

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

“A Glimpse of Our Glorified Lord: Part 1”

Revelation 1:9-11

INTRODUCTION

We are so fortunate to live in a country where we have the freedom to gather in worship, the freedom to pray, or simply the freedom to be a Christian. However, in some countries this freedom does not exist. Even today it is illegal in some places of the world to be a Christian. Churches are being burned, and Christian young people are being killed by anti-Christian mobs. Christians endure systematic starvation and enslavement in other parts of the world.

This is nothing new for the history of the Christian church. There has always been suffering for the cause of Christ. One such instance of suffering for the cause of Christ took place in the 1600's in England. A simple Baptist Pastor was imprisoned about 1660 for faithfully preaching the word of God. His first wife had died and left him with four children, including one who was blind. Regardless of this he was imprisoned for preaching the truth of God's Word. John Bunyan spent 12 years in prison. He was free to go at any time as long as he promised not to preach the truth of the Word. But this faithful pastor and loving husband and father could not compromise his faith in Christ, nor his duty to preach the truth of the Word. During this time while he was suffering persecution in prison, Bunyan wrote some sixty books, most of which are still in print today. One of these books to this day “remains the widest circulating single piece of literature in the history of the human race outside of the Bible, *“Pilgrim's Progress.”*”

Bunyan was in good company: The prophet Isaiah lived in difficult days and died a martyr's death, while the prophet Ezekiel wrote in exile. Jeremiah's life was one of trial, suffering, persecution and rejection and the Apostle Peter wrote his two letters shortly before he was martyred. Then there is the Apostle John who faced a similar situation as John Bunyan at the time of the writing of Revelation, being imprisoned on the Island of Patmos.

By the close of the first century, Christianity had become a hated and despised religious sect in the Roman Empire. Many viewed Christianity as a “depraved and extravagant superstition.” Politically, the Romans viewed Christians as disloyal because they refused to acknowledge Caesar as the supreme authority. This disloyalty was confirmed in the eyes of the Roman officials by Christians' refusal to offer the obligatory sacrifices of worship to the emperor. Religiously, Christians were denounced as atheists because they rejected the Roman pantheon of gods and because they worshiped an invisible God. Christians were falsely accused of cannibalism, incest and other perversions. Socially, Christians, most of whom, were from the lower classes of society were despised by the Roman aristocracy because of their teaching that all people were equal in Christ. They were also despised for declining to participate in worldly amusements such as Roman festivals, the theater, and other pagan events. Economically, the numerous priests, craftsmen, and merchants, who profited from idol worship, saw Christians as a threat.

Up until the reign of Domitian, there had not been an empire wide persecution of Christians. But the emperor Domitian hated Christians and instigated an official persecution of them. Little is known of the details of this persecution, but it extended to the province of Asia (modern Turkey), where the apostle John had been banished to the island of Patmos. It was during this time of imprisonment when John received this Revelation from the Lord and penned the book of Revelation as we see in our passage today.

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Here, in **Revelation 1:9-11**, John describes the circumstances surrounding his reception of this revelation from Jesus Christ. In so doing, John highlights three characteristics of his life situation at the time he received this revelation. What characteristics of his circumstances does John highlight?

Characteristic #1: First, John Reveals His Identity.

How does John identify himself to his readers?

First, John reveals that he has a Fraternal Identification with believers.

John says in **Revelation 1:9**, “*I, John, your brother...*” This is the third time in the first 9 verses in which John provides his name as the human author of the book of Revelation. John was the last living Apostle of the church. One can only imagine how respected and esteemed he would be in the eyes of other believers. He was likely the last individual alive who had personally seen the Lord. Most would expect that John would refer to himself as the Apostle of the Lord or the Elder. But that is not how he identifies himself at all. He humbly and simply refers to himself as, “*I, John, your brother.*” Rather than using terms of authority, John uses a term of relationship.

The word “brother” [ADELPHOS] was originally used in reference to a physical immediate family relationship. It was later expanded to refer to other family relationships. It eventually came to be used of those who possessed a common bond, interest or calling. Here it speaks of John’s spiritual relationship with other believers. He is their brother in Christ. This is nothing new in Scripture. Often believers are identified as brothers or brethren. The idea of Christians as brothers is also quite frequently accompanied in a context or exhortation of love.

- In **Romans 12:10**, we are told to “*be devoted to one another in brotherly love.*”
- In **1 Thessalonians 4:9** Paul says, “*Now as to the love of the brethren, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.*”
- In **Hebrews 13:1** it states, “*Let love of the brethren continue.*”
- Or there is the statement of Peter in **1 Peter 1:22**, “*Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart.*”

Just as John sees other believers in terms of relationship, we should too. We need to recognize each other as brothers in Christ, whether we serve in the church as elders, deacons or nursery workers. And because we are all relating to one another in terms of spiritual relationship as brothers, we should be driven to love one another. This is our command and duty as believers in Christ, and it should be natural for us. Just as John stated in an earlier letter, “*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*” (**1 John 4:7**) How are you doing in this department? Do you identify with other believers as brothers in Christ? Are you demonstrating a love for the brethren? John not only identifies himself as a brother, but:

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Second, John reveals that he has a Fellow Participation with believers.

John goes on to say in **Revelation 1:9**, “*I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus...*” The term “fellow partaker” [SUNKOINONOS] is literally “partaker with you.” It comes from two Greek words [SUN] meaning “together” and “KOINONIA” meaning “fellowship or sharing.” The idea is someone who shares in or is a companion with another. What does John share in with his readers? What is he a companion with them in?

First notice that John is a companion in Suffering!

John identifies himself as a fellow partaker in the tribulation. John is not speaking about the Great Tribulation highlighted in Revelation chapters 6-18, because he goes on to identify this tribulation as being in Jesus. The seven-year tribulation period of Revelation 6-18 is the outpouring of God’s wrath upon the world. It is not a tribulation, which is in Jesus. So what is John referring to when he says that he is a companion in the tribulation? He is speaking of a general tribulation, suffering or affliction that accompanies the Christian life during this present age.

- Listen to the words of Jesus in **Matthew 5:10-12**. He said, “*Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*”
- On the eve before His crucifixion Jesus says these words recorded for us in **John 15:20**, “*Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A slave is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you...*”

John was in midst of persecution for his faith. He was exiled on the Island of Patmos. Before exile most prisoners were beaten and tortured and denied warm clothing or adequate food. Those imprisoned on Patmos were forced to perform hard labor in the mines and sleep upon the bare rocky ground. This certainly would have taken its toll on a 90 year-old man such as John.

I doubt that many of us have suffered too greatly for our faith in Christ. We may have been criticized, demeaned, made fun of, or rejected for our faith. But I do not know any believer in Christ in our church that has suffered from imprisonment, starvation, or physical pain for the cause of Christ. (I could be wrong.) We are privileged to live in a country that is quite tolerant of Christianity. But we need to keep in mind that it is growing more intolerant with each passing year. We should not assume that we will always be exempt from suffering for our faith in Christ. Nowhere in the Scripture are we ever promised a life of ease. We can be confident that just as the prophets suffered persecution, we may too. We can be confident that just as Jesus suffered persecution, we may too. We can be confident that just as John and other believers in the church have suffered persecution we may too.

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- Whether we are faced with severe persecution and afflictions, or various kinds of trials, let us remember the words of Paul in **2 Corinthians 4:17**, “*For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison.*”
- Or as James puts it in **James 1:2**, “*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials. Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.*”

Whatever you might be going through or suffering through right now, remember that God can work it together for your good and for His glory. Rather than bemoan our circumstances let us rejoice in what God is doing in and through our lives. John was not only a companion in suffering, but

Second notice that John is a companion in Salvation!

John says in verse 9, “*I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and **kingdom**...*” The kingdom spoken of here is ultimately the future millennial kingdom, which will be described later in Revelation 20. This future kingdom is spoken of throughout the New Testament.

- For instance we see it mentioned by Christ in **Luke 22:29-30**. He says, “*and just as My Father has granted Me **a kingdom**, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in **My kingdom**, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*”
- We also see it mentioned by James in **James 2:5**, when he says, “*Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and **heirs of the kingdom** which He promised to those who love Him.*”

"Anticipation of such a kingdom is an integral part of the present Christian experience." It is a blessed hope of our salvation. The idea is that although going through present tribulation now, believers can be assured that at the time of their salvation they became heirs of God's kingdom and will be future partakers in Christ's millennial reign on the earth. This is a certain eventuality. At the time of our salvation we became heirs of the kingdom so John identifies with his readers as a fellow partaker in God's kingdom, although it is still a future event. The picture painted here is on the future glory and reign of Christ; this world is not our home we are just passing through. Our real home is yet future in Christ's kingdom.

What an encouragement this can be for us as we move through trials and tribulations here on the earth, looking forward to this future time. What encouragement we can have as we remember that our future hope is being in the presence of Christ, worshiping and serving Him for all eternity. John is not only a companion in suffering and salvation, but:

Third notice that he is a companion in Steadfastness!

The verse continues to read, “*I, John, your brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus...*” The Greek term translated “perseverance” [HUPOMONEI] literally means “to remain under” and is usually translated as “perseverance, or endurance.” It refers to steadfastness and perseverance under certain circumstances, which in the context here is present suffering.

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This endurance is a quality that is constantly connected with Christian living:

- Paul teaches in **Romans 5:3-4**, “*we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance proven character; and character, hope...*”
- In **James 1:2-4**, James writes, “*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.*”

Here the term carries the idea of enduring or persevering through affliction without giving up. We must have this attitude of patient endurance as we go through various trials or persecutions. Notice also that all three of these experiences are in Jesus. Suffering persecution for the cause of Christ, belonging to His kingdom, and patiently enduring trials are distinctly Christian experiences. We like John and his readers are co-sharers in these experiences. Thus we can encourage and identify with one another as we move through these experiences. Now we move on to the second characteristic of John’s situation.

Characteristic #2: Second, John Relates His Imprisonment.

He says in verse 9, “*I John...was on the Island of Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.*”

The island called Patmos is located in the Icarian Sea, about 40 miles west southwest of Miletus. It was the last stopping place for one traveling from Rome to Ephesus and the first stopping place for one traveling from Ephesus to Rome. The island, shaped like a crescent with its horns facing eastward, offered a safe place for vessels to harbor and was therefore important to navigators. It was a barren rocky island about ten miles long and five miles wide, which was used as a prison settlement by the Romans as were other islands in its group.

Early Christian tradition has it that John was sent to this island during the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian and was forced to work in the mines there. Tradition also reports that when Domitian died, John was allowed to return to Ephesus. Why was John exiled on the Island of Patmos?

John clearly states that he was exiled on the Island of Patmos because of the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus. It is the testimony of Jesus bore through the preaching of the word by John. John was dedicated to being a faithful witness of Christ. He was obedient to our Lord's command in **Acts 1:8**. It is recorded in church history that John was serving in the role of elder at the church in Ephesus, faithfully ministering to the surrounding churches and faithfully proclaiming the Gospel of Christ. Because of his faithful teaching and preaching, the Roman emperor Domitian had John imprisoned on the island of Patmos.

We too are called to be faithful witnesses of Christ. We are instructed by Christ to be salt and light to an unbelieving world. (**Matthew 5:13-16**) Our lives should be a living testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ. What is your situation? John’s situation should be an encouragement to us that we can persevere through times of suffering or persecution striving to be a faithful witness for Christ. Are you letting your light shine before men so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven? Are you a faithful witness of Christ? John has revealed his identity and related his imprisonment and now lastly:

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Characteristic #3: Third, John Relays His Instructions.

John goes on to say in verses 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, 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.”*

First, notice the experience of John.

What is John’s experience upon receiving this revelation from Christ? He says in verse 10, *“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-The phrase *“I was in the Spirit”* is a difficult phrase to understand exactly what John means.

However most believe that this is some sort of supernatural experience. This is because the Greek word translated *‘was’* is literally *‘became’* and therefore indicates that John became in spirit on the Lord’s day. This is not the normal way in the New Testament to speak of being filled with the Spirit or controlled by the Spirit. Thus it is likely a reference to an unusual experience.

Theologian John Walvoord, says, *“John's statement in verse 10 that he was in the Spirit refers to his experience of being carried beyond normal sense into a state where God could reveal supernaturally the contents of this book.”*

Pastor John MacArthur states, *“This was not a dream. John was supernaturally transported out of the material world awake, not sleeping, to an experience beyond the normal senses. The Holy Spirit empowered his sense to perceive revelation from God.”*

Simply stated, John’s experience transcended the bounds of normal human comprehension. Under the Holy Spirit’s control, John was transported to a plane of experience beyond the human senses so that he could receive this Revelation from Christ. That is why he could attest to *“all that he saw”* in verse 2. John personally witnessed this Revelation. But it was more than just a vision. **Revelation 4:1-2** repeats this phrase and further indicates that this was some sort of supernatural experience in order to receive this Revelation from Christ. John writes, *“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, “Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things.” Immediately I was in the Spirit (became in spirit)...”*

It is important to recognize that such visions or supernatural experiences are not possible today. These unusual circumstances only took place as the Word of God was being revealed to God's spokesmen. These dreams, visions, revelations and even miracles were primarily for the introduction of new revelation. Now that God's Word is complete, God does not give new revelations or speak through dreams, visions or other supernatural experiences.

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2-The phrase “On the Lord's day” is also controversial.

Some suggest that John is speaking of “The eschatological Day of the Lord.” Most proponents of this view want to interpret it this way so that they can place the events of the book of Revelation in the first century. However, a clear reading of the book of Revelation would place the events of chapters 4-22 as still future. Also, the arrangement of the Greek words are not the normal arrangement used to refer to the eschatological Day of the Lord. This is likely nothing more than a reference to Sunday, the first day of the week. Although this is the only reference to Sunday as being called the Lord's day, early Christians found this to be an appropriate title for Sunday since Christ's resurrection was on a Sunday. In fact this phrase was commonly used as early as the second century to refer to Sunday and came to be used in Asia Minor shortly after the writing of Revelation. The grammatical structure is similar to that of **1 Corinthians 11:20** where the same adjective is used of “the Lord's supper.” This term also became popular to the counterpart term used by the Roman Empire in which they would refer to the first day of the week as "Emperor's day."

3-John also records what he heard in relation to this experience.

He says, “*I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet...*” Throughout the book of Revelation, a loud sound or voice indicates the solemnity of what God is about to reveal. The phrase, “*Like the sound of a trumpet,*” describes the intensity and clarity of the voice. The trumpet was one of the loudest instruments of the time period and served as a good illustration of the intensity of the voice that John heard. Such an intense voice would certainly grab John’s attention so that he would follow through with the exhortation that he was given. What was it that the voice like a trumpet said?

Second, notice the exhortation to John.

The voice like a trumpet gave the initial commission for John to write the book of Revelation. The commission to write is simply stated here in a general way, but will be repeated in **Revelation 1:19**, where more detail as well as the outline of the entire scope of John's revelation will be given.

John is commanded to send what he writes to the same seven churches greeted in **Revelation 1:4**. These churches were centers of seven postal districts, a feature, which made them well suited for publicizing the message of Revelation. These seven churches knew John personally as he had the opportunity to minister to them while he was in Ephesus prior to his exile on Patmos. These seven churches needed to hear the message of the book of Revelation. These seven churches were in need of the hope and encouragement that the book of Revelation would bring in light of the persecution by Domitian.

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CONCLUSION

How about us? How about Valley Bible Church? Are we in need of the message of the book of Revelation? Yes! We may not be suffering the same kind of persecution as the first century church did under the reign of Domitian, but as fellow partakers in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance, which are in Jesus, we can still find hope and encouragement from this book. We can still be motivated toward Godly living by the message of this book. After his release from prison, John Bunyan would faithfully preach the truth of God's Word for sixteen more years. His last words preached from the pulpit shortly before his death were these: "Live like the children of God, that you may look your Father in the face with comfort another day."

Like the Apostle John and like John Bunyan as fellow partakers let us strive to be faithful witnesses for Christ.