

## Jesus and Domitian (by Rob Bell)

1. Ephesus was Emperor Domitian's favorite city (its Christian church was pastored by John the Apostle)
2. The Agora is the marketplace in Ephesus (a bridge city from Britain to India)
3. In order to buy and sell in the Agora a person was required to burn incense to the Caesar (acknowledging his deity). "Shoppers" were probably given some sort of ink stain mark that allowed them to enter the Agora. The early Christian's called a blasphemous ruler the "beast." (Rev 16:2; 19:20)
4. When Domitian (81-96 AD) became emperor, there was a significant change in the demand for deification. Domitian was obsessed with his own (and his brother Titus' and father Vespasian's) deity. One of the most brutal of all emperors he demanded worship as god throughout the empire from all his subjects, Roman or otherwise. He established Ephesus *neokorus* for himself. Domitian insisted on being called "Lord and God" whenever he was mentioned or addressed (even by his wife). Believing that he was the only mediator between the gods and humans, (1 Tim 2:5) he ordered that any who would not worship the ancient gods and the modern gods like himself should be eliminated by whatever means possible. Blood flowed throughout Asia as the "atheist" Christians (so called because they refused to worship the gods of the Roman world) were slaughtered in cold blood. 2,400 Christ followers were executed in one day by order of Domitian.
5. Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC. When a comet was seen shortly thereafter, His son, Augustus proclaimed that "He saw the Son of God ascend to the right hand of the Father." (John 6:62) Of course in Augustus' mind that made him the Son of God as well.
6. Virgil, the poet, had indicated that something "big" was going to happen around the time of Jesus.
7. Augustus established a twelve day holiday called advent for himself where children sang hymns and they predicted that "lions will lay down with lambs." (Isa 11:6) They would chant, "there is no other name under heaven (but Augustus) by which a man can be saved." (Acts 4:12)
8. Domitian believed his destiny was to bring universal peace and salvation to the world. He had twenty four singers who sang "you are our Lord our God who deserves glory, honor, and power. (Rev 4:8-11)
9. Annually he held the Domitian games. His priests wore gold crowns adorned with the divine titles of Domitian. (Rev 4:4; 13:1) (One of the highlights of the games was the display of 4 different colored horses.) A man wearing the mask of "Hades" cleaned up after the carnage. (Rev 6:1-8)
10. Domitian's father Vespasian suffered a near fatal head wound in Judea from which he recovered. (Rev 13:3-12)
11. 24 gods are carved into the Pantheon in Ephesus. The 27' statue of Domitian stands on the backs of those gods. The statue's arm is 9' long. Whether you came by land or water a traveler would see this statue and be reminded that Domitian was lord of heaven and earth.
12. Domitian had a problem with a small sect of people called the "tribe of Christians." If a person would not "bow down" and worship Domitian, he would be executed. *Christians of that era would not be too impressed with our problems.*
13. The Nicolaitans (Rev 2:1-7) were Christians who were willing to "take the mark of the beast in order to buy and sell in the Agora."
- VIP** 14. Apostles like John made it quite clear in their letters to the churches that it was far better to die for the one true God than to live for a fraud like Domitian.
15. Within 40 years of Domitian's death, Ephesus was 90% Christian.
16. The more the Church was persecuted, the more it grew.
17. "One thousand years" is a Jewish idiom for *eternity*. (Rev 20:2-6)
18. John does not bash Domitian. He simply points to something far better.

## Vespasian

Vespasian, full name Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus (ad9-79), Roman emperor (69-79), born in Sabine Reate, near Rome. During the middle of the 1st century ad he commanded a legion in Germany and in Britain conquered the Isle of Wight. In 66 he campaigned against the Jews in Judea. Upon being chosen emperor in 69, he left the war in Judea to his son Titus and returned to Rome, where he restored the government and the public finances. After the capture and destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70, the world was at peace for nine years. Other important events of Vespasian's reign include the suppression of a formidable revolt (69-70) by the Germanic Batavians under their leader Julius Civilis; conquests in Britain by the Roman general Gnaeus Julius Agricola; the development of a more extensive educational system; and the construction of the Colosseum in Rome. His son Titus succeeded him as emperor.

## Titus

Titus, full name Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus (39-81), Roman emperor (79-81), who destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem and completed the Colosseum. He was born December 30, 39, in Rome, the elder son of Titus Flavius Sabinus Vespasianus, later Emperor Vespasian. Titus served as a military tribune in Germany and Britain and later fought under his father's command during the Jewish rebellion in Palestine. After Vespasian became emperor in 69, Titus was left in command of the Roman army in Palestine, and he brought the war to a close with the capture of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple in 70. To commemorate this victory in the Jewish war, his brother, Emperor Domitian, later erected the Arch of Titus.

On the death of his father in 79, Titus became emperor, and by his generous gifts and lavish entertainments he soon made himself popular with the Roman people. He established a lenient government, discontinuing all prosecutions for *laesa majestas*, or treason by disrespect, and decreeing heavy punishments against informers. During his short reign Titus completed and dedicated (80) the Flavian amphitheater, later called the Colosseum, begun by his father and built near the extensive baths that bear his name. The eruption of the volcano Mount Vesuvius occurred during his reign in 79, and the following year Rome was afflicted by a great fire and a plague. His beneficence to the sufferers of these disasters made Titus the idol of the populace.

He died on September 13, 81.