



Pastor's Page

An Island Revelation

It was a trip that I'd wanted to go on for years and now at last the chance had arrived. And so early on Monday morning I jumped on a coach and headed off to Pythagonia (the town in which Pythagoras supposedly grew up) on the Greek island of Samos. What made the trip easy was the fact that I was already in Samos so it took about 15 minutes as opposed to the 5 days it would have taken over land from Selly Park! But from Pythagonia I was heading off to catch a boat to the 'holy' island of Patmos.

As the fifty or so guests started to board the 'Samos star' in the ancient harbour I wondered what the attraction of this Biblical Island might be for most of them; Historic interest? Spiritual exploration? or just a quick trip out to another Greek beauty spot? For me it was a chance to consider the wonder of a God who reveals himself to real people in real places at specific times in history (Oh yes, and a chance to top up my sun tan too!) As the craft began the 3 hour crossing over the clear blue Aegean sea I drank in the magnificent Mediterranean morning and settled down for the short voyage. Though it reminded me of an end-of-term school trip (I even had short trousers and a cap on to add to the affect!) I resisted the urge to say "are we nearly there yet?" For me the sail was part of the attraction and I relished every minute of the journey. So it seemed like no time at all before we were approaching the famous biblical Island and preparing to disembark. I must admit I had always thought of Patmos as a bleak and remote place where the Apostle John was sent as punishment for his gospel exploits (Revelation 1:9) But seeing the beauty of the Island I began to feel less sorry for John and wondered if he, of all the apostles, had been dealt the best hand! Arriving at the harbour at Skala (one of the three main villages on the Island) we were quickly herded off to "the cave of the Apocalypse" where it is supposed that John had his amazing revelation from God. The cave is enclosed by a Monastery with a side chapel which dates from the 18th century. The whole scene is steeped in church tradition and history in the shape of the Greek Orthodox church. Icons abound! There is no biblical foundation for the cave or the 'sights' within it (a triple crack in the rock, symbolic of the trinity, which was suppose to have occurred as God's voice thundered out) but I was still captivated by the place. For me it was enough to be on the very Island where God gave his final revelation to mankind.

I witnessed a lot more during our 4 hours on Patmos including seeing a copy of a part of Mark's Gospel dating from the 5th century AD. For me this, as well as the Island itself, just added to the reality of the gospel that we proclaim. However I proclaimed the gospel to no-one that day. I didn't speak to anyone on the trip about Jesus. I wanted to ask our wonderful guide if she was a Christian - but I didn't. Somehow it didn't seem right, she was the guide and I was just a tourist. Yes, that's the point! - I went to Patmos as a tourist not an evangelist! Maybe that's alright, but....what if I was a tourist for life? Passing through this world observing, enjoying, and photographing the views?!" I don't think God would be too pleased. The bible tells us that we are his witnesses. In other words God has called us to be evangelists not tourists! An important truth -- indeed quite a revelation?!

8th June 2008