

Defense of Domitian Date Revelation

Supposed Allusions to Nero in Revelation																							
Sequence of Roman Emperors	“⁹ This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; ¹⁰ they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while. ¹¹ As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to destruction.” (Rev. 17:9-11) <u>First seven emperors of Rome:</u> #1 Julius #2 Augustus #3 Tiberius #4 Gaius #5 Claudius #6 Nero (claim: emperor at the time John wrote) #7 Galba (reigned only seven months) #8 Otho																						
	<u>Evaluation:</u> • The preterist interpretation assume one starts with Julius as Rome’s first emperor, yet the more common initial emperor is Augustus • How could Otho be Revelation 17’s eighth king? Following Nero’s death, Rome experienced the devastating “year of four emperors” in which the following men all sat as emperor: Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and Vespasian (who restored normalcy, reigning for 10 years). The focus in Revelation is not on the 6th king (Nero) or even the 7th, but on the 8th who is “the beast.” • Another plausible explanation for this sequence of kings is their representing a sequence of kingdoms: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, Revived Rome, Antichrist																						
Mark of the Beast	“¹⁶ Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead, ¹⁷ so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name. ¹⁸ This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.” (Rev. 13:16-18) Through a process called <u>gematria</u>, numbers are assigned to letters of an individual’s name which sum up to “the number of its name.” When “Nero Caesar” is transliterated from the Greek into the Hebrew [נרון קסר], this name adds up to 666. <table><tr><td>Resh (ר)</td><td>Samekh (ס)</td><td>Qoph (ק)</td><td>Nun (נ)</td><td>Vav (ו)</td><td>Resh (ר)</td><td>Nun (נ)</td><td>Sum:</td></tr><tr><td>200</td><td>60</td><td>100</td><td>50</td><td>6</td><td>200</td><td>50</td><td>666</td></tr></table>							Resh (ר)	Samekh (ס)	Qoph (ק)	Nun (נ)	Vav (ו)	Resh (ר)	Nun (נ)	Sum:	200	60	100	50	6	200	50	666
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	<u>Evaluation:</u> • This process is highly arbitrary as countless individuals have been identified by this same approach to be the beast • This sum is only possibly by first transliterating “Nero” from Greek into Hebrew. As Greek’s used this system as well, why not add up the value of his name in Greek? (which would be 1005, not 666) • A sum of 666 is only possible if one adds the title “Caesar” before “Nero.”
Nero Redivivus Myth	“One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth marveled as they followed the beast ... the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived”(Rev. 13:3, 14) Shortly after Nero committed suicide in A.D. 68, “Popular hatred and fear of Nero led to stories circulating after his death to the effect that he would return to Rome leading a Parthian army. Passages in Revelation that speak of the beast recovering from a mortal wound (13:3-4), it is argued, allude to a Nero-redivivus myth” (Carson and Moo, <i>Introduction to the NT</i>, 710)
	<u>Evaluation:</u> • This Nero redivivus myth does not closely resemble text of Revelation. Nero never came back to life (!), as the beast in Revelation 13 clearly did. And all the primary activity of this beast takes place AFTER he dies and comes back to life. • It is unlikely that this myth gained enough of a following for it to have made it in a Christian book written in A.D. 69 • Even according to preterist constructions, Nero is head #6 (17:10) and the beast is head #8 (17:11)
Jerusalem Temple	
“¹Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, ²but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months.” (Rev. 11:1-2)	
Preterist Position	The reference to a temple in Jerusalem demands that this structure was still standing when the book of Revelation was written
Futurist Position	In the same way that Daniel (9:24, 26) and Ezekiel (40—48) wrote about a future temple when there was no temple standing in their day, so John here writes of a future, reconstructed temple in the tribulation where the beast will claim to be God (1 Thess. 2:4)

Arguments for Domitian Date	
Nature of Persecution	Nero's persecution was limited to the capital of Rome, while Domitian persecution was far more widespread There is no evidence that Nero exiled Christians, yet records show that Domitian not only exiled Christians, but did so to <i>islands</i> (1:9)
Emperor Cult	The "emperor cult" was the ancient Roman practice of worshiping the emperor as god. A similar form of idolatry is demanded of the world in Revelation 13 where "the earth and its inhabitants" are made to "worship the first beast" (13:12). "In 42 BC, after the death of Julius Caesar, the senate officially declared him <i>divius Iulius</i> ("divine Julius"). Soon thereafter Octavian, Caesar's nephew and successor, was called <i>divi filius</i> ("son of a divine being"). At most, an emperor, usually after death, could attain the status of <i>divius</i> ("divine") but not <i>deus</i> ("god"). Aside from Caligula's excessive claims to divinity, Domitian was the first Roman emperor to adopt and even mandate the title <i>deus</i>, a claim his critics found repulsive." (Kostenberger, Kellum, Quarles, <i>The Cradle, the Cross and the Crown: Introduction to the NT</i>, 936) Like the beast, Domitian made the emperor cult a test of loyalty. Domitian, like Antiochus Epiphanes IV, become types of the future tribulation beast.
State of Asian Churches	<u>Spiritual stagnation of several churches:</u> Ephesus – lost its first love (2:4) Pergamum – allowed Nicolaitan error to enter church (2:15) Thyatira – tolerated false teacher Jezebel (2:20) Sardis – called a dead church (3:1) Laodicea – rich and arrogant, Jesus wanted to spit them out (3:16-17) • <i>Most of these churches were placed in the mid-50s on Paul's 3rd missionary journey. Within a ten-year span, could these churches have fallen so far?</i> • <i>Paul mentioned Laodicea in his letter to Colossians (4:16) with no indication of its spiritual danger. Colossians was written in A.D. 62. And yet are we to believe that in three years' time Jesus now wants to spit them out?</i> <u>Laodicea:</u> Destroyed in an earthquake in A.D. 60—61. One account says that it took 30 years to rebuild the city. While it could have possibly recovered and become wealthy (3:17) by the 90s, it is very unlikely that it could do so by the late 60s. <u>Smyrna:</u> According to Polycarp, this church may not have existed until A.D. 60—64, very shortly before the preterist date of the book of Revelation <u>Ephesus:</u> Paul very likely served and ministered in Ephesus in A.D. 64, after his first Roman imprisonment (1 Tim. 1:3). If Paul served so recently in this church, and Timothy still sat as its pastor, how could the church be in such a state that Jesus could condemn it so harshly: "I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent" (2:5b)?

External Evidence	<u>Evidence for a Nero Date:</u> “Apart from two late Syriac versions, the only testimony asserting Nero as the emperor at the time of composition comes from tenuous statements by Theophylact of Bulgaria in the twelfth century.” (Kostenberger, Kellum, Quarles, <i>The Cradle, the Cross and the Crown: Introduction to the NT</i>, 936)
	<u>Evidence for a Domitian Date:</u> Clement of Alexandria (<i>Quis div.</i>, 42) [150—215] Origen (<i>Matt.</i>, 16.6) [185—254] Victorinus (<i>Apoc.</i>, 10.11) [d ca. 304] Eusebius (<i>H.E.</i>, 3.18) [260—340] Irenaeus [ca. 180] = resident of Smyrna, knew Polycarp personally (who knew John) “John received the Revelation almost in our own time, toward the end of the reign of Domitian.” (<i>Against Heresies</i>, 5.30.3)