

The Date of Revelation

To determine which date would be correct, we need to look at some other sources of information to help us come to a conclusion.

Error to the date of the writing

The book of revelation is unique in that of its composition affects the interpretation placed upon its message. There are two general views called "The Late Date" (c. AD 96) and "The Early Date" (c. AD 64-68).

Reason for holding to the Early Date

The parallel between passages in the Gospels and Revelation that deal with the destruction of Jerusalem would call for a date for the book before AD 70.

Allusions to other apostles still alive besides John.

The state of Israel and the temple still existed.

The fact that the Jewish persecution of Christians in foreign cities.

Tertullian, a contemporary of Irenaeus and Clement, said John suffered at the hands of Rome like Peter and Paul. They think it infers "at the same time." This is weak.

Since the language of the temple is mentioned, it must have been written before 70 AD, when the temple was destroyed. The temple language is spiritual not literal.

Outside testimony for the later date is over 100 years after the book was written. So are their witnesses.

Nero's name is equal to 666. However, Irenaeus did not include him or imagine him to be the one. Fritasche, in 1831, is the one to advance this theory. Besides, to get his name to come out he must:

Call him Nero Caesar

Use the Greek form of the Latin name

Transliterate into Hebrew characters and use a variant spelling.

In the most ancient version or translation made of the Bible into another language (The Syriac version in the second century), the super inscription says the Apostle John wrote the letter during the reign of Nero.

John expected to leave Patmos (in Ch.1), and go and preach among the churches to which he addressed this letter. That could be expected of a man who was 60 years old, but it could hardly be expected of a man who was 96 years old.

John says that the visions occurred in the reign of the sixth Roman Emperor. That within itself nails down the date without any doubt. The sixth emperor were: Julius, August, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. Nero reigned from AD 54 to AD 68. (Rev. 17:10).

According to Tertullian, a contemporary of Irenaeus and Clement, said that John suffered at the hands of Nero in Rome and was sent to an island away from Rome, being the island of Patmos.

The Later Date

John the Apostle, the same one who wrote the Gospel of John and the three Epistles of John, wrote the book of Revelation.

Justin Martyr (140-160 AD) wrote these words: "There was a certain man with us, whose name was John, on of the Apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him."

Irenaeus assigns the book to the Apostle John repeatedly and without question. Irenaeus was a pupil of Polycarp, who was a pupil of the Apostle John.

Irenaeus also tells us that John the Apostle wrote the book of Revelation in the time of Domitian Roman Emperor (81-96 AD).

The claim of Revelation 1:9 that the author was exiled on Patmos, is referred to John the Apostle by Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius.

However, the traditional date places the writing of the book under the reign of Domitian. {81-96 A.D.}

Eusebius tells that John was sent to Patmos during the latter part of Domitian's reign.

Irenaeus also places the book at the same time, as does Clement of Alexandria.

It is also declared that John was 90 years of age at the time of the exile.

Irenaeus also said that John remained alive till the days of Trajan (98-117 AD).

If John wrote the book of Revelation around 95-96 AD, then it would fit in with the decadence of the Churches of that day.

The historical, social and theological conditions of the Churches of Asia Minor, as portrayed in Revelation, is consistent with the end of the 1st Century, not the middle of the Century.

Nicolaitanism was not strong in the Churches until after 70 AD.

It fits Domitian's policy of punishment by exile.

It fits the Domitianic type persecution, which grew out of the refusal of the Churches to engage in emperor worship.

*{ Strauss, James. *The Seer, The Savior, and The Saved, Revelation.*, College Press, Joplin, Missouri, 1972}*

The late date has very strong support. When in connection with these strong and definite evidences, we remember that the Apocalypse reflects an age in which Ephesus has already lost its first love. Sardis is already "dead", Laodicea – which was destroyed by an earthquake during Nero's reign – has been rebuilt and is boasting of its spiritual wealth (3:17); John has been banished – a very common form of persecution during Domitian's reign; the Church has already

endured persecutions in the past (20:4); and the Roman Empire, as such, has become the great antagonist of the Church (17:9); when we remember all these facts we are forced to the conclusion that the date (A.D. 95 or 96) is correct. The Apocalypse was written towards the end of Domitian's reign by the apostle John.

{Hendriksen, William. *More than Conquerors.*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids M I., 1967}

John has been banished to the Isle of Patmos (1:9). This according to apostolic tradition was in the Persecution of Domitian, about A.D. 95. The next year, A.D. 96. John was released, and permitted to return to Ephesus. The use of the past tense, "was", in Patmos, seems to indicate that, while he saw the visions in Patmos, it was after his release, and return to Ephesus, that he wrote the book about A.D. 96.

{Halley, Henry., *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand rapids, M I., 1965}

Clearly the Revelation was written in a period when Christians were threatened by Rome, undoubtedly by pressure to make them recant their faith and accept the cult of emperor worship. Some maintain that the book was written during Nero's persecution of Christians after the burning of Rome in A.D. 64. However, the more probable date is during the harsh reign of that warped personality Domitian (A.D. 81-96). The Church Fathers Irenaeus and other early Christian writers held this latter date for the book, and it agrees better with the picture of complacency and defection of the Churches in Chap. 2 and 3. This dating is widely accepted by modern scholars.

{Ryrie, Charles., *Ryrie Study Bible Expanded Edition.*, Moody Press, Chicago, IL. 1995}

The early interpreters of the book, places it in the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96), almost at the close of the first century. Irenaeus (c. A.D. 180), Victorinus (c. A.D. 270), Eusebius (c. A.D. 328), and Jerome (c> A.D. 370) all agree on this date. It allows time for the growth of declension that is presupposed by the letters to the churches, and it fits better with the historical conditions of the Roman Empire depicted in the symbolism.

{Tenny, Merrill., *Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary.*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, M I. 1967}

Though most ancient Christian authors, apparently dependent on Irenaeus, thought that Revelation was written toward the end of the reign of Domitian, a few have suggested it was written earlier, during the reign of Claudius, Nero, or Galba, while others thought that it was written after the death of Domitian, during the reign of Trajan . Eusebius expresses the view that Revelation was written in the fourteenth year of Domitian, i.e., in A.D. 95. Clement of Alexandria relates a story that he claims has been transmitted by oral tradition and that refers to the departure of John the Apostle from the Island of Patmos after the death of "the tyrant" (Quis div. salv. 42; also preserved in Eusebius Hist. Eccl. 3.23.5–19). While Clement neglects to specify which tyrant he has in mind, Eusebius understands the tyrant to be Domitian. If the tyrant was Domitian, John's departure from Patmos must have occurred after A.D. 96, the year when Domitian was murdered (Suetonius Dom. 18).

Irenaeus preserves the tradition that John the Apostle, widely regarded in the ancient church as the author of Revelation, lived until the reign of Trajan, A.D. 98–117 (Adv. Haer. 2.22.5; 3.3.4; both passages are quoted in Eusebius Hist. Eccl. 3.23.34). This could suggest that Revelation was completed as late as the reign of Trajan. Since there is no reason to suppose that a particularly strong opposition to Christianity was manifest during the reign of Domitian, there is therefore no reason to insist that the persecution experience apparently reflected in Revelation occurred during the reign of Domitian. {Aune, David, Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 52a: Revelation 1-5, Dallas, Texas: Word Books, Publisher., 1998.}

According to tradition, c. A.D. 95-96, in the latter years of the reign of Roman emperor Domitian, who had begun persecuting Christians. John wrote from Patmos (Rev. 1:9), a rocky volcanic island in the Aegean Sea, 10 miles long by 6 miles wide, to which he had probably been banished by Domitian because of his faith (Rev. 1:9). {Wilmington's Bible Handbook}

Most evangelical scholars affirm that Revelation was written in A.D. 95 or 96. This is based on accounts of the early church fathers that the Apostle John had been exiled on Patmos Island during the reign of Domitian who died in A.D. 96. John was then allowed to return to Ephesus. {Bible Knowledge Commentary}

Some scholars have dated Revelation in the late 60s, shortly after Nero's death, as several emperors in a row quickly met violent deaths (cf. Rev. 17:10). In the book of Revelation, however, the emperor's power seems to be stable, and this situation does not fit the 60s. Similarly, the imperial cult in Asia (western Turkey) appears to be gaining in power and directly threatens the readers of the book; this situation fits the period of the 90s better. The church also seems to be entrenched in the major cities of Asia; thus a date in Domitian's reign in the 90s of the first century, reported in early church tradition and still preferred by most scholars, is most likely. {Bible Background Commentary}

Most scholars believe that the seven churches of Asia to whom John writes were experiencing the persecution that took place under Emperor Domitian (A.D. 90—95). It seems that the Roman authorities had exiled John to the island of Patmos (off the coast of Asia). John, who had been an eyewitness of the incarnate Christ, had a vision of the glorified Christ. God also revealed to him what would take place in the future—judgment and the ultimate triumph of God over evil.

Time Line of John

A.D. 26-27: John called, follows Christ

A.D. 31: John ministers in Samaria

A.D. 49: Paul mentions John as church leader

A.D. ??-??: John ministers in Ephesus?

A.D. 85-95: John writes 5 NT books

A.D. 98: Death of John

Most of the Church “fathers” attributes it to the Domitian’s era. These men lived and wrote well within the time of people who could have corrected their statements had they been in error.

There is internal evidence – The Churches had a history.

Sardis had time to become dead

Laodicea by an earthquake became lukewarm. (It was rebuilt after its destruction by an earthquake in Nero’s reign).

Ephesus was a great Church in 62 AD during Paul’s day. Here it has already lost its first love.

Smyrna Church was not started till 64 AD.

Nero’s persecutions were in Rome. Domitian’s took place where the seven Churches were.

The focus of the most intense struggle between the Roman Empire and the Church was in Asia Minor during the reign of Domitian. Asia Minor was the main stronghold of Christianity, but not until after 70 AD (after Judaism was destroyed). In Asia Minor, the Church not only clashed with the growing paranoia of the imperial power, but also found itself in the motherland of mystery cults and opposed by growing ghettos of exiled Jews. It is clear the Church was being severely persecuted.

Summary

John says that the things revealed, “must shortly come to pass.”

The series of events must begin to unfold in a short time after his words were written, and continue until “time shall be no longer.”

As the date at which John wrote is 95-97 AD, we must examine the pages of history within a few years after the date, or about the 2nd Century, for the fulfillment of the predictions first in order. The condition of the seven Churches of Asia Minor had not begun to show signs of changes until later in the 1st Century.

If the Churches were in the condition they were when John wrote the Revelation, then Paul would have mentioned it in his letters and would have given them a sermon that they would probably make them want to kill him.

The history in the seven Churches also shows us that the book was written at a later date.

I would have to agree with the later date because of the strong evidence that support it.

The message of the Book

The book does not say, "Everything will be alright." It says:

Martyrdom is worth it.

Don't be afraid of those who kill you

Your sacrifice is not useless

Your death is precious in God's sight

The crown is attainable at your execution.

As one old Saint named Julius, who would not worship the emperor, said, "If I choose life, I choose death. If I choose death, I choose life."

God cares for you in persecution.

He is walking amidst His Church – 1:13

He holds the keys of death and Hades – 1:18

He avenges the blood of martyrs – 6:9-11

He sees our tears – 7:17

He hears and answers our prayers – 8:3-5

Our death is precious in His sight – 14:13

He has prepared a marriage supper for us – 21

He wars with our enemies.

The enemies of the Church will be destroyed:

Whore (Babylon) – 18:2

False Prophet – 19:20

Beast – 19:20

Dragon – 20:10

In fact, we reign with Him:

Upon the earth – 5:10

In Heaven – 20:4

In the new Heaven – 22:5

Distinctions of the Book

The number *seven* is seen throughout the book. (54 times)

It is the last book in the New Testament and closes out the Canon. It is a completed Revelation of what was lost in Genesis.

A blessing is placed upon the reader and doer – 1:3

The word *throne* appears in almost every chapter of the book of Revelation.

The many Old Testament references in the book:

Swete say 278 – See Toy's *Quotations in the New Testament*.

Hunter says there are 500 in his *Interpreting the New Testament*

Westcott and Hort say there are 500 Old Testament references in the book – *Greek New Testament*.

The Church, by practicing true Christianity, broke down every barrier of class, race and culture. This made it harder for Rome to rule.

The Church, as far as the majority of Christians were concerned, was poor. There were not too many noble, rich, or wise who were Christians. They were considered the scum of society. Rome resented these kinds of people assembling together and they feared an up rising among them.

The natural hatred that darkness has for light, that the immoral has for the moral, the liar has for the truth, fed the hatred of Rome toward the Christian.

Nero's blaming the Church for burning Rome fueled their hatred of the Church.

2 Tim. 2:15

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly [dividing] the word of truth.”*

orthotomeo – does not mean cutting up but handling consistently.