

Revelation

ILLUSTRATED

The word 'Revelation' is rendered in a highly stylized, gothic-inspired font. The letters are three-dimensional and have a metallic, golden-yellow finish with a gradient of red and orange, giving them a glowing, fiery appearance. The letters are set against a dark, textured background. Below the main word, the word 'ILLUSTRATED' is written in a bold, red, sans-serif font on a golden ribbon that curls and flows across the bottom of the main text.

Artwork by Pat Marvenko Smith ©1982, 1992
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The Dragon . . . Satan



The First Beast... Roman Empire



Revelation 13: 1-8

The Second Beast . . . Emperor Worship



Revelation 13: 11-15

The Prostitute . . . Rome



The View that Best Fits Revelation is:

The Roman Empire will Persecute
Christians and God Will Eventually Bring it
to Defeat



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Period of Roman Persecution

The period being considered starts with the first distinct Roman persecution of Christians in 64 AD, by the emperor Nero, and closes with the implementation of the 'Edict of Milan' in 313 CE., signed by Constantine and Licinius.

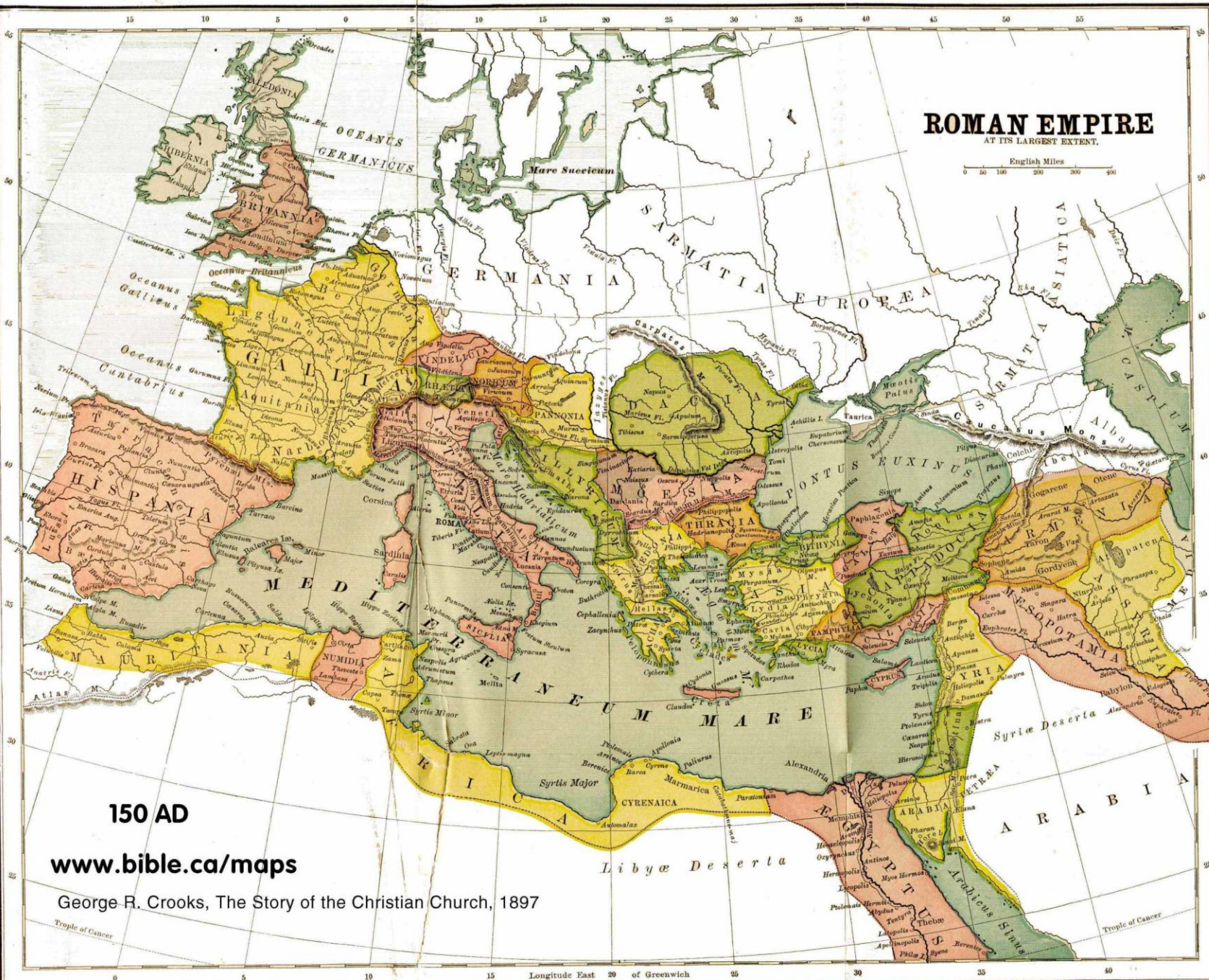
The Condition of the Roman Empire

- Book of Revelation puts the Christian Church in conflict with the Roman State
- Rome was at her zenith during the first century
- Rome's boundaries extended from the British Isles to the African desert and from the Atlantic Ocean to the Euphrates

ROMAN EMPIRE

AT ITS LARGEST EXTENT.

English Miles
0 50 100 200 300 400



150 AD

www.bible.ca/maps

George R. Crooks, The Story of the Christian Church, 1897

The Condition of the Roman Empire

1. Revelation 17:1 Describes Rome

- Harlot
- Sets upon many waters

2. What do the waters symbolize?

- Revelation 17:15
- People, multitudes, nations, tongues

3. Rome ruled over many people and nations

- To the people of that time, Rome represented the world.

The Condition of the Roman Empire

- **Rome was built on two things:**

- 1. **Conquest**

- Rome was held together by large, well trained and well supplied armies.

- 2. **Commerce**

- The system of highways made trade possible throughout the empire
 - Revelation 18: 11-14 mentions over 30 articles of trade

Periods of Persecution under Roman Rule

1. Nero (64-68)

- Begin first period of persecution.
- Traditional martyrdoms of Peter and Paul
- “... for several generations after Nero there was no special or anti-Christian legislation, but what Nero had done was always remembered and served to confirm the opposition to Christians. As a result the conviction rose that it was illegal to be a Christian.”

Periods of Persecution under Roman Rule

NERO cont.

“First those who confessed to being Christians were arrested. Then, on information obtained from them, hundreds were convicted for their anti-social beliefs. In their deaths they were made a mockery. They were covered in the skins of wild animals, torn to death by dogs, crucified or set on fire—so that when darkness fell they burned like torches in the night. Nero opened up his own gardens for this spectacle and gave a show in the arena, where he mixed with the crowd, or stood dressed as a charioteer on a chariot.”

Tim Dowley, *A Lion Handbook: The History of Christianity*



An unidentified man peers into a recently unearthed brick structure [Sept. 2009] incorporating a 4-meter-diameter pillar, seen in the background, discovered during maintenance work in the Roman Forum. Archaeologists believe the structure supported a rotating dining room imitating the Earth's movement and used by Roman Emperor Nero to impress his guests in his Golden Palace.

Periods of Persecution under Roman Rule

2. Domitian (81-96).

- Little is know about the reign of Domitian.
- Popular coin circulating during reign of Domitian depicted Rome as a beautiful woman luxuriously arrayed woman.
- After Domitian's Death, John was allowed to return to Ephesus in the year AD 97. He remained there until the reign of Trajan, governing the churches in Asia and writing his gospel until he died at about the age of one hundred."

Periods of Persecution under Roman Rule

3. Trajan (98-117).

- Did not seek out Christians to persecute.
- Considered a praiseworthy emperor.
- Enter: Pliny, governor of Bithynia.
- Despised Christians
- Persecuted Christians without the knowledge of Trajan.
- Thought singing hymns to Christ was a depraved and immoderate superstition.

Periods of Persecution under Roman Rule

3. Trajan (98-117).

- Rapid growth of Christianity had caused Pliny concern.
- Pliny wrote to Trajan *“that this superstition was constantly spreading, not only in the cities, but also in the villages of Asia Minor, and captivated people of every age, rank, and sex, so that the temple were almost forsaken, and the sacrificial victims found no sale.”*
- Trajan responded positively.
- Many Christians put to death by Pliny.
- AD 107 Trajan visits Antioch threatening to persecute those who refused to offer sacrifice to Roman gods.

Periods of Persecution under Roman Rule

4. **Marcus Aurelius (161-180).**

- Considered Christianity “as an absurd and fanatical superstition.
- Well educated philosopher.
- Anti-Christian literature flourished during his reign.
- Persecution of Christians widespread throughout the empire.
- Martyrdom of Polycarp: bishop of Smyrna, a disciple of the apostle John.
- Christianity flourished during his reign

Periods of Persecution under Roman Rule

5. **Septimus Severus (193-211).**

- In the beginning of his reign, the Christians had several years of rest where they could worship the Lord freely.
- In AD 204 Severus changed. The emperor enacted rigid laws against Christianity.
- “Many martyrs are daily burned, confined or beheaded, before our eyes,” in the reign of Severus.
Clement of Alexander
- Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicity.
- Christianity flourished during his reign.

Periods of Persecution under Roman Rule

6. Maximinus (235-238).

- The church was free from persecution for more than six years prior to his reign.
- Christians forced to worship idols or false gods.
 - Whosoever confessed as a Christian, would be imprisoned and put to death.
- Christianity flourished during his reign.

Periods of Persecution under Roman Rule

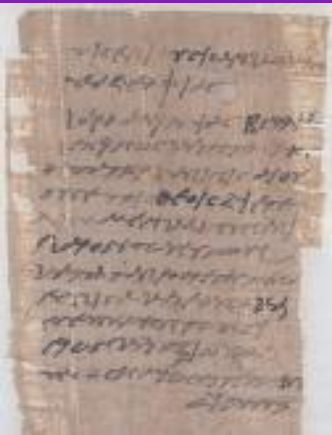
7. Decius (249-251).

- Begin second period of persecution.
- After Decius came to throne, persecution started in AD 249.
- Martyrdoms of bishops of Rome, Jerusalem and Antioch.
- Christian church has grown significantly in the previous period.
- Christians are actively sought out by requiring public sacrifice.
 - Could buy certificates (*libellus*) instead of sacrificing.

Periods of Persecution under Roman Rule

7. Decius (249-251) cont.

- In January of 250, Decius issued an edict requiring all citizens to sacrifice to the emperor in the presence of a Roman official and obtain a certificate



“From Aurelia Charis of the Egyptian village of Theadelphia. I have always continued to sacrifice and show reverence to the gods, and now, in your presence, I have poured a libation and sacrificed and eaten some of the sacrificial meat. I request you to certify this for me below.”

Periods of Persecution under Roman Rule



8. Valerian (253-260).

- Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 263–339)
“Both phases of Valerian’s rule are astonishing, the first being especially remarkable in character: he was so wonderfully friendly and gentle to the people of God. Not one of the emperors before him – not even those who were supposed to have been avowed Christians – was so kindly and sympathetic in his attitude to them as was Valerian at first, when he received them publicly with all friendship and affection and filled his whole palace with god fearing people, making it a church of God.”
- Martyrdoms of Cyprian of Carthage and Sixtus II of Rome.

Periods of Persecution under Roman Rule



8. Valerian (253-260) cont.

- Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 263–339)
“What a change when he was induced to get rid of them by the teacher and guild-leader of the magicians from Egypt, who urged him to kill or persecute pure and saintly men as rivals who hindered his own foul, disgusting incantations! ... They also induced him to perform devilish rites, loathsome tricks, and unholy sacrifices, to cut the throats of unfortunate boys, use the children of unhappy parents as sacrificial victims, and tear out the vitals of newborn babies, cutting up and mincing God’s handiwork, as if these things would bring them happiness.”

Periods of Persecution under Roman Rule

9. Aurelian (270–275).

- Initially concerned for the plight of the Christians.
- Gave in to the pressure of his advisors and persecution once again spread throughout the empire.

Periods of Persecution under Roman Rule

10. Diocletian (284-305).

- The most severe persecution of Christians.
- Antioch was Diocletian's primary residence from 299 to 302
- Wife Prisca, his daughter Valeria, court officials were Christians or were favourable to Christianity.
- First 19 years of reign were without major or widespread persecution.
 - 303AD appointed Galerius to be Caesar.
- “In 303 Diocletian issued in rapid succession three edicts, each more severe than its predecessor. Maximian issued the fourth, the worst of all, April 30, 304. Christian churches were to be destroyed; all copies of the Bible were to be burned; all Christians were to be deprived of public office and civil rights; and at last all, without exception, were to sacrifice to the gods upon pain of death.”

Periods of Persecution under Roman Rule

10. Diocletian (284-305) cont.

- “... In addition to these decrees, he commanded that “no one to approach him except on bended knees, and with the forehead touching the ground, while he was seated on the throne in rich vestments from the far East.” This was the starting of the practice as the Pope requires today.

Philip Schaff, *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*

The End

'edict of Christian tolerance or Edict of Milan' in 313 CE., signed by Constantine and Licinius