



THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

- being chosen to bring change -
“Patmospheric Treasure”
1:9-11

In what he called “The Second Persecution Under [Roman Emperor] Domitian,” John Foxe (author of *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*) wrote,

Among the numerous martyrs that suffered during this persecution was... St. John, who was boiled in oil, and afterward banished to Patmos.

Afterwards? Wow! Boiling is a very slow, incredibly painful form of execution by torture. The condemned is stripped naked and either plunged into already boiling liquid or tied up and placed in a giant cauldron of cold liquid, under which the executioner then lights a fire, which heats the liquid until it boils. The liquid used may be oil, water, acid, tar, or even molten lead.

Tradition tells us that Domitian commanded that the apostle John be boiled to death in oil but John only continued to preach from within the cauldron. Thus John was banished to Patmos.

It was God's rather unorthodox way of getting His aging servant to a place where he could receive the series of visions we know as *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*.

Revelation 1:9 I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

This is already the third mention of his name by **John** in the book. I think he kept mentioning his name, telling them it was really him, because he wanted them to see God's faithfulness in preserving him.

John's having survived boiling would have encouraged the persecuted believers. He would have become a poster boy for endurance. Banishing him to **Patmos** was a more wicked strategy. There he would drop out of circulation. It could seem to the suffering church, over time, that the Lord had abandoned him.

*"No, no," said John. "It is I, **John** – and here is why the Lord and not Domitian brought me to **Patmos**."*

John was the last living apostle. He was the last living person who was a writer of the inspired Word of God. So it's humbling that he takes no title other than **your brother**.

We have various gifts; we serve in various capacities; we hold various offices in the Lord's church. But we are equals; we are brothers and sisters.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus are **companions** along life's journey homeward to Heaven. *Try to be good company to others!*

John described our time on earth journeying heavenward as **the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ**. Here is what I think that trio of phrases might mean:

1. We are promised **tribulation** on our journey heavenward. Jesus said **in the world you will have tribulation** (John 16:33). This isn't referring to the Great Tribulation. This tribulation is the trials and troubles that we can count on just for being believers.
2. At the same time we are promised **tribulation** we are assured of the **kingdom**. Nothing is more certain than Jesus will return for us then return *with* us to establish the literal kingdom of God on the earth.
3. Meanwhile we need the **patience of Jesus Christ**. **Patience** is the Greek word *hypomone* and describes the hope that springs from our faith that leads to our being able to endure hardship. It is said to be **of Jesus Christ** because He is the One who both promised **tribulation** and assured us of the **kingdom**. We can patiently suffer tribulation because it's what Jesus promised **and** it will shortly be over.

John **was on the island that is called Patmos**. The verb tense is that *he came to be* there. It wasn't his idea. But, as we've seen, neither was it really Domitian's either. It was the Lord's.

Patmos is some fifty miles off the coast of Ephesus in the Aegean Sea. It is roughly 10 miles long by 6 miles wide. (By comparison, Catalina Island is 26 miles off the Southern California coast and 22 miles long by 8 miles wide). It was an Alcatraz from which there was no escape. I've heard it said that John was forced to work either mining salt or quarrying marble.

Domitian tried to boil him then exiled him **for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ**. John was preaching from **the word of God** and his **testimony** was that **Jesus** was the promised Messiah of Israel and Savior of the world.

When we share Jesus Christ it's not something we're making up. We are simply revealing to people that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of everything God has been saying since the Garden of Eden. The Word of God is our foundation. Our testimony is that it describes salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet,

In the Spirit isn't too hard to grasp. Obviously John was touched by the Holy Spirit in such a way that he was in a kind of trance-like state and carried beyond his normal senses to be able to experience the series of visions revealed to him.

The phrase, **the Lord's Day**, is somewhat controversial. There are two main interpretations:

1. Some say it means the first day of the week, Sunday. They point out that Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday; that He made notable appearances to His disciples on Sunday; that the Holy Spirit was sent on a Pentecost Sunday; that the early church certainly met on Sunday, the first day of the week, the Lord's Day.
2. Others say **the Lord's Day** means the Day of the Lord. It is that period of time prophesied in the Old Testament and revealed to John in the Revelation. It includes the Great Tribulation and the Millennial Kingdom.

It's hard to see why John would make such a big deal out of the fact it was Sunday! Sunday was never referred to as **the Lord's Day** in the Bible and not in church history until much later.

There is also a third possibility. This particular word for **Lord's** was used outside of the Bible in common literature to refer to the imperial authority of Rome. Christians began to use it of the greater authority of Jesus Christ. Thus John may simply have been saying that while he was **in the Spirit** he saw ahead to the time on earth when Jesus would be the ultimate ruling authority.

It seems John was saying that he was spiritually transported in such a way or to such a state that he could see the events of the Revelation transpire and usher in the Lord's ultimate authority.

He **heard behind [him] a loud voice, as of a trumpet...** It wasn't a trumpet; it was a **loud voice**.

Loud doesn't do the translation justice. *Great* is a better word, but still falls short. It means something like *full of stature*. 'Majestic' isn't one of the official definitions but that's more the idea.

John hadn't heard Jesus' **voice** – His physical **voice** – since the ascension. Now he hears it with its new heavenly majesty.

Trumpets were commonly used by the Jews. Often they were sounded to gather the people of God:

1. Trumpets were sounded in Old Testament times to gather the tribes together.
2. A trumpet sounded every morning to announce the services at the Temple.

Describing Jesus' voice like **a trumpet** in conjunction with the mention of **the seven churches** in the next verse simply but powerfully means that He was gathering the churches to hear something very special.

We should always want to be gathered with the saints on earth. Some gatherings *are* more special than others.

Revelation 1:11 saying, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last," and, "What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia: to Ephesus, to Smyrna, to Pergamos, to Thyatira, to Sardis, to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea."

This is the second time Jesus calls Himself **the Alpha and the Omega** in this chapter. We've talked about it's doctrinal meaning – that Jesus is all God has to say to us, the complete spiritual alphabet and all its words.

It also means something on a devotional level. **Alpha** is the beginning; **Omega** is the end. The Christians had begun well when they were first born-again. Now they were being persecuted – *really* persecuted. They were losing their livelihood and their lives for the sake of Jesus. Jesus was assuring them that the end would turn out just as God had promised. Jesus is **the Alpha and the Omega**. What He had begun in them and in the world, He would complete.

First and **Last** thus reminds us that Jesus was there at creation and He will bring the creation to its conclusion. I can therefore trust Him for help and strength **right now** in my tribulation.

Persecuted believers are drawn to the Revelation of Jesus Christ. It reveals to them that, despite their awful sufferings, God's plan is unfolding and is right on track.

Perhaps it is a commentary on his relative ease and comfort if a Christian is not really interested in the things of this book or prophecy in general.

John was told **What you see, write in a book and send it to the seven churches which are in Asia**. Christian historians say that John was on Patmos for about eighteen months. After that he returned to Ephesus and wrote what he had seen.

He was going to **see** things that he must later **write in a book and send to the seven specific churches** listed by the Lord.

John was being told to pay close attention. Even more so because the things he'd see were for others to benefit from.

We're not writing a book; we **are** the book – living letters for all to see and read. We ought to pay close attention to what the Lord shows us in His Word and in His world. Others can benefit from our time spent with the Lord.

We talked a great deal about the levels of meaning behind the number **seven** and these specific **churches** in our last study. One thing to note here is that Jesus dealt with each church as an independent entity. He was the Head of each church; there was no diocese or denomination. Organization like that isn't necessarily wrong; but neither is it necessary.

The church is an organism. It is a body with Jesus as its head. If we all know our gifts and offices and perform our service submitting to the Lord and to one another, then we don't need a great deal of organization.

A thought for those of us getting older. John had been serving the Lord for over sixty years. You'd have to conclude from John that there is no retirement from serving the Lord. **If you do plan to retire from something, it ought to be to serve the Lord!**

We may not be transported by the Holy Spirit to the 'Patmosphere' of revelation that John received. But we **will** shortly be translated from earth to Heaven. Jesus promised to return to resurrect and rapture His church off the earth prior to the Great Tribulation.

In the mean time we can be transformed day-by-day as we hear the Lord's voice and turn to spend time with Him.

