

The Book of Revelation

The book of Revelation was written by the apostle John near the end of the first century. At that time, Rome was the world-ruling empire and the reigning emperor, Domitian, had imposed a state-religion upon the people in the form of emperor worship. Everyone had to appear before Domitian's magistrates to burn a pinch of incense and declare "Caesar is Lord." Those who fulfilled their ceremonial obligations were issued a certificate good for one year while those who refused to do so were accused of treason and severely persecuted. This is the backdrop of Revelation.



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John wrote to seven churches who were having their faith tested by Domitian and his wicked enforcement of emperor worship. Many Christians had their property confiscated for not complying while others were banished or even beheaded. Moreover, without the certificate they could not buy or sell (Revelation 13:17). This made life extremely difficult for the faithful and John encouraged them to stay strong, promising that they would eventually be vindicated.

Revelation has self-imposed time restraints that many seem to either miss or ignore. It begins and ends by telling us that these things would happen shortly. They would "soon take place" (Revelation 1:1; 22:6) for "the time is near" (Revelation 1:3; 22:10). Therefore, we should not try to apply the signs and symbols to modern-day events. They pertained to things occurring back then and were not far off when John wrote.

Obviously, when we get to the end of the book, John does look ahead to final judgment and the ushering in of the new heavens and new earth (chapters 20-22). However, the bulk of the book deals with the plight of persecuted Christians in the first century. The most important lesson for them and us, however, is that in the end Christ and His people will be victorious. The faithful win!