

Message #4

Revelation 1:9-11

JOHN WANTS THE CHURCHES TO SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFY HIM AS THE ONE WHO WROTE REVELATION.

There are four ways John identifies himself in these verses:

Identification Way #1 - John identifies himself by name. 1:9a

As Revelation opens, it opens with the author saying, “I, John” (Rev. 1:9). That is the same way the book of Revelation also closes, “I, John” (Rev. 22:8). **So it is very clear that John wants every reader to understand that this book of Revelation was written by him.**

John does not typically name himself in his writings. He does not name himself in the Gospel of John or in I John, II John or III John. But he names himself at least four times in Revelation (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8) and, as we mentioned, he uses the “I, John” first person pronoun grammatical formula two times (1:9; 22:8). Why does he do that here in this book?

The reason why John is doing this is he wants all to realize that these things that he is personally writing and seeing are real things. Some of the things he writes are astounding and he wants people to realize this book is very authentic, written by a real man and real apostle of God.

Now the “I, John” formula is all he needed to write. He knew that everyone who read that would know who he was. When Nebuchadnezzar used this formula, “I, Nebuchadnezzar” (Dan. 4:4), he knew all would know who he was. When Daniel used this formula, “I, Daniel” (Dan. 8:15, 27; 12:5), he knew that all who read his book would know who he was.

There was only one person on this earth that could write “I, John” and people would immediately know who he was and that was the Apostle John. Now after John identifies himself he immediately connects himself to the believers of the church in two ways:

Identification Way #2 - John identifies himself as their brother. 1:9b

This is fascinating because John is writing to the churches and he wants God’s people to know that he is their brother. He does not begin by saying, “I, John” am an Apostle who has the highest ranked gift in the church. He doesn’t say I am the Apostle John, or Doctor John, who was trained by Jesus Christ, Himself and actually took care of His mother. He says I am your brother. I am in the same family of God just as you are in the family of God. Think about this for a moment. John could have said:

- 1) I am John and I was directly taught by Jesus Christ.
- 2) I am John and He called me His “beloved Apostle.”
- 3) I am John and I was one of only three at His transfiguration.
- 4) I am John and I was the only Apostle entrusted to care for Jesus’ mother.

- 5) I am John and I had the gift of being an Apostle.
- 6) I am John and I am one of the pillars of the N.T. church.
- 7) I am John and I have written several inspired books of the Bible.
- 8) I am John and I am the only Apostle left living to write Revelation.

What John says is I am John, and I am your brother.

Identification Way #3 - John identifies himself as their fellow partaker. **1:9c**

This word “fellow partaker” is one that means to share joint fellowship with or in something. John says to the people, I am just like you. I am going through the same kind of things that you are. He was living life and growing and learning and developing just as they were. He was no different. Whatever they were experiencing, so was he.

Now there are three specific “in Jesus” areas that John specifically mentions, in which John was their brother and fellow partaker:

(Area #1) - He was their “in Jesus” brother/partaker in the tribulation. **1:9d**

By virtue of the fact that there is an article “the” that goes with each of the nouns, it is clear that John wants things identified. John says I want you to know that I am not living life in some Apostolic millennial bliss. The average believer could begin to think John has been so greatly used by God, he must be living life immune from our struggles. John says I have the same struggles you have. I face pressures and trials and hardships.

The tribulation to which he is referring here is not “the Great Tribulation” that he will mention in Revelation 7:14. This particular word refers to different afflictions, distresses and pressures that believers face because of their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Jesus specifically told His people that they would have tribulation in this world because they are related to Him (John 16:33). He uses the very same word John uses here. Every believer will face some kind of pressure and distress in this world because this world hates Jesus Christ (John 15:18).

G. Campbell Morgan 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*, p. 260).

Any church or believer who does things the world likes will sail along quite nicely. If a church promotes the social programs and welfare programs, self-esteem and self-development programs and promotes total, non-judgmental toleration and love, the world will readily embrace it.

However, the moment the believer or church accurately proclaims and defends the word of God, it will begin to feel and sense the pressure, the agony and the distress that the world can give. The world has not changed one bit and it will not ever be the friend of one dedicated to Jesus Christ and God's word.

No minister is immune to hardship in life, even great ministers like John. They experience negatives; they have fears; they have needs; they hurt; they bleed and they die. John says I am just like you.

(Area #2) - He was their "in Jesus" brother/partaker in the kingdom. **1:9e**

The noun "kingdom" (basileia) may be used a couple of ways. It may refer abstractly to a sovereign, royal dominion over something or it may refer specifically to a specific territory over which a king reigns (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 77).

John uses an article "the" before the noun kingdom which would seem to indicate he has something specific in mind. What he specifically has in mind is the entire sovereign, majestic God who rules over everything. God's sovereign program is heading to a Messianic Kingdom reign of Jesus Christ on this earth. Before that Kingdom gets here, God's sovereign program includes the church (Acts 14:22-23).

John says I am part of the sovereign kingdom program of God, even though right now we are suffering and all of this is a prelude to the glorious moment when Jesus Christ will come back to reign on this earth and take over the world.

Suffering and hardships for believers in this Church Age are definitely connected to God's sovereign work on earth. John says I want you to know that I am a fellow brother/partaker in the sovereign Kingdom work of God going on right now.

(Area #3) - He was their "in Jesus" brother/partaker in the perseverance. **1:9f**

To make it to the finish line as an honored believer takes "perseverance" (upomonh). The actual Greek word means to "stay under or behind" (*Ibid.*, p. 462) .

John understood the fact that because of his relationship to Jesus Christ, he had to endure things and at times did not look like a winner. John knew what it was like to patiently endure all kinds of things, including some hardships, while he waited for the return of Jesus Christ. There is no such thing as a super saint who sails through life in this world problem and pressure free.

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. 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 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.

John was a brother/partaker in every possible way. He was the real thing. Life was not an easy cruise. But he stayed faithful no matter what he faced.

The preposition “in Jesus” means that it is one’s relationship with Jesus Christ that causes the trouble. It is His work and His kingdom that causes us to have to endure.

Identification Way #4 - John identifies himself by his personal circumstances. **1:9f-11**

John is very careful to lay out his personal circumstances surrounding this book of Revelation, which both John and Jesus Christ wanted us to know. There are at least four personal pieces of information John gives us in this section:

(Personal Circumstance #1) - John gives us his specific physical location. **1:9f-h**

John begins by letting us know that he was on the specific island of Patmos. The Greek is very emphatic - “the island, the called Patmos island.”

Now I have been to this island. It is about 8-10 miles long and about 5-6 miles wide. It sits in the Aegean Sea and is about a 4 ½ hour boat ride from a port near Ephesus. It sits about 40 miles out in the Ocean and it took us 4 ½ hours one way to get there by a chartered boat.

Patmos was a Roman prison island. It was a place of banishment and punishment. Having been there it was much better than Alcatraz. It is actually a nice island. It is actually today a nice place to live. A decent house will cost one between 500,000-600,000. One can buy an apartment for about 100,000. It is more like a resort island than a prison island.

Now at the time John was on this island, it was not a luxury resort. In fact, our tour guide showed us a cave where he claimed John lived and where he actually wrote the book of Revelation. It was a nice cave, but it was a cave.

Now John is very specific to point out why he was on that island. He was not on that island as a tourist wanting to see a Greek island. The preposition “because” (dia) is causal, so it gives us the reason why John was on this island. He was on that island for two specific reasons:

Reason #1 - He was on the island because of the word of God. **1:9g**

John was on this prison island because he communicated and taught the word of God. **John was on this island because he publicly taught the word of God.** When a teacher like John accurately sets forth God’s word and doctrines, there will be times when it will get one into trouble. Any person who accurately sets forth the word of God will at times suffer for it.

If you tell people what they want to hear they will love you, but if you tell them God's truth, you will suffer.

Reason #2 - He was on the island because of the testimony of Jesus. **1:9h**

When you read the Gospel of John and the Epistles, it is clear that John proclaimed the truth that believing on Jesus Christ is the only way to be saved. His Gospel of John proves Jesus was the God/Savior and he taught that He was the only way to a relationship with God. Now that teaching was totally foreign to a religious world of rituals and works. This is why John was on this island.

(Personal Circumstance #2) - John gives us his specific spiritual condition. **1:10a**

John says, "he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." The verb "was" is the same verb used in **verse 9** where John says he "was on the island called Patmos." It is also the same verb used in **verse 18**, in which Jesus said He "was dead."

Now in John's case as being on the island of Patmos, this was not a circumstance caused by John. John did not go to the island of Patmos because of his own desires to see it like I did. He did not go there by choice.

What I understand this to mean is that John was in the Spirit because the Spirit of God put me in this state. Now this identical prepositional phrase, "in spirit" is used three other times concerning John 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.

Based on these observations we conclude that it was the Spirit of God that put John in the condition for writing Revelation. There is nothing about this that was John instigated. This was all by the Holy Spirit. We could call this Holy Spirit possession.

Now John was in the Spirit "on the Lord's day." The Greek literally reads "in the Lord's day"- (en th kuirikh hmera).

Now since **verse 11** is addressed to churches, the most logical meaning of this is that John had the Holy Spirit take over him on Sunday, the first day of the week. Sunday had become the day when the believers gathered to worship (Acts 20:7; 16:2). It was the day of Christ's resurrection (Matt. 28:1; John 20:1, 19) and that point is critical to this very context (Rev. 1:18).

Some have suggested that this refers to Easter and some to the specific day when Christ will return and others have said it refers to the entire future program of God. **But the best interpretation of this is that the Holy Spirit took total possession of John on a Sunday to enable him to write Revelation.**

I have become more and more convinced that Sunday is the day when the Holy Spirit does His greatest level of work. Without Sunday worship, God's people will be anemic.

(Personal Circumstance #3) - John gives us his specific audible communication. **1:10b**

On this particular Lord's day John specifically heard something:

- 1) **He heard a voice - fwnhn** from which we get our English word "phonetics." This was a real literal voice he heard.
- 2) **He heard a voice behind him** - I argued with our tour guide on this very point. We were in this small cave and he said this was where John wrote Revelation. I said you mean that John heard a voice and he turns around in this cave where you only have a couple feet. I don't think so.
- 3) **He heard a loud voice - megalhn...** - It was a very large, great, intense voice.
- 4) **He heard a loud voice that was like a trumpet.** The voice had a commanding military ring and blast to it.

What is actually happening here is that the God/man, Jesus Christ, is audibly speaking to John and there is tremendous power and authority in this.

God's word should turn us around. When God's word is accurately handled, there should be a power and authority to it. It should shake us up and turn us around. That is what it did to John.

(Personal Circumstance #4) - John gives us his specific commanded commission. **1:11**

John was given two commands, literally in Greek two imperative verbs:

Command #1 - You write everything in a book. **1:11a**

Chapter 1 of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, stresses the importance of the written word of God (1:3, 11, 19).

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, there is a specific, serious warning about accurately handling the written word - Rev. 22:18-19. This book clearly stresses the importance of the written Scriptures.

Now the command is to "write in a book." The Greek literally reads "you write into a Biblion" (eis biblion). The word "biblion" is one that refers to a written document or book that is literally written on some form of paper, either papyrus or vellum (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 81).

One thing is clear and that is, when it comes to prophecy, John was not to wing it; he was to write it. I have always believed that expositions should be written out completely. Many who get up and preach will say they are being led by the Holy Spirit. Well if it is the same Holy Spirit that was dominating John, they will write it and expound it and not wing it.

Command #2 - You send it to the seven churches. 1:11b

We will discuss these churches later. But what is very clear here is that the written word of God is written for the churches and Jesus lists seven: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

The order of the churches is a sort of horseshoe loop that starts at Ephesus and ends at Laodicea. One church would get the written word and copy it and send it to the next church so when the project was completed, each of the seven churches would have a copy.

John did his job. He did write it. He did send it to the churches and we have a copy in English today. We are only eleven verses into the book and already we are blessed.