

The Bible and its Influence

Chapter 34: “Crisis and Persecution”



Hannah & Patrick

Suffering and Execution



- Emperor Domitian
 - Wanted people to call him “Lord and God,” and treat him as a Roman deity
 - Caused problem for Christians
 - Some who refused to worship Emperor were imprisoned, tortured, even murdered
- Romans saw Christians as disloyal
- Revelations written during time of suffering and persecution for Christians
 - Temptations to abandon faith to avoid persecution
- *Revelation* revealed value & meaning of suffering, what was coming next
- Includes symbolism to hide meaning
 - Confusing read as a result

<https://bible.fandom.com/wiki/Domitian>

Revelation as a Letter

“The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place; he made known by sending his angel to his servant John, who testified to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw”
-*Revelation 1:1-2*

- *Revelation* is apocalyptic but shares characteristics with prophecy and narrative biblical forms
- Written as letter from John to seven existing churches
 - John exiled from Ephesus to Patmos, where *Revelation* was written
- Visions mirror author's surrounding scenery
 - Patmos is an island 10 miles long, 6 miles across, w/ 37 miles of coastline

- Unlike the Romans, first-century Christians were familiar w/ apocalyptic literature
- Use of terms, symbols, numbers to communicate with audience
 - *Son of Man* = Messiah
 - Echoes vision from chapter 7 of the Book of Daniel:
 - “I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven” (Daniel 7:13)
- The number seven
 - Appears 57 times in *Book of Revelation*
 - Seven days of creation, seven festivals, seven days to build a temple, seven churches

Apocalyptic Literature & “Sign” Language

Pattern of Apocalyptic Literature

- Addresses communities undergoing some kind of suffering or difficulty
- Reassures communities that the evil force causing the difficulty will be destroyed and a new era will begin
- Warns the communities that at first the suffering may become extreme



<https://www.britannica.com/art/apocalyptic-literature#/media/1/29733/268974>

The Seven Churches

1. Ephesus - First Love (2:1-7)

Challenged their community to return to their “first love”, reward would be to eat from the tree of life.

2. Smyrna - Persecution (2:8-11)

Their community had suffered poverty and affliction, but because of their faith they would be rewarded with the crown of life and avoidance of the second death.

3. Pergamum - Adversity (2:12-17)

Their community remained faithful in a city full of idolatry, reward would be hidden manna

4. Thyatira - Endurance (2:18-28)

Remained faithful despite the strong temptations of sin, reward would be authority over the nations and the morning star.



The Seven Churches



5. Sardis - Repent (3:1-6)

Community in a city often invaded, encouraged to remember, obey, and repent, reward would be white robes and names recorded in the book of life.

6. Philadelphia - The Key (3:7-13)

Community often clashed with a Jewish community here, their reward would be to become a symbolic pillar in the temple and to have the name of God written on them.

7. Laodicea - Lukewarm (3:14-22)

Called the community to reform and repent, their reward would be a place on the throne.

Cultural Connections: Geography

The Isle of Patmos

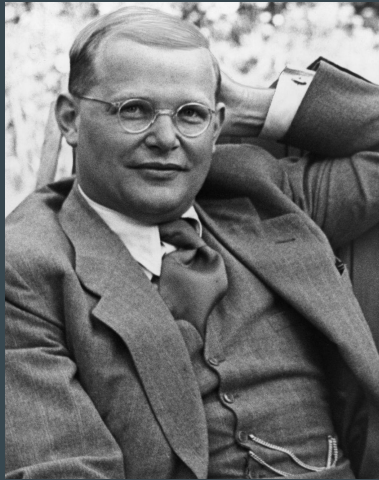


<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/942/>

- It is believed that John wrote Revelation in a cave halfway up the islands highest point: Mount St. Elias
 - Holy place
 - Monastery of Saint James
 - Museum
 - Library
 - Designated “sacred island” in 1981 by Greek Parliament
 - Celebrated 1900th anniversary of the *Book of Revelation* in 1995
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Cultural Connections: World History

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945)



<https://www.buchenwald.de/en/geschichte/biografien/ltg-ausstellung/dietrich-bonhoeffer>

- Lutheran pastor in Germany
 - Arrested and imprisoned by Nazis during WWII
 - Wrote letters and sermons in prison, *Letters and Papers from Prison*
 - Executed by Nazis on April 9, 1945
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