

### 1<sup>st</sup> Seal

We'd expect a time-period of general Roman peace in which allowed for ecclesias to be established, however with a certain level of pressure and persecution to ensure the gospel did spread.

- AD 68: Death of Nero by suicide, sets Rome on fire. Plunged Rome into a year of civil war.
- Flavian Dynasty
  - AD 69 – 79: Vespasian. Vespasian served in the military in Thrace. Given the throne during the year of the four emperors. He was proclaimed ruler by the armies. Vespasian helped rebuild Rome after the civil war. He added the temple of Peace. He also began construction of the Colosseum, using funds from the spoils of the Jewish Temple after the Siege of Jerusalem.
  - AD 79 - 81: Titus. Titus gained renown as a military commander. In 70, he besieged and captured Jerusalem, and destroyed the city and the Second Temple. Died of a fever.
  - AD 81 – 96: Domitian. Strengthened the economy by revaluing the Roman coinage, expanded the border defenses of the Empire, and initiated a massive building program to restore the damaged city of Rome. A ruthless but efficient autocrat whose cultural, economic, and political program provided the foundation of the peaceful 2nd century. Assassinated by court officials.
- Nerva – Antonine Dynasty
  - AD 98 – 117: Trajan. Remembered as a successful soldier-emperor who presided over the greatest military expansion in Roman history, leading the empire to attain its maximum territorial extent by the time of his death. He is also known for his philanthropic rule, overseeing extensive public building programs, and implementing social welfare policies, which earned him his enduring reputation as the second of the Five Good Emperors who presided over an era of peace and prosperity in the Mediterranean world.
  - AD 117 – 138: Hadrian. Remembered as one of the Five Good Emperors.
  - AD 138 – 161: Antonine. One of the Five Good Emperors. Unique among emperors in that he dealt with these crises without leaving Italy once during his reign.
  - AD 161 – 180: Marcus Aurelius. One of the Five Good Emperors.
  - AD 180 – 192: Commodus. Assassinated.

“If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus. The vast extent of the Roman Empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom. The armies were restrained by the firm but gentle hand of four successive emperors, whose characters and authority commanded respect. The forms of the civil administration were carefully preserved by Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian and the Antonines, who delighted in the image of liberty, and were pleased with considering themselves as the accountable ministers of the laws. Such princes deserved the honour of restoring the republic, had the Romans of their days been capable of enjoying a rational freedom.” Gibbon

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Seal

We'd expect a time-period that denotes incredible instability and hostility to oneself. Specifically, the Roman empire imploding on itself.

## Revealing Revelation

- AD 192 – 235
- Year of the Five Emperors.
  - Assassinations. The praetorian guards auctioned off the imperial position.
  - Julianus immediately devalued the Roman currency.
  - Severus ordered the execution of a large number of Senators.
  - Brothers Geta and Caraculla. Geta is murdered. Assassinated by his own guard.
- Severan Dynasty
  - The name Elagabalus is branded in history above all others" because of his "unspeakably disgusting life." Assassinated.
  - Severus Alexander. Upon his accession he reduced the silver purity of the denarius. Assassinated.

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Seal

We'd expect then a time-period after the prior seal, where the economic and environmental crisis overtake the world. The price of common bread increases for a couple key reasons, shortage of food, or collapse of the value of money. With the fact the wine and oil were not impacted, it indicates an economic crisis influenced by different reasons.

- AD 222 – 238: Severus Alexander, Maximinus Thrax. Considered to mark the beginning of the Crisis of the Third Century.
- Period in which the Roman Empire nearly collapsed under the combined pressures of invasion, civil war, plague, and economic depression.
- Continual decrease in the value of the denarius.
- Wheat production was increasingly being replaced by wheat-growing districts in North Africa, Egypt, and the Danube Valley. World trade had devalued the production locally, and the empire became reliant on shipping wheat.
- As civil unrest grew and the denarius continued to be devalued, it became too dangerous and less profitable to ship wheat.
- To complicate matters the emperors had provided wheat for free to the citizens of Rome for various reasons throughout its history. Something that no leader was willing to encroach on this sacred right. The free handout was called the "dole", and is attributed as one of the causes of the decline of the empire.
- Initiating a fifty-year period in which there were at least 26 claimants to the title of Emperor.
- One of the most profound and lasting effects of the Crisis of the Third Century was the disruption of Rome's extensive internal trade network.

### 4<sup>th</sup> Seal

Death prevails from all directions, there would be no reprieve. The 1/4th part of the earth would be destroyed through the process of war, famine, pestilence, and wild animals. The expectation is that the earth would be divided into four quarters.

The process of war brings famine. This then leads to pestilence and disease. The result of loss of population and mankind brings about the increase in population of the wild beasts. Scripturally we can see the beasts of the earth and the fowls of the heaven often come and devour after a battle.

The wild beasts appear to be related to the last judgment before change (Deu 7:20; Jos 24:12).

## Revealing Revelation

- In the 3rd century, the Roman frontiers weakened against the Germanic tribes across the Rhine and Danube, and the Sassanid Empire across the Euphrates increased its own attacks. When the Persians under Shapur I invaded Mesopotamia
- The barbarian incursions into the Empire were becoming more and more daring and frequent whereas the Empire was facing a serious economic crisis in Decius' time
- AD 253 – 260: Valerian. first Roman Emperor who was captured as a prisoner of war, causing instability in the Empire.
- Continued development of persecution of Christians.
- The breakup of the Roman Empire into three distinct governing entities.
- AD 268 – 270: Claudius. Died from the plague that ravaged the provinces of the Empire.
- AD 270 – 275: Aurelian. His successes were instrumental in ending the Roman Empire's Crisis of the Third Century.

## 5<sup>th</sup> Seal

The four Living Creatures are now silenced. Their voice will not be heard again until they praise the one who sits on the throne with the redeemed multitude. In part it also represents the end of the Judaic-Christian ecclesia.

True Christianity is persecuted nearly to the point of extinction, but this time-period would only be for a little season. However, it should be noted the phrase “True Christianity”. The reality is that sudo-Christianity was growing in leaps and bounds.

- The 2nd and 3rd centuries Christianity saw a sharp divorce from its early roots. There was an explicit rejection of then-modern Judaism and Jewish culture by the end of the 2nd century, with a growing body of adversus Judaeos literature. 4th- and 5th-century Christianity experienced imperial pressure and developed strong episcopal and unifying structure.
- In the 3rd century, the pattern changed. Emperors became more active and government officials began to actively pursue Christians, rather than merely to respond to the will of the crowd.
- Christianity, too, changed. No longer were its practitioners merely "the lower orders fomenting discontent"; some Christians were now rich, or from the upper classes.
- Christians had been distancing themselves from their Jewish heritage for their entire history.
- Christian communities grew quickly in many parts of the empire (and especially in the East) after 260.
- Large churches were prominent in certain major cities throughout the empire.
- Loathed the Christians for avoiding her festivals.
- AD 284 – 305: Diocletian. Stabilized the empire and marks the end of the Crisis of the Third Century. Established the 'tetrarchy', or "rule of four", each emperor would rule over a quarter-division of the empire.
- AD 303: The Diocletianic or Great Persecution was the last and most severe Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire.
- Christians were also deprived of the right to petition the courts,
- The fortitude of the martyrs in the face of death had earned the faith respectability in the past, though it may have won few converts. The thought of martyrdom, however, sustained Christians under trial and in prison, hardening their faith.

### 6<sup>th</sup> Seal

The sixth seal is critical. As stated, the primary purpose of the Seven Seals and the whole letter of Revelation is to bring about the Kingdom of God, however the Seven Seals have a secondary purpose which is critical to the final. Namely, the sixth seal.

The first of three great earthquakes. An eclipse with a blood moon. This was representing the upheaval of the Roman empire and its structure of government and religion. We would expect the apostasy to be in full swing, the corruption and replacement of the gospel of Christ, with a harlot suedo-christian empire being born.

- AD 293 – 306: Constantius. The father of Constantine the Great. Married Helena a Christian. Ruled in the West. Did not persecute the Christians.
- AD 306 – 337: Constantine the Great. The first Christian emperor. Civil war.
- Removal of the tetrarchy and the return to monarchy. Paganism overthrown.
- Constantine and his army adopt the Greek letters for Christ's initials.
- The Edict of Milan was the February 313 AD agreement to treat Christians benevolently within the Roman Empire.
- Constantine instructed that Christians and non-Christians should be united in observing the venerable day of the sun.
- The reign of Constantine established a precedent for the position of the emperor as having great influence and ultimate regulatory authority within the religious discussions involving the early Christian councils of that time, e.g., most notably the dispute over Arianism, and the nature of God.

### 7<sup>th</sup> Seal

The continuation of the prophecies leading up to the Kingdom of God. It would contain all sequential prophecies that follow. Which include the seven Trumpets, three Woes, the seven Bowls, and the seven Thunders, the remaining two great earthquakes, and finally the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

These prophetic visions would contain the relationship and development of the dragon, the false prophet (harlot, woman, Babylon), and the beast.