

Great Events Of The Bible --
John Exiled To Patmos
And Christians Persecuted
Under Domitian Caesar.

**(SLIDE #1) “GREAT EVENTS OF
THE BIBLE -- JOHN EXILED TO
PATMOS AND CHRISTIANS
PERSECUTED UNDER DOMITIAN
CAESAR!”**

Introduction:

- A. Tonight, One Of The GREAT Events Of The Bible -- Horrible Persecution Of God's People At The End Of The First Century!
- B. Many Of Them Felt That The Church Was Going To Be Annihilated!
- C. By A Symbolic Message, God Gives These Persecuted Christians Hope!

I. The Author!

- A. The ULTIMATE Author Is GOD HIMSELF!
 - 1. Never forget that the Bible was given “by inspiration of God!” II Tim. 3:16
 - 2. The Chain of Authority: (Rev. 1:1)
 - a. God, the Father.
 - b. Jesus Christ.
 - c. Angel.
 - d. John.
- B. The INSPIRED Author – John, The Apostle.

II. The Date.

- A. Different Dates Suggested, Approaches, And Difficulties.
 - 1. Before A.D. 70.
 - a. These interpreters attempt to have everything in the Bible completed before A.D. 70 and the Fall of Jerusalem.
 - b. Problems with this view:
 - 1. Nero did not persecute Christians over the whole Empire, only in the city of Rome. The Revelation deals with Empire-wide persecution.
 - 2. Emperor worship was not an issue under Nero's reign.

3. Nero preferred killing his enemies instead of banishing them. Remember that during his reign Paul was beheaded; Peter was crucified.
 4. The conditions of the Churches in Rev. 2,3 in the 60's simply will not justify the idea that the book was written in A.D. 68-70.
2. A.D. 96.
- a. Evidences of why this is the date for the writing of the book.
 1. Domitian practiced banishment.
 - a. He even banished his wife on the charge of sacrilege because she espoused Christianity.
 - b. John, of course, was exiled. 1:9
 2. Domitian was the first Caesar to DEMAND emperor worship!
 - a. A temple was built for his worship in the city of Ephesus.
 - b. Certainly refusal to bow down in worship would bring wrath!
 - c. He demanded to be addressed as "Dominus et deus" or "Our Lord and God."
 - d. He placed statues throughout the Empire where he demanded emperor worship by all the people.
 - e. Once a year everyone in the Empire had to appear before Domitian's magistrates and say "KAISAR KURIOS" or "Caesar is Lord" and as a testimony they had to burn a pinch of incense to the godhood of Caesar. Then they were given a written certificate good for one year. Christians who obviously refuse such professions were severely persecuted.
 3. The condition of the Churches demands a late date.
 - a. Ephesus had left its first love.
 1. It was established about A.D. 61 by Paul; it was a strong, vibrant congregation in the middle 60's when "Ephesians" was written.
 2. Yet, in Revelation, it was weak and had "lost its first love." If the early date is held, this occurred within 6 or 7 years.
 - b. Smyrna seems to have been established after A.D. 60-64; yet it is DEAD when the Revelation is written.
 - c. An earthquake had destroyed Laodicea in A.D. 60,61 (during Nero's reign); yet in Revelation it is seen as a wealthy, vibrant town.

B. The Main Concern Is To See How This Book Was An Encouragement To Persecuted Brethren Encouraging Them To Never Give Up!

III. The Conditions Of The World At The Writing Of The Revelation.

A. It Was A Time Of TREMENDOUS Wealth.

1. One man spent \$160,000 just for roses for a dinner for Nero.

2. Caligula:
 - a. He spent \$500,000 for one banquet.
 - b. His wife wore a set of emeralds valued at \$2 million.
 3. It seems that people were almost enslaved to monetary possessions and gains.
- B. It Was A Time Of Little Morality.
1. Hypocrisy and immorality were rampant.
 2. Marriage was easily made and easily dissolved.
 3. Homosexuality was openly accepted, even practiced by many of the Caesars.
- C. It Was A Time Of MANY False Religions.
1. The Caesars had all claimed to be gods; by the time of Revelation emperor worship was being forced on all of the people of the Empire.
 2. Gnosticism was spreading.
 - a. It claimed that matter was evil.
 - b. It emphasized that wisdom came only through knowledge.
 - c. It exalted human knowledge far above the importance of Christ.
 - d. Thus, it really emphasized humanism above God.
 3. Antinomianism was prevalent.
 - a. This philosophy claimed that moral law was not binding on people.
 - b. This doctrine provided man an excuse to practice every kind of immorality.
- D. It Was A Time Of GREAT Difficulty For The Christians!
1. Christianity was an illegal religion.
 2. Christ's commission to the Church and Christianity's aim to be universal put it in direct confrontation and opposition to Rome.
 3. Because Christianity excluded all who were not Christians, it was hated.
 4. Because they taught against sin and avoided it, Christians were hated.
 - a. They would not mingle in heathen social practices or customs.
 - b. They would not associate with the pagans because they did not want to accept their ungodly ideas.
 - c. They refused to go to pagan temples or to have idols at home.

5. They refused to practice Emperor worship; thus they were despised, ridiculed, persecuted, and killed.
6. The Jews, despising the Christians also, sided with the Romans in order to gain favor for themselves in Rome's sight.
7. The Christians refusal to go to war and even to defend themselves caused more trouble.
8. Their appeal to the poor and to outcasts caused them to be looked down upon by the "socially elite."
9. Their zeal, commitment, and dedication to Christ and His Word caused them to be viewed as fanatics.
10. The Roman priests, makers and venders of idolatrous items, and others who made money on the pagan sacrifices and worship despised them.
11. They were accused of many atrocities:
 - a. Drought
 - b. Floods
 - c. Earthquakes
 - d. Wars
 - e. Drinking and eating flesh (being cannibals)
 - f. Meeting in secret
 - g. Burning towns (When Nero was accused by the Romans of burning Rome, he turned that blame upon the Christians).
12. Each Caesar took different approaches toward Christians. Some were very lenient, some were antagonistic, and some were murderous. Thus, each succeeding Caesar brought a different attitude toward the Christians. During some reigns they were terrorized and murdered; during some reigns they were somewhat ignored; during the reign of other Caesars they were left alone and tolerated.

IV. This Book Is A Message To N.T. CHRISTIANS!

A. It Is NOT A Message For All Mankind!

B. It Is NOT A Message For So-Called "Christendom!"

C. It Is A Message For "The Persecuted Church Of Christ!"

1. His blood-bought Body! Ac. 20:28
2. Those Deity added to the Church! Ac. 2:47

3. Those “sanctified” in Christ! I Cor. 1:2
4. To “Christians” – those who belong to Christ by being redeemed by His Blood because of their faith (belief, repentance, confession, and baptism)! Ac. 11:26; Rom. 6:3,4

V. Invalid Approaches That Many Take To Interpret Revelation:

- A. Preterist -- Everything Was Fulfilled Before A.D. 70.
- B. Continuous Historical Method -- This Approach Claims That The Book Of Revelation Is A Blueprint Of The History Of The Whole World From Christ Onward. [Supposedly It Is History Written Beforehand!]
- C. Futuristic -- This Approach Claims That Revelation Describes Events That Will Occur Just Before Christ’s Return For A Supposed “Rapture” Of The Righteous, Chapter 20 To Christ’s Supposed Return To Earth And A Supposed Millennial Reign In Jerusalem, And Chapters 21,22 To The Final Judgment.
 1. This is the view of Premillennialism.
 2. This approach makes the message have NO MEANING to those to whom it was written in the First Century.
 3. This view is inconsistent with Rev. 1:1,3 at the beginning of the book and Rev. 22:6,10 at the end of the book which say these events will “shortly come to pass” and “the time is at hand.”
- D. Poetic or Spiritual -- This Approach Claims That The Book Is Merely An Allegory And That No One Can Truly Understand It Completely.
- E. Philosophy of History -- This View Suggests That The Book Does Not Refer To Specific Events, Rather It Is A Symbolic Picture Of A Struggle Between The Forces Of God And The Forces Of Satan. It Claims That The Books Only Purpose Is To Show That Good Will Win Over Evil.
- F. Proper Approach:
 1. The book is symbolic -- It was written in this style to CONCEAL it from the enemies of God and to REVEAL it to those who understood His symbolism.

2. It addresses historical events that were occurring at the end of the First Century. It addresses Christians of seven congregations in Asia.
3. It does have a message for Christians of ALL ages or centuries: God's people will always ultimately have victory no matter HOW HORRIBLE they are persecuted; God is in ultimate control; NEVER BECOME DISCOURAGED and give up your faith.
4. In the previous books of the N.T., some things had not been fulfilled – The falling away from the faith, the Lord's Second Coming, the Judgment, and Heaven or Hell forever. By the time of the Revelation, the falling away had occurred; however, some things in Revelation have not fulfilled – the Lord's Second Coming, the Judgment, and Heaven or Hell forever.
5. Every interpretation must be consistent with the rest of the N.T.!

VI. It Is A Message To Troubled Christians That You MUST NOT DESPAIR, That GOD Has NOT Forsaken You; You WILL BE VICTORIOUS FOREVER!

A. Many Have Been Taught The Following Outline Of The Types Of Literature In The Bible:

1. Old Testament:
 - a. Law -- Genesis through Deuteronomy (5 books)
 - b. History -- Joshua through Esther (12 books)
 - c. Poetry -- Job through Song of Solomon (5 books)
 - d. Prophecy -- Isaiah through Malachi (17 books)
2. New Testament:
 - a. Gospels -- Matthew through John (4 books)
 - b. History -- Acts (1 book)
 - c. Epistles -- Romans through Jude (21 books)
 - d. Prophecy -- Revelation (1 books)
3. For the most part this is a pretty accurate outline; HOWEVER, depicting Revelation as a book of prophecy fuels the idea that this book is a message about the end of the world!
4. I totally reject that description of Revelation -- it is NOT a book of prophecy about the end of the world; it is a book of encouragement to persecuted Christians to NEVER give up no matter how bad persecution is and no matter how bleak things look -- they will be victorious in Jesus!

B. It Is An Encouragement To NEVER Leave Christ And The Church!

- C. It Is An Message Of Exhortation To Despondent People Who May Have No Hope And Who May See No End To Their Suffering And Despair – You MUST NOT GIVE UP!
- D. Christ Reigns And WILL Reign Until Every Enemy Is Overthrown And Overcome And HIS PEOPLE HAVE VICTORY!
 - 1. Mk 12:36; Lk. 20:42,43; I Cor. 15:25
 - 2. I Cor. 15:25,26 “For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. ²⁶The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death.”
- E. You CAN HAVE “Victory In Jesus!”
- F. It Is A Message Of Hope: WE CAN OVERCOME!!!

VII.(Slide #2) The Old Apostle John Was In Exile On The Isle Of Patmos When God Gave Him The Revelation!

- A. 1:4 “John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne,”
- B. 1:9 “I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”
- C. He Received This Revelation On “The Lord’s Day” -- Sunday! 1:10

VIII. (Slide #3) Jesus Addresses The Seven Church Of Asia! 1:9 - 3:22

- A. He Addresses The Churches Of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, And Laodicea.
- B. He Reveals Their Spiritual Conditions, Areas That Need To Be Corrected, And How They Can Please Him!

IX. God’s Message To The Persecuted Christians.

- A. (Slide #4) A Scroll Is Revealed!

- B. **(Slide #5)** The Scroll Has A Message, But WHO Will Open It? “Worthy Is The Lamb!” 5:9,10
- C. **(Slide #6)** Then He Depicts The Conditions That Christians Are Facing As The Seals Of The Scroll Are Opened! The First Four Seals Reveal Four Horses.
1. Christ rides the WHITE horse; he is a conqueror.
 2. The second horse was a RED horse; its rider began to destroy the peace on the earth and to kill people -- to shed blood.
 3. The third horse was a BLACK horse; its rider carried a pair of scales; the people of God have their pay rationed -- see the impact of the trade guilds upon Christians in Thyatira.
 4. The fourth horse was a PALE horse; the rider was death; he spreads widespread slaughter! Things are getting AWFUL for Christians!
 5. When the 5th seal was opened, martyred Christians are pictures under the Throne crying out to God!
 - a. Rev. 6:9-11 “When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. ¹⁰And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ ¹¹Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both *the number of* their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they *were*, was completed.”
 - b. Those who had remained faithful are given white robes signifying “Victory In Jesus!”
 6. The 6th seal shows God’s judgment upon the wicked.
 7. In Chapter 7, God’s people are sealed; they are a multitude of the faithful!
 8. **(Slide #7)** The 7th seal reveals 7 angels blowing trumpets. 8-11
 - a. As these trumpets are blown, God begins to pour out His wrath upon the wicked.
 - b. After the first four trumpets are blown, an angel announces that “WOES” are coming. 8:13
 - c. The fifth trumpet brings the first woe; the sixth trumpet brings the second woe. Chapter 9
 - d. **(Slide #8)** A mighty angel declares that God will no longer restrain His punishment! Chapter 10
 - e. In Chapter 10 John devours a book that will likely shows the destiny of the Church and the judgment upon the wicked.

9. **(Slide #9)** In Chapter 12 a pregnant woman, symbolizing the remnant of the faithful delivers a child; Satan tries to destroy the remnant and the child -- Christ!
10. In Chapter 12 a great war occurs between Michael and the Dragon. Satan tries to destroy the Church!
11. **(Slide #10)** The beast of the sea, representing the Roman government, worships the Dragon, blasphemes God,
 - a. The government is evil, just like Satan.
 - b. It opposes the ways of God.
 - c. It persecutes the righteous.
12. **(Slide #11)** In Chapter 13, the beast of the earth, representing false religion, marks those who submit to it.
 - a. This is set in contrast with the “sealing” of God’s people earlier in Chapter 7.
 - b. The wicked receive “The Mark Of The Beast” -- “666” -- standing for “Total Imperfection!” They have NO connection to God; they are His enemies!
13. **(Slide #12)** In Chapter 14 the Lamb and the 144,000 are praising God. Three angels make proclamations -- the first offers the wicked an opportunity to repent; the second proclaims the fall of Rome, and the third declares the punishment upon the wicked!
14. Chapter 15 describes Heaven rejoicing at the coming judgment upon the enemies of God’s people!
15. **(Slide #13)** Chapter 16 tells of the Bowls of Wrath being poured out upon the wicked; This describes God’s judgment upon the beasts and their allies - - this is NOT a depiction of the Final Judgment! It describes the “beginning of the end” for the opposition of the Roman Emperor and the religious proponents; they STILL blaspheme God!
16. **(Slide #14)** Chapter 17 The great harlot, depicting the city of Rome, and the beast of the sea, depicting the Domitian and the Roman Empire, will wane and fail!
17. Chapter 18 tells of the harlot’s fall, the reaction of those who were loyal to her, and the reaction of God’s people to her fall!
18. **(Slide #15)** Chapter 19 describes praise in Heaven for God’s righteous judgments; the marriage of the Lamb, and praise of the victorious Christ riding on a white horse; His victory over the two beasts in the battle of Armageddon. Now, every enemy but Satan has been defeated!

19. Chapter 20 described Satan being bound in the bottomless pit; he is released for a while to spread His evil influence, and finally the Final Judgment!
20. **(Slide #16)** Chapters 21,22 describe the glories of Heaven!

X. (Slide #17) God's Message To The Christians Persecuted By Domitian:

- A. (►) Stay Faithful NO MATTER WHAT!
- B. (►) God Will Protect The Church And Give Christians A Home In Heaven!
- C. (►) The AWFUL Persecutions By Domitian Ceased; Rome's Power Waned; Ultimately Constantine Made Christianity The Religion Of The State In The Early Fourth Century.
- D. (►) The Roman Empire Fell In A.D. 476; The Church Of Christ Continues To Exist And To Thrive And WE Are Blessed To Be A Part Of The Holy, Spiritual Nation And To Invite Sinners To Salvation By The Blood Of The Victorious Lamb, Jesus Christ!
- E. We Shall See The King Some Day!