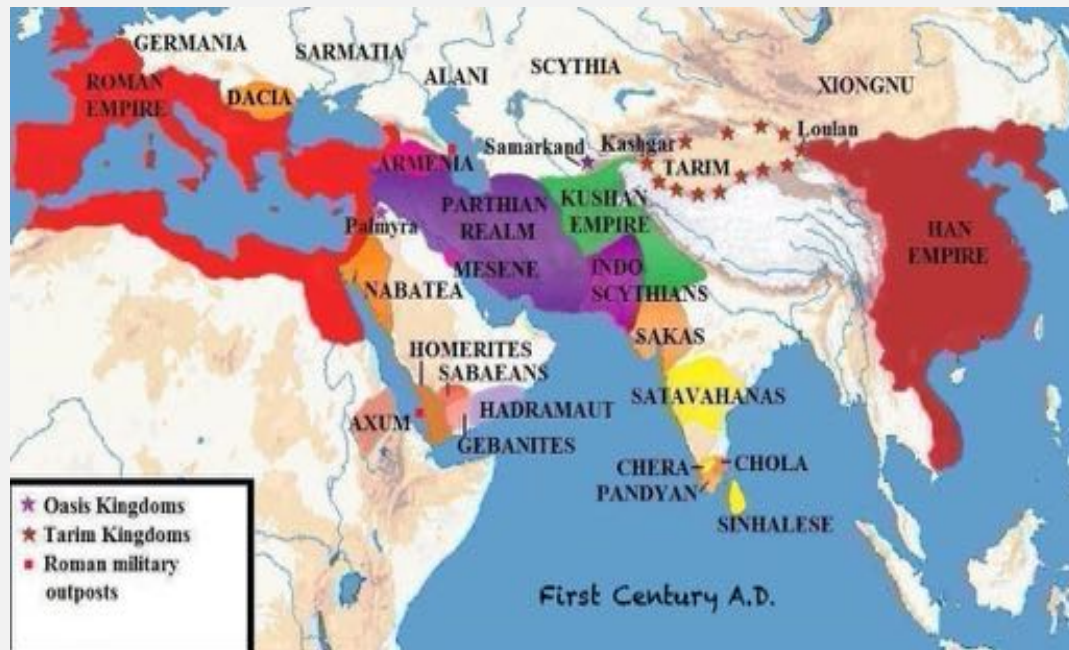


# REVELATION 01 - HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Dr. Leon L. Sanders  
Revelation

# FIRST CENTURY: GEOGRAPHICAL – POLITICAL REALMS

WORLD EMPIRES



ROMAN EMPIRE



# REVELATION: SEVEN CHURCHES

- Relationship of Geographical locations in Revelation (Re 1-3)
- John imprisoned on penal island of Patmos near Ephesus
- Seven Churches form circular route
- John's Church letters follow this route; unclear if entire book distributed at this time
- John, like Paul, based out of Ephesus: Jerusalem destroyed



## THREE SCHISMS: SIGNIFICANT BACKGROUND THEMES

- God does not work, nor did John write in a religious-political vacuum; dynamic changes were incorporated into people's worldviews, esp. Greco-Romans
  - Modern notion that religious and political and social forces were distinctly separate or compartmentalized from each other would be incoherent to ancient peoples
  - Bible phrase, *fullness of time* emphasizes that God brought **all** human history to this point: Christ to die and have His Gospel spread to all peoples (Ga 4:1-5)
- These three significant schisms form the backdrop to John's writing in addition to the Hebrew Bible {Old Testament} (Re 4-20)
  - John {Christ} wrote so people could understand the imagery and message; it eludes readers who interpret this book divorced from these influences (Hab 2:2-3; 1Pe 1:10-12; 2Pe 3:14-18)

## FIRST SCHISM: CHANGE IN ROMAN DYNASTIES

- Julio-Claudian dynasty formed the political backdrop of the Gospels and Acts influencing even the birthplace of Christ prophesized in Old Testament (Mic 5:2)
  - Augustus' tax edict brought Mary to Bethlehem to birth Jesus (Lk 2:1-7)
  - Nero *forced* to commit suicide; replaced by a new dynasty: Flavian
- Vespasianus was not from a Roman noble line, but he was a successful military leader proving political success follows military success; same today
  - His succession brought peace after a civil war {Four Emperors}; it changed the character of the Empire just as Caesar changed the Republic to an Empire
  - This appearance of *weakness* embolden Palestinian Jews to revolt; met with force by future emperor: Titus who finished the work begun by Vespasianus

## SECOND SCHISM: JERUSALEM AND TEMPLE DESTROYED

- Roman Empire encouraged peace through economic trade that extended as far as modern China {Marco Polo (Later Medieval) late comer opening China}
- Jews, subservient to Gentile powers since returning from Babylon Captivity, rebelled to form independent theocracy; misread Rome's and God's will (1Sa 15:23)
  - Jerusalem center of Judaism: Temple; all sacrifices had to be performed at Tabernacle-Temple (De 12:5-14)
  - Titus A.D. 70 destroyed the Temple-Jerusalem returning Jews to limbo, nowhere to offer their sacrifices; thus, no Sadducees as no need for priesthood
  - Elevated Pharisaical sect synagogue-system as during Babylon Captivity; only Judaism form existing today though in various sects and began decline of Jewish Christians

## THIRD SCHISM: CHRISTIAN CHURCH'S SEPARATION

- Acts details not only the rise of Christianity and spread of the Gospel but also the inclusion of Gentiles who gain ascendancy over the Jews in the Church
  - Nearly from its beginnings Jewish Christians wanted to continue Jewish practices and force Gentiles to adopt same; as second-class believers (Ac 6:1-6)
  - Jerusalem Council rejected this as God showed through Peter (Ac 10:9-48; 15:1-35)
  - Paul warned Gentiles not to be prideful of *replacing* Jews but learn humility since God could, would, graft *True Jews* into *New Covenant* {Millennial Kingdom} (Je 31:31-34; Ro 11:11-36)
  - Clement, Bishop of Rome (95 A.D.) begins propaganda of Rome as The Church of Christ through Peter to him and then other recognized churches {Roman Catholic}

# NATURAL DISASTERS: NATURE APPEARS BE AGAINST MAN

- Nature linked to Man's Evilness, even by Pagans {Shakespeare's *The Tempest*}
- Mount Vesuvius erupts (79 A.D.) {Naples} on a scale unknown since Bronze Age: Thera and Santorini Eruptions destroyed Minoan and Mycenaean, early proto-Greek cultures
- Rome is nearly destroyed by days of fire (64; 80 A.D.)
- Pestilence erupts even resulting in the death of Emperor Titus (81 A.D.)
- Wars along the borders continue unabated and though seemingly victorious, these incessant wars force fundamental changes that *weaken* the Western Empire
- Famines, poverty and riots are common events; esp. in Rome which passes serfdom policies as farmers leave their land seeking *bread* in Rome {failure of early central price-wage controls}; continues until Industrial Revolution begins eradicating poverty: Socialism resurgence of Centralized Control reemerges and continues today



## UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES: MODERNITY BASED ON THE PAST (DA 2)

- World events not independent of spiritual forces but result of these forces
- Pax Roma existed through military force causing corruption, coercion and weakness at all levels; early *socialism* fostered very wealthy upper ruling class and an expanding lower poverty class dependent on the state {Socialism}
- Jews rejected Jesus and extended this to Christians even to today in Talmud
- Christians, esp. post-Apostolic writers, vilified Jews building barriers resulting in modern Gentile-Jewish conflicts: Fiscal and Physical
- Christians formed monolithic religious-political denominations to gain political power: RCC-Medieval; Protestantism-Nation-states and Scientism-Globalization

# BATTLE IS SPIRITUAL: BEYOND SCIENCE

- We battle **not** against people but against spiritual forces that cannot be discerned apart from the Bible (Ep 6:10-12)
  - Bible only absolute Truth showing spiritual warfare (2Ti 3:16-17; 2Pe 1:20-21)
  - Bible revealed to believers by the Holy Spirit based on work of Christ as Creator and author of salvation (1Co 2:14; Col 1:15-20; He 1:1-2)
- Science is a method to grasp some details about empirical creation by sinful people to bring order out of nature's chaos (Ge 1:28-30; Ro 8:19-22)
  - Science deals in theories via measurements; not absolute Truth (He 11:3)
- Revelation shows Believers spiritual influences working in the physical realm

# REVELATION ANSWERS QUESTION: CHRIST'S RETURN

- Christ promised to return but did not give a time (Mt 24:36-39)
  - When Christ ascended, two angels told Apostles He would return as He left (Ac 1:9-11)
- However, by mid first-century people **doubted** He would return; if He lied on **any** point, He was not a prophet; i.e., not Messiah (De 13:1-5; 18:20-22)
  - Jude addressed the acceptance of False Teachers who sow disbelief among *weak* believers that Christ had not, would not, returned {Amillennialism} (2Pe 3:3-13; Jude)
- Revelation addresses this concern showing Christ will return as He said (Re 19)
  - How can one know Revelation is true? It's spiritual and future; untestable by Science

# VALIDATION: VERIFIABLE VALIDATES SPIRITUAL

- Bible shows its veracity in the spiritual by empirical-historical revealed Truth (Jn 14:8-11)
  - Revelation opens revealing Christ as High Priest of all Believers (He 5:5-10; Re 1)
  - Letters to the Seven Churches verify Truth of John's vision: Church history has shown these revelations to be true (Re 2-3)
  - Revelation concludes the Old Testament; esp. building on Daniel's visions (Da 2; 7; Re 4-19)
  - Revelation concludes this Creation in victory which is never in doubt (Re 20)
  - Finally, Revelation glimpses the final Creation for both Saved and Lost (Re 21-22)
- Revelation is God's *merciful* warning to the Lost to be saved while encouraging Saved to grow in maturity: Both will be held accountable based on the Bible (Lk 16:22-31; 2Co 5:10)