

REVELATION: LESSON 2

The correspondence below was written in AD 111 or 112 and was exchanged between Pliny Secundus, the Roman governor of Bithynia, and the Roman Emperor Trajan, who was the second emperor to rule after Domitian. Bithynia was just north of the area in Asia where the seven churches of Revelation 2-3 were located.

Pliny to the Emperor Trajan:

It is my custom to refer all my difficulties to you, Sir, for no one is better able to resolve my doubts and to inform my ignorance.

I have never been present at an examination of Christians. Consequently, I do not know the nature or the extent of the punishments usually meted out to them, nor the grounds for starting an investigation and how far it should be pressed. Nor am I at all sure whether any distinction should be made between them on the grounds of age, or if young people and adults should be treated alike; whether a pardon ought to be granted to anyone retracting his beliefs, or if he has once professed Christianity, he shall gain nothing by renouncing it; and **whether it is the mere name of Christian which is punishable, even if innocent of crime, or rather the crimes associated with the name.**

For the moment this is the line I have taken with all persons brought before me on the charge of being Christians. **I have asked them in person if they are Christians, and if they admit it, I repeat the question a second and third time, with a warning of the punishment awaiting them. If they persist, I order them to be led away for execution;** for, whatever

the nature of their admission, I am convinced that their stubbornness and unshakeable obstinacy ought not to go unpunished. There have been others similarly fanatical who are Roman citizens. I have entered them on the list of persons to be sent to Rome for trial.

Now that I have begun to deal with this problem, as so often happens, the charges are becoming more widespread and increasing in variety. An anonymous pamphlet has been circulated which contains the names of a number of accused persons. **Among these I considered that I should dismiss any who denied that they were or ever had been Christians when they had repeated after me a formula of invocation to the gods and had made offerings of wine and incense to your statue (which I had ordered to be brought into court for this purpose along with the images of the gods), and furthermore had reviled the name of Christ: none of which things, I understand, any genuine Christian can be induced to do.**

Others, whose names were given to me by an informer, first admitted the charge and then denied it; they said that they had ceased to be Christians two or more years previously, and some of them even twenty years ago. They all did reverence

to your statue and the images of the gods in the same way as the others, and reviled the name of Christ. They also declared that the sum total of their guilt or error amounted to no more than this: **they had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately among themselves in honour of Christ as if to a god, and also to bind themselves by oath, not for any criminal purpose, but to abstain from theft, robbery and adultery, to commit no breach of trust and not to deny a deposit when called upon to restore it.** After this ceremony it had been their custom to disperse and re-assemble later to take food of an ordinary, harmless kind; but they had in fact given up this practice **since my edict, issued on your instructions, which banned all political societies.** This made me decide it was all the more necessary to extract the truth by torture from two slave-women, whom they call deaconesses. I found nothing but a degenerate sort of cult carried to extravagant lengths. I have therefore postponed any further examination and hastened to consult you. The question seems to me to be worthy of your consideration, especially in view of the number of persons endangered; for a great many individuals of every age and class, both men and women, are being brought to trial, and this is likely to continue. **It is not only the towns, but villages and rural districts too which are infected through contact with this wretched cult. I think though that it is still possible for it to be checked and directed to better ends, for there is no doubt that people have begun to throng the temples which had been almost entirely deserted for a long time;** the sacred rites which had been allowed to lapse

are being performed again, and flesh of sacrificial victims is on sale everywhere, though up till recently scarcely anyone could be found to buy it. It is easy to infer from this that a great many people could be reformed if they were given an opportunity to repent.

Trajan's Reply to Pliny:

You have followed the right course of procedure, my dear Pliny, in your examination of the cases of persons charged with being Christians, for it is impossible to lay down a general rule to a fixed formula. **These people must not be hunted out; if they are brought before you and the charge against them is proved, they must be punished, but in the case of anyone who denies that he is a Christian, and makes it clear that he is not by offering prayers to our gods, he is to be pardoned as a result of his repentance however suspect his past conduct may be.** But pamphlets circulated anonymously must play no part in any accusation. They create the worst sort of precedent and are quite out of keeping with the spirit of our age.



Revelation – Lesson 5

How to Interpret Revelation

1. We should pay careful attention to the context and the time frame of the book.
2. We should use easily understood verses to help us understand verses that are harder to understand.
3. We should interpret apocalyptic language figuratively unless we have a compelling reason to do otherwise.
4. Similarity of speech does not imply identity of subjects. (The same image can be used to depict different subjects.)
5. Dissimilarity of speech does not imply distinctness of subjects. (Different images can be used to depict the same subject.)
6. We should always carefully study how the same symbols are used elsewhere in the Bible, while keeping Rules #4 and #5 in mind.
7. We should not add symbols to the text.
8. We should pay careful attention to any explanations that are given in the text.
9. Sometimes a literal person, place, or thing is later used as a figure for a similar person, place, or thing.
10. Sometimes a figurative number is also a literal number.

How **NOT** to Interpret Revelation

1. Make sure that our interpretation has no particular message for the initial readers of the book who were suffering persecution and praying to God for deliverance. Ideally, our view of this book should create *panic* rather than provide *comfort*.
2. Make sure that our own generation, and not anyone else, is the focus of this book.
3. Make sure that our interpretation includes signs pointing to the end of the world.
4. Make sure that we ignore the context of the book. We should study each verse as if it is the only verse in the Bible and without regard to history.
5. Make sure that we ignore the time frame of the book, no matter how clear it is or how many times it is repeated in the book.
6. Make no efforts to be consistent in our interpretation.
7. Ignore the symbols in the book. Instead, we should always interpret the text with *rigid literalism* — except when we don't.
8. Ignore the Old Testament.
9. Ignore the rest of the New Testament.
10. Treat the book of Revelation as two books — a first book with letters for the first century church, and a second unrelated book with a vision about nuclear bombs.

Lesson 8



Ephesus
The Loveless Church

Smyrna
The Persecuted Church

Pergamum
The Compromising
Church

Thyatira
The Corrupt Church

Sardis
The Dying Church

Philadelphia
The Loyal Church

Laodicea
The Lukewarm Church





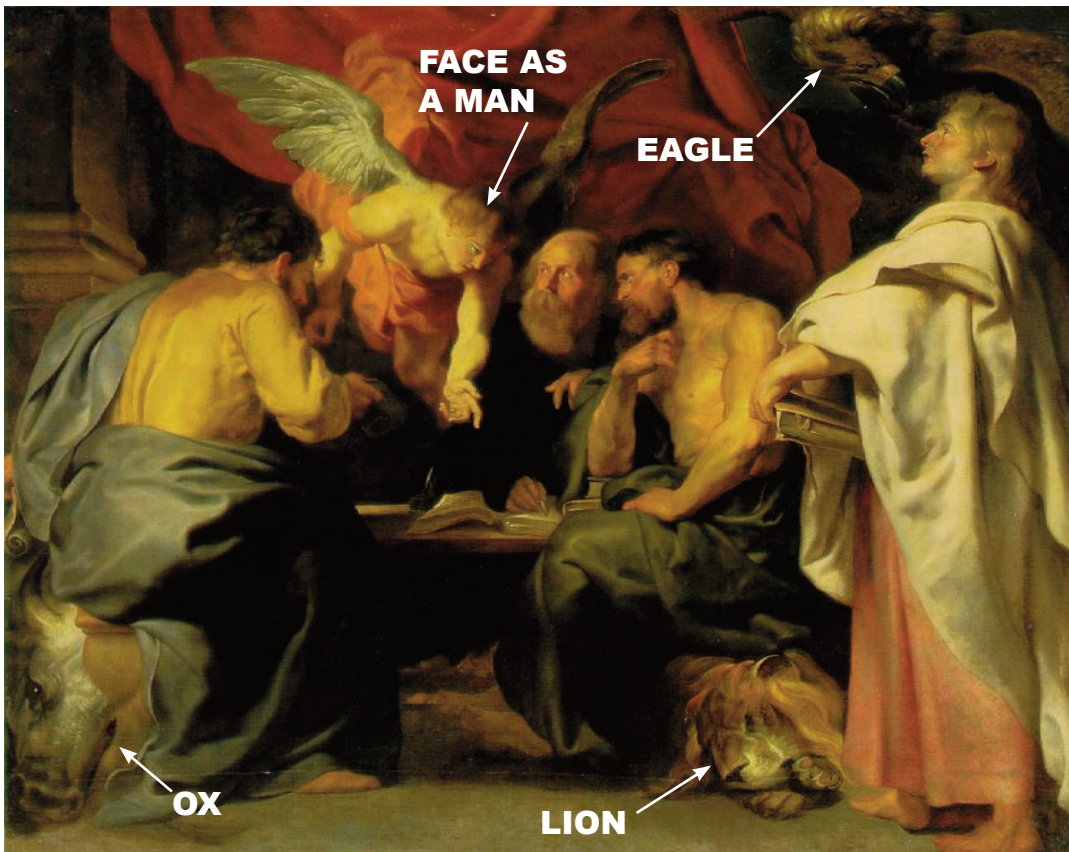
DOMITIAN

ROMULUS & REMUS

Revelation

Lesson 13

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FACE AS
A MAN

EAGLE

OX

LION

"The Four Evangelists conferring about the Gospels," by Peter Paul Rubens, 1614.



Four glazed terracotta rondellos, one of each gospel writer, by Luca della Robbia, b. 1399/1400.

Lesson 15

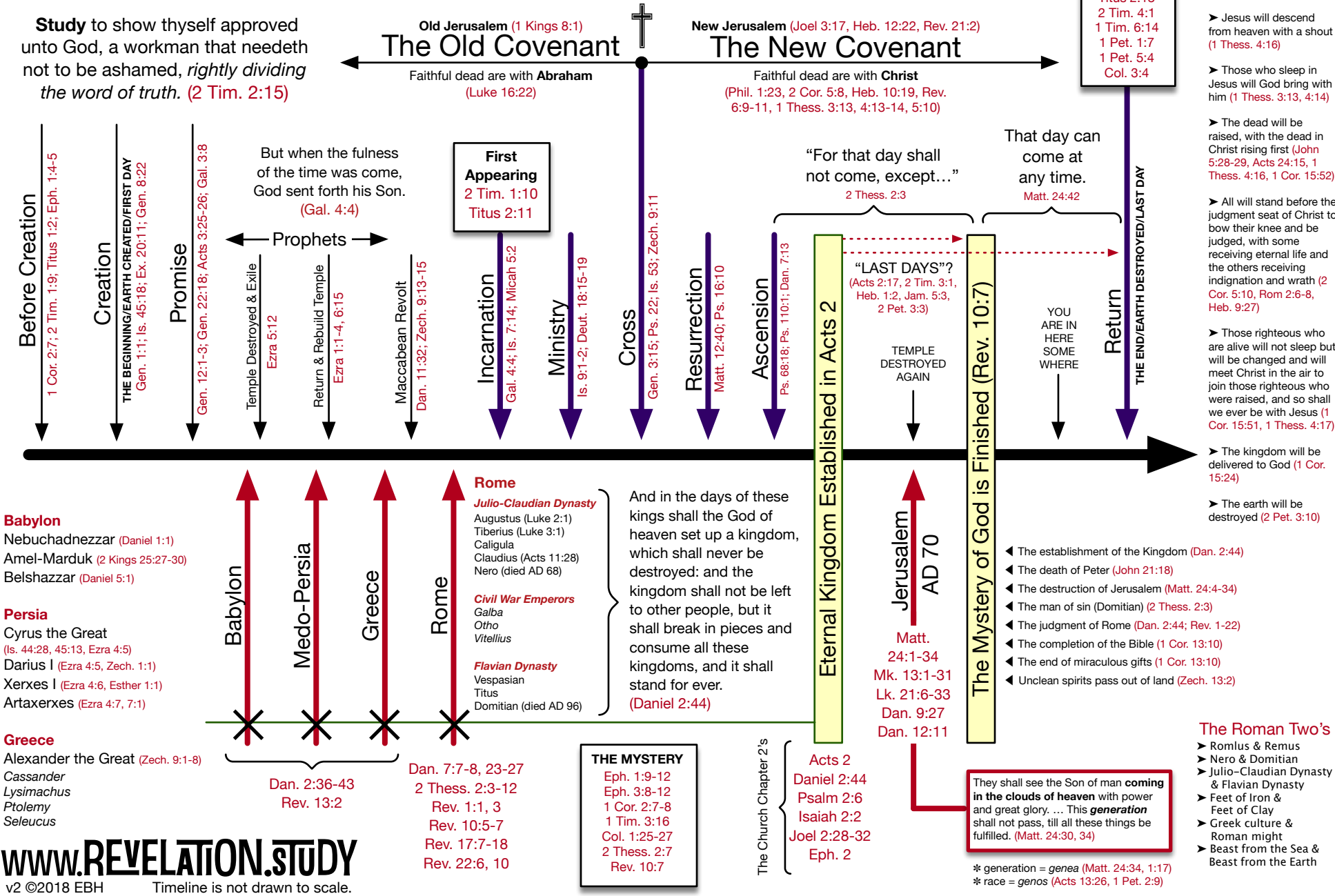
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Revelation: Lesson 23

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, *rightly dividing the word of truth.* (2 Tim. 2:15)

But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. (Revelation 10:7)



Revelation Lesson 27

And he had in his right hand **seven stars**: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. (Revelation 1:16)



The infant son of Domitian is shown as baby Jupiter sitting on a globe. The globe represents world dominion and power, while the seven stars around the child denote divinity. The intent of the coin is to depict the child on the globe as the son of a god and as the conqueror of the world. The inscription on the back reads: “The Divine Caesar — Son of the Emperor Domitian.”



The inscription on the front reads: “Son of Divine Caesar — Domitian,” by which Domitian was claiming to be the son of a god. Compare this with 2 Thessalonians 2:4 — “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”



This coin was minted in the reign of Hadrian, who reigned from AD 117 (just 20 years after Domitian’s death) to 138. Notice the seven stars on the reverse side of the coin.

Ask me after class if you want to see these two coins.

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REVELATION LESSON 29

CHAPTER TWELVE

- ① 1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:
- 2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.
- ③ 3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.
- 4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.
- ⑤ 5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.
- ⑥ 6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

- ⑥ 7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.
- ⑦ 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. 12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.
- ⑧

- ⑨ 13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. 14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. 15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. 16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. 17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.



The book of Revelation is written.



THE JULIO-CLAUDIAN DYNASTY

THE CIVIL WAR KINGS

THE FLAVIAN DYNASTY

“And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.” (Revelation 13:1)

REVELATION LESSON 33

"THE ANTICHRIST"

1 JOHN 2:18

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard **that antichrist** shall come, even now are there many **antichrists**; whereby we know that it is the last time.

DANIEL 7:8

I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another **little horn**, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots; and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

1 JOHN 2:22

Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is **anti-christ**, that denieth the Father and the Son.

DANIEL 7:20-22

And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of **the other which came up**, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

1 JOHN 4:3

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of **antichrist**, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

2 THESSALONIANS 2:3-4

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and **that man of sin** be revealed, **the son of perdition**; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

2 JOHN 1:7





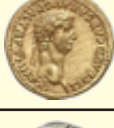







For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an **antichrist**.

REVELATION 17:11

And the beast that was, and is not, even he is **the eighth**, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

REVELATION LESSON 39

“THE TWELVE CAESARS”

				A	B	C	D
Republic	1		Julius Caesar	Assassinated on March 15, 44 BC.	1	1	
Julio-Claudian Dynasty	2		Augustus	Reigned from 31 BC to AD 14. (Luke 2:1)	2	2	1
	3		Tiberius	Reigned from AD 14 until 37. (Luke 3:1)	3	3	2
	4		Caligula	Reigned from AD 37 to 41.	4	4	3
	5		Claudius	Reigned from AD 41 to 54. (Acts 11:28)	5	5	4
	6		Nero	Reigned from AD 54 to 68. (Acts 25:11)	6	6	5
	Civil War Kings	7		Galba	Reigned seven months from AD 68 to 69.	7	
8			Otho	Reigned 95 days in AD 69.	8		7
9			Vitellius	Reigned eight months in AD 69.			8
Flavian Dynasty	10		Vespasian	Reigned from AD 69 to 79.		7	6
	11		Titus	Reigned for 26 months from AD 79 to 81.		8	7
	12		Domitian	Reigned from AD 81 to 96.			8

Revelation 17:10-11

And there are **seven kings**: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. And the beast that was, and is not, even he is **the eighth**, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

Daniel 7:24-25

And the ten horns out of this kingdom are **ten kings** that shall arise: **and another** shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and **he shall subdue three kings**. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.



