

Bethel

Prayer Meeting Addresses

Number 10 Patmos

Reading: Revelation 1. 9-20

9 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.

10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were

as a flame of fire;

15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Address

The Apostle John was now a very aged man, and it must have been about sixty years or more since he leaned on Jesus' breast. Now he finds himself exiled on the remote, rocky island of Patmos. Little did John as a young

disciple, the disciple whom Jesus loved, know what lay before him. Neither do any of us know what lies before us. John had lingered for some years in and around Jerusalem, and then in the mysterious providence of God he went to Asia Minor where he preached to the church at Ephesus. But then a fresh edict was brought in by a Roman emperor and he was thrown into exile. There he was, an aged man, separated from all his loved ones – so many, many years since he used to go about with the Lord Jesus. Was it only a dream? And all his fellow disciples now gone, he the last one remaining, there in loneliness in the island, unable to meet with the Lord's people; and it was the Lord's day. Perhaps he thought of that word, "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." There was no gathering on the Lord's day for John, and there in much hardship, it would appear, having to work there as a slave.

Now who can understand the mystery of God's providence? "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." Mysterious to John; mysterious to us; not mysterious to God. You see the Lord had a wonderful purpose in John being cast on the Island of Patmos. You say, What good can come out of it? No-one can hear his preaching. He must have been a wonderful preacher, mustn't he? I do not think any man knew more of the love of Christ. But now he cannot preach. There is no-one to preach to. He has no congregation. He is separated from them all. Whatever good can come out of this? Whatever good can come out of an aged saint having to endure such loneliness and hardship? The Lord said unto him, "Write." He has to stop preaching. He has to write the whole of the Book of the Revelation. Our translators, you notice, have called it "the Revelation of St. John the Divine." The Holy Ghost has called it "the Revelation of Jesus Christ." But John must have these mysterious, solemn, hard things happen to him that God might use him. "Write." You have this word comes over and over again: "Write." You see, it was from this Patmos experience, this Patmos tribulation, this Patmos exile that we have words like this: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," and many other sacred and beautiful words.

Now God does not make any mistakes. You may have thought it strange that Paul could no longer preach when he was in prison in Rome. No, says Paul. "I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel." John had to stop preaching, and we have the Book of the Revelation. Paul had to stop preaching, and we have the epistles. Bunyan had to stop preaching, and we have the *Pilgrim's Progress*. The deep mystery of divine providence. And perhaps tonight you are in strange things. Perhaps you are having a *Patmos* experience.

O may you live to prove that it is all for the honour and glory of God and for your real good and for the good of His people.

But it must have been an awful trial for John to be dragged away from his beloved flock and taken in loneliness as a slave to this island. You see our aged people, all the comforts they have. Some of you because of old age and infirmity have had to leave your own home, but it is not to go in exile to a rocky island. It is to enjoy every earthly comfort. None of us knows what there might be, but we do know that God makes no mistakes, and if He brings us into the Island of Patmos, it will be for His glory.

But the point is this. Here is John exiled, enduring hardship, loneliness. It is the Lord's day. He says, "I was in the Spirit." O what sacred seasons these when we are found in the Spirit! John had not any preacher to listen to, any chapel to attend, and he was in the Spirit. And sometimes, solemnly the Lord's day comes and we are out of the Spirit. He heard the Lord's voice: "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." And then he had that view of Christ, that wonderful vision of Christ. If ever any person was intimate with the Lord Jesus, it was John. But now he saw Him in all His risen glory in heaven and he "fell at His feet as dead." That will save you from the light, trifling religion of today. He "fell at His feet as dead."

On Thursday evening I spoke to you from the Song of Solomon chapter 5. I did just refer to that very beautiful, sacred description of Christ we have in that chapter. Now there is another very beautiful, sacred description here. There is not time to go through it tonight. But let me say this. He saw Christ in all His glory, in all His eternal glory. You say, he saw Him in heaven. Well, did he? He saw Him walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, which, we are told, are the seven churches of Asia Minor, representative of the church militant in all ages. Now this is it. This glorious Christ is in the midst of the church and He walks there. That was John's comfort and should be yours and mine. Do you believe it, can you receive it, that this glorious Christ stands in our midst and walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks? And He holds the seven stars – these are the pastors of the churches – in His right hand. The Lord Jesus is in control and He is in control in the church. Do not think of the first chapter of the Book of the Revelation as not mattering. Most of the book is prophecy, mysterious prophecy, the conflict between good and evil, the conflict between Christ and Satan, the triumph of good over evil, of Christ over Satan, the victory of the church of God. But this is vital to it, this view that John had

of a glorious Christ, of Christ walking in the midst of the churches, of Christ almighty, of Christ in control. Now may you and I have that same view.

But do not forget this. He had to be brought away from Ephesus and his beloved flock. He had to be brought to Patmos, and then he knew this. And (dare I say it?) I do not think that John ever had a better day than this, even when he was living and walking with the Lord Jesus on earth! I wonder if even here he saw things in Christ, saw a beauty in Christ, saw a suitability, a glory in Christ, that he had never seen before, that he never saw in the days of His flesh. You remember the first time when as a young man he walked along by the River Jordan and heard that other John point to a stranger and John the Baptist said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" John never forgot that day. He followed Jesus, and now he sees Him again, the same Christ. He again beholds the Lamb, but he sees "the glories of the Lamb before His Father's throne." Now may a few of you have your Patmos sanctified to you tonight, and may a few of you have a little glimpse of the King in His beauty, and may you see Him in control.

This address was given at Bethel Chapel, Luton, by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom, on Monday, 25th June, 1984