

REVELATION 1:9-11

In **verses 9-11**, we get a very personal look at the Apostle John. He is still faithful, still serving, still waiting for Christ to return and he has not slacked off in any way from his commitment. A prison island did not break John; in fact, he ended up writing Revelation. If we date Revelation in the late first century, it is a sovereign miracle that John was still alive. Most of the apostles and big names of Christianity had already been executed. There are four personal facts that John specifically reveals:

PERSONAL FACT #1 – John specifically states his name. **1:9a**

The opening words of the text do literally read “I, John” (Εγω Ιωαννης). John is named at least four times in Revelation (1:1, 4, **9**; 22:8) and the formula “I John” is used twice (**1:9**; 22:8).

The obvious point of this is that John wants us to realize that this is a real person, with a real name, who is really seeing all the things that he will be revealing. By naming himself, he adds real authenticity to the message.

Daniel did the same kind of thing in his Old Testament prophetic book (Daniel 8:15; 9:2; 10:2). Both Daniel and John reveal some prophetic amazing things and both want God’s people to know that they are real and so are the things they are writing.

Now we may make at least three observations we may make about this:

Observation #1 - God’s greatest prophetic messages came through proven godly servants.

Those God used to write His prophetic Word were godly, proven men over a long period of time. John certainly would have known about all of his fellow apostles who had been killed. Peter, according to history, had been crucified; Paul had been decapitated; Herod had killed James, John’s own brother (Acts 12:1-2), and through all of this John remained faithful. It is possible for one to lose family and friends and health and wealth and still be godly and greatly used by God.

Observation #2 - God’s greatest prophetic messages came through exclusive servants.

When God wanted to reveal His eschatological prophetic plan to Israel, He went through a prophet like Daniel. When God wanted to reveal His eschatological plan to the Church, He went through an apostle like John. God is a God who exclusively selects specific servants for specific jobs.

Observation #3 - God’s greatest prophetic messages came through known servants.

The men God used to write Scripture were so well known that they could say, “I, Daniel” or “I, John.” God had raised these men to a tremendous level in which their reputation was known.

PERSONAL FACT #2 – John specifically states he is their brother . **1:9b**

There is an article “the” before the noun brother (ο αδελφος) which means that John wants them to know that he is their specific brother. What is intriguing about this is that John does not major on his apostolic position or his gifted superiority; rather he stresses that he is one of them. He is their brother, which means **he is in the same spiritual family that they are in as a child of God.**

When one considers what he is about to write, the book of Revelation, he certainly could have stressed his rank and status, but instead he wants the churches to realize that he was one of them, in that he was in God’s family.

PERSONAL FACT #3 – John specifically states that he is their fellow partaker . **1:9c**

The article “the” which is given before the noun “brother” also goes with the noun “fellow partaker” (ο συγκοινωνος). **The word “fellow partaker” actually means to jointly . fellowship and share with or in something** (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 431).

John wants these believers to realize that even though he was given the great privilege of writing Revelation, he shared the Christian life with them. He was not some prima donna who lived life different from them. He lived life in joint participation with them. John specifically lists three areas of life that he shared with every believer in the church.

Grammatically, there is one article “the” which appears before the three areas, which according to the Greek Granville Sharp rule, goes with all three nouns (Dana & Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 147). **What this grammatically means is that John wants believers to realize that there were three specific identifiable areas of the Christian life that he shared with them:**

Area #1 - John was a fellow sharer and partaker in tribulation . **1:9c**

This is not a reference to the “Great Tribulation” that will be discussed later (i.e. Rev. 7:14). The specific word John uses here (θλιψει) is one that refers to different afflictions and pressures and distresses that come against believers. By using the article “the” John is referring to specific pressures and distresses that hit believers.

Jesus Christ specifically used this very noun in telling believers that in this world they would have tribulation because they were related to Him (John 16:33). Every believer is destined to face pressure and distress in this world because this world hates Jesus Christ (John 15:18).

G. Campbell Morgan made an interesting observation when he said a loyal-hearted believer and church that lives godly will suffer because “the church forever contradicts the world.” The business of the believer and the church is a contradiction to the world in its concepts and conduct (*The Westminster Pulpit*, Revelation 1:9, Vol. 9, p. 260).

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If a believer or a church does things the world likes, it will sail along quite nicely. If the church promotes the world's social programs and welfare programs and promotes a God of toleration and love, the world will love it. However, the moment the believer or church confronts the world with God's truth and moves and develops in accordance with the Word of God, it will feel all the pressure and agony and distress the world can give. The world has not changed one bit, and it is not the friend of the true believer or true church. So if the church is getting along with the world, something is truly wrong with the church.

Believers in the first century suffered for their faith and John says I suffer right along with you. Sometimes when you are in ministry and have been greatly used by God, as John was, some believers may begin to think that you don't hurt or suffer like they do. After all:

- 1) John had personally lived with and directly learned from Jesus Christ .
- 2) John had been specifically identified by Jesus Christ as being His “ beloved ” disciple.
- 3) John was a rare privileged disciple, one of three to actually witness Christ's transfiguration .
- 4) John was the only disciple specifically entrusted with the care of Christ's mother .
- 5) John was an apostle .
- 6) John was a pillar of the N.T. Church and respected by all N.T. Churches.
- 7) John wrote many inspired books of the Bible
- 8) John was the only apostle chosen by God to write Revelation .

This is a very impressive resume and when John wrote Revelation he was the most exalted Christian who was still alive.

The average believer could begin to think that John had been so greatly used by God that he lived on another planet. John wants to emphasize that he lived in the same world as every other believer and he had to cope with the same pressures and problems that they did. He was a fellow partaker with them.

No minister is immune to hardships in life, even great ministers like John. They have needs, they have fears, they hurt, they bleed and they die. John wanted believers to know he faced the same pressures they faced.

Area #2 - John was a fellow sharer and partaker in the kingdom . **1:9d**

The noun “kingdom” is used in different ways and means different things at different times in Scripture. The actual Greek word “kingdom” (Βασιλεια) is one that refers to royal, majestic, power and sovereignty (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 77).

This particular noun is used to describe a kingdom of people over which some king rules; it was used to refer to the kingdom of God in which God rules over everything, and the kingdom of the heavens which specifically refers to the messianic kingdom reign of Jesus Christ on this earth.

Because John uses the article “the” before the noun kingdom, he has something specific in mind and what he specifically has in mind is God’s sovereign and royal program and work on this earth during the Church Age (Acts 14:22-23). John was involved in God’s Church Age work.

There is a distinct chronology to the program of God which John will reveal in Revelation. The Church Age will end and then things will happen that will be a prelude to Jesus Christ coming back in all of His glory to take over the world.

Presently we are in the Church Age and we face troubles and trials as believers because Jesus Christ is not now reigning on earth. But when we suffer in the Church Age, we are actually partaking in God’s holy, royal, kingdom work on this earth.

Suffering and hardship for believers in the Church Age are definitely connected to God’s royal kingdom work on this earth (Acts 14:22-23; II Thessalonians 1:4-5). John says, I want you to know that I am a fellow partaker in the kingdom work of God right alongside every believer.

Area #3 - John was a fellow sharer and partaker in the perseverance . **1:9e**

John was persevering in his faith as he waited for the return of Jesus Christ just as every other believer was persevering. The word “perseverance” (υπομονη) is one that means that John was patiently enduring all things, including great hardships, as he waited for the return of Jesus Christ. The actual word means to “stay under or behind” (*Ibid.*, p. 462). We may observe that the need to persevere and the ability to persevere are because of Jesus, literally “perseverance in Jesus.” John was in war because of his commitment to Jesus Christ and he was not quitting. He was not abandoning his responsibilities, he was not giving up, but he was persevering.

G. Campbell Morgan said that to patiently endure means to stay under the pressure which means to stay in the pressure and stay on through the pressure. In fact, he said, “staying under always means staying on” (*The Westminster Pulpit*, Rev. 1:9, Vol. 9, p. 262).

Anyone can quit under pressure. Anyone can run from the pressure. People right with God stay the course in the midst of the pressure and that is precisely what John did. He persevered and patiently endured whatever came his way. In fact, had not John remained faithful, he would have missed writing Revelation.

William Barclay said, “Men will never listen to one who preaches endurance from the comfort of an easy chair, nor to one who preaches heroic courage to others while he himself has sought prudent safety. It is the man who has gone through it who can help others who are going through it. John could speak because he sat where his people were sitting” (*The Revelation of John*, Vol. 1, pp. 39-40).

John was a fellow sharer and partaker with other believers in every possible way. He was the real thing. Life was not easy for him, but he stayed faithful to the Lord no matter what he faced.

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PERSONAL FACT #4 – John specifically describes his personal circumstances. **1:9f-11**

There are at least four personal circumstances of which John wants us aware:

Personal Circumstance #1 - John informs us of his actual physical location. **1:9f**

John was on the specific island of Patmos. The Greek is emphatic, “the island the called Patmos island.” John wants us to know this was the specific place where he received the Revelation. Patmos is eight to ten miles long and five to six miles wide in the Aegean Sea about forty miles from the coastal city Miletus, not too far from Ephesus (Acts 20:15,17; II Timothy 4:20).

Patmos was a Roman prison island used for housing prisoners, very similar to what the Alcatraz island used to be near San Francisco. Joseph Seiss saw the island and described what he saw: “Less than a year ago I passed that island. It is a mere mass of barren rocks, dark in color and cheerless in form. It lies out in the open sea, near the coast of Western Asia Minor. It has neither trees nor rivers, nor any land for cultivation, except some little nooks between the ledges of rocks. There is still a dingy grotto remaining, in which the aged Apostle is said to have lived, and in which he is said to have had this vision” (*The Apocalypse*, p. 36).

This certainly was no luxury resort island for the rich and famous. This was a lousy place to live. John did not go to Patmos to start a church or because he expected to see Jesus Christ or be able to write the book of Revelation. He did not go by his own will; he was sent to Patmos by force. There were no family or friends there, there were no nice clothing stores there, and he would have been surrounded by murderers and thieves.

But this lousy place became the very place of the Apostle John’s greatest communion with God. This clearly proves that you can be living in lousy circumstances and surrounded by dark and lonely things and still have great fellowship with God and be greatly used by God. God can do great things with a person when everything around them appears to be negative and terrible. Paul wrote many of his epistles in a dungeon and John wrote Revelation on a prison island.

John never once believed that he was suffering because of himself or his sometimes seeming confrontational personality (i.e. II John 10; III John 10). He believed he was suffering because of his stand for God’s Word and Jesus Christ. He specifically states two reasons why he was on this island of Patmos:

(Reason #1) - Because of the Word of God. **1:9g**

John found himself in terrible trouble because he taught God’s Word. When a person faithfully and accurately sets forth God’s Word and God’s doctrines, he will not be popular with this world and there will be times when he will be in trouble. John’s loyalty to proclaim God’s Word and God’s true doctrines got him into trouble. J. Vernon McGee said when you teach the Word of God, you’ll get in trouble (*Revelation, Thru The Bible*, Vol. 5, p. 892).

(Reason #2) - Because of the testimony of Jesus Christ. **1:9h**

John also found himself in terrible trouble because he faithfully testified and witnessed . for Jesus Christ. John was one who continually stressed that the only possible way for a sinner to be saved from his sins was by faith in Jesus Christ and not works. That message did not make him popular with most of the religious world.

When you accurately teach the Scriptures and stand for Jesus Christ you will become a major antagonist to corrupt religions. In John's day, if you did these things you could be rejected by family and friends and society and government could turn against you to the point that you could end up on a prison island or even end up dead (Rev. 2:13). But that did not stop John. He stayed faithful to the Word of God and he stayed faithful to the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Personal Circumstance #2 - John informs us of his special spiritual condition. **1:10a**

John describes his spiritual condition as being "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." The problem with this prepositional phrase is one of meaning . What did John actually mean or what is he describing? Actually there are at least four grammatical matters that must be resolved: 1) What does the verb "was" mean? 2) What does the preposition "in" mean? 3) What did John mean when he said he was "in the Spirit," literally "in Spirit" (εν πνευματι)? 4) What did John mean when he said he was "on the Lord's day?"

(Grammatical Matter #1) - The verb "was."

The verb "was" (εγενουμην) is the same verb John used in **verse 9** in describing the fact that John was on the island of Patmos. The verb literally means to be made or to become something (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 92). **The particular emphasis of this verb is that this was not John's normal state.** He was made to become something. Just as he did not volunteer to go to Patmos; he was made to go. We believe that the phrase "in the Spirit" must be interpreted in the same sense. What this means is, **it was God who made John become "in the Spirit" and John did not put himself in this condition.**

(Grammatical Matter #2) - The preposition "in."

There are four ways this preposition "in" may be interpreted:

1. It may express direction - "I went into the direction of the Spirit," meaning John was moving in a spiritual direction when this happened.
2. It may express position - "I was in the position of being in the Spirit, meaning God put John in a very spiritual, ecstatic state when all of this happened.
3. It may express cause - "I was in my state because of the Spirit," meaning the Spirit of God was the cause of everything that John would see and write.
4. It may express means - "I was in my state by means of the Spirit," meaning the Spirit of God was the means by which everything happened.

(Grammatical Matter #3) - The prepositional phrase “in the Spirit.”

The first matter which we must resolve is whether or not “in Spirit” refers to John’s spirit or an angelic spirit or the Holy Spirit. The original text reads, “I was in Spirit” not “in the Spirit.” I think we may safely conclude that the Spirit is a reference to the Holy Spirit. The identical phrase “in Spirit” occurs in Romans 8:9 and it most definitely refers to the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, the verb “was” means that this was not John’s normal state or condition.

The identical use of the prepositional phrase “in the Spirit” (εν πνευμα) is one used in reference to John at least three other times in Revelation:

- 1) In Revelation 4:2 it refers to John being taken to heaven.
- 2) In Revelation 17:3 it refers to John being taken to a desert wilderness to see futuristic things.
- 3) In Revelation 21:10 it refers to John being taken to a great mountain to see Jerusalem.

This phrase was often closely connected to prophetic things. For example, in the Old Testament this phrase was used in connection to the prophetic vision and writing of Ezekiel:

- 1) The Spirit of God transported him. Ezekiel 3:12, 14
- 2) The Spirit of God was involved in his prophetic visions. Ezekiel 8:3; 11:24
- 3) The Spirit of God was involved in his prophetic messages. Ezekiel 37:1-12
- 4) The Spirit of God was involved in Israel’s prophetic program. Ezekiel 37:1-2; 43:5-7

Based on these facts, we may understand this phrase “in the Spirit” to be a reference to the work of the Spirit of God. **What this means is that this book of Revelation, which was written by John, was specifically prophetically wrought by the Spirit of God.** This point coincides precisely with what John wrote in John 16:13-14.

Dr. Allen Johnson said this phrase means that John was transported to the world of prophetic visions by the Spirit of God (*Revelation*, Expositors Bible Commentary, Vol. 12, p. 424).

(Grammatical Matter #4) - The prepositional phrase “on the Lord’s day.”

The prepositional phrase “on the Lord’s day” literally reads “in the Lord’s day” (εν τη κυριακη ημερα).

There have been four views as to what this means:

- 1) Some suggest it refers to Sunday, the first day of the week.
God’s Spirit does uniquely work on Sunday. God does speak powerfully through His Word on Sunday. One problem is in Scriptures Sunday is referred to as “the first day of the week” and not “the Lord’s day.”
- 2) Some say it refers to Easter. This is pure allegory and Easter became a holiday in the 4th century.
- 3) Some say it refers to the specific day in which Jesus Christ will return. This does show up in this book.
- 4) Some say it refers to the final time period of future events which culminate with Jesus Christ finishing all of God’s entire future program with all people.

The actual Greek words emphasize both position and authority. It is referring to a specific time in which the Lord is the master or ruler. More than likely, John is referring to the entire prophetic time period in which God will show Himself as the Sovereign Lord, Master and Ruler of all creation.

A good understanding of what John means when he says “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” is that **by means of the Spirit of God, John was transported into the future to the time in which Jesus Christ will demonstrate that He is the Lord and master of everything and will finish all of the prophetic program of God.**

God’s Spirit transported John to the time when God displays Himself to be Lord and Master and Supreme ruler of everything. God’s Spirit gave John a prophetic cinematic and panoramic picture in full color, sight, and sound, of God’s future program that will culminate with the return of Jesus Christ and Him taking charge of everything.

This interpretation fits the grammar, the context (**1:3, 11**) and the entire book of Revelation.

Personal Circumstance #3 - John informs us of the audible communication he heard. **1:10b**

Four specific facts are revealed to us about what John heard: 1) It was a voice ; 2) It was a voice that came from behind him; 3) It was very loud ; 4) It was like a trumpet .

The word “voice” (φωνη) from which we get our English word “phonetics” means that John was hearing a real voice, communicating a real verbal message. He was not listening to music.

The word “loud” (μεγαλη) means that the sound was loud and large, very great, very intense.

This particular word emphasizes that it was coming from a high ranked Person.

The words “like a trumpet” (literally “as a trumpet”) indicate that the voice had a commanding ring to it. A trumpet in Biblical days was used for giving commands in both religious and military events. The trumpet blast typically announced some religious, or military action, or ceremony, or conquering.

The voice came from behind John and immediately caused John to turn around (**Rev. 1:12**).

What is actually happening here is this: Jesus Christ, the highest ranked God/Person of all, audibly spoke to John and it was very authoritative, and powerful, and loud and His voice was about to reveal the ultimate conquering of God, His entire prophetic finale.

God’s Word should turn us around just like it did John. When God’s Word is preached, there ought to be a real ring of authority to it; after all, it is the living and active work of God that has the power to cut souls and transform lives. God’s Word does have a tenderness in it, but it also has thunder in it and frankly the roar of the authority of God’s Word isn’t heard much anymore.

We live in an age when people want a politically correct, feel-good message when they go to church. But where God’s Word is accurately proclaimed, people will be forced to turn around because there is real power and authority to it. That is something you do see right here.

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Personal Circumstance #4 - John informs us of the specific orders he received. **1:11**

John is given two commands (both imperatives) in this verse:

(Command #1) - You write everything you see in a book.

Chapter 1 of the book of Revelation stresses the importance of the written Word of God (1:3, 11, 19). In fact, at least twelve times in this book John is commanded to write God's Word (1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5). Furthermore, specific warnings are given about not accurately handling God's written Word (Rev. 22:18-19). **Do not miss this point, because this final book of the Bible emphasizes the importance of the written Scriptures.**

Jesus Christ could have said, John, you just go around and share your feelings about everything you saw. He could have said, I'll show you these things then you go to various cities and hold rallies and give your testimony and with music playing, ask people to raise their hands or walk down aisles. What Jesus Christ specifically says is, you write My Word and you get it into My churches.

We must see the importance that Jesus Christ, Himself, places on the written Word of God. There ought to be a high priority that the N.T. Church has on the written Word of God. It ought to be the main reason people go to church; to learn and to hear the Word of God expounded.

(Command #2) - You send it to the seven churches.

We will discuss these churches later, but John is told that he is to see to it that he sends this written Revelation to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

We will discuss these churches later; however, the order would be the travel route that would be followed to take a copy of God's written Word from Ephesus finally to Laodicea. The original copy would be taken to Ephesus and then a copy would be made of it and then the original would move on to the next church, until there were copies in all seven churches.

It is obvious that God wanted His written Word in every church. Each church has different people and different problems, but each church needs its focus to be on carefully understanding the written Word of God.