

Text: Rev. 1:9-11

Title: "What kind of book is the Book of Revelation?"

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Intro – I can remember a conversation I had years ago with a man in town who does not attend our church, but who is a great neighbor and friend of many in New Boston. The conversation was somewhat unusual, because we had it in my office over at the parsonage one weekday morning. Not many people whom I have never met before knock on my door in order to talk to me about spiritual things. This man was an exception. He is the only one I can remember.

Our discussion involved some concerns this gentleman had, not for himself, but for someone else, and he came to offer me counsel about how to minister to that person. As I explained some principles from the Bible to him, he responded to me with an assertion about the Bible that I have never forgotten. He said something like, "Pastor, the Bible is kind of like a building code; it offers you some good guidance, but you do not have to follow its every detail."

Well, it turns out that the apostle John would have disagreed with my neighbor's view of this book. At the very beginning, John tells us what kind of book the book of Revelation is, and it is very unlike our town's building code. In fact, it is a book unlike anything else ever written down on paper. This morning from these verses of chapter 1, we are going to learn three answers to the question, "What kind of book is the Book of Revelation?"

I. Revelation is a book with a human author (v. 9).

III: J. Gresham Machen was a seminary teacher at Princeton for 20 years. He ministered at a time, the 1930's, when theological battles were raging within the Presbyterian Church about the fundamentals of the faith, including the nature of the Bible as God's Word.

The neighbor I mentioned earlier has attended a church in our town of that same denomination. During the semester that would prove to be his last at Princeton before separating from that institution to found Westminster Seminary, Machen gave a lecture to his students about the nature of this battle. He finished those words with this sentence about what it is like to be a Christian in a world like ours: "A man may believe what he pleases, provided he does not believe anything strongly enough to risk his life on it and fight for it." That is a deal that Satan will make with us every time.

Appl: There were two things that the apostle John believed strongly enough to risk his life for and fight for: (1) the word of God, and (2) the testimony of Jesus (v.9).

Patmos is a desolate island off the coast of Asia Minor that the Romans used to house exiles. The church father, Irenaeus, describes how the apostle John had been sent there by the Emperor Domitian. He had likely come under this persecution for refusal to participate in emperor worship. Domitian was the first Roman emperor to really take seriously the assertion that he was "Lord and God." God's Word and the testimony of Jesus said, very clearly, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10). So there was this that John would risk his life on and fight for. Are we risking our lives and fighting for these same things?

App12: John did not see himself as the only one called to this kind of dedication to God's word and the testimony of Jesus. He tells other believers that he is their brother and companion or fellow-participant in Jesus. What we share together as John's brothers and fellow-participants in Jesus is a common life of tribulation, of kingdom, and of patience (v. 9). Those three experiences are the way that John summed up the Christian life. They go together in John's mind and in the life of every believer.

You cannot have the blessedness of the kingdom without the difficulty of the tribulation, and you will not suffer the difficulty of the tribulation without the sure promise of the blessings of the kingdom, and all of this means that we are going to need patience or endurance.

Ill: That word *patience* means *to remain under*. I failed to do that once while helping a man carry a large filing cabinet we had just sold him, and he was badly injured as a result.

Tribulation-kingdom-patience in Jesus – this is what being a Christian is all about (Acts 14:22, "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God"). Do we own our identity as brothers and fellow-participants of the apostle John this morning? Are we willing to accept that kingdom comes with tribulation and will require patience? Are we being patient in tribulation, because we have faith in the glory of the kingdom? Are we willing to stand together for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, refusing to bow to the idols and gods of this world, or will petty small things divide and splinter us, bringing shame to God's word and the testimony of Jesus? Revelation is a book with a human author who

was an example for every one of us. Let's determine to follow that example.

II. Revelation is a book with a divine Author (vv. 10-11a).

III: This is the only place in the New Testament where we find the term *The Lord's Day*. Just a few decades after John used that term here, we find it in the writings of the church fathers of Asia Minor as a reference to the first day of the week as the day consecrated for the corporate worship of the assembled church.

Appl1: When we think of Sunday as the Lord's Day, I think it is helpful to think of Communion as the Lord's Cup and the Lord's Table (1 Cor. 10:21). The Lord's Cup of communion is different from all other cups because it is consecrated to the worship of the Lord. The Lord's Table is different from all other tables because it is consecrated to the worship of the Lord. The same is true of the Lord's Day. It is different from all other days of the week because it is consecrated by the Lord as a day of corporate worship for the assembly.

In exile, John was not in assembly with other believers on this Lord's Day, but his heart was with them. He knew it was the Lord's Day. That day meant a lot to him. Does it to us? God gives us 6 days every week for ourselves, and He claims one Day that we are supposed to give back to Him to worship Him. Israel did not survive the desecration of her Sabbaths, and no local church can survive its neglect of worship on the Lord's Day.

Appl2: Now on this particular Lord's Day, something happens to John that will not happen to you and I today. Very literally, he "became in the Spirit" on the Lord's Day. The phrase prior used the same vocabulary to tell us that John "became on the isle of Patmos," and it indicates a certain

sense of involuntariness to these experiences. John's volition had little to do with his being on Patmos, and it had little to do with his being in the Spirit in this sense. John began here to experience something through the power of the Holy Spirit that cannot be accounted for as a mere act of his human will. The Bible calls this the miracle of God's work of inspiration of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:18-21).

This miracle guarantees us some things about a Book like Revelation:

It will be authoritative, because it is the Word of God. We are required to obey what it says.

It will be infallible, because it is the Word of God. We are required to believe what it says.

It will be all-sufficient, because it is the Word of God. We are required to apply what it says.

It will be supernaturally powerful, because it is the Word of God. We are required to be changed by what it says.

Ill: I had a wonderful phone conversation with a brother this week who simply spoke of how his Bible reading ministered to his heart, specifically the passage in Acts that describes Barnabas's love for the Lord's work. That was a blessing to see God's word read, obeyed, believed, applied, and working a great change in the heart of a brother.

The apostle John would have us read this book of Revelation with this in mind - it is a book with a divine Author.

III. Revelation is a book for local churches (v. 11b).

Ill: Maralyn Avery asked me this week if I could name all seven churches, and I did manage to do so. I hope we can all do that eventually. These are real cities, with real local churches. They are named in the order that this letter to

them would likely travel. It turns out that both the human author and more importantly the divine Author of the book of Revelation are very interested in local churches. Revelation is a book for local churches.

Appl: It is folly for a New Testament believer to try to read and apply his New Testament to his life without being a faithful part of a good local church. By and large, the Old Testament was given to the nation of Israel to tell God's people how to be a good nation of Israel. In the same way, for the most part, the New Testament was given to local churches to tell God's people how to be good local churches.

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament touch on the kind of family members we as believers need to be. Come tonight for more instruction on that during our Christian growth discussion. That is certainly important. But Revelation is a book, like nearly every other book of the New Testament, that was sent to local churches. Even some that were sent to individuals were sent not really to help them deal with life as individuals, but to help them understand what a local church should be. See 1 Tim. 3:14-15. If you are going to be a faithful New Testament believer, you will also have to be a faithful local church believer.

Conclusion: As we close, I want to remind us that the human author here is the last surviving apostle. But do you see how he refers to himself? "Your brother. Your fellow-participant." In real Christianity there is no pope, no human hierarchy, no someone who is better than someone else. John says that we are brothers and sisters, sharers-together of the tribulation, and kingdom, and patience that is in Jesus.

The only qualification we have to be a part of that blessing is found in those two last words, *in Jesus*. Are you in Christ this morning? Have you trusted Him to be your Savior on the basis of His death for your sins and His resurrection?

If not, the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." He can save you and make you a fellow-participant in the tribulation, kingdom, and patience that are in Jesus.

The apostle Paul used the word fellow-partaker when he spoke of why he shares the gospel with people: "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be *partaker* thereof with you" (1 Cor. 9:22-23).

If you are not yet a fellow-partaker of Christ, of the tribulation, kingdom, and patience that are in Him, with Paul we invite you to turn from your sins and partake. We want to be fellow-partakers with you.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*