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Series: For the Time is Near  
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**Write What You See: A Commissioned Reporter, Part 1**  
**Revelation 1:9-11**

This morning, please turn to Revelation, chapter 1. The title of this morning's message is, *Write What You See: A Commissioned Reporter, Part 1*.

My intentions are always to split, divide the Bible into different sections, but that doesn't always work out. I was thinking, "Ok, I'm going to do Chapter 1 on day one, and that didn't work. We covered what, eight verses? What we're going to cover this morning is verses 9-11. So next week we'll make every attempt to finish off the first chapter of Revelation. I thought it was very important for us to spend a little more time going through the few verses that we're going to cover this morning.

How many of you have gone through certain issues, trials, difficulties in your life? Everyone, right? We've all had difficulties, hard times, what we would call "trials and tribulation." Things that sometimes just leave us floored. How many times as we're going through those different situations do we really go through them victoriously? I can tell you...and I am confessing to you...that there are many times as I'm going through trials in my life...and I am still learning...I figured out that I fail a lot of times. And sometimes, I will realize at some point that I am not doing so hot through those trials. I'm not being a witness, a testimony, of God's strength, His power, His grace in my life. So, I'm glad that He's patient with us. I hope you guys are different. You guys are different, right? You guys go through those trials and you say, "Man! I don't know what Pastor is talking about! Everything's cool with me."

Well, listen, this morning we're going to be encouraged. We're going to see what perspective, what should motivate us, through those trials so that we can be victorious through the trials. Not at the end to where you're like, "Oh, God, You got me through! Man, I'm so tired! That was just too much!" No! Listen, God has called us to a relationship with Him so that we through different trials, different issues, different difficulties, we would be victorious *through* them. Not just at the end..."Oh, You've strengthened me, Lord." That's great, but *through* them. That is when you are a testimony of Jesus to others. In the midst of your trial, others are looking at you with little squinted eyes. They're bewildered, and they're asking, "How? How are you getting through that situation, not missing, not skipping a beat as far as your relationship with the Lord. I see a peace about you. I

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see something that I don't have." John Squires said it about a month ago, "When you're squeezed, what comes out of you?" It should be Jesus, right? So, we're going to learn about that in these next few verses here.

Now, it had been over 60 years since John had last seen Jesus. When did he see Him? It was when He resurrected from the grave and He appeared to His disciples for 40 days. And then after those 40 days, He ascended and now, today sits at the right hand of the Father and intercedes for you and I. It was on that day that John had last seen Jesus.

The time of this encounter with Jesus was on the Lord's Day. Supernaturally, Jesus transported John into the eternal. We get this glimpse into the eternal. He's transported into what we would see described before us to be on the Lord's day, not the Day of the Lord, that's different with a capital D. We're going to cover that later, but this is something that the Lord was showing him. A day in which He would show him things that are happening, things that are going to happen, things that are just needing to be written down for the benefit of the church, and for you and I today.

He was commanded directly by Jesus, as we read here in verses 19: ***Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this.*** As John pointed out, this took place in another dimension, outside of our own, in the Spirit is how it was described. It was a moment when God would reveal Jesus to John. He would reveal Himself. Events that were shown to him, events that were happening, and ones that we know that are to come in the future, but will be shown in this particular day to John.

So, I want to read with you verses 9-20, but we're only covering a few verses today, verses 9-11.

***<sup>9</sup> I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. <sup>10</sup> I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet <sup>11</sup> saying, "Write what you see in a book 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."***

***<sup>12</sup> Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, <sup>13</sup> and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. <sup>14</sup> The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, <sup>15</sup> his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. <sup>16</sup> In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.***

***<sup>17</sup> When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, "Fear not, I am the first and the last, <sup>18</sup> and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. <sup>19</sup> Write therefore the things that you have seen, those that are and those that are to take place after this. <sup>20</sup> As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.***

[Prayer] Father, we come before You right now with so many thoughts, so many wishes of people thinking that one day they are going to stand before You, ask You questions, wonder about this, wonder about that...but one

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*day we will know, just as we are known. I don't believe we will be standing in Your presence because every encounter that we see in the Bible of someone coming before You is that they fall to their face, because You are righteous, You are holy. So, right now I pray and I ask You, Lord, to move in the hearts of each and every person here. May we understand that this is Your Holy Scripture, breathed out by You that we may be instructed, and corrected, and exhorted, that we may be built up, that we may be equipped for the work of the ministry, that we may be counseled, and that we may be vessels which are used for Your glory. I pray, Lord, that we would hear Your voice above all. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

In 1 Peter 5, the apostle Peter is writing and he says something here that we're familiar with. He says: <sup>9</sup> **Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.** <sup>10</sup> **And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.** <sup>11</sup> **To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.**

I bring that to your attention because oftentimes in the midst of certain difficult seasons in life, we sometimes feel alone. We feel like we're the only ones that are going through this. When in fact, that's not true. There's nothing that you're going through that someone else has not experienced already. And so, we are to look to the Lord. If anyone knew what it was to be restored, it would be the apostle Peter. He denied Jesus three times and he needed to be restored. Jesus did just that one day after He was resurrected from the grave, He met him on the beach and asked Peter, "Do you love me?" Do you remember that scene? "Do you love me?" Jesus wants to do that.

If you haven't been victorious through trials and difficult times, just know...don't be fooled by anyone who says otherwise. Don't believe them. God will embrace you. He will bring you in, the moment you just turn to Him and ask Him for forgiveness, and ask Him to strengthen you and help you with whatever it is that you're going through.

Now, there are three distinct sections within the verses that we just read. We are going to go over one part of those three sections, and that is the introduction of John; he introduces himself. And also, Jesus' command to write to the seven churches.

What we need to understand here, is that God thought it important enough to not leave the church in the dark as it pertains to the last days, that the church would be prepared for what was to come and not relax. We're not to relax, or grow lazy; we're to be ready. And really, the church at this point should be thriving, even all the way to the last moments when the Lord comes back for his bride. We should be thriving, not dead, not lazy, not wrapped up in the non-essentials. You know, there are just some things that are just not worth arguing about. There are other things that have to do with salvation, and we need to lay those things out. But listen, the church need to be refined, to be purified, it needs to be strong. We know that judgment first begins, as the Bible tells us, with His church.

Jesus snatches John up in the Spirit and shows him things in this eternal realm, and commands him to write them down for our benefit, but it's for God glory. It's for His glory. John becomes God's commissioned reporter, who is ordered to write down what he is shown, and sent to the church that it may benefit from what is revealed, and be ready for what was to come.

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### John's Introduction of Himself

So, in these few verses are John's introduction of himself, and Jesus' command to write to the seven churches, which were in Asia. John introduces himself in the following manner. He said: ***I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus...***

So, two things...***"your brother"***...that's the first part, and the second part...***"your partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus..."*** Now, there is something of great importance, of great significance that I don't want you to miss. I don't want us to just skim over this part. This is him introducing himself to the church, because remember this book is being written by God's command to go out to the seven churches, and we'll learn what those seven churches are and what they represent. So it's important for us to understand that every word is important in the Bible, not just some, but all. And this introduction has great significance.

Yes, in Christ, we are brothers in faith and eternally connected through Jesus Christ, but that brotherhood is connected by something that is not oftentimes comforting, nor welcoming, although it marks the follower of Jesus Christ. Most people are fine with being a brother in Christ, and a partner as well, but to partner in tribulation and the patient endurance..."Did I sign up for that?" When you find out that..."I gave my life to the, Lord. Perhaps I thought that things were going to just miraculously be perfect." Not so. It rains on the just, and the unjust. And there's certain reasons why we go through certain things in our lives. We don't have all the answers, but God does. But something that marks the Christian is that, as Jesus said, we will suffer, we will go through tribulation, we will be persecuted just as He was. The servant is not greater than His master.

And yet, we need to understand that the whole New Testament is a record of the suffering of the followers of our Lord. Think about that. It's filled from beginning to end, all throughout, the sufferings of the followers of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist was beheaded and died in his own blood. Jesus was crucified beneath the great and open skies, raised above the earth by a cross upon which He was nailed. The story of the church from the beginning is written in blood and tears, and it continues that way until today. There are people suffering in South America, in the Middle East, in China, in so many different areas of the world because of their relationship with Jesus Christ. Their not only imprisoned, like Saeed Abedini in Iran. He's only one, by the way, of many. They are all over the world today.

Acts 8:1 says: ***And Saul approved of his execution*** (that's Stephen's execution). ***And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*** But, let me tell you that it didn't end there. It continues even today. Sometimes trials serve to bring to the surface the truth through the hands of persecutors. There's times when trials, when persecutions, what they cause is for there to be a dispersion among the peoples that belong to God, so that the Word may go out to peoples and places that God has ordained to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. There are Christians today in chains being persecuted and experiencing serious trials all over the world.

Let me ask you, have you ever been persecuted on behalf of Jesus Christ? Have you really, really been persecuted. I would say most of you probably have, some of you maybe haven't been persecuted. Let me tell you something that if you stand solid for Jesus Christ *you will be* persecuted. Trust me, you start saying a few things on Facebook..."You are not tolerant!" Just this week I got a mouthful from a Muslim who wasn't happy

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with what I had to say. That's ok. My Lord tells me that this is going to come. Am I going to stop because one person persecutes me? No, I'm not.

I'm so looking forward to the day when I'm at rest, full rest, in the glory of the Lord. I'm so looking forward to that day. But church, we need to be ready today, right now. We need to have that set before us, but we need to be equipped, we need to be strong in the Lord, we need to get through these trials victoriously, so that not only would we glorify the Lord, but that others would see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. That they would have this inclination to ask questions. "You have something I don't have." It's important to be a testimony. John, as we read here, was a testimony of Jesus Christ.

W.A. Criswell shares this story: "One family which so suffered was that of John Deswarte, his wife and six sons. The inquisitors came and arrested John Deswarte and his wife and four of his sons, the two younger being away from home. The neighbors told the two younger boys of the tragic plight that had overwhelmed their father and mother and brothers. They told the two younger sons to escape for their lives. Those boys said to one another, 'Let us not save ourselves but let us die with our father and with our mother.' When the father saw the two younger boys coming to him, he asked, 'Sons, are you ready to go with us to the New Jerusalem?' Those two boys replied, 'We are.' In the city of Lisle the father and mother and six sons were burned at the stake. Out of martyrdom of God's children was born again the knowledge of the Word of God."

Then there's another short excerpt from this commentary by W.A. Criswell, which says, "When they burned Master Ridley and Bishop Vladimir in Oxford, Master Ridley began to cringe before the mountain flames. Bishop Vladimir said, 'Master Ridley, be of good cheer. We shall this day light a fire in England that, please God, shall never go out.'"

Martyrs, tears, and blood has marked the church since it's inception, beginning with our Lord's. John 16:33: ***"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."***

Matthew 16:24-27: ***Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup> For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? <sup>27</sup> For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done.***

And so, we shouldn't be overwhelmed or concerned about what anyone else is doing or not doing. We ourselves are worthy of being called "children of God" and "followers of Jesus Christ", as our fruit is denying ourselves, picking up the cross, and following Him. You want to know the mark of a Christian? It's one who is willing to suffer for the sake of Christ. There's not too many people who are willing to suffer. There are a lot of people who are willing to prosper, but not to suffer.

John introduces himself in this manner, and identifies himself as one who has been exiled to the island of Patmos. "Hey, I'm a brother of yours! I'm a partner in the tribulation, and the kingdom, and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, and was on the island of Patmos on account of the Word of God, and the testimony of Jesus." That's how he introduces himself.

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By the way, he was exiled to the island of Patmos by Dometian who was the first Roman Caesar to be addressed by all of his subjects as "our lord and god". He was the first of the Roman Caesars to make images of himself, erect them in places of worship, and command that all of the people worship him. This was the time that John was exiled to the island of Patmos. It wasn't rosy times. It was difficult times; times when people were being persecuted for following Jesus Christ.

The island, by the way, was not like Gilligan's Island. It wasn't filled with beautiful lush vegetation. It was actually known for its marble. They would mine for this marble and no doubt they used the prisoners to do this. It was a rocky, barren island that was about 10 miles long, by 6 miles wide. It was in the Aegean Sea, and it was here that God gave us the book of Revelation, through the apostle John, the Beloved Disciple.

Remember, he was the one who laid his head on our Lord's bosom, on His chest, to hear Him a little closer. This was the same man who is now exiled to the island of Patmos. And yet, he is also the same person who has now been chosen by the Lord to enter into the eternal realm to reveal God's glorious plan in the end days for the benefit of you and I, so that we would be prepared.

It is the man who perseveres through heavy trials with Christ who brings forth an unusual word of comfort to God's people. It is such a person who holds our attention, and as we make our attempt at comforting them, *they* are at the same time being used by God himself to speak to His people of His power and compassion, love, grace, and mercy. Have you noticed that? Someone who is just immersed in God's grace and love? All of a sudden, as you are trying to minister to them, you walk away in tears because you've just been ministered to yourself! "I've just walked away with the fragrance of Christ all over me because I was in this person's presence. I was trying to comfort him, (or her, or them) and I walk away knowing Christ a little bit better."

Such a man was John. As he himself knew why he was on the island of Patmos. He says, "***on account of the word of God...***" by command of God. It wasn't by chance. It was ordained by God, and he believed that "***...and the testimony of Jesus.***" Jeremy Camp has a song that has these lyrics within it: "*We will overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony.*" How true that is. John's testimony was Jesus' testimony - his belief confirmed it, his actions confirmed it.

### The Command

***<sup>10</sup>I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet <sup>11</sup>saying, "Write what you see in a book 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."***

It's as John is in this state of spirit that the Lord supernaturally transported him into the eternal realm, and into the Lord's day, and was commanded to write what he was shown in the book and send it off.

The initial description of the Lord's voice was that of a trumpet. That kind of struck me, because we read a little bit later that it was like "the roar of many waters." Now remember, John knew Jesus, God incarnate. He still had his back to him. He heard the voice from *behind* him, not in front of him. He describes the Lord voice as a trumpet. It's the voice of the Supreme Authority, the great voice that speaks as the Author, the same voice that spoke the universe into existence.

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A trumpet, by the way, was normally associated with that of a command to a soldier, a subordinate, who was to fix his attention on the sound of the trumpet and respond accordingly. Think about these things. Every single word means something! That's why when you hear in the Bible, "the trumpet", it's a command, a proclamation, it's an order.

This voice was the voice of the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Commander of the Lord's Army. It was this voice which spoke to John on this day and commanded him as the Lord's subject, as His bondservant, as we see in the Bible, the children of God are referred to as "slaves of righteousness". Just as He had commanded all creation and had commanded even Christ to fulfill the purpose of God on earth, the same word was coming forth. He said write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches.

Do you hear God's voice in that manner? Like a trumpet; like the call from the Commander of the Lord's Army. Not always, right? But, I hope most of the time. I hope so. I pray it may get better as you continue to get to know Him.

Now, let's talk about these seven churches. They're located in what we presently know as being Turkey, western Turkey. They were geographically located in such a way that one messenger could have easily taken a letter or any document to each and every church in the area. What I find absolutely amazing is that it was the Roman Empire that had developed this system of transportation throughout that whole area. They actually facilitated the Gospel to be spread out throughout the modern world and beyond.

That's why I don't throw away the baby with the bathwater; the internet, social media, etc.. I'll use it and probably offend more people, but that's ok. Hopefully, more people get to hear the Gospel. That's what important.

The number seven, according to it's symbolic meaning in the scripture, represents "the whole; the complete". Although, we have this Book having been written for the seven churches, the number seven represents all of them. There's really no "Church of the United States", there's no "Church of California", there's no "Church of Riverside". There are churches *in* Riverside, churches *in* California, churches *in* the United States. So that's what we see here...the churches in these different areas. It literally represents all of them, the Divine, full and complete number, which would represent the church, or bride of Christ. We see it in all it's completion, in it's fullness, within these seven churches.

When Jesus Christ addresses this message to be taken to the seven churches of Asia, He is addressing the churches of all ages, and of all times. Still today, we're reading and benefitting, and understanding from it. It is with this understanding that as we study what Christ is speaking to each church in the different regions of Asia, He is speaking to His church today in *all* locations, to *all* groups and fellowships who are gathering in His name. It doesn't matter if you're in a coffee shop, or if you're getting together at a home, or in a community center, or in a building like this, or one with a cross, or one with colored windows. It doesn't matter! If you're there, you're part of the church, and this is addressed to you. It is a perfect and complete message to the whole church, and not just one in particular.

As we read through these different churches, we going to study them. Let's not get hung up on, "Which one are we?" We're all seven, not just one. We want to believe we're like the Church of Ephesus...that we just need to

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return to our first love, and that's all. No, no, no...the whole of scripture applies to you, and to me. Let's not pick and choose. It's everything together.

I believe that the time we took to cover this section was necessary because there are so many people who are experiencing trials of different sorts. You admit it, right? That's why I asked the question at the beginning...kind of "hook, line, and sinker". You all admitted that you're going through different trials, or have suffered at some point and have been persecuted. So, it's important for us to understand and have the right perspective, to have basically, John's perspective. Understanding that when he said that he "***was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.***", those are our words, too.

At some point, we have our own barren Patmos in our own lives. We need to learn what can come about if we are going through those times victoriously in Jesus Christ, because there are some issues that are so small that they can be overlooked. You may be thinking, "I don't really have any issues in my life." Then guess what? You're overlooking something that God is trying to do in your own life. You see His work of sanctification isn't just for the person who has wrecked their car, or lost their home, have no job...it's not just for that person, it's for *every* person. It's occurring, but what happens is that sometimes our issues are small ones, and through them we need to learn, and be victorious, as well. Others seem so large that one would wonder how they're *ever* going to overcome them. "How am I going to do *this*?" I've experienced both and I know that it's in this context, through John, we have come to receive the revelation of Jesus Christ, as was given to him. What's going to be revealed in your life?

There's a point in people's life when we need to make a re-commitment. I remember that, too, and let me tell you this...the Christian life isn't about just re-committing one time. Sometimes people talk about that one day, that one time. "I re-committed my life on this one day, so I'm cool. I'm good." No, in fact the Christian life is marked by a daily life of repentance. It's daily being humbled before the Lord and asking for His forgiveness, cleansing you from all unrighteousness, revealing to you what is not of Him and more of what closely resembles Him.

Genesis is the book of beginnings and origins. Revelation is the book of end times, but I'd like to say that it's also a book of beginnings in an eternal and wonderful way for the believer. It doesn't end there. Save the fork, the best is yet to come! Next Sunday we're going to see John's description of Jesus, the only description of Jesus, and break that down. That's wild! He's going to put it in the best way that he can. We're going to see that there's a lot of meaning behind the different words that he used to describe the Lord.

Revelation is a book of hope. How many times have you persevered through trials only to learn that God was with you the whole way through? And then something comes about that you would have never known, had you not gone through that trial. "I went through that trial and was moaning and groaning all the way through, but if I hadn't gone through it I wouldn't have known this, or that."

John had the right perspective and knew the importance of:

1. Clinging to the Lord.
2. Not losing sight of the eternal.
3. Being a witness of his faith in the midst of his trial.



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John was a commissioned reporter, but you know what? So are you. Do you know that each and everyone of you have been called to be ambassadors of Christ? An ambassador of Christ; that's a tall order. Are you prepared to be Christ's ambassador? If you're not, that's fine. Admit that, confess it to the Lord, and just tell Him, "Today, Lord, I want to know you better. I want to walk with You. I don't want to continue to fail through these trials, these issues, these difficult seasons in my life. I want to know how to go through those things with great strength, being a testimony of You *in* and *through* my life." It's ok! God will meet you right there. He'll hold your hand and bring you through.

You see, we're representing Him with the message of hope. Someone told me the other day, "What's hope got to do with it?" Hope has *everything* to do with it! *Everything!* That's why Jesus came. Hope has everything to do with it.

John was told to write what he was shown for the benefit of the church. You read, know, and tell what *you* have been shown for the benefit of others, but make sure you have the right perspective and the right heart, just as John did.

This morning, as the worship team comes up, we're going to close in this song...I just want to ask...are you at that point? Have you been victorious through your issues, through your trials, through difficult seasons in your life? I want to pray for *all* of us because I know that we *all* fail. I confess to you that there's times when I have difficulties. We need the Lord desperately to help us to be that witness, to be a testimony of Jesus Christ, knowing that whatever circumstances we find ourselves in, we also need to believe that it was by no accident, and for whatever reason, God allowed it. Let's pray.

[Prayer] *Father, we come to You this morning, Lord I pray, not with heavy hearts but with a lightened burden, that we understand that we can come to You, and we can confess our sins, and that You are faithful and just to forgive us of our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Father, we confess to You that we fall short of Your perfect standard. We fall short of Your glory. I pray that You would fill us with Your Spirit Lord, that You would renew a right spirit within us, that You would help us to be your ambassadors, help us to be a testimony of who You are in our lives. Help us to walk by the Spirit so that we would not fulfill the lust of the flesh. Oh, help Your church, Father. Anoint each and every one of us. Wash our hands pure. Cleanse us from within. I pray Lord, that You would set us in that right place. Thank You for this time, thank You for your patience, thank You so much for Your grace. I pray that we have met You there. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*