

## **The Kingdom and Patience of Jesus Christ**

Revelation 1:9-11

*:<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet, <sup>11</sup> 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."*

As we begin today, I know there are thoughts of how many verses are in the text. We are not going to only cover three verses per week, but there is much in the introductory portions of the Book that we need to discuss.

We have already discussed that the Book of Revelation is the revelation of Jesus Christ, and that it was given to John as a message of encouragement to specifically the seven churches in Asia Minor. Today is the first time in the text, we actually learn the names of those churches. In last week's message Jesus was revealed as the Alpha, the Omega, the first and the last in today's passage those titles are repeated. These titles will be repeated again. But one of the things that is meant to be made clear here is that the Revelation of Jesus is given to John by Jesus, yes there are other messengers in the Book, but then John is writing down what it is that is being revealed to him.

John begins today's text by identifying himself as both a brother and a fellow companion in the tribulation. Something that should be noticed is that John does not say he is there brother in tribulation, but he says he is there brother in "the tribulation." In the Scriptures we are told that

all who live Godly lives in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. Tribulation is something that is part and parcel of what it means to be a Christian. But John identifies this tribulation that he is their companion in as the tribulation. He is identifying the tribulation that they are going through as the very tribulation that Jesus spoke of in the Olivet discourse. Here our Lord's words from Matthew 24:9<sup>9</sup> *"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake.* This specific period, which has been called "The Great Tribulation," is the tribulation that John is experiencing while he writes in the first century.

Now something that we miss because of preconceived ideas is that he speaks of the tribulation, but tribulation is an ongoing and a present reality. The tribulation he is speaking of is that there are members of the church who are being persecuted by not only apostate Israel, but they are being persecuted to a large degree by the Roman Empire. Prior to the reign of Nero Caesar, the Roman Empire, in large part, served as a buffer between the Jews and the early church. Where the Jews were persecutors of the early church it was the Roman Empire that stepped in and often protected the church from Jewish persecution.

This changed when Nero was Caesar as he began a massive slaughter of Christians. We have spoken of this in the past, but the early Church was accused by Rome of three heinous crimes against the state. They were accused of atheism, because of their unwillingness to follow the emperor cult. In Rome, all Gods were allowed, but in order to serve them one must receive the blessing of the emperor and this was done by burning a little bit of incense and declaring that Caesar was Lord. Since Jesus was Lord and not Caesar, the Christians would not do this act. Thus they were accused of atheism.

Secondly, the Christians were accused of the crime of incest. This accusation was of course false, but to those on the outside, to hear of Christians referring to one another as brother and as sister and of their deep love for one another aroused a little bit more than suspicion. It is interesting that when John begins to address the churches in Asia Minor he refers to himself as their brother.

Thirdly, they were accused of cannibalism. Again this arose to confusion about what took place when the Christians gathered together and ate the flesh and drank the blood of their Savior. I remember when I was younger, and people became confused about the Lord's Supper I thought it was funny. How strange that people would be confused about this I thought, but listen to this passage from John 6 beginning in the 50<sup>th</sup> verse, and this is our Lord speaking:

*. <sup>51</sup> I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."*

*<sup>52</sup> The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?"*

Notice the quarrel that broke out among the Jews about this saying.

*<sup>53</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. <sup>54</sup> Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. <sup>55</sup> For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. <sup>56</sup> He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup> As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. <sup>58</sup> This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever."*

*<sup>59</sup> These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum.*

*<sup>60</sup> Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”*

*<sup>61</sup> When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, “Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup> What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before? <sup>63</sup> It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life. <sup>64</sup> But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. <sup>65</sup> And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.”*

This saying was so controversial when Jesus first said it that many ceased to follow Him, To day that this controversy has died down is also rather naïve. I have said it before and I know I will say it again, the table of the Lord, whose purpose is to unite us, has possibly been the source of more division than any other subject in the history of the Church. During the time of the Roman Empire, misunderstandings from the outside were leading Christians to be killed. But remember, unless it has been granted by the Father, no one can understand it.

So John is their brother and companion in tribulation, but he is also their brother and companion in the kingdom and the patience of Jesus Christ. Just as the tribulation had come upon them so too had the kingdom of God. These early Christians were not sitting around awaiting the Kingdom of God. They were aware that it had come upon them, and they also knew that with

that coming kingdom the whole world had changed. In Matthew 12:22-30 Jesus pronounced that the Kingdom had already come upon them. It was there in the person of Jesus:

*22 Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. 23 And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"*

*24 Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."*

*25 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. 26 If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? 27 And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. 28 But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. 29 Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. 30 He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad."*

There are many who claim to use a very literal hermeneutic, by that I mean they claim that if the Bible says something, they believe it, but here Jesus tells the Pharisees plainly that the Kingdom had come upon them. The Pharisees, like many modern Bible interpreters have a difficult time seeing how the kingdom can be upon them and things not be perfect, but notice here in Revelation, John is their companion in tribulation and in the kingdom.

When Isaiah 9:7 says *Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end*, this is speaking of growth. That means the kingdom yesterday was smaller than it is today, and it will be bigger tomorrow than it was today. Of course that being the case, that means there are still enemies that are being crushed. But remember the enemy that is crushed today was at one time strong. In Luke 10, Jesus sent out 70 disciples two by two and he sent them to numerous cities where he said beginning in verse 9:

*<sup>9</sup> And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' <sup>10</sup> But whatever city you enter, and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup> 'The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you. <sup>17</sup> Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name."*

*<sup>18</sup> And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. <sup>19</sup> Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. <sup>20</sup> Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."*

When Jesus saw Satan falling as lightning from heaven He was announcing that his rule and dominion were over. We will see this more as we proceed in this Book, but something I want us to understand, and I know it may be difficult, but Satan has already been bound. I want to be clear, this does not mean he has been destroyed, but he has been bound. In Revelation 20, a very familiar passage of Scripture we read:

*20Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; **2**and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.*

I want us to notice that the binding of Satan that is spoken of in this passage is very specific. Satan is bound from deceiving the nations. Note: He can deceive the nations no more. We have to understand the state of the world at the time of the coming of Christ. Every nation on the planet was in darkness. Israel had been called to be a light to the nations and as we discussed last week rather than be the light, they were walking in darkness just like all of their neighbors.

Every Lord's Day as we are commissioned and sent forth into the world, we sing the Song of Simeon found in Luke. In that song Simeon says, *Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation Which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, **A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.***

Jesus is the light. As John 1 says the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it. When the true light comes into the world the darkness is driven out. Prior to the coming of Christ the way one came into covenant with God was through circumcision. Yes I know it was more than circumcision, but this was the sign of the covenant. There are examples in the Scripture of people who are known as God fearers. Whenever the Bible speaks of someone being a God-fearer they were not ethnically Jewish, but revered the Hebrew God. But now with the coming of Christ there is a change in the entire system of things:

Romans 10:9-13

*<sup>9</sup> that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. <sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." <sup>12</sup> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. <sup>13</sup> For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."*

There is much discussion in certain circles about John 3:16, probably the most well known passage of Scripture in the world, but we naturally read this passage according to our own environment.

*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

The Statement that God so loved the World is not even shocking to us. But to Nicodemus this was completely a shock. According to the teaching that was common in their circles, God loved the Jews and hated the world. The Jews were His special people and unless you were a member of that group you had no hope.

Perhaps even more shocking was the part where Jesus said, "whosoever believes on Him."

Whosoever would include the Romans. Whosoever would include the Greeks, but that is the magnitude of the coming of the light and the binding of Satan.

So John is their brother and companion in the tribulation, and in the kingdom and then it speaks of the patience of Christ.



The Word I want us to think about when we read the patience of Christ here is the word persevere. One of the things we will see throughout this Book is promises to those who overcome. Overcoming only means something, when there are obstacles. Overcoming has everything to do with persevering through difficulty. A question people often ask, is, “If all things are now in subjection under His feet, what is it that needs to be overcome.”?

This is where we deal with the subject of the already and not yet as it relates to the subject of eschatology. Christ has definitively won the battle, and yet, there are still rulers and authorities that must be defeated. The entire prophecy of the Book of Revelation is about that. But it is a picture of the way all of the enemies of Christ will be completely eradicated. The Kingdom has arrived. This means that we do not have to wait for some future redemptive or eschatological event before we can effectively take dominion over the earth. The dominion of God’s people throughout the world will simply be the result of a progressive outworking of what Christ Himself has already accomplished.

John wanted his readers to understand that they were in both the Great Tribulation and the Kingdom that, in fact, they were in the Tribulation precisely because the Kingdom had already come. Listen to the words from Daniel 7:13-14 which we spent a significant amount of time on in our series on Daniel:

*<sup>13</sup> “I was watching in the night visions,*

*And behold, One like the Son of Man,*

*Coming with the clouds of heaven!*

*He came to the Ancient of Days,*

*And they brought Him near before Him.*

*<sup>14</sup> Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,*

*That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him.*

*His dominion is an everlasting dominion,*

*Which shall not pass away,*

*And His kingdom the one*

*Which shall not be destroyed.*

The patience or perseverance of Christ is an important theme that we need to grasp. I know many of us struggle with the idea of patience, especially in our digital world. But the message we are given here is that through patience and perseverance the Kingdom will overcome. John and the churches he was writing too were in a time of great tribulation. The text says “the great tribulation,” and they were fighting for their survival. This was also prophesied in Daniel 7 verses 21 and 22.

*<sup>21</sup> “I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, <sup>22</sup> until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.*

Now John tells us where he is writing the letter from, and that is the island of Patmos. Patmos was a penal colony at this time and John tells us he is there for the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

I like what David Chilton writes about this: “St. John does not say that he is imprisoned on a rock in the sea on account of his own testimony about Christ, but on account of God’s Word and Jesus’ Testimony. He suffers because God has spoken, because Jesus has testified. Christ the faithful Witness has borne the Testimony against the would-be gods of this age, and they have fought back by imprisoning the apostle. This is why the Tribulation and Kingdom and

perseverance in which these believers share are all in Christ Jesus: His Testimony has determined the course of history.

Our text today ends with John telling us that he was in the Spirit on the Lords Day, and that is the setting for the receiving of this vision. When he says he was in the Sprit, we know this does not mean that he felt good, or that he was in a good mood, the language he is using here has to do with him being in the Holy Spirit. The language refers to some unusual state, or to some influence that had been brought to bear upon him from without and that was appropriate to such a day. Different commentaries either say that he was in that state of mind produced by the Holy Spirit, or he was under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Albert Barnes says: “The fair meaning of the passage is, that he was at that time favored, in a large measure, with the influences of the Holy Spirit - the spirit of true devotion; that he had a high state of religious enjoyment, and was in a condition not inappropriate to the remarkable communications which were made to him on that day.”

And that day was the Lord’s Day. We will spend more time talking about the Lord’s Day as we go on in this Book, but the Lord’s Day is the first day of the week. Christians began meeting together on the Lord’s Day because this was the day that the Lord was raised. We see this frequently in the Book of Acts. Something else that I want us to understand, another way of saying the Lord’s Day, is to say “The Day of the Lord.”

Now, it is when John is in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day, that he hears a loud voice as of a trumpet 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.”*”

