

## February 12<sup>th</sup>

What was **John** doing on the island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9)? To understand this you have to understand a man named **Domitian**, and Roman politics. The general Vespasian was sent in 67AD to Palestine to quell a revolt among the Jews. He quickly overran the country but in 68AD the Emperor Nero committed suicide and a war of succession broke out. Vespasian halted military operations to watch the politics. Four men claimed the emperorship in succession—Galba, Otho, Vitellius, then Vespasian. Vespasian had turned his campaign against the Jews over to his son, Titus, and concentrated on defeating Vitellius. Domitian had been taken hostage by Vitellius, but once he was defeated, Domitian returned to Rome. However, Vespasian didn't return to Rome for 19 months, leaving Domitian to run the government in his stead. Domitian fought with leaders and officials and relations broke down. Thus, during his father's reign, Domitian was given only minor roles and Titus, the older son was always heir apparent. Vespasian died in 79AD and Titus succeeded him. Titus lived just 2 years and suddenly it was Domitian's turn in 81AD. Domitian's first years as emperor were autocratic but went fairly well, but then in 87 he decided he wanted to proclaim himself a god. That irked some Romans but was anathema to Christians and they fell under increasing persecution. In 90AD he declared a war against all Christians, slave and free, Roman citizens or not. Leaders were exiled or killed.

John was living in Ephesus at the time, where there had grown a large church of a few hundred. Greeks and Romans typically exiled people to deserted islands and John was exiled to Patmos in the Aegean Sea, a harsh volcanic island where few things grew. It is from there that he wrote Revelation which starts with admonitions to the 7 churches in Asia Minor inland from Ephesus. It is thought that he wrote his gospel about 95AD, just after Revelation. The fact that John's gospel is so unique comes from the fact that he had no former gospels to look at, just writing his own story in seclusion. Domitian was an intolerable ruler and his wife led some officers to assassinate him in 96 AD. Nerva was the next Caesar and released John from Patmos and some other Christian leaders. We have no idea how old John was but tradition says he was about 12 or 14 at the time Jesus called him. Hence he was just a few years older than Timothy and John Mark. Putting his birth at 15-17AD, he may have been about 85 when he died in 98(?). His Greek was definitely a second language. It is so simple that John's Gospel is typically used to start students in learning the language, yet it is so profound. His gospel has so many human interest stories. It was perfect as an evangelism tool in the years to come. It shows Jesus' character better than other gospels and has touched many hearts over the years. Revelation was written in the apochryphal style of end times with names and places alluded to by analogy. Perhaps God gave this vision to convince his captors that he was a kooky madman in order to slip copies from the island to the Christian community to give them hope.