

Dispensationalism — Domitian Dating (95-96AD)

Arguments for the Domitian Dating (95-96AD):

■ EXTERNAL EVIDENCE FOR DOMITIAN DATING:

1. MAJORITY OF SCHOLARS AFFIRM THE DOMITIAN DATING:

"The Majority of modern scholars place the date of the composition of the Book of Revelation between 90-110 AD. There are good reasons for this, not the least of which is the testimony of several Fathers of the Church. Irenaeus places the work at 96 AD. Victorinus places the writing in the context of the persecution of Domitian, and indicates it was thus that John was imprisoned on Patmos. Jerome and Eusebius say the same. This date of composition (90-110) also flows well with modern theories of biblical dating which tend to favor later dates as a general rule."

— Charles Pope, Why the Modern View of the Book of Revelation may be Flawed. (November 25, 2012 by MSGR).

"The traditional view for the date of the composition of Revelation is during the reign of Domitian (A.D. 81-96). The early church fathers affirmed this and most scholars since then have accepted this... For those who want precision in such matters, there is a virtual consensus that Revelation was written between AD 94 and 96."

— W.A. Elwell, Revelation, in W.A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 1199.

"The majority opinion as to the date of Revelation is that of Irenaeus, who wrote concerning the book, "There has been no very long time since, but almost in our own day, toward the end of Domitian's reign" (Irenaeus Haer. 5.30.3)."

— G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, R.P. Martin and P.H. Davids, eds. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 1028.

"All ancient sources, both Christian and secular, place the banishment of Christians to Patmos during the reign of Domitian (AD81-96). Not a single early source (within 500 years of John) places John's banishment under the reign of Nero, as preterists claim. All modern attempts to date Revelation during Nero's reign rely exclusively on alleged internal evidence, and ignore or seek to undermine the external evidence and testimony of Christians who lived about that time, some of whom had connections to John."

— Tim Warner, *Preterism & the Date of the Apocalypse*, 2003.

"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. The whole business of making the interpretation depend upon the date is therefore built upon a sandy foundation. . . . But if the late date is correct, the whole approach that assigns Revelation as a prophecy fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem is false and must be totally rejected."

— Howard Winters, *Commentary on Revelation* (Greenville, SC: Carolina Christian, 1989), 15-16.

"The first clear, accepted, unambiguous witness to the Neronic date is a one-line subscription in the Syriac translation of the New Testament in a.d. 550," notes Mark Hitchcock. "Only two other external witnesses to the early date exist: Arethas (c. 900) and Theophylact (d. 1107)." This is scant "evidence," needless to say, upon which to draw such dogmatic conclusion, as is often done by many Preterists. On the other hand, Hitchcock notes that the late date "has an unbroken line of support from some of the greatest, most reliable names in church history, beginning in a.d. 150. . . . The external evidence from church history points emphatically to the a.d. 95 date for the composition of Revelation."

— Mark Hitchcock, *Date of Revelation*, in Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson, editors, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2004), 337.

"John is said to be on the island of Patmos (1:9) when writing Revelation because he was banished there. Yet, Nero put to death Peter and Paul. If Revelation were written during the reign of Nero, then why wouldn't John have been killed like Peter and Paul? Banishment was Domitian's favorite way to persecute Christians. "Moreover, we have no evidence of Nero's use of banishment for Christians."

— Mark Hitchcock, *Date of Revelation*, in Tim LaHaye and Ed Hindson, editors, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Bible Prophecy* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2004), 338.

"The Canon of the New Testament was completed when the last authoritative book was given to any church by the apostles, and that was when John wrote the Apocalypse, about A.D. 98."

— B.B. Warfield, *The Formation of the Canon of the New Testament* (American Sunday School Union, Philadelphia, Pa. 1892), n.p.

"The question now arises, when did John write the Apocalypse? In the year 69 (or even earlier), or must we reverse the figure and make it 96 (or perhaps 95)? One cannot find a single really cogent argument in support of the earlier date. The arguments produced are based on late and unreliable testimonies, on the wholly imaginary idea that John did not yet know his Greek when he wrote the Apocalypse, and on a very questionable literal interpretation of certain passages ... The late date has very strong support. Says, Irenaeus: "For that (the apocalyptic vision) was seen not a very long time since, but almost in our own day, toward the end of Domitian's reign." Again he says: "... the church in Ephesus founded by Paul, and lived in by John until the time of Trajan (AD 98-117), is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles."

— William Hendriksen, *More Than Conquerors: An Interpretation of Revelation* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1967), 14.

"John wrote to churches that had experienced an occasional localized persecution (2:3, 13; 3:8-9), which does not fit with the severe persecution under Nero in A.D. 64-65. The church at Ephesus, founded around 52, had been around long enough to have lost its first love (2:4). The Laodicean church is called rich (3:17), but Laodicea was devastated by an earthquake in 60-61 and would have taken many years to recover. Early Christian writers, including Irenaeus, held that John received his vision during the reign of Domitian (81-96), and it was during that reign that a cult of emperor worship was established at Ephesus and some form of persecution broke out against the church. Our study will show that the Christians to whom John was writing were being forced to participate in this imperial cult (see on 2:9, 13-14; 13:15). From about 100, the usual basis for charges against Christians was their refusal to worship the emperor. Judaism enjoyed certain freedoms under Roman law, including the right to worship in synagogues and some degree of exemption from the imperial cult. However, as Christians became identified as a separate group from Jews, such privileges would not have been extended to them. It seems from Revelation that some Jewish Christians were tempted to flee persecution by returning to the synagogue and that Gentile Christians were tempted to avoid persecution by giving in to the demands of emperor worship. In Asia Minor, where the churches addressed in Revelation were located, the demands of emperor worship were particularly strong from about 90 onward. People were even required to participate in sacrifices as ritual processions passed their homes. The impetus for this cult seems to have come more from local and provincial officials seeking to ingratiate themselves with Rome than from the emperor himself. Their attempts to make themselves look good depended on their ability to force the local population to support the cult enthusiastically, and detractors had to be punished. In Revelation Rome, along with other kingdoms, is identified with Babylon, yet Jews never referred to Rome as Babylon until after the destruction of the temple in 70, comparing that destruction with the similar destruction carried out by the Babylonians many centuries before. The evidence, therefore, seems to indicate that Revelation was written sometime shortly after 90, when John the apostle would have been an old man."

— G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 14.

"To sum up, the earlier date may be right, but the internal evidence is not sufficient to outweigh the firm tradition stemming from Irenaeus."

— G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 27.

"The word "preterist" refers to the past. This view holds that Revelation is a prophecy of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 and that everything in the book has already been fulfilled — and hence is "past." But we have seen, it is unlikely that Revelation was even written until some years later than the fall of Jerusalem. On the preterist view, "Babylon" represents rebellious Israel, which persecutes the church. "Babylon," however, is never used in ancient Jewish or Christian literature to refer to unbelieving or disobedient Israel, but rather to Rome. The prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7, alluded to throughout Revelation, speak of an end-time judgment of the pagan nations (as does Rev. 1:7), not of Israel. Daniel also says that the end-time judgment is to be universal, not just involving one nation. Finally, the book becomes irrelevant for anyone who lives after those first days of the church. Why would God include it in the Bible at all? A variation of this view is that "Babylon" refers to the Roman Empire and that the prophecies in the book were completely fulfilled when that empire was destroyed in the fifth century. This deals with some of the objections yet leaves the question as to how the universal end-times judgment of all nations pictured in Revelation could possibly fit with the gradual decay and eventual collapse of destruction of the Roman Empire. Further, the book would have become less relevant to believers following that event."

— G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (The New International Greek Testament Commentary. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 19-20.

"Those who hold to the early date [pre- A.D. 70] see in Jerusalem's destruction the prophesied second coming of Jesus Christ in its first phase. External evidence for the earlier (Neronian) date is almost nonexistent. On the other hand, the view that the apostle John penned Revelation near the end of Domitian's reign was widely held in the early church. The second-century church father Irenaeus wrote ... [see above quote] ... The church fathers Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Victorinus, Eusebius, and Jerome also affirm that Revelation was written during Domitian's reign ... The testimony of the early church that Revelation was written during Domitian's reign is difficult to explain if it was actually written during

Nero's reign."

— John MacArthur, *Revelation 1-11*. (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary. Moody Press, 1999), 7-8.

"[The external evidence] almost unanimously assigns [Revelation] to the last years of Domitian."

— R. H. Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary, ed. S. R. Driver, A. Plummer, and C. A. Briggs (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), xci.

"Early Christian tradition is almost unanimous in assigning the Apocalypse to the last years of Domitian."

— H.B. Swete, *Apocalypse*, xcix.

"Undoubtedly a strong argument in favor of a Domitianic date is the fact that the earliest and the weightiest external witnesses attest it."

— Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1990), 956.

"A date during the last decade of the first century, about A.D. 95, is the traditional time assigned to the publishing of the Apocalypse. This tradition is substantiated by contemporary majority opinion as well as those who suggest alternatives."

— Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7, An Exegetical Commentary*, (Moody Press, Chicago, 1992), 20.

"The case for the traditional date of about A.D. 95 remains the most probable option."

— Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7, An Exegetical Commentary*, (Moody Press, Chicago, 1992), 23.

"There are two chief theories, the Neronic, soon after Nero's death, the other in the reign of Domitian. Irenaeus is quoted by Eusebius as saying expressly that the Apocalypse of John was written at the close of the reign of Domitian. This testimony is concurred in by Clement of Alexandria, by Origen, by Eusebius, by Jerome. In harmony with this clear testimony the severity of the persecutions suit the later date better than the earlier one. There is, besides, in Revelation 17:11, an apparent reference to the story that Nero would return again. The fifth king who is one of the seven is an eighth. There was a Nero legend, to be sure, that Nero either was not dead but was in Parthia, or would be redivivus after death. Juvenal termed Domitian "a bald Nero" and others called Domitian "a second Nero." But in spite of all this Hort, Lightfoot, Sanday, Westcott have argued strongly for the Neronic era. Peake is willing to admit allusions to the Neronic period as Swete is also, but both consider the Domitianic date the best supported. Moffatt considers any earlier date than Domitian "almost impossible."

— Robertson, A. *Word Pictures in the New Testament, Revelation*, e-book, (Baker Books, 1982), 267.

"In regard to the writing date of Revelation, the overwhelming consensus of second to twenty-first century scholars, with good reason, embraces a late writing date of Revelation (ca. A.D. 95) rather than the early date (pre-A.D. 70), with the exception of the nineteenth century when postmillennialism was the majority opinion. This one conclusion alone eliminates a preterist approach from viable consideration."

— Richard L. Mayhue, *Jesus: A Preterist or a Futurist*, TMSJ 14/1 (Spring 2003), 23.

"The most widely held date for the composition of Revelation is sometime in the early 90s of the first century."

— Sam Storms, *Kingdom Come, The Amillennial Alternative* (Mentor Imprint of Christian Focus Publications, Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire, IV20 1TW, Scotland, U.K., 2013), 412.

2. EARLY CHURCH FATHERS AFFIRM DOMITIAN DATING:

■ Hegesippus (ca. A.D. 120-190)

"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."

— 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), 127.

"Hegesippus is significant to the present study because he was cited as a source by Eusebius two times in the section of Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History where the banishment of John to Patmos under Domitian was presented." This reference is germane to the issue at hand because it was while John was banished to Patmos that he received the Revelation (Rev 1:9-10)... In Book 3 of Ecclesiastical History, after discussing the cruelty of Domitian, Eusebius is clearly referring to some source when he writes, "At this time, as the story goes, the Apostle and Evangelist John was still alive, and was

condemned to live in the island of Patmos for his witness to the divine word. "Clearly, Eusebius had heard or read a story from some source that included this information. Then twenty-eight lines later Eusebius explicitly mentions Hegesippus by name as a source for his material. Another thirty-two lines later, he again refers to Hegesippus by name as a source. Then only six lines after that, 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 the ancient Christians relates that the apostle John, after his banishment to the island, took up his abode at Ephesus. ""

— Mark Hitchcock, *A Defense of the Domitianic Date of the Book of Revelation*. Dissertation for Dallas Theological Seminary, (December 2005), 12-13.

"Putting this all together, the Hegesippian support for the banishment of John to Patmos during Domitian's reign, and thus the late date of Revelation, is compelling. The argument unfolds in seven steps. 1. Eusebius was clearly using Hegesippus as a source for much of the material in books 2-4 of Ecclesiastical History. He mentions him specifically by name. 2. Eusebius mentions the banishment practices of Domitian in Ecclesiastical History 3: 17.1 in the final sentence of that chapter. 3. In the very next line, at the beginning of 3: 18.1, Eusebius makes it clear that he is using a source for his information, in that, he introduces the section with the words "At that time, as the story goes. 4. Twenty-eight lines later in 3.19.1 Hegesippus is specifically identified as Eusebius' source for his information. 5. Thirty-two lines later in 3.20.7 Hegesippus is again specifically mentioned as Eusebius' source. 6. Then, only six lines later, and in 3: 20.8, Eusebius relates the story of John's banishment to the island under Domitian. He says, "Those who committed the story of those times to writing relate it ... the story of the ancient Christians relates. "Again, he plainly indicates that he is using a written, ancient Christian source for the story about John's banishment under Domitian. 7. In 4.22.1-8 Eusebius looks back and states that he has already made use of Hegesippus in the previous books of Ecclesiastical History. This would include Book 3 where the statements about John's banishment under Domitian occur. Therefore, the question is not did Eusebius employ a source for the information in 3.20.8-9 concerning the banishment of John to Patmos under Domitian. He openly states that I have employed a written source. The only question then is-who was Eusebius' source for this information? In the context there is no other plausible conclusion except that Eusebius is referring to Hegesippus, the man he mentions by name two times in the immediate context of 3.18-20."

— Mark Hitchcock, *A Defense of the Domitianic Date of the Book of Revelation*. Dissertation for Dallas Theological Seminary, (December 2005), 15.

"But chapter xii certainly, as we have seen, came ultimately from Hegesippus. And it will be remembered that Hegesippus was in the mind of Eusebius, if the Memoirs were not actually open before him, when he began to write chapter xvii. For chapter xvi ends with a reference to that work. And finally it may be added, by way of confirmation, that Rufinus believed that chapter xvi was a quotation from Hegesippus. . . On that hypothesis we find ourselves able to give a reasonable account of the construction of this part of the Ecclesiastical History. Eusebius acted, it would seem, exactly as we might expect that a historian would act whose design was to give a narrative of a series of events, which should practically consist of extracts from earlier writers. He took as his basis Hegesippus, who had the fullest account known to him of the history of the Church during the period with which he was concerned. And here and there I have added to his Hegesippian narrative illustrations from other authorities-Irenaeus, Tertullian, Brettius, and the rest. Thus. . . we have arrived once more at our former conclusion, that Eusebius drew from Hegesippus the account of Domitian in chapter xvii and the statement of chapter xviii that the Apostle St. John was banished under Domitian to Patmos; and we have extended it by tracing to the same source the further statement in chapter xx that the apostle returned to Ephesus in the reign of Nerva."

— H.J. Lawlor, *Eusebiana*, 53.

"Now evidence from the second century in regard to the date and authorship of the canonical Apocalypse is both scanty and, in some respects, difficult to interpret. But if the two passages referred to are really from Hegesippus we have his testimony that St. John was banished to Patmos under Domitian, and resided at Ephesus under Nerva. That is to say, he must be added to the small band of early witnesses to the late date and apostolic authority of the Apocalypse, and this is full of significance. It is not only that Hegesippus is the earliest writer who can be quoted in favor of that view. That, indeed, we may well claim for him."

— H.J. Lawlor, *Hegesippus and the Apocalypse*, JTS 8 (1907) : 436-444. Kistemaker agrees with Lawlor's conclusion that Hegesippus was Eusebius' source for the information about John's banishment by Domitian (Revelation, 28).

"The first person to describe the date Revelation was written in AD 95 is a man named Hegesippus who lived AD 120-190. While there is a limited number of writings that exist today from Hegesippus, Eusebius Pamphili of Caesaria (who lived AD 300-340) heavily relied on Hegesippus' material when writing his Ecclesiastical History (Andrew James Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea, Supplements to Videliae christiana*, ed. J. Van Oort, J. Den Boeft, W. L. Petersen, et al., vol. 67 [Leiden: Brill: 2003], 1-36). In Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History he mentions a written source that he uses to state that John the apostle was banished to the island of Patmos under the reign of Domitian."

— Christopher Scott, The Date of the Book of Revelation, Website: <http://christopherscottblog.com/date-book-revelation/>

"This is not of course to say that Eusebius was the source of his identification. Apart from quoting Irenaeus, he refers to 'the record of our ancient men.' (i.e., in all probability the Memoirs of Hegesippus) for the tradition that 'the apostle John also took up his abode once more at Ephesus after his exile' under Domitian's successor Nerva."

— John A. T. Robinson, Redating the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 223.

■ Irenaeus (A.D. 120-202)

"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 not very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign."

— Irenaeus, Against Heresies, 5:30.3.

Defending Irenaeus...

"Taking the referent of ἐωράθη as the Apocalypse is actually much more grammatically plain and simple than John since ἀποκάλυψις is the closest antecedent to the verb and is the main subject in the context... The broader context of the entire chapter strongly supports the Apocalypse as the referent of ἐωράθη. The topic of chapter 30 of Book 5 in Against Heresies is the Apocalypse and the interpretation of a specific verse within it (Rev 13:18). The Apocalypse is mentioned specifically in Against Heresies 5.30.2 and again in 5.30.3. Also, the immediate context in Eusebius points to the Apocalypse as the referent for ἐωράθη."

— Mark Hitchcock, A Defense of the Domitianic Date of the Book of Revelation. Dissertation for Dallas Theological Seminary, (December 2005), 21-22.

"First, there is no reputable translation of Irenaeus' statement that renders John as the subject of the verb ἐωράθη. All four standard English translations of Eusebius, who quotes Irenaeus, translate the statement in question as a reference to when the apocalyptic vision was seen, not when John was seen. All read, "it was seen," referring to the book of Revelation. "Moreover, none of these translations contain any footnote or reference that signals any possible alternative translation." The alleged translational ambiguity is totally absent from any standard translation. If the statement of Irenaeus is ambiguous and easily susceptible to an alternate translation one would expect this to be reflected somehow in these translations. Second, in the Greek text, preserved by Eusebius, the subject of the verb ἐωράθη is lacking and must be provided. However, the nearest grammatical antecedent to the verb is ἀποκάλυψις or "apocalyptic vision." The only natural subject in this case is the object of the preceding clause... Third, the Latin translation stands strongly against any effort to re-interpret the words of Irenaeus. The Latin translation of Irenaeus reads: *qui et Apocalypsin viderat. Neque enim aene multum temporis visum est.* In the Latin translation from the Greek, the translator made a translational decision and used the word *visum*, a neuter word, which refers to a thing, such as a book in this case, rather than *visa* which indicates a person. The Latin translator clearly understood Irenaeus' statement as a reference to when the Apocalypse was seen, not when John was seen. This argues strongly against any alleged translational ambiguity. The statement by Irenaeus was not translated in such a way that would indicate that it was ambiguous in any way to the Latin translator. Fourth, the verb ἐωράθη fits perfectly with the noun ἀποκάλυψις. An ἀποκάλυψις is an uncovering or revelation or disclosure often through visions. The ἀποκάλυψις is clearly something that John saw; Therefore, the verb ἐωράθη refers to what John saw (the apocalypse) rather than someone seeing John. The word *εἶδον* ("I saw") is used 55 times in Revelation in reference to John seeing something. In Rev 1: 2, John is described as the one, "who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw." Also, the verb in question (*ἐπάω*) is used seven times in Revelation (1: 7; 11:19; 12: 1, 3; 19:10; 22: 4, 9). The entire Book of Revelation "was seen." The verb ἐωράθη is an appropriate verb to refer to the Revelation that was seen by John at the end of the reign of Domitian. Fifth, if John were the intended subject of this statement, Irenaeus, who was trying to bring the matter as near to his own time as possible, would surely have said that John lived into the reign of Trajan (AD 98-117), a fact that Irenaeus knew well. Sixth, the statement of Irenaeus is simply not ambiguous. The alleged ambiguity in Irenaeus' statement has been created by modern scholars with a viewpoint that demands a pre-70 date for Revelation. In this case the maxim is true that "necessity is the mother of invention." The vast majority of scholars, ancient and modern, have accepted the fact that this statement refers to the time the Apocalypse was seen." One must ask-if Irenaeus' statement was subject to another interpretation why did none of the numerous witnesses in the early church after Irenaeus ever raise this issue? How could it be "grammatically ambiguous and easily susceptible to a most reasonable reinterpretation," as Gentry claims, if no one in the early church interpreted it that way or even raised a question about it? Evidently, it was not quite so easy as Gentry claims to arrive at this reinterpretation.

— Mark Hitchcock, *A Defense of the Domitianic Date of the Book of Revelation*. Dissertation for Dallas Theological Seminary, (December 2005), 24-28.

"The first person to suggest the re-interpretation of Irenaeus' words was Johann Jakob Wettstein in 1752. Wettstein re-interpreted Irenaeus' statement as a reference to when the apostle John was seen rather than the Apocalypse. But there are two serious problems with Wettstein's re-interpretation of the words of Irenaeus. First, it occurred almost 1600 years after the fact. None of the early witnesses in the church, whose natural language was Greek, ever questioned the interpretation that Irenaeus referred to a Domitianic date for Revelation. The first mention of an alleged translational ambiguity came almost 1600 years after the fact by Wettstein. Second, Wettstein was an early preterist whose eschatological scheme could make him predisposed to arrive at this conclusion. Wettstein's preterist interpretation would have been aided greatly by re-interpreting Irenaeus' words and eliminating his statement in support of the Domitianic date. Any new interpretation that is too far removed from the original text or too self-serving for its innovator should be received with caution. While neither of these arguments necessarily prove that Wettstein's re-interpretation was mistaken, they do cast a shadow over his conclusion that renders it highly improbable at best. From the historical perspective, the issue involving the re-interpretation of Irenaeus' statement can be reduced to one simple question. Is it more sensible to accept the interpretation and translation by numerous early witnesses, whose natural language was Greek, and who lived within two hundred years of Irenaeus' statement and all the standard modern translations of Eusebius, or to adopt the re-interpretation by a scholar, whose native tongue was not Greek, almost 1600 years after the fact whose theological position is greatly aided by that re-interpretation? The answer is clear. The settled, traditional interpretation of Irenaeus should stand."

— Mark Hitchcock, *A Defense of the Domitianic Date of the Book of Revelation*. Dissertation for Dallas Theological Seminary, (December 2005), 28.

"In the preceding clause the object of sight is the revelation. When the same verb follows in the succeeding clause and is changed from the active to the passive, the only natural subject is the object of the clause preceding."

— Arthur S. Peake, *The Revelation of John* (London: Holborn Publishing House, 1919), 73.

"Further, the passive verb ἐώραθη, 'he/she/it was seen,' does not appear to be the most appropriate way to describe the length of a person's life; it is much more likely that ἐώραθη means 'it [ie, 'the Apocalypse'] was seen,' referring to the time when the Apocalypse was seen 'by John on Patmos.'

— David E. Aune, *Revelation 1-5. Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. Ralph P. Martin, vol. 52 (Dallas: Word Books, 1997), lix.

"The translation has been disputed by a number of scholars, on the ground that it means that he (John) was seen; but this is very dubious. One must assume that Irenaeus believed the Apocalypse to have come from c. 95."

— John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 221.

"I cannot think that any other Nominative than ἀποκάλυψις can be fairly supplied here. So, most of the ancients clearly understood the matter; and we may well acquiesce in their judgment, for it is supported by the obvious principles of interpretation."

— Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse* (Edinburgh: MacLachlan, Stewart, & Company, 1847), 218.

"It is a sufficient answer to all these forced interpretations, that the early church always understood the words of Irenaeus in their plain and obvious meaning, nor would any other have been suggested if his testimony had not been a stumbling-block in the way of modern exposition. That Irenaeus refers the Apocalypse to the reign of Domitian is generally admitted by scholars of all shades of opinion."

— J. Ritchie Smith, *The Date of the Apocalypse*, *BSac* 45 (1888): 299.

"It is unnecessary to say more. There need be no hesitation in asserting that in regard to few facts of early Christian antiquity have we a statement more positively or clearly given than that of Irenaeus, that the Seer beheld the visions of his book at the end of Domitian's reign, that is, about AD 96."

— William Milligan, *Discussions*, 79.

■ Clement of Alexandria (ca. 155-220)

"First, Clement references to "true account of John the apostle that has been handed down and preserved in memory." He is clearly referring to some well-known tradition in the church. The only extant tradition that had been handed down and preserved at that time was the Domitianic tradition. Had Clement intended someone other than Domitian he no doubt

would have named that person specifically in light of the established Hegesippian- Irenaean tradition of John's banishment under Domitian. Clement's reference to "the tyrant" without any further designation implies that there was a generally known tradition concerning the identity of this Roman emperor. Since the Hegesippian-Irenaean tradition is apparently the only tradition that existed at that time, one can logically conclude that Clement's designation "the tyrant" without any further description points to Domitian."

— Mark Hitchcock, A Defense of the Domitianic Date of the Book of Revelation. Dissertation for Dallas Theological Seminary, (December 2005), 43.

"And that you may be still more confident, that repenting thus truly there remains for you a sure hope of salvation, listen to a tale, which is not a tale but a narrative, handed down and committed to the custody of memory, about the Apostle John. For when, on the tyrant's death, he returned to Ephesus from the isle of Patmos, he went away, being invited, to the contiguous territories of the nations, here to appoint bishops, there to set in order whole Churches, there to ordain such as were marked out by the Spirit."

— Clement, Who is the Rich Man that shall be Saved, XLII.

"The "tyrant" is likely Domitian rather than Nero because Eusebius cites Clement with Irenaeus as a witness to the Domitian exile."

— Website Reference: <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/revelation/introduction/early-testimony.html#7909E>

■ Tertullian (ca. 150-212)

"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."

— Website Reference: <https://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/revelation/introduction/early-testimony.html#7909E>

■ Dio Cassius (ca. 155-235)

"While Dio does not specifically mention John's banishment during the reign of Domitian he does refer three times to Domitian's practice of banishment. Dio even notes the release of exiles immediately after Domitian's death. This secular testimony solidly corroborates the ecclesiastical tradition of John's banishment under Domitian and liberation when Domitian died."

— Mark Hitchcock, A Defense of the Domitianic Date of the Book of Revelation. Dissertation for Dallas Theological Seminary. December 2005. 33.

■ Victorinus (d. A.D. 304)

"He says this, because when John said these things he was in the island of Patmos, condemned to the labour of the mines by Cæsar 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."

— Victorinus, Commentary on the Apocalypse, 10.11.

"The time must be understood in which the written Apocalypse was published, since then reigned Cæsar Domitian; but before him had been Titus his brother, and Vespasian, Otho, Vitellius, and Galba. These are the five who have fallen. One remains, under whom the Apocalypse was written — Domitian, to wit. The other has not yet come, speaks of Nerva; and when he has come, he will be for a short time, for he did not complete the period of two years."

— Victorinus, Commentary on the Apocalypse, 17.10.

■ Eusebius (ca. 260-340)

"It is said that in this persecution [under Domitian] the apostle and evangelist John, who was still alive, was condemned to dwell on the island of Patmos in consequence of his testimony to the divine word. Irenaeus, in the fifth book of his work Against Heresies, where he discusses the number of the name of Antichrist which is given in the so-called Apocalypse of John, speaks as follows concerning him: 'If it were necessary for his name to be proclaimed openly at the present time, it would have been declared by him who saw the Revelation. For it was seen not long ago, but almost in our own generation, at the end of the reign of Domitian.' To such a degree, indeed, did the teaching of our faith flourish at that time that even those writers who were far from our religion did not hesitate to mention in their histories the persecution and the martyrdoms which took place during it. And they, indeed, accurately indicated the time. For they recorded that in the fifteenth year of Domitian Flavia Domitilla, daughter of a sister of Flavius Clement, who at that time was one of the consuls of Rome, was exiled with many others to the island of Pontia in consequence of testimony borne to Christ."

— Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 3:18.1-5.

"Upon hearing this, Domitian did not pass judgment against them, but, despising them as of no account, he let them go, and by a decree put a stop to the persecution of the Church. But when they were released, they ruled the churches because they were witnesses and were also relatives of the Lord. And peace being established, they lived until the time of Trajan. These things are related by Hegesippus. Tertullian also has mentioned Domitian in the following words: Domitian also, who possessed a share of Nero's cruelty, attempted once to do the same thing that the latter did. But because he had, I suppose, some intelligence, he very soon ceased, and even recalled those whom he had banished. But after Domitian had reigned fifteen years, and Nerva had 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 at Ephesus, according to an ancient Christian tradition."

— Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 3:20.7-11.

[Eusebius Quoting Tertullian] "Domitian also, who possessed a share of Nero's cruelty, attempted once to do the same thing that the latter did. But because he had, I suppose, some intelligence, he very soon ceased, and even recalled those whom he had banished."

— Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 3:20.9.

[Eusebius Quoting Irenaeus] "We are not bold enough to speak confidently of the name of Antichrist. For if it were necessary that his name should be declared clearly at the present time, it would have been announced by him who saw the revelation. For it was seen, not long ago, but almost in our generation, toward the end of the reign of Domitian."

— Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 5:8.6.

[Eusebius next statement after quoting Irenaeus] "He states these things concerning the Apocalypse in the work referred to. He also mentions the first Epistle of John, taking many proofs from it, and likewise the first Epistle of Peter."

— Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, 5:8.7.

■ Jerome (ca. 331-420)

"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. But Domitian having been put to death and his acts, on account of his excessive cruelty, having been annulled by the senate, he returned to Ephesus under Pertinax and continuing there until the time of the Emperor Trajan, founded and built churches throughout all Asia, and, worn out by old age, died in the sixty-eighth year after our Lord's passion and was buried near the same city."

— Jerome, Lives of Illustrious Men, 9.

"An Apostle, because he wrote to the Churches as a master; an Evangelist, because he composed a Gospel, a thing which no other of the Apostles, excepting Matthew, did; 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 the boundless mysteries of the future."

— Jerome, Against Jovinianus, 1.26.

■ Sulpicius Severus (ca. 400)

"Then, after an interval, Domitian, the son of Vespasian, persecuted the Christians. At this time, he banished John the Apostle and Evangelist to the island of Patmos. There he, secret mysteries having been revealed to him, wrote and published his book of the holy Revelation, which indeed is either foolishly or impiously not accepted by many."

— Sulpicius Severus, *Sacred History*, 2.31.

■ Paulus Orosius (early 5th century)

"In the eight hundred and thirtieth year after the founding of the City, Domitian, the ninth emperor after Augustus, succeeded his brother, Titus, to the throne But Domitian, elated by the most distorted form of vanity, held a triumph nominally over the enemy who had been overcome, but actually over the loss of his legions. This same emperor, crazed by his pride because of which he wished to be worshiped as a god, was the first emperor after Nero to order a persecution against the Christians to be carried on. Also, at this time, the most blessed Apostle John was banished to the island of Patmos. Also among the Jews, an order was given that the race of David be searched out and killed by cruel tortures and bloody inquisitions, since the holy prophets were both hated and believed, as if some day there would be One from the seed of David who could acquire the throne."

— Paulus Orosius, *The Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, 7.10.

■ The Acts of John (ca. 650)

"And the fame of the teaching of John was spread abroad in Rome; and it came to the ears of Domitian that there was a certain Hebrew in Ephesus, John by name, who spread a report about the seat of empire [sic] of the Romans, saying that it would quickly be rooted out, and that the kingdom of the Romans would be given over to another. And Domitian, troubled by what was said, sent a centurion with soldiers to seize John, and bring him.... And Domitian, astonished at all the wonders, sent him away to an island, appointing for him a set time. And straightway John sailed to Patmos, where also he was deemed worthy to see the revelation of the end. And when Domitian was dead, Nerva succeeded to the kingdom, and recalled all who had been banished ..."

— Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. 8 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1867-72; reprint, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1951), 560-562.

■ Venerable Bede (ca. 672-735)

"And it is told in church history how he was put by the emperor Domitian into a tub of boiling oil, from which, since divine grace shielded him, he came out untouched, just as he had been a stranger to the corruption of fleshly concupiscence. And not much after, on account of his unconquerable constancy in bringing the good news, he was banished in exile by the same prince to the island of Patmos, where although he was deprived of human comfort, he nevertheless merited to be relieved by the frequent consolation of the divine vision and spoken message. Accordingly, in that very place he composed with his own hand the *Apocalypse*, which the Lord revealed to him concerning the present and future state of the Church."

— Bede the Venerable, *Homilies on the Gospels*, trans. Lawrence T. Martin and David Hurst, Cistercian Studies Series: no. 110 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 89-90.



■ INTERNAL EVIDENCE FOR THE DOMITIAN DATING:

1. EPHESUS LOST ITS FIRST LOVE

Ephesus was founded in the latter part of Claudius' reign. When Paul writes to them in approx. 61AD, he tells them of their great love. How is it that they've suddenly lost their love in approx. 3 years if the Neronic dating is valid?

Ephesians 1:15 NASB

For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints

Revelation 2:4 NASB

But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

Not enough time developed for them to lose their first love, which is why the Domitian dating explains the estimated period of time for them to lose their first love by the Domitian period.

"The spiritual decline of the 7 churches (chaps. 2,3) also argues for the later date. Those churches were strong and spiritually healthy in the mid-60s, when Paul last ministered in Asia Minor. The brief time between Paul's ministry there and the end of Nero's reign was too short for such a decline to have occurred"

— John MacArthur, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. Website: <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB66/the-revelation-of-jesus-christ>

2. LAODICEA IS RICH

John says that Laodicea is rich, yet that's impossible if they suffered a horrible earthquake in 60AD. Laodicea needed about 30 years before they would begin to see wealth again, which fits with the Domitian dating.

Revelation 3:17-18 NASB

Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, [18] I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see.

"Then consider this fact. The church at Laodicea is represented as existing under conditions of great wealth. She was rich and had need of nothing (3:17). In A.D. 60, though, Laodicea had been almost entirely destroyed by an earthquake. Surely it would have required more than eight or nine years for that city to have risen again to the state of affluence described in Revelation."

— Wayne Jackson, When Was the Book of Revelation Written? Website:

<https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1552-when-was-the-book-of-revelation-written>

"How could John dwell on the prosperity of the church in Laodicea when the city had been completely destroyed by an earthquake only five years earlier? Gentry responds to this problem by suggesting that Laodicea's wealth was spiritual and not material, by supposing the possibility of a quick rebuilding, and by theorizing that the earthquake did not impact the sector of the city where the Christians were. A careful exegesis of 3:17, however, shows that Christians in the city thought their material prosperity was equivalent to spiritual prosperity, not that they were spiritually rich while materially poor. The possibility of a quick rebuilding contradicts the facts. The rebuilding effort was still in progress as late as 79 when a gymnasium that was part of the rebuilding effort was completed."

— Robert L. Thomas, Theonomy and the Dating of Revelation, TMSJ 5/2 (Fall 1994) 198.

"Additionally, Rev 3:17 describes the church as rich and flourishing economically, yet a catastrophic earthquake shook the Lycus Valley in AD 60 or 61. In a primitive time when construction was long and tedious, it is unlikely that the people in Laodicea would have been experiencing a strong economy only five years after a massive earthquake."

— Christopher Scott, The Date of the Book of Revelation, Website: <http://christopherscottblog.com/date-book-revelation/>

3. SMYRNA DIDN'T EXIST IN 60-64AD

How is it possible that John is writing to a church that didn't even exist at that time? Again, the evidence leads to the conclusion Smyrna had been around for some time.

"Polycarp—writing in AD 110—states that Smyrnaeans weren't believers during the time of Paul."

— James M. Rochford, Why is the dating of Revelation important? Website: <http://www.evidenceunseen.com/bible-difficulties-2/nt-difficulties/jude/date-of-revelation/>

"Regarding the church of Smyrna, this church did not even exist during the ministry of Paul (who likely died in AD 65-68)."

— Christopher Scott, The Date of the Book of Revelation, Website: <http://christopherscottblog.com/date-book-revelation/>

4. JOHN WASN'T IN ASIA UNTIL MIDDLE TO LATE 60's

Another impossible timeframe within the Neronic period is the arrival of John to Asia. How could he have been banished by Nero in 64AD, when he wasn't even there until the late 60's? How could he have been establishing connections in the Asian churches in this time frame?

"When did John arrive in Asia? According to the best tradition, John was part of a migration of Christians from Palestine to the province of Asia just before the outbreak of the Jewish rebellion in A.D. 66, so he did not arrive there before the late sixties. A Neronic dating of the book would hardly have allowed time for him to settle in Asia, replace Paul as the respected leader of the Asian churches, and be exiled to Patmos before Nero's death in 68. Gentry does not respond to this problem, but his dating of the book in 65 or 66 renders its apostolic authorship impossible."

— Robert L. Thomas, Theonomy and the Dating of Revelation, TMSJ 5/2 (Fall 1994), 199.

5. NERO WASN'T KNOWN FOR EXILING, DOMITIAN WAS.

"It is well known that Domitian had a fondness for this type of persecution. If, however, this persecution is dated in the time of Nero, how does one account for the fact that Peter and Paul are murdered, yet John is only exiled to an island? (Eusebius III.18; II.25)."

— Wayne Jackson, When Was the Book of Revelation Written? Website: <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1552-when-was-the-book-of-revelation-written>

"First, church history records Peter and Paul being executed in Rome near the end of Nero's reign. Why would Nero execute Peter and Paul for being Christians only to banish John to an island? Second, Nero did not exile people nearly as often as Domitian. Domitian was known for banishing Christians while Nero was known for killing them. Third, nowhere in history is there a record that says Nero banished Christians. The only punishment known by Nero for Christians was death."

— Christopher Scott, The Date of the Book of Revelation, Website: <http://christopherscottblog.com/date-book-revelation/>

6. JOHN'S WORK WOULD HAVE OVERLAPPED WITH TIMOTHY AND PAUL.

"If the early date is true, then John would have been leading in Ephesus at the same time as Paul and Timothy. Why would Paul leave Timothy in charge of this church, if the apostle John was there? Moreover, at the end of 2 Timothy, Paul mentions 17 coworkers by name, but John isn't mentioned! Why wouldn't he mention John? Why wouldn't John mention Paul or Timothy in his writing to the church of Ephesus (Rev. 2:1-7)."

— James M. Rochford, Why is the dating of Revelation important? Website: <http://www.evidenceunseen.com/bible-difficulties-2/nt-difficulties/jude/date-of-revelation/>