

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

First Love Ministries, Inc.

PRAYER STUDY 211

JOHN'S LIFE AFTER THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

This is the disciple who testifieth of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

John 21:24

One of the most loved men in the Christian faith was the Apostle John. He was a man who started out with a certain amount of arrogance and intolerance and hot-headedness, and yet at the same time one of prophetic zeal and resolution to witness for Christ. Yet staying in close contact with the Lord Jesus Christ really changed this man. Slowly but surely, he became the Apostle of Love. He refers to himself (with humility, I believe) as that disciple whom Jesus loved. He was the youngest disciple and sat next to Christ at the Last Supper. He seemed to have special favor from the Lord and was entrusted by Jesus to look after the mother of Jesus. That one act of Jesus says volumes about John. In addition, he seemingly is the only one of the disciples at the cross. He lived to be almost one hundred years old.

We see John active in the book of Acts. He is always with Peter and never says anything that is recorded in Acts. He also probably wrote the three epistles that bear his name, although some believe they were written by another man known as John the Elder who was a contemporary of John's and a well-regarded church leader.

Stepping away from the inerrant Word of God is uncomfortable for me, but I think we have enough historical data outside of scripture to speculate with a high level of probability some of the events in John's life after the Lord ascended into heaven. Much of this information is drawn from Rick Renner's new book *A Light in Darkness: Seven Messages to the Seven Churches, Volume One*. Renner is both an extraordinary Greek scholar and a wonderful Christian.

Ephesus

Sometimes between 37-44 AD John and the other apostles left Jerusalem. He left with Mary, the mother of Jesus, whom he cared for until the end of

her life. For a while he ministered in various parts of Asia Minor, which is mostly present day Turkey. Around 67 AD he settled outside Ephesus with Mary. They lived in a hill outside the city of Ephesus. A high level of tolerance was extended to people living outside the city because their lifestyle was not obvious to the people living in the city. Here John was the overseer for all the churches in Asia Minor and frequently met with leaders who traveled great distances to see him. They were much safer since John lived in a not-so-noticeable place. (Timothy, on the other hand, actually lived in Ephesus, since he was a pastor and most of his congregation lived in the city.) After Paul was beheaded in 67 AD, John became even more prominent as the leader of the churches in Asia Minor, where he continued to serve as the overseer until around 93 AD when he was 90 years old.

Rome

The Emperor Domitian hated Christians because they refused to worship him. Domitian was the son of the Emperor Vespasian and the younger brother of Titus, who ruled Rome for two years and then died a mysterious death. He demanded that he be made Emperor even before Titus had died. He became one of the most wicked tyrants in human history. He declared himself a god and demanded that people worship him. He was so cruel that after his close associates murdered him in AD 96, the Senate passed a bill calling for an eradication of his memory and the demolition of all his statues and temples honoring him.

A few years before his death, probably in 93 AD, Domitian ordered the arrest of John. He was forcibly taken from his home in Ephesus, chained and shackled like a dangerous criminal, and taken to Rome by ship to stand trial before the Emperor. Domitian ordered the apostle to burn pagan incense to save his own life, but John refused. Domitian became furious and ordered that John be thrown in a vat of boiling oil, but John emerged out of the vat unburned. Domitian became terrified and ordered that John be taken away from his presence and banished forever to Patmos.

There is enough historical evidence to support the truthfulness of this incident in John's life. His deliverance from the boiling oil is considered an authentic miracle that really happened.

Patmos

Patmos was an desolate, isolated island in the Aegean Sea. It was located 24 miles from modern Turkey and approximately 60 miles from Ephesus. Here

the Romans sent their most dangerous prisoners. Those who were sent to Patmos were considered the scum of society. Patmos was an open air prison. It was almost impossible to escape Patmos because the island was surrounded by very sharp and jagged rocks and strong currents.

The Romans classified the prisoners at Patmos as either criminal or political. The criminals were met on arrival by harsh Roman guards who lashed their backs with whips or beat them with clubs if they did not move fast enough. Roman law did not permit abusive treatment of prisoners, but since Patmos was so isolate the guards had an “anything goes” mentality and treated the prisoners with a brutality that would not be permitted elsewhere. The criminal element was immediately scourged as a warning that disobedience would not be tolerated. These men had to work and were punished for the least offenses, but they were fed. The political prisoners were treated with more respect and allowed to roam the uninhabited part of the island. They were not, however, provided with food, clothing, water, or medical services and were responsible for their own survive. Many of these political prisoners died of starvation, disease, lack of clean water, or exposure.

Sometimes the political prisoners formed communities in order to work together for survival. Often these communities were made up of entire families who had been exiled here.

Remember that John is now in his nineties. Surviving in such a harsh environment would have been difficult for a young man, but John was old. He found a cave that provided some protection from the harsh weather. It was dry and warm. It was here that John received his vision which became the 22 chapters of the book of Revelation. He was exiled in his mid-90s to Patmos for 18 months. He would have died there if Domitian had not been assassinated.

Prochorus

There is an early Christian tradition not recorded in the New Testament that John had a disciple who went with him to Patmos. His name is Prochorus. He is mentioned in Acts 6:5 where he is listed as one of the first seven men chosen to be a deacon. The tradition says that Prochorus helped John write the gospel of John and later accompanied John to Patmos where he wrote the book of Revelation as John dictated it to him. Afterwards Prochorus returned to Ephesus with John and helped him write First John, Second John, and Third John. After John died, Prochorus became a bishop. He was

having great success preaching to the people of Antioch but was attacked by a mob and died a martyr's death.

John's return home

After Domitian's assassination, many of the political prisoners, including John, were granted amnesty. John was able to return to his hilltop home outside Ephesus. Here he lived until somewhere between 100 and 104 AD and was approximately a hundred years old. He was the only one of the original twelve disciples who died a martyr's death.

Leave It There C. Albert Tindley

*If the world from you withhold of its silver and its gold,
And you have to get along with meager fare,
Just remember in His word, how He feeds the little bird.
Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there.*

*If your body suffers pain and your health you can't regain,
And your soul is almost sinking in despair,
Jesus knows the pain you feel He can save and He can heal;
Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there.*

*When your enemies assail and your heart begins to fail,
Don't forget that God in Heaven answers pray'r,
He will make a way for you and will lead you safely thru.
Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there.*

*When your youthful days are gone and old age is stealing on,
And your body bends beneath the weight of care;
He will never leave you then, He'll go with you to the end.
Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there.*

CHORUS

*Leave it there; leave it there.
Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there.
If you trust and never doubt, He will surely bring you out;
Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there.*