

# THE USE OF GRECO-ROMAN MYTHS IN REVELATION 12-13

# HOW THE BIBLE VIEWS MYTHS

❖ *1 Timothy 1:3-7*

❖ *1 Timothy 4:6-10*

❖ *2 Timothy 4:1-5*

❖ *Titus 1:10-16*

❖ *2 Peter 1:16-21*



# BACKGROUND

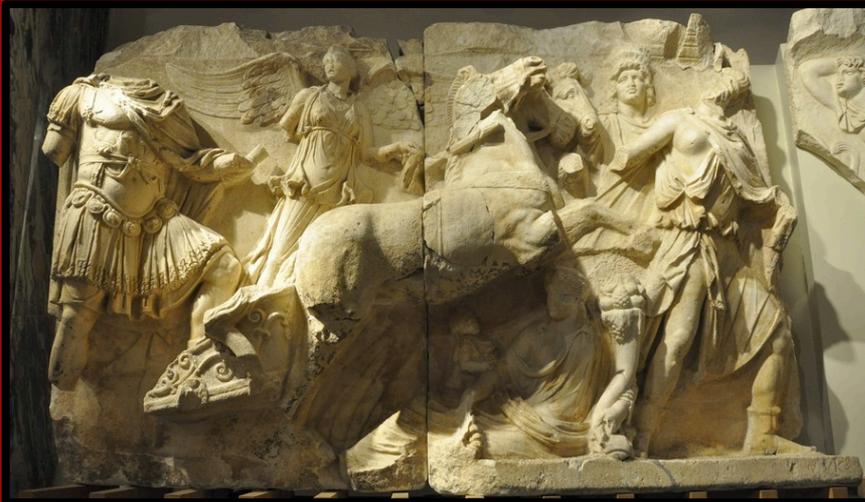


- ❖ *Written to persecuted people, who were going to experience even worse persecution soon, in an effort to give them hope.*
- ❖ *Written during the reign of the fourth kingdom (i.e. Rome; Daniel 2 and 7)*
- ❖ *Terrible persecutions under Nero, Domitian, Trajan, and others because Christians refused to worship the emperors as gods*

## BACKGROUND: IMPERIAL CULT WORSHIP



Tiberius Casear, son of the divine Augustus



Apotheosis of Roman Emperor Lucius Verus in the chariot of Sol, led by the goddess Victory

## BACKGROUND: IMPERIAL CULT WORSHIP



Inscription in biblical  
Pergamum deifying  
Emperor Trajan:

Emperor, Nerva,  
Caesar of God, son of  
Nerva, Trajan Ariston  
Germanicus Dacicus,  
Lord of earth and sea.

## BACKGROUND: IMPERIAL CULT WORSHIP

*“Those who denied they were, or had been Christians, who repeated after me an invocation to the gods, and offered adoration, with wine and frankincense, to your image, which I had ordered to be brought for that purpose, together with those of the gods, and who finally cursed Christ – none of which acts, it is said, those who are really Christians can be forced into performing – these I thought it proper to discharge. Others who were named by that informer at first confessed themselves Christians, and then denied it; true, they had been of that persuasion but they had quitted it, some three years, others many years, and a few as much as twenty five years ago. They all worshipped your statue and the images of the gods, and cursed Christ.” (Pliny’s Letter #96 to Trajan, 112 AD)*

## BACKGROUND: IMPERIAL CULT WORSHIP

*“The signal development, first manifest in the dedications of the Temple of the Sebastoi but reflecting broader trends in society was the use of neokoros as a technical title for a city with a provincial temple of the emperors. The power of this innovation was explosive. In a matter of years it changed the public rhetoric of empire in Asia. Within a century it had transformed the discourse of Roman imperialism in the eastern Mediterranean. From the late first century onward, the most prestigious self-designation that could be employed by a city in Asia was neokoros, indicating the presence of a provincial temple where the emperors and their relatives were worshipped” (Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins*, p.150).*

## BACKGROUND: IMPERIAL CULT WORSHIP



Inscription in biblical Smyrna designating the city as neokoros. The inscription particularly honors a man who took the lead in enforcing worship of the emperors and reads:

Cl[audius] Aristophanes  
Aurelianos Neokoros of  
Sebaston [i.e. Emperor]

# THE APOLLO MYTH IN REVELATION 12

- ❖ *Similar details and images, particularly the connection to the sun, the serpent, the flight of the woman and child, divine protection*
- ❖ *Roman emperors often depicted themselves as Apollo*
- ❖ *Upper right: Nero depicted as Apollo; Lower right: Augustus statue at Prima Porta with Apollo on a griffin*
- ❖ *John has adapted the Apollo Myth in order to mock the arrogance of the emperor cult and pagan mythology with the truth of Jesus.*



# THE NERO REDIVIVUS MYTH IN REVELATION 13

- ❖ *Nero was Rome personified, thought he was divine, persecuted Christians, and stabbed himself in the neck*
- ❖ *His body not being recovered, many circulated a myth that he would return and bring glory to Rome (e.g. Dio Chrysostum, Suetonius, Tacitus)*
- ❖ *God is intentionally mocking this pagan myth. Note the numerous similarities.*



# THE NERO REDIVIVUS MYTH IN REVELATION 13

<b>Sea Beast (i.e. Nero/Rome)</b>	<b>Jesus</b>
<b>Revelation 13:1-10</b>	Revelation 4-5
<b>given great authority by the dragon</b>	authority from the Father
<b>mortal wound healed</b>	standing as if slain
<b>receives worship</b>	worshipped
<b>names written on head</b>	name written on Him
<b>“who is like...?”</b>	“Who is worthy...?”
<b>name a mystery</b>	name unknown
<b>wears diadems</b>	wears many diadems
<b>followers marked on forehead</b>	followers marked on forehead
<b>followers from many nations, tribes, tongues, etc.</b>	followers from many nations, tribes, tongues, etc.

# THE NERO REDIVIVUS MYTH IN REVELATION 13

- ❖ *Nero was Rome personified, thought he was divine, persecuted Christians, and stabbed himself in the neck*
- ❖ *His body not being recovered, many circulated a myth that he would return and bring glory to Rome (e.g. Dio Chrysostum, Suetonius, Tacitus)*
- ❖ *God is intentionally mocking this pagan myth. Note the numerous similarities.*
- ❖ *The sea beast represents Rome in all its arrogance and blasphemy. The sea beast is crafted based on mixing imagery from Daniel 7 and the Nero Redivivus Myth. It is the fulfillment of prophecy as well as God's mocking of pagan idolization of unworthy leaders and imperial Rome. The worship of Rome and her emperors was akin to worshipping Satan.*



**GIVEN THE CULTURE IN WHICH FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIANS BEGAN TO BE OPENLY PERSECUTED BY THE CIVIL AUTHORITIES IN POWER, NAMELY ROME, IT SEEMS BEYOND QUESTION THAT JOHN WAS MOVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO PRESENT THE AGENTS OF SATAN IN A RIDICULING WAY TO CONTRAST WITH THE VICTORIOUS JESUS WHOM THE MARTYRS WOULD DIE TO SERVE.**