

News & Notes

Sunday, May 31, 2009

Remember in Prayer: Arland Anderson; Robbie Alberson; Robert Bennett; Patricia Campbell; Freeman Duncan; Shannon Hastings; Cannan Hawkins; Wayne Hawkins; Dot Ketchum; Robert King; John and Deliah Mann; Diane Mize; Betty Moore; Ann Ray; Brandon Ray; Bob Riles; Shad Street; Calvin Ursery; Norma Vaughter; Alvie Williford;

Pantry item for the month of May is Purex liquid laundry detergent.

Betty King is **collecting old newspapers** for a VBS activity.

Ashland Events: Today: Meal after morning service and joint afternoon service with South Ashland at 1:30 PM; June 7-10: Vacation Bible School;

Area Events: Beginning today: Gospel meeting at the North Rienzi church of Christ; Beginning tomorrow: Lectureship at the Calvary Hill congregation in Oxford;

Sermon in Preview:

AM: Guest speaker

PM: Special joint afternoon service with South Ashland.

For the Record (May 24, 2009):

Attendance: 80 Contribution: \$1184.00 Budget: \$1459.00

The Ashland Church of Christ

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Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Worship 10:30 AM
Worship 5:00 PM

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

Shepherds:

Barney King
Jeff Roberson
Carrol Street

ASHLAND

ANNOUNCER

"Note Those Who So Walk"

Philippians 3:17

2Thessalonians 3:14

JOHN WAS MORE THAN JUST A WRITER

Roger D. Campbell

The apostle John was the human penman of *"The revelation of Jesus Christ"* (Revelation 1:1) that was sent *"unto the seven churches which are in Asia"* (Revelation 1:11). *"I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ"* (Revelation 1:9). Guided by the Spirit of God, John penned five New Testament Books (John, 1-3 John, Revelation). However, Revelation 1:9 reveals that this man of God was more than just a writer. From his description of himself we see him as:

John – a Brother (in the Lord). What would we do without our brethren in the Christ? I shudder to think where I would be in my life without the assistance and service of my sisters and brothers in the Lord Jesus. We have the same Father, which makes us family – *"the house of God"* (1 Timothy 3:15). Like John, none of us became a child of God by accident. Each of us experienced the same spiritual birth by being baptized into the Christ in obedience to the faith (Galatians 3:26,27). We now have the privilege to carry out this instruction: *"by love serve one another"* (Galatians 5:13). Our fleshly family is special. Yet, our bond in the Christ takes priority over all fleshly ties. When someone is introduced to us as *"brother ____"* or *"sister ____"*, it is not a trivial matter. When we meet for the first time one that is truly a brother or sister in the Lord, we are meeting one of our own. Since we make up less than 1% of the world's population, is it not a special thing to meet a new member of God's family?

John – a Companion in Tribulation. The word *"companion"* (*"partaker,"* ASV) means *"participant with others in (anything), joint partner"* [*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the N.T.*, p. 593, word no. 4791, *"ὁἰῶν ἐν τῷ τῆσδε"* (sungkoinonos)]. John was not simply writing about tribulation. He was living it and having part in it – just like the saints to whom he wrote. What about the tribulation that these saints were facing?

Tribulation (*thlipsis*) is 'a pressing together (as of grapes), squeezing or pinching' (I.S.B.E.), hence a crushing as of grapes or grinding as of wheat. Jesus had forewarned His disciples that such would be their lot . . . Tribulation had been the lot of the church from its beginning, but it was now breaking upon the saints with an increasing intensity that would cover a period of more than two hundred years . . . John was a partaker with them, which meant there was a link of sympathy between him and all Christians [Homer Hailey, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, p. 104].

The Christians in Smyrna had already suffered for their Lord, and their plight would get no easier. Jesus told them what was in the future for at least some of them: suffering, prison, tribulation, and death (Revelation 2:9,10). Throughout the Bible's last book, we see the truth that God's saints must suffer for Him, but in the end they will be victorious through their victorious Savior. Regardless of the trials or persecution that God's children might endure, they can know that "the same afflictions" are being experienced or have been experienced before by their fellow saints (1 Peter 5:9).

John – a Companion in the Kingdom. Again, John does not write as one that is unconcerned about the circumstances of the churches of Asia. He is a member of the same body of the Christ that they are. He is empathetic to their cause, knowing the truths that "the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all he members suffer with it" (1 Corinthians 12:25,26). He is a fellow-citizen with them in the Lord's Kingdom. This shows, of course, that the Kingdom was already in existence at the time John wrote this book. How could John and the saints to whom he wrote be "in the kingdom" if it did not yet exist?! Like the saints in Colosse, they had been translated into the Kingdom when they obeyed the gospel (Colossians 1:12-14). As fellow-citizens in God's Kingdom, should we not lay aside all partiality, prejudice, and envy, plus any petty differences of opinion, and strive to work together for the good of His Cause for His glory? More than anything else, citizens of the Lord's Kingdom should be concerned about what pleases their King and is best for His Kingdom.

John – a Companion in the Patience of the Christ. The word "patience" points to steadfastness in the Lord's service. The fact that John was on the island of Patmos "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (1:9) seems to indicate that he had been exiled there as a result of his faithful proclamation of and allegiance to the gospel. How were John and other Christians holding up under persecution? They were being patient/steadfast. Just as the Lord Jesus was humble and faithful unto His death of agony (Philippians 2:5-9), so these early saints were remaining unmoved by their personal perils. What an example of being steadfast and unmoveable! (1 Corinthians 15:58).

The children of God that maintain a good attitude through their trials are strengthened by such, "Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience" (James 1:3). The Revelation speaks of overcomers that overcome by the

blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony (12:11). Why would they remain steadfast in their efforts to overcome whatever the devil might throw their way? The same verse reads: ". . . they loved not their lives unto death." Patient, steadfast overcomers are those that see things as they really are: faithfulness to the Lord is priority number one in life, taking precedence over our own personal safety, personal desires, or personal likes. Remember this: the eternal blessings of the Christ are promised only to those that overcome (Revelation 2,3), and only those that are steadfast overcome. Let us give diligence to be like John and those of his day who were companions in the Lord's steadfastness.

John – Isolated on an Island. Where was John when he wrote the Revelation? "I John . . . was in the isle that is called Patmos" (1:9). Patmos was "a rocky and uninhabited island located about seventy miles southwest of Ephesus, about forty miles from Miletus, and twenty-four miles from the shore of Asia Minor. The island is ten miles long and, at its widest point, six miles across" [Hailey, p. 105].

John was isolated on an island, but he did not forget his God. Noah did not forget his Lord when he was cooped up inside the ark for more than one year. Joseph, Jacob's son, did not forget or turn his back on God when he was shipped off to Egypt.

John was separated from his brethren in the Lord, but he did not forget them. The same is true of the apostle Paul, who though he was imprisoned more than once for his faithful service to God, did not forget his fellow saints. At least five books that Paul penned by the Spirit [Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, 2 Timothy] were written when he was a prisoner, and in each case, it is obvious that those to whom he writes are very much on his mind.

During his time on Patmos, John was most likely not living in conditions that he counted as ideal or desirable. Yet, his work for the Lord did not cease. He kept on doing what he could do for the benefit of God's Cause. The message that he wrote during his stay on that tiny island, the Revelation, has been a source of comfort and encouragement to people of all generations. Regardless of where we are in life, we can "Brighten the Corner" where we are. No matter where we are located, we can use our talents to do the best we can in God's service. What we do may not seem or look like much to us or other humans, but rest assured that God sees and cares about even the smallest efforts that we give for Him. John was down, but not out. He was cast out by men, but not by the Lord. Despite his inconveniences and tribulation as a servant on an isolated island, John did not forget God, did not forget his brethren, and did not forget to do what he could for the Lord.

Yes, the apostle John was more than a writer. He was a brother in the Lord, a companion in tribulation, a companion in the Kingdom, a companion in the Lord's patience, and isolated on an island. There are some fabulous lessons in these truths for any of us that long to go to heaven more than anything else.