

John was On the Island of Patmos because of the Testimony of Jesus

1: 9-11

DIG: Why was John on Patmos? What kind of a place was it? What is meant by the Lord's day? What was significant about his spiritual condition and the day when he received his vision? What was his message?

REFLECT: Do you feel like you are on Patmos suffering like John right now, or do you feel like you are reigning in the Spirit? Why? Can both happen at once? How can John's message to seven churches, written so long ago, give you hope for today?

The books of **Isaiah** and **Ezekiel** both began with a great vision of the glory of **ADONAI** (**Isaiah 6** and **Ezekiel 1**), and the same is true for **John** in the book of **Revelation**. As if he were going out of his way to keep the spotlight on **Jesus**, the apostle **John** introduced himself and his circumstances with succinct simplicity and humility, saying: **I, John (1:9a)**. Though **John** could have pointed out things in his resume that no one then alive could equal, he didn't. Instead, he described himself in ways that emphasized the common experience shared by all believers: **Your brother and companion in the tribulation (NASB) and kingdom and patient endurance that are ours in Jesus (1:9b)**.

Tribulation: The Greek word *thlipsis* can be translated **suffering** or **tribulation**. It can refer to the coming **Great Tribulation** of the end times, leading up to the physical return of the **Messiah** (see my commentary on **Isaiah Kg - The Second Coming of Jesus Christ**). More commonly, though, it refers to the general trials and **suffering** experienced by believers of every age (**Revelation 1:9; John 16:33; Romans 5:3**).

Kingdom: The term **kingdom** here, refers to the future messianic Kingdom that will be established when **Christ** returns (**Matthew 19:28; Acts 1:6-7; Second Timothy 4:1; Revelation 20:1-6**). In light of the common destiny of all believers, they are occasionally referred to as **God's "kingdom"** in a spiritual sense (**First Cor 4:20; Colossians 1:13**).

Patient endurance: The Greek noun *hupomone* implies **patient endurance under extreme difficulty**, as a beast of burden might endure under a heavy load. **ADONAI Himself** gives believers the ability to endure such hardship (**Romans 15:5; Colossians 1:11**).

Church tradition has it that Roman authorities attempted to boil **the aged apostle** in oil, but **he** was miraculously preserved, although scared, which baffled and frightened the superstitious officials. **He was** then exiled to **the island of Patmos (1:9c)**, which means *treading*. It is a small barren **island** off the west coast of present-day Turkey in the Aegean Sea, about 40 miles, west southwest of **Miletus (Acts 20:15)**. It was a small **island**, 8 miles long and 5 miles wide and measured 30 Roman miles in circumference.¹⁴ It had very rocky, volcanic soil, and because it could not sustain anything else it was used by the Roman Empire as a penal colony for political prisoners. **Yochanan** was exiled to **Patmos** for eighteen months beginning in AD 95.

During the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian (see **Ac - The Book of Revelation From a Jewish Perspective**), **John** was exiled to **Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony about Yeshua (1:9c)**. According to several early fathers of the faith like Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Eusebius, **John** was sent to that **island** as a prisoner to work in the mines following **his** effective pastorate at Ephesus.¹⁵ Domitian, afraid of the kingdom of **God** and wanting to rid the world of any competition to his throne, sought out the known descendants of King David. He called in two grandsons of **Jesus'** brother **Jude** for questioning regarding the nature of **Christ's** Kingdom and whether they were heirs to the Roman throne and, therefore, a threat to him personally. To Domitian's surprise, however, those messianic believing relatives of **Messiah** explained that the Kingdom they were a part of was heavenly, not earthly, and it was to be established at the end of the world. What was more, they both had little money. After showing the emperor their empty pockets he released them. **John** soon returned from exile and ministered in the seven churches in Asia Minor until his death after the crowning of Emperor Trajan in AD 98.

Therefore, in these things - **tribulation, kingdom and perseverance** - **Yeshua** drew believers together by giving them purpose and perspective in the midst of their suffering. If **the Lord** could suffer unjustly for them, they could certainly endure persecution for **Him**. And as **Yochanan** personally reflected upon the persecution that **he** and the **churches** of Asia Minor were enduring, **he** received a revelation about **Jesus Christ**.

Even in exile for his faith, surviving in the uncertain surroundings of a rocky desolate island, **the elderly apostle** set aside time for worship and prayer. **John** received **his** message **on the Lord's day (1:10a)**, better translated *lordly day*. In the Greek, the word translated **Lord** is not a noun, but an adjective. It does not refer to a specific day of the week, such as the Sabbath (Saturday) or Sunday. Rather, it was a **day** in which **John** was in a time of meditation and prayer. Thus, for him, it was a *lordly day*.¹⁶ **He was in the Spirit and he heard behind him a penetrating voice, loud and clear as a trumpet (1:10b)**. The phrase **in the Spirit** means to be caught up in an ecstatic experience, or to enter into a

trance (Acts 11:5, 22:17). Rabbi Sha'ul described one such experience in **Second Corinthians 12:2**, when he was caught up to the third heaven and heard **inexpressible things**.¹⁷ Suddenly he was aware that **the Lord Himself** had come down from **heaven** to be with **John** on that *lordly day* to show **him** things to come.¹⁸ The **voice behind** him gave a simple instruction, saying: **Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches. Send what you see to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (1:11)**. These **seven** cities appear in the order that a messenger, traveling clockwise would visit them. Copies of **Revelation** would have been distributed to each **church**.¹⁹

If you were to list the top three blessings you would want to ask from **God**, would one of those blessings be **patient endurance**? We know we would need such gifts if we were going to face suffering or trials. But it's not something we like to think about. We'd rather ask for health, wealth, and happiness. In other words, we'd rather avoid **suffering** than ask for the gifts we really need. But the truth is that no matter how hard we try to avoid them, difficulties have a way of finding us like a heat seeking missile. They are simply a part of life on this earth. So rather than try to run away from the inevitable, perhaps we would do better to ask what would bring us the most hope, strength and comfort when **suffering** does come our way.

John tells us that **he** is a **brother and companion in suffering**, and that **he** shares in our **patient endurance**. Evidently, **he** found a way to deal with **his** own difficult life - a life of exile and deprivation **on the island of Patmos**. So exactly what was it that helped **him**? Nothing more than the firm conviction that **Jesus** was going to come back! **Yeshua the Messiah, the Alpha and the Omega**, the almighty and everlasting **One**, will be revealed to the nations, even those who have rejected **Him** and **His** followers. No matter what **he** faced, **John** knew that this **hope** would never change. Paul's letter to **Titus** encouraged **him** to live a **self-confident, upright and godly life in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:14)**.

Let's face it, daily life can be a grind. It's not hard to feel worn down by all our responsibilities, overwhelmed by worries or agitated by injustices. As a result, we can forget that our lives are **hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3)**. We are not alone, trudging through life's difficulties with no one to help us. We are in the center of **God's** eternal plan. **Jesus** is with us, and **His Holy Spirit** is working in and through us! Because **the Messiah** is really coming again, our lives have a purpose and a goal beyond making it to the end of a day or completing all the items on our to-do list.

When you pray today, lift your eyes to heaven. Ask **Jesus** to give you a vision of the end, when **His** promises will be fulfilled and you will see **Him** face to face. Imagine what it will be like when everyone sees **Him** and everything is put right. Let this heavenly vision inspire you and give you **hope**. Let it strengthen you to endure patiently and even enjoy whatever may come your way today. After all, you know the end of the story!

***Yeshua**, let me never forget that **You** are coming back. Fill my heart today, so that the vision of your heavenly glory will lift me up and give me a new perspective. Come, **Lord**, and give me **patient endurance, hope** and joy!²⁰*