

**THE VISION OF CHRIST - 1**  
(Rev 1:9-13) 09-30-18  
Grace Bible Church, Gillette, Wyoming  
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I. THE SITUATION OF REVELATION (Rev 1:9-11)

A. John's Description (Rev 1:9)

1. There are two times, three counting the KJV, where John describes himself as "**I, John**" (Rev 1:9; 22:8; KJV - Rev 21:2). In the Gospel of John, he described himself as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" (Joh 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20) and the "disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things" (Joh 21:24).
2. John always wrote with an attitude of humility. But here in Revelation, John wrote with astonishment that he himself would receive a revelation from Jesus Christ.
3. Though an apostle, John humbly and affectionately identified himself a "**brother**" in the Lord.

B. John's Persecution

1. John also identified himself as a "**fellow partaker**" (*sugkoinōnos* - *to share with or in common with*) who shared in the persecution of the day with all believers.
2. John described persecution as "**tribulation**" (*thlipsis* - *lit. pressing together, fig. suffering brought on by outward circumstances*). John was not saying that he was going through the event called the Great Tribulation (Mat 24:21; Rev 7:14). Rather, he was speaking of the difficult persecution that was being pressed upon all Christians at that time.
3. John's reference to being a fellow partaker in the **kingdom** refers to the association of all believers who have been made heavenly citizens of Christ's kingdom (Php 3:20; Eph 2:19).
4. Even though Christ's kingdom is under constant attack from the kingdom of this world (Joh 18:36 cf. Eph 2:2), the trials and the response of Christians are described as **perseverance**. "Perseverance" is the Greek word *hupomonē* which means to "remain under." Believers are to remain under trials and persecution for the glory and for sake of Christ ["**which are in Jesus**"] (Rom 5:3-4; Heb 12:1; Jam 1:2-4).

C. John's Persecution Under Domitian

1. There is a controversy over who was emperor during the time of John's exile.
2. The persecution under Nero was mostly limited to Rome, however, Domitian's persecution of Christians went far beyond Rome and fits the context of John's exile.
3. Historical evidence points specifically to the reign of Domitian during John's exile (Irenaeus [115-202], Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Hippolytus, Victorinus, Eusebius, etc.).
4. Historical evidence records Christian persecution under Domitian (Tertullian [155-220], Eusebius, Jerome).
5. Historical evidence sites Domitian's self-deification to "Dominus et Deus" ["Lord and God"] (Suetonius [69-122], Cassius Dio).

D. John's Exile

1. Island of Patmos

- a. Historical evidence states that banishment to the islands was a form of punishment in the first century (Tacitus [55-117], Cassius Dio). Though not one of the common penal islands, John was probably sent to **Patmos** so that he would not convert the other islands.
- b. Patmos is the northernmost island of the Dodecanese islands of Greece. Two other islands from the Dodecanese are mentioned in Act 21:1, namely, Cos and Rhodes.
- c. Patmos is only 7.5 miles long and 6 miles at the widest point. The 13 square mile area is a volcanic island made up largely of rocks and treeless landscapes.

2. Testimony of Jesus

- a. Domitian banished his own niece, Flavia Domitilla, to the island of Pandateria with the charge of atheism (Cassio Dio [155-235]).
- b. John was exiled to Patmos by Domitian because of his Christianity and preaching. He was exiled because of the **word of God** (Act 4:31; 6:7; 8:14; 11:1; 13:5; 17:13) and the **testimony of Jesus** (cf. Act 5:42; 8:35; 17:18) which are synonymous terms. Essential what they mean is that, "*John suffered exile for his faithful, unequivocal, uncompromising preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ*" (MacArthur).

E. John on the Lord's Day (Rev 1:10)

1. Lord's Day
    - a. Some suggest that the **Lord's Day** is equivalent to the "Day of the Lord." The Day of the Lord is not one particular day but a period of time in which the Lord will bring His judgment through a series of events.
    - b. However, the phrase could simply be a reference to the Christian day of worship on the first day of the week (Sunday).
    - c. The Greek construction (*tê kuriakê hêmera, adjectival*) is a different construction than the one normally used for the phrase "Day of the Lord" (*hêmera kuriou or tê hêmera tou kuriou, 1Co 5:5; 1Th 5:2; 2Th 2:2; 2Pe 3:10*).
  2. In the Spirit
    - a. The phrase "**in the Spirit**" here suggests more than being filled with the Spirit. The context refers to the Spirit's revelatory work in the apostle. God superseded John's natural awareness and brought him into contact with the invisible spiritual world. In other words, the apostle saw a heavenly vision (Eze 2:2; 3:12, 14; Act 10:10-11; 22:17-18).
    - b. It was in this spiritual condition that John heard a **loud voice like the sound of a trumpet** which signals a solemn and commanding announcement (Rev 5:2, 12; 6:10; 7:2, 10; 8:13; 10:3; 11:12, 15; 12:10; 14:2, 15, 18; 16:1, 17; 19:1, 17; 21:3).
    - c. The loud voice in this case was the voice of the Lord Jesus (Rev 1:12-13, 17-18).
- F. John's Writing to the Churches (Rev 1:11)
1. Write what you See
    - a. The Lord Jesus commanded John to **write** in a book. This is one of twelve times that John is commanded to write (Rev 1:11; 1:19; 2:1; 2:8; 2:12; 2:18; 3:1; 3:7; 3:14; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5). Once John is told not to write (Rev 10:4).
    - b. "**Book**" is the Greek word *biblion* and would mean a scroll made out of parchment.
    - c. John is to write **what he sees** when the Spirit reveals those things in visions.
  2. Seven Churches
    - a. The things which John sees pertaining to the churches are the "things which are" (cf. Rev 1:19b).
    - b. The **seven** (literal) **churches** are the ones who are in "Asia" (Asia Minor, Modern Turkey) recorded as **Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea**.
    - c. Not only are these seven churches the major churches in Asia Minor, but they are named according to the postal route by which the letter was to be delivered.

## II. THE FIRST VISION OF REVELATION (Rev 1:12-13)

- A. Seven Golden Lampstands (Rev 1:12)
  1. The symbols in Revelation are interpreted by 1) Revelation itself, 2) allusions to OT Scriptures, 3) cross references in Revelation, 4) biblical theology, and 5) knowledge of historical background (adapted from S. Lewis Johnson in loc.)
  2. The identity of the "seven golden lampstands" is given by John in Rev 1:20. They are the seven churches.
  3. The number **seven** can also symbolize fullness or completeness as was symbolized in the description of the Spirit in the "seven Spirits" (Rev 1:4). God rested on the seventh day after completing Creation (Gen 2:2-3). There were seven lamps in the Tabernacle (Exo 25:37) and seven lamps in Zechariah's vision (Zec 4:2).
  4. **Gold** is a precious metal and the church is precious to Christ, who purchased it with His blood (Rev 1:5).
  5. **Lampstands** emit light and believers are the "light of the world" to emit Christ's light in the world (Mat 5:14).
- B. Son of Man in Midst of the Lampstands (Rev 1:13)
  1. In the midst of the lampstands was one like a **son of man.** The title "**Son of man**" is used for Christ over 80 times in the Gospels and 13 times in John's gospel. It is reminiscent of Daniel's vision of the "Son of Man" as the Messiah (Dan 7:13).
  2. This was John's vision of Christ as He is now in the Church Age. Christ is in the **midst** of His church then and now. This is a vision of the blessing that believers have now.

## III. OBSERVATIONS AND APPLICATIONS

- A. The Persecution of John
  1. John would have at least been in his late eighties when he was banished to Patmos. According to Sir William Ramsay, John may have been subject to forced labor on the island.

2. Banishment combined with hard labour for life was one of the grave penalties. Many Christians were punished in that way. ... It was in its worst forms a terrible fate: like the death penalty it was preceded by scourging, and it was marked by perpetual fetters, scanty clothing, insufficient food, sleep on the bare ground in a dark prison, and work under the lash of military overseers.
  3. Persecution will happen to believers (2Ti 3:12), but Christ is in the midst of His church.
- B. The Perseverance of John
1. The apostle John endured persecution because, though he was in his late eighties, he continued to preach the Word. He continued to minister to the church. He continued to use his position and gifts in the church.
  2. Apparently, there is no cut off age for using one's gifts in the church. I would also say there is no young age limit in serving the Lord and serving in the church.
  3. Perseverance is needed by believers (Heb 12:1), but Christ is in the midst of His church.
- C. The Presence of Christ in the Church Age - We have encouragement in persecution and encouragement to persevere.
1. Christ is present with His Church (Mat 28:20).
  2. Christ is potentate over the church (Col 1:18).
  3. Christ is priest to His church (Heb 2:17).
  4. Christ is praying for His church (Rom 8:34; Heb 7:25).
  5. Christ is purifying His church (Eph 5:26-27).
  6. Christ is protector of His church (Mat 16:18).