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THE FALLEN HEROES OF FAITH – LESSON 11

APOSTLE JOHN

Apostle John, “The Beloved” of Jesus and brother of the Apostle James was technically not a martyr. I include him in this series for what he endured as the only one of the twelve who lived a long life and died a natural death at a very old age.

John did the work of a true apostle by planting new churches throughout Asia Minor (mostly in present-day Turkey). These churches were Smyrna, Pergamos, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and Thyatira, all of which are addressed in chapters two and three of Revelation, excluding Ephesus from the seven churches therein addressed. However, John did have a very close personal connection to Ephesus.

John was in Ephesus when it was ordered that he be sent to Rome, presumably by Roman Emperor Caesar Domitian who ruled from A.D. 81 to A.D. 96. It was there where his persecutors cast John into a cauldron of boiling oil. God miraculously delivered him from the boiling oil without harm to him. It was the same God who delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego from the fiery furnace. Surely John’s faith and intimacy with Jesus in **“the secret place of the Most High”** brought forth that miraculous deliverance.

Having seen that miracle, Domitian ceased from trying to kill him. Instead, he banished John to the prison island of Patmos. That is where God’s favor continued as John was taken in a vision to heaven in the Holy Spirit. He was given there all that is written in the Book of Revelation. It included the messages to the seven churches which still apply to us today. It also gave the history of God’s plan for earth all the way to the end of this earth and heaven, and the birth of a new earth and new heaven. This was written about A.D. 96 which was the year of Domitian’s death.

The successor of Domitian, Nerva, recalled John from Patmos a short time later. John was then allowed to live out his last days at Ephesus where he died a natural death among his cherished brothers and sisters in Christ.

Jesus said of the world in John 15:20, **“...if they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.”** How will you respond if persecutions come upon you as it did for these servants of Jesus? May God give us the grace and strength to endure it. That is the true meaning of Philippians 4:13 that says, **“I can do (endure) all things (situations) through Christ which (or who) strengthens me.”** Verses 11-12 set that in context. Therefore, let us be reminded of Ephesians 6:10 where it says let us **“be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might (strength).”**