

2

3 The Coming Universe As God Sees It

4

5 The Apostle John / The Isle of Patmos / Emperor Domitian

6

7 Tonight's session begins a 13-week series on the final book of the Bible, the book of
8 Revelation. You have perhaps heard the term *apocalypse*. This word is derived from
9 the Greek word *apocalupsis* and is best translated as *revelation*. The very first verse in
10 Revelation 1 defines the purpose of the book:

11

12 ***Rev. 1:1***

13 ***The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants***
14 ***things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto***
15 ***his servant John:***

16

17 Who is the "him" referred to in this verse? None other than the Apostle John. John
18 was the youngest of the disciples called by Jesus and the only one of those twelve
19 original followers of Christ who did not die a martyr's death.

20

21 "If you want theology, read Paul. If you want ethics, read James. But if you want to
22 know about love, if you want the heart of Christianity, you must read John. Of all the
23 twelve apostles there were three who seemed to form an inner circle: James, Peter and
24 John. And of these three, one came the closest to Jesus: John, the beloved, the disciple
25 whom Jesus loved. Out of that inner communion, out of that close fellowship, out of
26 that heart-to-heart relationship, came a beautiful life, a sensitive spirit, an apostle of love.

27

28 "John's preaching took him out of Jerusalem to various places in Asia Minor (Turkey).
29 He spent his later years in Ephesus. During these years he wrote the Gospel of John and
30 the letters John I, John II and John III in the New Testament. Three well-known early
31 Christian leaders sat at his feet as learners: Polycarp, Papias and Ignatius.

32

33 "The (Roman) Emperor Domitian banished John to the isle of Patmos. Here John saw
34 visions and received the inspiration to write the book of Revelation. He was set free by
35 the Emperor Nerva in 96 AD and returned to Ephesus. John died a natural death in old
36 age, the last of the apostles to die." (Probably at age 95 or later. DB)

37

38 *Thirteen Men Who Changed The World / H. S. Vigeveno / Gospel Light / pages 121 and 130.*

THE TIMES OF THE DISCIPLES

1
2
3 It is always essential, in studying God's Word, to remember that the characters whose
4 lives are detailed on those sacred pages were very real men and women, who lived in
5 very real times. The New Testament times were lived during the reign of **the 12**
6 **Caesars** of Rome. When Julius Caesar was assassinated in the Senate in March of 44
7 B.C., his murder activated the hostility between Mark Antony and Octavian. Octavian
8 won the battle and the Roman crown following the historic Battle at Actium (off the coast
9 of north-western Greece) in 31 BC. Octavian became the Caesar of Rome and called
10 himself Augustus. We first read of him in Luke 2:1: *And it came to pass in those days,*
11 *that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.*
12

13 So it was that Jesus was born during the reign of Caesar Augustus. Our Lord would
14 have been a teenager, growing up in Nazareth of Galilee, when Augustus died and was
15 succeeded on the throne by Tiberias. It was during Tiberias' reign that Jesus was
16 crucified in Jerusalem.²
17

18 Several years after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, Tiberias died in 37 AD and
19 was succeeded by the quite mad Gaius Germanicus - better known as Caligula or Little
20 Boots. Caligula's rather short reign of 4 years ended when he was assassinated on the
21 way to the theater. By this time, persecution of the early believers had become quite
22 extensive and the Christians were being scattered all over the world.
23

24 When Caligula died, he was followed on the throne by Tiberius Claudius Nero
25 Germanicus, best known as Claudius. It was during Claudius' reign of some dozen
26 years or so that Peter would have gone to Babylon (Iraq) with the Gospel, Thomas to
27 India and Paul to Asia Minor and Italy (and perhaps as far west as Spain). Claudius
28 was all-in-all a good emperor with the exception that he expelled the Jews from Rome.
29 Two of the Jews, Priscilla and Aquilla (ten-makers) migrated to Corinth, Greece, where
30 they met the Apostle Paul and helped form the great Christian community and church
31 there.
32

33 Claudius unfortunately died for he was succeeded by Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus -
34 better known as Nero. It was under Nero's rule that both Peter and Paul were executed
35 in Rome.
36

37 Upon Nero's death, about 68 AD, Galba became Emperor and the Roman civil wars
38 began with three men ruling in succession within a very short period of time: Galba, Otho
39 and Vitellius. Their rules were quite cruel and, in Israel, resulted in the great Jewish
40 rebellion that caused the Roman armies to sweep through the land from 68 to 73 AD,
41 destroying not only Jerusalem but most of Israel (just as Jesus had prophesied in Matthew
42 24 and 25).

1 The following three Caesars were known as the Flavian Emperors. They were
2 Vespasian, Titus (who earlier, as a general, had destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD, and
3 Domitian.
4

5 Now consider this historical reality: During all of this time (with the exception of Julius
6 Caesar's life and the early part of Augustus' life) the Apostle John lived. Long after all
7 the other apostles had been killed, John, now in his 90's, was still pastoring the church in
8 Ephesus (on the western coastline of Turkey). There is ample reason to believe that the
9 blessed mother of Jesus, Mary herself, lived for a long time in Ephesus and worked with
10 John in the establishment of the Christian community there.

11
12 Now in 81 AD, Domitian comes to the throne of Rome. "When he came to the throne,
13 Domitian followed a meticulously thought-out policy of systematic absolutism - in
14 contrast with the ostensible Republicanism of the old Augustan monarchy."

15
16 The Twelve Caesars / Michael Grant / Scribners Publishing / Page 240
17

18 Domitian would not tolerate any kind of worship unless it was directed at himself.
19 While other Caesars might have been a bit more tolerant, Domitian determined to
20 obliterate any religion that did not proclaim him as God. He thought that by terminating
21 all religious leaders known in the Empire, he could secure his place as the one and only
22 deity. Thus Domitian had a 90 year old pastor in Ephesus, Turkey, banished to the death
23 island of Rome - Patmos.

Rev. 1:9

I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

24
25 I have had the privilege of being on Patmos a number of times, as recently as this past
26 May. The Lord willing, Darlene and I will be there again this May with our tour group.
27 I want to take you now to Patmos by way of video so you can see the actual place where
28 John was sent to die by Emperor Domitian.
29

VIDEO

30
31
32 Now you have some history of the story....and you have seen where John was
33 incarcerated. Now....he's left there to die.....but something incredible happens to him.
34 Let's pick up the story.
35
36

1 **Rev. 1:1-3**

2 **The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his**
3 **servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his**
4 **angel unto his servant John: [2] Who bare record of the word of God, and of the**
5 **testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. [3] Blessed is he that**
6 **readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which**
7 **are written therein: for the time is at hand.**

8
9 The “revelation” (apocalypse) of Jesus Christ! This marvelous final book of Holy Writ
10 gives us an entirely new concept - or revelation - of our precious Lord Jesus. God
11 wanted the beloved Apostle John to see what lay ahead for humanity.
12

I find it fascinating that in Revelation 1:19 John was commanded by Jesus Himself to write down what he saw: **“Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter...”** It is my personal feeling that the Apostle Paul saw much of the same revelation while in Corinth but was expressly forbidden by God to chronicle what he saw: **2 Cor. 12:1-4 “It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. [2] I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. [3] And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) [4] How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”** How interesting! Paul saw but could not report; John saw and was commanded to report. We all have different missions in life. We are not to compare ourselves to others.

13
14
15 **Revelation 1:2** clearly spells out our mission in today’s world: **Who bare record of**
16 **the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.**

- 17
18 • Our mission is to KNOW GOD’S WORD....and to PERSONALLY KNOW
19 JESUS....and BE ABLE TO RELATE TO OTHERS AS PERSONAL EYE-
20 WITNESSES WHAT JESUS HAS DONE FOR US.

21
22 Now note the divine blessing God bestows on all those who study this book of
23 Revelation: **Rev. 1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of**
24 **this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at**
25 **hand.**

26
27 **THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR (TODAY’S NATION OF TURKEY)**

28
29 **Rev. 1:4**

1 **John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from**
2 **him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits**
3 **which are before his throne;**
4

5 These were early Christian churches scattered on the western side of what we know today
6 as Turkey. Those churches were:

- 7 • Ephesus
- 8 • Smyrna
- 9 • Pergamos
- 10 • Thyatira
- 11 • Sardis
- 12 • Philadelphia
- 13 • Laodicea

14
15 We will take time to study each of these churches AND CHRIST'S PERSONALIZED
16 MESSAGES TO EACH ONE in the next few Wednesday night studies.
17

Why are they important? “Obviously these were literal churches with which John was familiar for much of his ministry had been conducted throughout that area of Asia. The question that naturally comes to mind is: why of the hundreds of churches located in cities all over the world by this time (about 63 years after the Day of Pentecost) were these seven churches selected? It is suggested that they also represent the seven basic divisions of church history. The Church through the past 2000 years has gone through seven basic periods of stages. Their influence still carries over from stage to stage and some trends are still in existence even in our own day. As we come to them, we can readily see that these seven churches comprise seven methods of attack by Satan upon the Church of individual Christian within the Church, demanding that we take unto ourselves the whole armor of God (Eph. 6:10-18) and resist the devil.”

Revelation Illustrated and Made Plain / Tim LaHaye / Zondervan / pages 16 and 17)

18
19
20 Verses 5-8 of Chapter One give us terrific encouragement:
21

22 **Rev. 1:5-8**

23 **And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the**
24 **dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed**
25 **us from our sins in his own blood, [6] And hath made us kings and priests unto God**
26 **and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. [7] Behold,**
27 **he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced**
28 **him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen. [8] I**
29 **am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and**
30 **which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.**

1 (Verse 6) Our position, as far as God is concerned, is that we are “kings and priests”
2 unto God.

3
4 In a recent meeting of our Executive Presbytery in Springfield, Missouri, the board was
5 discussing why we are seeing such prolific Assemblies of God church growth overseas
6 (nearing 60 million adherents now) and why the we are NOT seeing similar growth in
7 America. Our Executive Director of World Missions John Bueno prepared a response
8 to that question. I present it to you here:

“I believe the first reason as to do with *the priesthood of believers*. Our early forefathers in the Assemblies of God believed very much in the priesthood of all believers. Everyone is of equal value in God’s sight. While church organizations may have an organizational hierarchy in which members have different callings, everyone has equal access to God. In our churches overseas, anyone can pray to God; the Holy Spirit is available to everyone in equal measure. I believe that, over time, our U.S. churches have increasingly lost the practice of the priesthood of the believers. We began hiring people to do almost all the ministries of the church. Staffs were increased, which eliminated most volunteerism or the practice of laity ministering. Now it seems as though Christians sit back and let the professionals do the job. While there are many advantages to having paid staff conduct all the ministries of the church, we have lost one of the main ingredients of the Pentecostal ethos: the priesthood of ALL believers. I believe this is probably the primary reason why we are not growing as fast in the United States. We will never have enough money to pay people to do everything in the church. Even if we did, it leaves something missing in the life of the church. The franchisement of the believers in our services is vitally important to future growth and ownership. Someway, somehow, we must address this. Almost anywhere you go overseas, you will see that this is one of the main differences. Believers are active in the ministry and in the development of the church. Believers are the ones who do the church planting and go out and start the outstations and cell groups. All of these things, I believe, combine to make a church active and have full ownership of its future growth.”

9
10 I believe John Bueno’s observation is “right-on.” While in India recently, I learned that
11 all ministerial candidates MUST start a church before they can be considered as
12 ministers. I also learned that Pastor David Mohan in Madras expects each member of his
13 church to win at least two people to Christ EVERY YEAR. With over 40,000 in
14 attendance that day, his requirements must be working.

15
16 Revelation 1:6 makes it very clear that God has ordained all of us as kings and priests
17 unto Him.

18

1 THE RETURN OF CHRIST

2 **Rev. 1:7**

3 **Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which**
4 **pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.**

5
6 Great portions of the rest of this book of Revelation give us specific details of that return
7 (as do many other passages throughout the Scriptures.) It should be clearly noted that
8 there are NO BIBLICAL PROPHECIES yet to be fulfilled before Christ’s return. We
9 should all be living in the expectancy of Jesus to come.

QUESTION: If you knew Jesus was returning by midnight tonight, would you need to
rush out and change some of the factors of your life?

10
11 **Rev. 1:8**

12 **I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is,**
13 **and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.**

14
15 Jesus is the first and last of everything. All our lives center around Him! Far too many
16 never give Christ a place in their lives. It is their loss. Jesus is the very meaning of
17 life.

18 THE PRISONER OF PATMOS

19
20 **Rev. 1:9**

21 **I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the**
22 **kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the**
23 **word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.**

24
25 It sometimes comes as a shock to followers of Christ when they find difficulties in their
26 lives. There have been so many teachings that Christians never have problems, are never
27 sick, are never faced with set-backs, that Christians have a virtual cornucopia of
28 resources. That isn’t true, of course. Jesus Himself taught us, **(John 16:33) These**
29 **things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall**
30 **have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.**

31
32 If our Lord Himself declared that we would have “tribulation” in this life, why then are
33 we so set back when actual difficulties arise?

34
35 John’s testimony was that: **Rev. 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and**
36 **heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,**

1 My old friend, the late Ira Stanphill, wrote this great song: “Anyone can sing when the
2 sun’s shining bright; but you need a song in your heart at night!”

3
4 This is what my late father-in-law used to call “practicing the presence of Jesus.”
5 During times of duress or strain, begin praising the Lord, bringing (as Paul put it) “every
6 thought into obedience to Jesus Christ.”

7 8 **WHAT DOES JESUS LOOK LIKE NOW?**

9
10 WE GET THE ANSWER NOW AS JOHN TURNS TO SEE THE WHO IS SPEAKING
11 TO HIM ON PATMOS:

12 13 **Rev. 1:11-17**

14 **Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write**
15 **in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and**
16 **unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto**
17 **Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. [12] And I turned to see the voice that spake with**
18 **me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; [13] And in the midst of the**
19 **seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the**
20 **foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. [14] His head and his hairs were**
21 **white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; [15] And his**
22 **feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of**
23 **many waters. [16] And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth**
24 **went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his**
25 **strength. [17] And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.**

26
27 What a word picture of the Christ of God - as He appears now!

28

I have often wondered why most pictures of Jesus show him as a rather fragile, feminine-appearing, soft-eyed man. Even in his pre-resurrection body He must have been an incredible man physically. He had worked as a carpenter (some say a stone mason) until He was thirty. In His passion, He took a beating prior to the cross that could have killed Him, yet He was still able to bear that 90 pound timber of the cross clear across Jerusalem, almost all the way to Calvary. Why not pictures of Him like that?

29

30

31 **In his book “Revelation-Illustrated and Made Plain”, Tim LaHaye lists ten**
32 **characteristics of the Christ Who confronted John on Patmos:**

33

34 1. “...one like the Son of man” indicates that this person was not a grotesque creature
35 of the supernatural world; rather He was manlike in His appearance. The “Son of man”
36 is one of the most frequent titles Jesus applied to Himself. It is used of the Messiah in all

- 1 four gospels and also in Daniel 7:13.
2
- 3 2. “...clothed with a garment down to the foot.” This was typical of the long robes of
4 the high priests as they ministered in the Holy Place in the Temple.”
5
- 6 3. “...girded about the breasts with a golden girdle” refers to a symbol of strength and
7 authority common in the ancient world. The average working man wore a short tunic of
8 loose-fitting clothes. Only those in authority wore the sash - or girdle.
9
- 10 4. “His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow” conveys the thought
11 of antiquity and reminds us of the vision of Daniel 7:9-13 where Christ is called “the
12 ancient of days.” The whiteness here speaks also of the righteousness of God, who is
13 from everlasting to everlasting.
14
- 15 5. “...his eyes were like a flame of fire.” The Greek construction is literally: “His eyes
16 shot fire,” indicating that Christ was indignant over something. As we progress with the
17 vision, we find that Jesus was indignant over the indifference, in some cases, of the
18 apostate churches. Whenever the Church of Jesus Christ is not what it should be, we can
19 be sure it arouses the indignation of the Christ.
20
- 21 6. “...his feet like fine bronze.” The bronze speaks to us of judgment. It reminds us
22 of the brazen altar of the tabernacle where sin was judged.
23
- 24 7. “...his voice like the sound of many waters.” This simile can best be illustrated by
25 Niagara Falls. When you come to the edge of the great falls, all other sounds are
26 eliminated from your hearing as you are engulfed by the deafening roar of the turbulent
27 waters. This figure seems to indicate the attitude of the Son of God as He comes on the
28 Lord’s day in judgment. Men cannot hear His voice today, but they will hear it then.
29 The call of worldliness, materialism, science, education, psychology, and all other voices
30 calling to the souls of men seem to take precedence over the voice of Jesus Christ today.
31 In that day all other voices will be stilled by the deafening, overpowering voice of the
32 Son of God to whom all men will give heed, for they will be entering into their hour of
33 judgment. The church of Christian that so desires can hear His voice today if he or she
34 will but listen.
35
- 36 8. “And he had in his right hand seven stars.” The Lord Himself interpreted to John
37 the meaning of the seven stars. In verse 20 we find that “the seven stars are the angels of
38 the seven churches.” The meaning of the Greek word translated “angels” is literally
39 “messengers.” Many godly Bible scholars believe this verse refers to the messengers
40 appointed by God to lead local congregations. Once I heard Dr. J. Vernon McGee, the
41 radio Bible teacher, say regarding this, “I like to think that it refers to the local pastors. It
42 is good to hear a pastor being called an angel; sometimes we are called other things.”

1 9. “...out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.” Ephesians 6 refers to the
2 Word of God as “the sword of the Spirit.” Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of God is
3 “sharper than any two-edged sword.” Evidently the spoken word of Christ will go forth
4 as a sharp sword against which there will be no defense in the day of judgment. Thus
5 we can see that there will really be no battle with the Antichrist, for he will be
6 indefensible against the very presence of Christ at His coming (Rev. 19, 20).

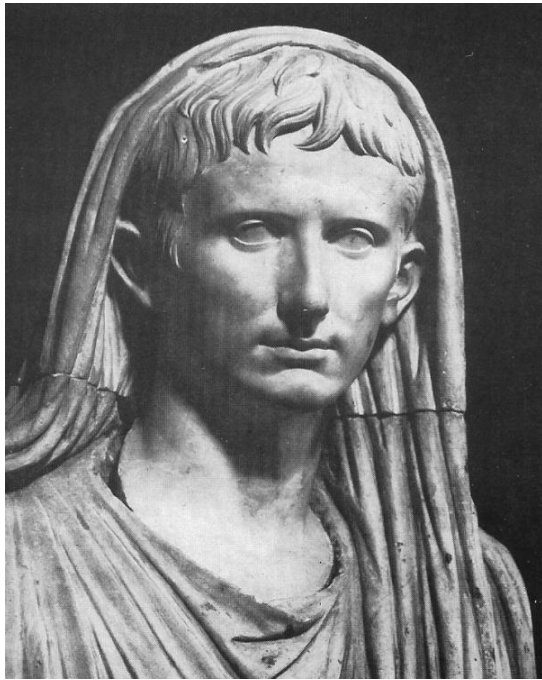
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8 10. “...his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.” This speaks of the
9 divine nature of Christ and reminds us of the event that took place on the Mount of
10 Transfiguration, where Christ “was transfigured before them; and his face did shine like
11 the sun, and his raiment was as white as the light” (Matt. 17:2). For just a moment
12 during His earthly ministry, Peter, James and John saw Jesus in His divine glory as John
13 saw Him in this vision. Let there be no doubt about it. This is Jesus the Christ, the
14 divine Son of God. Amen!

15
16 Revelation Illustrated / LaHaye / Zondervan / pages 18-20)

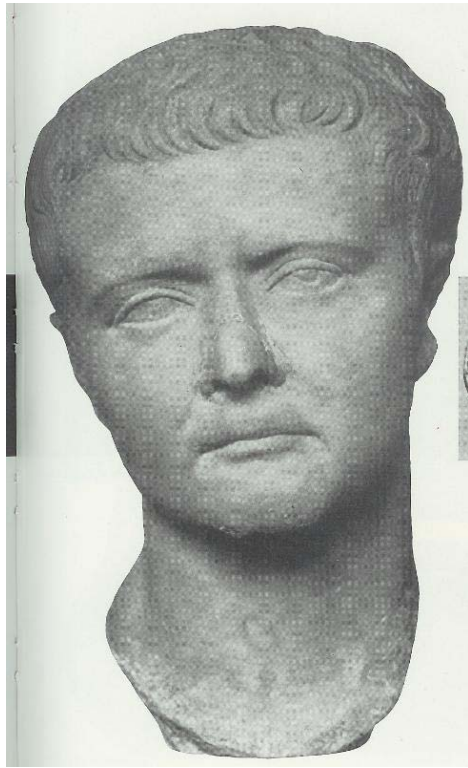
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Next Wednesday evening, we begin Revelation chapters 2 and 3 and will take up the Church in Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamos.

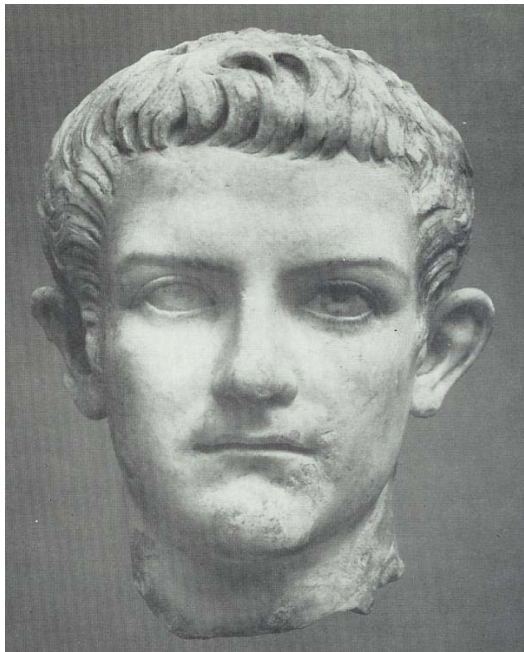
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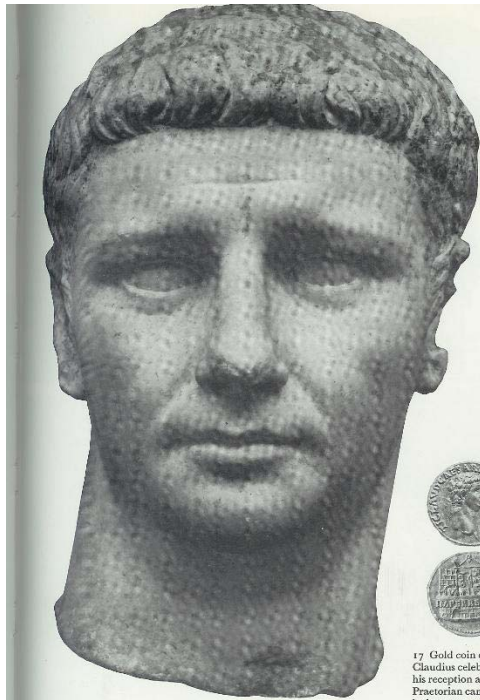
Augustus as chief priest



Tiberius

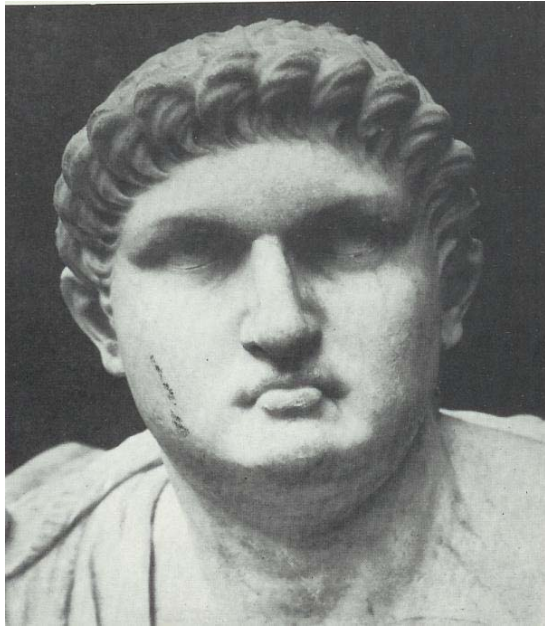


Caligula

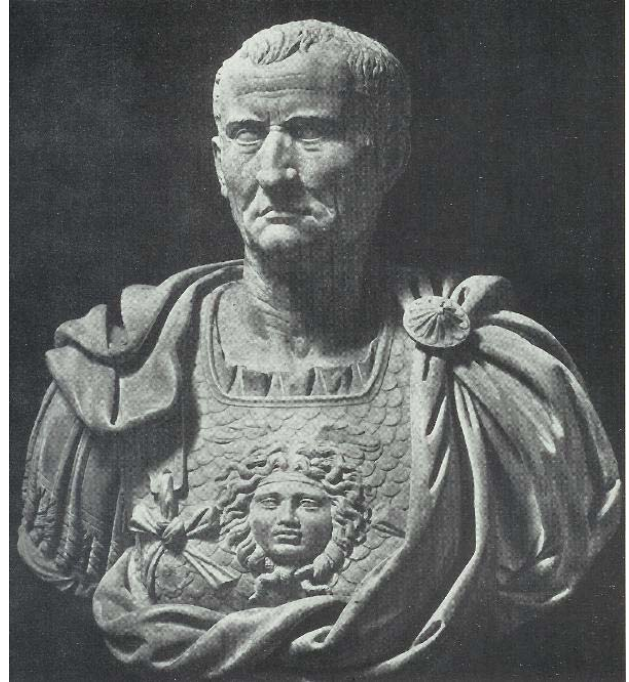


Claudius

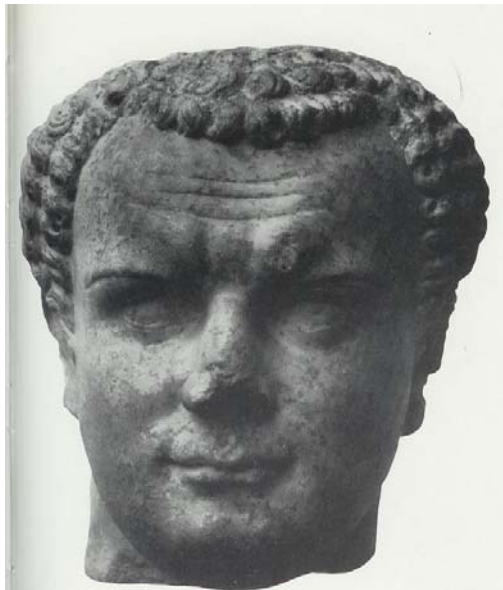
17 Gold coin of
Claudius celebrating
his reception at
Praetorian camp



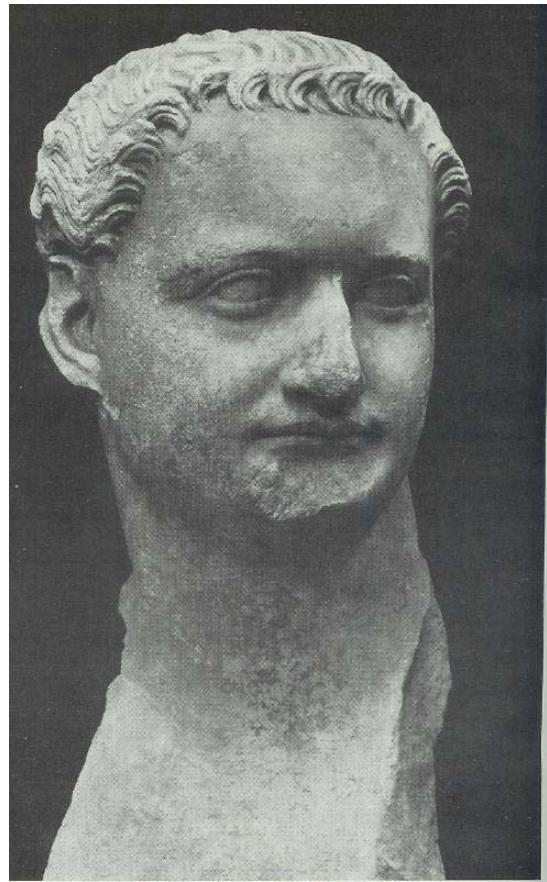
Nero



Galba



Titus



Domitian