

# Seeing Christ on Patmos, Part 1

Revelation 1:9–20





“A lamb is a meek creature. It hurts none, is hurt by all; it hangs not back, when it is led to the slaughter; it cries not when it is pierced; no greater emblem of patience to be found among irrational creatures. To this the prophet likens our Savior, when he said, ‘He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth’ (Isaiah 53:7). How strange was His humility in entering into such a life!”

—Stephen Charnock

## Text and Outline

“I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance *which are* in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound* of a trumpet, saying, ‘Write in a book what you see, and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea.’”

### I. The Beholder of the Vision (1:9–10)

### II. The Behest of the Vision (1:11)



“Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash. His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength. When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man.”

**III. The Bearer of the Vision (1:12–16)**

**IV. The Burden of the Vision (1:17a)**

# I. The Beholder of the Vision (1:9–10)

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“I, John, **your brother** and **fellow partaker** in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance *which are* in Jesus” (1:9a).

- “**your brother**” – John’s first self-description emphasizes *family relationship*; in the grand scheme of what he is about to describe, John is just a commoner along with all Christians.
- “**fellow partaker**” – John’s second self-description emphasizes *mutual participation*; John is not aloof but shares in the same experiences as those to whom he writes.
- This *mutual participation* is expressed in three spheres:

**“I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus” (1:9a).**

- **“the tribulation”** – not “the Great Tribulation” that is coming soon (Matt 24:21; Rev 3:10; 7:14), but “the cup” of suffering common to all believers for loyalty to Christ (Matt 20:22–23; John 16:33; 2 Tim 3:12).
- **“the kingdom”** – “tribulation” and “kingdom” are oxymorons—this “kingdom” for believers comes later, inaugurated at Christ’s second coming (Luke 22:28–30; 2 Thess 1:5; Rev 20:1–6).
- **“the perseverance”** – the attitude required in the midst of the “tribulation” as believers await the “kingdom” (Rom 5:3; Rev 3:10).
- **“in Jesus”** – that which defines all three spheres.

**“perseverance”**

**Acts 14:21–22**



“After they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.’”

**“kingdom”**

**“tribulations”**

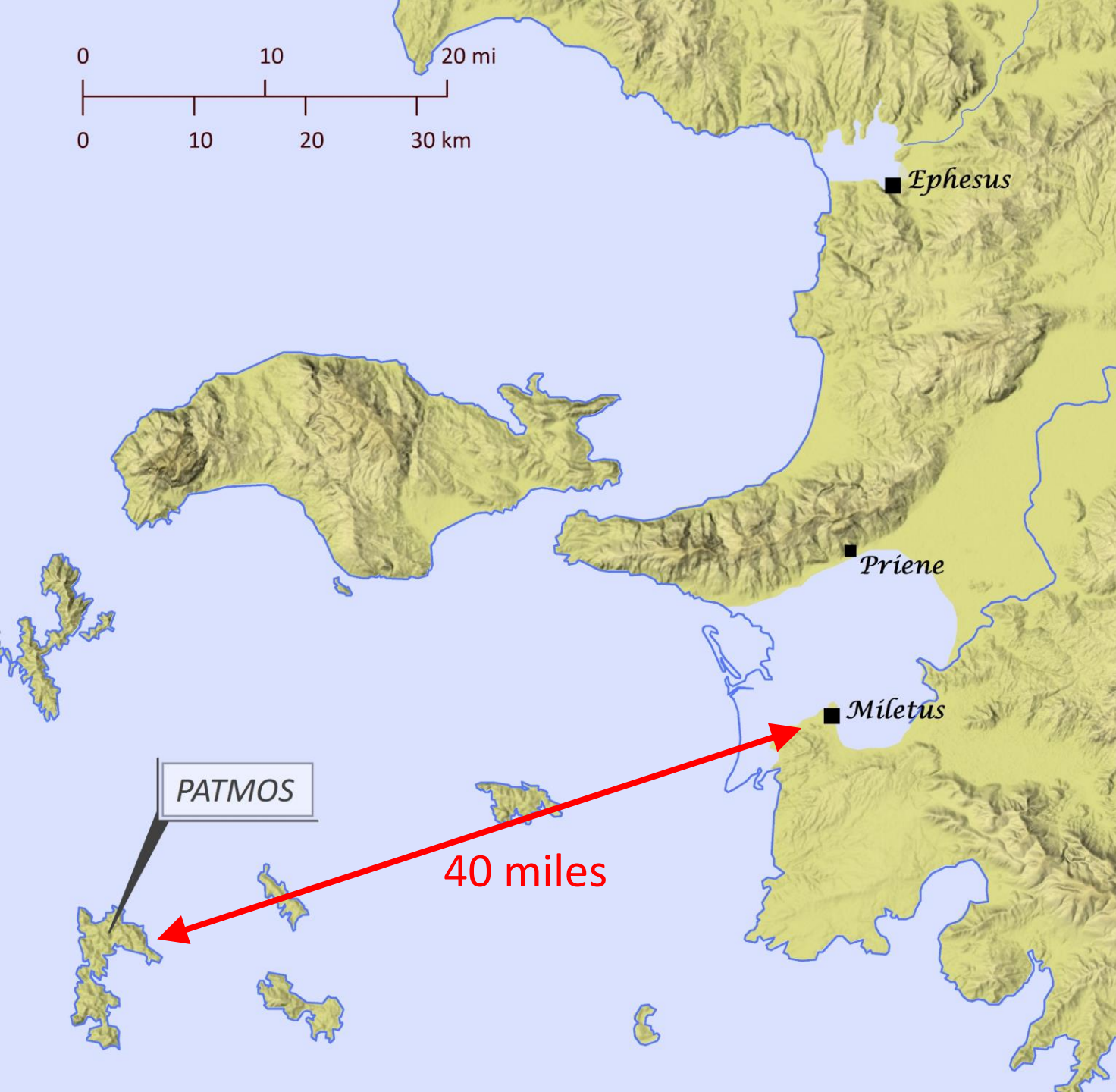
**“was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (1:9b).**

- **“on the island called Patmos”** – John’s *geographical* location; 40 miles off the coast from Miletus; possibly a Roman penal colony.



- **“the word of God”** – John was exiled there by Emperor Domitian (ruled AD 81–96) for his preaching of God’s word.
- **“and [particularly] the testimony of Jesus”** – the specific message—about Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, giver of eternal life (John 20:31; 1 John 1:1–3).













- According to church history, John eventually returned to Ephesus *after* Emperor Domitian died in AD 96.

“But after Domitian had reigned fifteen years, and Nerva had succeeded to the empire, the Roman Senate, according to the writers that record the history of those days, voted that Domitian’s honors should be cancelled, and that those who had been unjustly banished should return to their homes and have their property restored to them. It was at this time that the apostle John returned from his banishment in the island and took up his abode at Ephesus, according to an ancient Christian tradition.”

—Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.20.10–11

**“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound* of a trumpet” (1:10).**

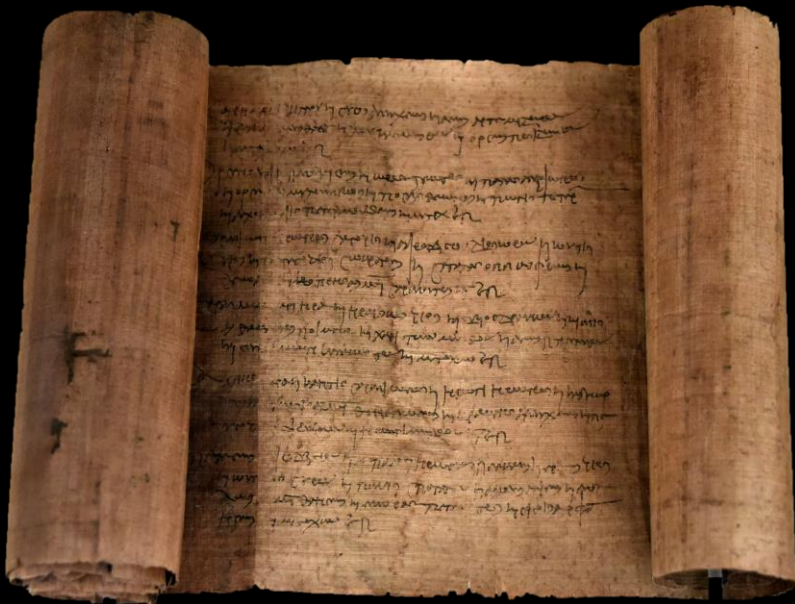
- **“in the Spirit”** – i.e., in the *Holy Spirit*, John’s *spiritual* location; a reference to John’s *revelatory state* (like Peter in Acts 10:10; 11:5).
- **“on the Lord’s day”** – not a reference to the eschatological “Day of the Lord,” but to the day *dedicated to* the Lord—the first day of the week, the day when Jesus was raised from the dead (cf. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2).
- **“a loud voice”** – John describes the volume to emphasize (as it does elsewhere in Revelation) that what the voice was speaking was *clear, public, and authoritative*.
- **“like of a trumpet”** – emphatic authority (cf. Exod 19:16; 20:18–19).



## II. The Behest of the Vision (1:11)

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**“Write in a book what you see, and send *it* to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea” (1:11).**



- **“Write in a book”** – the first of two commands; this command appears 12x in Revelation; the “book” is a “scroll,” made of papyrus material.
- **“what you see”** – the entire message to be given from here to the end of the book; the contents of Revelation required approx. 15ft of papyri.
- **“Send it”** – one copy would be sent, to be read and copied at each church.



### III. The Bearer of the Vision (1:12–16)

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**“Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands; and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man” (1:12–13a).**



- **“seven golden lampstands”** – John sees these first; a stand “upon which lamps were placed or hung” (not a mere candlestick); they had significant OT religious significance (cf. Exod 25:31–40); they represent the seven churches (1:20).
- **“one like the son of man”** – as John’s vision clears, he then sees this “Son of Man”—a reference to Daniel 7:13 (cf. Mark 13:24–26; Rev 1:7); emphasizes judgment and dominion.



“... **clothed** in a robe reaching to the feet, and **girded** across His chest with a golden sash. **His head and His hair** were white like white wool, like snow; and **His eyes** were like a flame of fire” (1:13a–14).

- As John sees better, he recognizes specific characteristics of this “Man.”
- “**clothed in a robe . . .**” – echoes Ezekiel 9:2; emphasizes judgment.
- “**girded . . . with a golden sash**” – echoes Daniel 10:5; emphasizes authority.
- “**His head and hair were white . . .**” – echoes Daniel 7:9; emphasizes antiquity.
- “**eyes like a flame of fire**” – echoes Daniel 10:6; emphasizes omniscience.



**“His feet** were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and **His voice** was like the sound of many waters. In **His right hand** He held seven stars, and out of **His mouth** came a sharp two-edged sword; and **His face** was like the sun shining in its strength” (1:15–16).

- “feet like burnished bronze . . .” – echoes Isaiah 63:1–6; emphasizes strength and wrath.
- “voice . . . like many waters” – echoes Ezekiel 43:2; emphasizes power.
- “right hand . . . held seven stars” – emphasizes sovereignty (1:20).
- “out of His mouth . . .” – echoes Isaiah 11:4; emphasizes judgment.
- “face was like the sun . . .” – echoes Judges 5:31; emphasizes glory.

“This first vision of John, then, including an indication of Jesus’ Messianic office with its associated functions: judgment of the unrighteous and comfort of the suffering righteous, His high rank that fits Him as an agent of imposing divine wrath, His activities in imposing that wrath, His preexistence along with God the Father, His penetrating intelligence that enables Him to perform righteous judgment, His movement among the churches to enforce standards of moral purity, His identification with the Father in the power of His utterance, His authority over the seven messengers and the churches they represent, His power to overcome His enemies and pronounce judgment upon them, and His return to earth to implement judgment upon mankind.”

—Robert Thomas, *Revelation 1–7*, 105

## IV. The Burden of the Vision (1:17a)

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**“When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man” (1:17a).**