question at hand. There, we were dealing with a specific form of persecution related to the requirement to worship the Roman Emperor. We treated this as internal evidence because the connection between emperor worship and the description of the [Beast](#) and persecution of believers is tentative. Here we look at persecution *in general* during the time of [Nero](#) and Domitian. The connection between generic persecution and the churches of Asia, especially Smyrna, is more definite than that of emperor worship. The letters to the [seven churches](#) are clearly written to reflect actual conditions experienced by those churches at the time of writing. Although they say nothing *explicit* in relation to emperor worship, the fact of Christian martyrdom is undeniable (Rev. 2:10<sup>+</sup>, 13<sup>+</sup>). Beale prefers the later date because of indications that general Christian persecution intensified near the end of the first century:

The letters in Revelation suggest that Jewish Christians were tempted to escape persecution by seeking some form of identification with Jewish synagogues, which were exempted from emperor worship, and that Gentile Christians were tempted to compromise with trade guild cults and even the emperor cult in order to escape persecution. Such a situation is more likely to have been present toward the end of the first century rather than earlier.<sup>66</sup>

There is even record of Christian persecution involving both execution and exile under Domitian:

Dio Cassius records that Domitian executed the aristocrat Flavius Clemens and banished his wife Flavia Domitilla because of "atheism" ([θεσότης](#) [atheotēs]). . . . Dio's full statement views "atheism" as "a charge on which many others who drifted into Jewish ways were condemned." A similar but later statement affirms that Domitian's persecution was explicitly two-pronged, being directed against "*maiestas* [treason]" or against "adopting the Jewish mode of life." . . . With particular reference to Flavia Domitilla, inscriptions and Christian tradition affirm that she professed Christianity, which would have made her a prime candidate for a charge



of “atheism” by those believing in the deity of the emperor.<sup>67</sup>

Beale also notes that evidence is lacking that Nero’s persecution of Christians extended beyond Rome to Asia Minor as reflected by the letters to the seven churches there.<sup>68</sup> The different treatment of Peter and Paul (executed) versus John (banished) is more difficult to explain if all three occurred under Nero’s reign:

Church history consistently testifies that both Peter and Paul were executed in Rome near the end of Nero’s reign. Preterists maintain that during this same time the apostle John was banished to Patmos by Nero. Why would Nero execute Peter and Paul and banish John? This seems inconsistent. The different punishments for Peter and Paul as compared with John argue for the fact that they were persecuted under different rulers. Moreover, there is no evidence of Nero’s use of banishment for Christians.<sup>69</sup>

Overall, it seems that evidence of Christian persecution in the book of Revelation is more characteristic of the reign of Domitian than that of Nero.

#### 2.11.4.2.3 - The Church at Smyrna

Some have observed that the church at Smyrna may not have existed until almost the time of Nero allowing precious little time for it to have earned a reputation suitable for the commendation given by Christ (Rev. 2:8-11+).<sup>70</sup> Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, writing to the Philippians (ca. 110) indicates that the church at Smyrna post-dated Paul’s ministry, which is more in keeping with a late date:

In his letter to the Philippians written in about A.D. 110, Polycarp says that the Smyrnaeans did not know the Lord during the time Paul was ministering. “But I have not observed or heard of any such thing among you, in whose midst the blessed Paul labored, and who were his letters of recommendation in the beginning. For he boasts about you in all the churches—those alone, that is, which at that time had come to know the Lord, **for we had not yet come to know him.**” [emphasis added]<sup>71</sup>

#### 2.11.4.2.4 - John in Asia

Thomas notes that if John arrived in Asia Minor in the late 60s, the early date must overcome problems of timing:

A second reason for preferring the later date is the timing of John’s arrival in Asia. According to the best information, he did not come to Asia from Palestine before the late 60s, at the time of the Jewish revolt of A.D. 66-70. This was after Paul’s final visit to Asia in A.D. 65. . . . A Neronian dating would hardly allow time for him to have settled in Asia, to have replaced Paul as the respected leader of the Asian churches, and then to have been exiled to Patmos before Nero’s death in A.D. 68.<sup>72</sup>

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup>“The book of Revelation has been dated as early as Claudius (AD 41-54) and as late as Trajan (AD 98-117). . . . The majority of scholars place the composition of the Apocalypse either during the reign of Domitian (AD 81-96) or toward the end or immediately after the reign of Nero (AD 54-68).”—Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), 31-32.

<sup>2</sup>“The early date is especially important to those viewing the main intention of the book as prophecy of the imminent destruction of Jerusalem: interpreters who hold to the early date generally understand the book primarily as a polemic against apostate Jewish faith.”—Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 4.

<sup>3</sup> “[Gentry] associates cultural defeatism and retreatist pietism with assigning a late date to Revelation and wants to date the book before A.D. 70 so as to have biblical support for the implementation of long-term Christian cultural progress and dominion.”—Robert L. Thomas, “Theonomy and the Dating of Revelation,” in Richard L. Mayhue, ed., *The Master’s Seminary Journal*, vol. 5 (Sun Valley, CA: The Master’s Seminary, 1994), 187-188.

<sup>4</sup>“Based on the historical evidence, the date, therefore, must be before the death of Domitian, who was assassinated in A.D. 96, as the apostle was apparently released from his exile shortly after this.”—John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1966), s.v. “Latest Possible Date.”

<sup>5</sup>Mark Hitchcock, “The Stake in the Heart—The A.D. 95 Date of Revelation,” in Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, eds., *The End Times Controversy* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2003), 124.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 123.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 125.

<sup>8</sup>This is not to deny the influence of bias upon the interpretation of *all* evidence. For example, evolutionists and creationists are faced with the same objective evidence, but arrive at a totally different interpretation of the evidence.

<sup>9</sup>Kenneth L. Gentry, [\*Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation\*](#) (Atlanta, GA: American Vision, 1998), 113.

<sup>10</sup>Colin J. Hemer, [\*The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 4.

<sup>11</sup>David Chilton, [\*The Days of Vengeance\*](#) (Tyler, TX: Dominion Press, 1987), 4.

<sup>12</sup>Jerusalem is mentioned separately from Babylon and Jerusalem is not known to have been referred to as “Babylon” any time prior to A.D. 70. Yet it is *Babylon* which is the object of God’s total destruction (Rev. 18<sup>+</sup>), not Jerusalem.

<sup>13</sup>Thomas, [\*Theonomy and the Dating of Revelation\*](#), 186.

<sup>14</sup>Mounce, [\*The Book of Revelation\*](#), 35.

<sup>15</sup>Robert L. Thomas, “The ‘Jesus Crisis’: What Is It?,” in Robert L. Thomas and F. David Farnell, eds., [\*The Jesus Crisis: The Inroads of Historical Criticism into Evangelical Scholarship\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1998).

<sup>16</sup>Chilton, [\*The Days of Vengeance\*](#), 5.

<sup>17</sup>“The text that Jesus cited concerning the Temple’s desecration, Dan. 9:27, predicts that the one who desecrates this Temple will himself be destroyed. By contrast, those who destroyed the temple in A.D. 70 (in fulfillment of Jesus’ prediction)—the Roman emperor Vespasian and his son Titus—were not destroyed but returned to Rome in triumph carrying vessels from the destroyed Temple.”—Thomas Ice, “[The Great Tribulation is Future.](#)” in Kenneth L. Gentry and Thomas Ice, [\*The Great Tribulation: Past or Future?\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999), 126. “However, if this interpretation is taken [that the abomination of desolation refers to the worship of the Roman standards in the temple precincts], Mat. 24:16-20 is difficult if not impossible to explain. By then it would be too late for the followers of the Lord Jesus to escape; the Romans had already taken the city by this time. D.A. Carson notes, ‘by the time the Romans had actually desecrated the temple in A.D. 70, it was too late for anyone in the city to flee.’”—*Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>18</sup>Alfred Edersheim, [\*The Temple: Its Ministry and Services\*](#) (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), s.v. “ch. 7.”

<sup>19</sup>“The name which fits the circumstances most admirably is that of the nefarious Nero Caesar.”—Gentry, [\*Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation\*](#), 198.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 168.

<sup>21</sup>What is perhaps more significant than John’s mention of a Temple is the lack of explicit mention of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Although this may seem unusual, neither is it conclusive evidence of an early date. The destruction of Jerusalem would have been widely known to readers of his day obviating any need to discuss it. Moreover, the major focus of the book involves events of global magnitude preceding the Second Coming of Christ—events which are at least 1900 years beyond the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>23</sup>“The twenty-fifth year of the captivity, and the fourteenth year after the city was smitten, i.e., taken and reduced to ashes, are the year 575 before Christ.”—Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, [\*Commentary on the Old Testament\*](#) (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), Eze. 40:1.

<sup>24</sup>Hitchcock, [\*The Stake in the Heart—The A.D. 95 Date of Revelation\*](#), 140.

<sup>25</sup>“When [Zec. 1:16] was written, the Second Temple was still standing so the reference can only be to the rebuilding of the Temple the Romans destroyed in 70 AD.” *Israel Today Magazine*, April 2001, 22.

<sup>26</sup>Alan F. Johnson, [\*Revelation: The Expositor’s Bible Commentary\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), 10.

<sup>27</sup>How much better to understand the parallel between Paul’s church epistles and the seven letters of Revelation as evidence of common authorship by the Holy Spirit.

<sup>28</sup>“Thus it is obvious that James died in the year A.D. 63, for that is the date on the ossuary lid. Which brings us to the very date that

Josephus, the great first century historian, said of James, one of the first early church leaders, who was martyred for his faith in A.D. 63. It also agrees with Dr. Luke, author of the book of Acts that describes the scene in Acts 12:2.—Tim LaHaye, “[Newsletter](#),” in [Pre-Trib Perspectives](#) (Dallas, TX: Pre-Trib Research Center, January 2003), 2.

<sup>29</sup>J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, [The Apostolic Fathers](#), 2nd ed (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 318.

<sup>30</sup>“Tradition claims that John had come to Ephesus in A.D. 66. That meant he had been there for nearly thirty years. . . . By A.D. 95, he was an old man—probably in his eighties.”—Edward Hindson, [Revelation: Unlocking the Future](#) (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2002), 20.

<sup>31</sup>“Irenaeus and others record that John, the theologian and apostle, survived until the time of Trajan [A.D. 98-117].—Eusebius, *Chronicle*”—Lightfoot, [The Apostolic Fathers](#), 313.

<sup>32</sup>Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, eds., [Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. I](#) (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), s.v. “ECF 1.1.7.1.5.31.”

<sup>33</sup>Philip Schaff and David Schley Schaff, [History of the Christian Church](#) (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997, 1916), 1.XII.101.

<sup>34</sup>Schaff goes on to state that the internal evidence favors an earlier date, “The internal evidence strongly favors an earlier date between the death of Nero (June 9, 68) and the destruction of Jerusalem (August 10, 70).”—*Ibid.*, but as we have pointed out, external evidence should take precedence over internal evidence which is subject to greater interpretive bias.

<sup>35</sup>Gentry, [Before Jerusalem Fell: Dating the Book of Revelation](#), 48-49.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>37</sup>Hitchcock, [The Stake in the Heart—The A.D. 95 Date of Revelation](#), 128-129.

<sup>38</sup>Roberts, [Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. I](#), s.v. “ECF 1.1.7.1.5.31.”

<sup>39</sup>Beale, [The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text](#), 20.

<sup>40</sup>Hitchcock, [The Stake in the Heart—The A.D. 95 Date of Revelation](#), 146.

<sup>41</sup>Richard Chenevix Trench, [Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia](#) (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1861), 77.

<sup>42</sup>Hitchcock, [The Stake in the Heart—The A.D. 95 Date of Revelation](#), 148.

<sup>43</sup>“The Nicolaitan party, of which there is no certain trace in the Epistles of St. Paul, is now widely distributed and firmly rooted.”—Henry Barclay Swete, [The Apocalypse of St. John](#) (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1998, 1906), cxvii. “The existence of a distinct heretical sect with the well-known title, the Nicolaitans, presupposes some distance in time from the apostolic epistles (in which they are not even hinted at).”—Mounce, [The Book of Revelation](#), 34.

<sup>44</sup>“Leaving Corinth in the spring of A.D. 52, Paul paid a brief visit to Palestine and then traveled overland to Ephesus, chief city of the province of Asia, which he made his base for the next phase of his activity, lasting nearly three years (Acts 20:31).”—F. F. Bruce, “[Paul the Apostle](#),” in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., [The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979, 1915), 3:716.

<sup>45</sup>Hitchcock, [The Stake in the Heart—The A.D. 95 Date of Revelation](#), 147.

<sup>46</sup>Swete, [The Apocalypse of St. John](#), lxxxiv.

<sup>47</sup>Yet not all agree. David Aune, writing in the forward to Hemer states: “Hemer affirms the historicity of ‘the Domitianic persecution,’ though scholarship during the last twenty-five years has shown that an official and empire-wide persecution under the reign of Domitian has no firm historical basis but was in fact a Christian legend which reached full-blown form with Eusebius of Caesarea in the early fourth century AD.”—Hemer, [The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting](#), xviii.

<sup>48</sup>Swete, [The Apocalypse of St. John](#), lxxxii.

<sup>49</sup>Grant R. Osborne, [Revelation](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 6-7.

<sup>50</sup>Isbon T. Beckwith, [The Apocalypse of John](#) (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 200,204.

<sup>51</sup>Beale, [The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text](#), 5.

<sup>52</sup>"The city of Laodicea was destroyed by an earthquake in A.D. 17 in the reign of Tiberius (A.D. 14-37) and again in A.D. 60 when Nero was emperor (A.D. 54-68)."—Mal Couch, "[Interpreting the Book of Revelation.](#)" in Mal Couch, ed., [A Bible Handbook to Revelation](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001), 52.

<sup>53</sup>"Rev. 3:17+ has been connected with Laodicea's unaided recovery from the earthquake of Nero's reign . . . but I argue the strong probability that the reference is to a later stage of reconstruction, mentioned in the earlier *Sibylline Oracles* (4.108 of about AD 80), and occupying a full generation between the disaster and the time of Domitian."—Hemer, [The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting](#), 4.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*, 5,3.

<sup>56</sup>Roberts, [Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. I](#), s.v. "ECF 1.1.7.1.5.31."

<sup>57</sup>Hitchcock, [The Stake in the Heart—The A.D. 95 Date of Revelation](#), 134.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>60</sup>"Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen all support the late date, but . . . they don't specifically say that John was banished by Domitian."—*Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup>"The apocryphal book *The Acts of John* clearly states that John wrote the book of Revelation on Patmos during Domitian's reign."—Gordon Franz, "[Was 'Babylon' Destroyed when Jerusalem Fell in A.D. 70?.](#)" in Tim LaHaye and Thomas Ice, eds., [The End Times Controversy](#) (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2003), 222.

<sup>64</sup>Hitchcock, [The Stake in the Heart—The A.D. 95 Date of Revelation](#), 133.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>66</sup>Beale, [The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text](#), 13.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 6-7,9.

<sup>68</sup>"There is no evidence that Nero's persecution of Christians in Rome extended also to Asia Minor, where the churches addressed in the Apocalypse are located."—*Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>69</sup>Hitchcock, [The Stake in the Heart—The A.D. 95 Date of Revelation](#), 149.

<sup>70</sup>"As suggested by many commentators, the very existence of the church at Smyrna suggests a later date, since it is possible that the church was not even established until 60-64 A.D."—Beale, [The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text](#), 17.

<sup>71</sup>Hitchcock, [The Stake in the Heart—The A.D. 95 Date of Revelation](#), 147.

<sup>72</sup>Robert L. Thomas, [Revelation 1-7](#) (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1992), 22.

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