

Women of the Bible

WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

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Preface

A Composite Portrait of: The Devoted Bride

A word of severe caution must precede this writing. In Christ there is no rich nor poor, no male or female, but only equality of spirit. Since he is the originator of equality we must not suppose that the Bride of Christ and all its symbolism is pertinent only to females or applies merely to Women. Every male, every female may seek this calling to be the bride of Christ for in heaven there is to be no marriage – only a marriage of his exclusive wife who has set herself apart from even the other saved souls by becoming one of the genuine brides described in the lives that are examined and explained in the following scriptural portraits painted in the vivid colors of scripture by the following composite portrait of those who are part of the written history of God’s creation of a wife for His Son, Jesus Christ.

When the author wrote this series of vignettes on great women of the Bible in the late 1990’s for *The Christian Spirit Magazine*, she selected a roster of women who most impressed her for their faith and love toward God. The selections included a cross-section of women from both the Old Testament and the

New. Instinctively, she zeroed in on women with distinctive aspects of Brideship which stood out as being representative of the perfect wife. Not that any one of the women's acts and lives of faith depicted a comprehensive view of Brideship in itself. Generally, their tests of faith and show of virtues brought to life aspects of Brideship ultimately depicted in the final visions of the Bride recorded in the New Testament. It was not until we put the articles together for this website that we discerned that these lives could be presented together to further *The Outcast Eagle's* major theme of the journey to Brideship. It was realized how each individual woman owned its own set of outstanding representative qualities that directly correlates to the mystery of Brideship. At the same time each of the women has her own individual identity, each a beautiful cameo in its own right, carved out in Scripture displaying a personal set of virtues, amounting to her very own beautiful testimonial, worthy of representing the Bride by its quality and spiritual holiness and beauty.

The array of 'Illustrious Women of the Bible' presented in this writing are not to be thought of as an all inclusive list of the women who demonstrate attributes of the Bride. Women like Rahab, the woman at the well, the woman healed of the issue, the widow who gave her last penny, Bathsheba, Leah and of course, Eve, all endured tests of faith indicative of bridal elements of faith, humility or oneness with Christ. Other primary portraits such as the five wise virgins, the beloved one of the Song of Solomon, and the Sun-Clad woman in Revelation are given full attention in their proper place. Regardless of the magnitude of the Bride's expression throughout Scripture, we think the following gallery of 'brides' paints a full portrait of Brideship qualities, if not complete in this hand-picked group, then nearly so.

Given the powerful testimonies of each of the women, it may seem strange that Joanne Smith decided to introduce her galaxy of brides, not with one outstanding individual woman, like Mary or Esther, but with the idealized portrait of all women of Scripture, that figurative wife who is graphically portrayed at the conclusion of the book of Proverbs. Proverbs ends with this ‘perfect portrait of a wife which is graphically contrasted against the foolish woman of the early chapters of the same book with whom the believer is earnestly advised to avoid emulating like one would avoid the plague.

The reason why *The Virtuous Woman* seemed a natural for introducing the train of ‘brides’ is that she epitomizes the perfect spouse of Christ. Subsequently, the women of the bridal gallery can well be viewed as combining together to make up a single portrait of the Bride. Each woman a set of delicate strokes spiritually blended into by its own hue and features into a single Mona Lisa of spirit. Each succeeding woman, a set of brush strokes of expression and texture, until it is built layer by layer into the portrait on a perfect spiritual canvas, each fiancée complete, having been composed by the supreme artist’s hand of genius, until the whole composition is finished, rendering one perfect and ‘virtuous woman’. Sarah, Esther, Ruth and so forth, ending with Priscilla the married one, the whole being added to stroke by stroke, revealing the sweet bride of Christ, who has won, been formed as out of some Pygmalion by her suitor, Christ, into a woman and wife of grace with attributes of devoted belief, a queen of beauty, submission, obedience and unshakeable actions of purity and faith, complete as one exquisite and essential portrait of the Bride of Christ.

We hope the reader will attain a clear vision of her, will see the bride in the lives of these illustrious women and enjoy the beauty of the bride’s portrait as much as the author did while

writing about its composition. We hope the reader will also get a taste for the delight of the bridegroom who has carefully and lovingly brought the picture of her to life by recording her individual beauty and her composite love in the pages of the Bible, giving the end-times saints a mirror in which one may not merely compare oneself to the Bride, but use it to strive to hit *'the mark of the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus'* Phil 3:14 and by faith truly be conformed to her stunning beauty.

Introduction: Proverbs 31

The Virtuous Woman

Women mentioned in the bible usually have a name, or at least are called by something like “the woman at the well” or “a certain woman who was...” The woman I tell you about in this installment of bride oriented women isn’t an ordinary woman of the bible. She doesn’t have a name or even a specific personality, but she is called virtuous. She is a woman of strength and honor. She is a courageous woman who faces adversity head on. From her mouth come words of wisdom and kindness. She is frugal, yet generous. She is a friend to the needy and poor. She is industrious; tending to every need of her family from purchasing land to making fine linen to keeping her family warm in the winter. She is indeed blessed, for her husband and children praise her. Above all else this woman fears the Lord. Have you guessed who this woman is? She is the woman of Proverbs 31.

Many a woman, especially one with a family, has aspired to be like the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31. Who wouldn’t pride themselves in showing the same care and concern that this woman shows to her family? What woman wouldn’t be pleased to garner the adoring praises of husband and children?

Certainly to be like her is a noble goal that women should all aspire to. In general, women, even those who haven't given their lives to the Lord and are walking in their own righteousness, don't find it all that difficult to truly care for their families. The natural instinct of a parent is to care and nurture their offspring, although in this day and age we see and hear of much to the contrary, but the vast majority of parents certainly fall into the nurturing category.

Recently the Lord presented a challenge to me for not only women but for all Christian men, women and children. The challenge is this: Can we take this one step further? Can we truly love and care for those that are not our natural flesh with the same passion we would for our own? Can we nurture the truly needy and not just our family members? It's easy to love our own family, everybody does that, but can we extend ourselves to others in the same way we do for our own flesh and blood? Jesus says in Matthew 5:46-47 *"For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?"* The true reward is in loving those who do not love you back, as Jesus tells us in the preceding two verses in Matthew 5:43 & 44 *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you"*.

"Who can find a virtuous woman?" Prov 31:10. That is the challenge. The manner in which that question is posed in the Scriptures leads us to believe it is not an easy challenge to meet. The woman in Proverbs 31 obviously represents the bride of Christ. She fears the Lord and *"the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her."* Prov 31:11. The fifth chapter of Ephesians gives us insight into the nature of the relationship between Christ and

His church, the bride: *“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.* Eph 5:31 The bride is also portrayed in Revelation 21 as being one and the same as the heavenly city Jerusalem, God’s dwelling place. (see Rev 21:2-9) So it is fitting that one of her main responsibilities is for the well-being of God’s family. She is faithful and diligent in caring for those the Lord has entrusted to her, who, in light of what we’ve learned in Matthew, could be vast. The family not only represents different aspects of the Church but those outside the Church, as well. Caring for one’s fleshly family comes natural for most people. Caring for strangers does not. But we are admonished to do just that if we are to be considered the “virtuous woman”. The “care” I am referring to is not the care of the outer man, but, more importantly, it is the care of the inner man, the spiritual man and his needs. Just as the woman undertakes the overall care for her family, the Lamb’s wife should be willing to undertake the care of the household of faith or anyone the Lord entrusts to her care.

Clothing

Let’s take a closer look at exactly how this virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 fulfills these needs. *“She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.”* (Vs 13). *“She layeth her hands to the spindle,* (Vs. 19). *She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple.”* (Vs 22). *“She maketh fine linen, and selleth it.”* (Vs 24). Wool and flax were materials used to make clothing, blankets etc. Wool was a major resource in Israel and also signified purity, while flax was used to make linen for clothing. Being clothed, in the Scriptures, takes on spiritual significance

in our relationship with God as we see in the following verse from Isaiah 61:10 *“for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments.”* The epistles are rich with references instructing us to be clothed with the proper garments. The sixth chapter of Ephesians is perhaps the most noted where Paul exhorts us to put on the whole armor of God. Another, of equal importance, is Colossians 3:14 where Paul, again, tells us, *“And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.”* We see from the Scriptures that this is an important function in the family and our woman is pretty serious in the task at hand of clothing her family, just as we should be in equipping our “family” with the garments of righteousness and seeing to it that they *“put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.”* Eph 4:24

Feeding

Our woman also undertakes the task of feeding her “family”, even rising in the middle of the night to do so, as we see in the following: *“She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens.”* (Vs 14 & 15). We can follow her example by taking the advice of Paul, again: *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.”* Acts 20:28. We are even required to go one step further, the real challenge, and feed our enemies as we see in Romans 12:20 *“Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head.”* And how do we accomplish this?

In the Husband's own words do we find the answer: *"And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."* Luke 4:4 Jesus told Peter three times, after He asked him if he loved Him, to feed His sheep. The word of God is our sustenance, it nurtures our inner man. It is powerful, as we see in Hebrews: *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* Heb 4:12

Takes care of the estate

Feeding and clothing are the two main chores of our woman but that is not all that keeps her busy. Verse 16 presents her as both a real estate mogul and a keeper of the vineyard, *"She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard."* The vineyard is where seeds are sown and fruit is expected to be partaken of. *"...who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?"* 1 Cor 9:7. Jesus is the Vine and we are the branches: *"He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."* John 15:5. Bearing good fruit is of utmost importance to our woman and her Husband. (See John 15:8; Gal. 5:22-25).

Wise and Kind

Our woman is both wise and kind. *"She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness."* (Vs 26). *"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold."* Prov 3:13-14. She is fully aware

of the value of finding wisdom and sees to it that her family discovers this same truth. Something, no doubt, we should be ever mindful of doing with our “family”. As the Scriptures say, *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”* Ps 111:10.

Will not engage in foolishness

Finally, our woman *“looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.”* (Vs 27). By doing this she avoids the destruction of a house as described in Ecclesiastes 10:18 *“By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.”* We can do well with our “family” by heeding the warning in 1 Timothy 5:13 *“And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not.”*

The rewards of our virtuous woman are rich, as we see in the conclusion of this chapter, and they can be ours, as well, if we follow in her footsteps.

“Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.

Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. —Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised.” Proverbs 31:28-30.

Sarah: Believing

Mother of Nations - Mother of Faith

The background of the portrait is the bold shades of Sarah's belief. Sarah, "*Mother of Nations*" Gen 17:16 could also be known as Mrs. "Father of Faith" for between Abraham and Sarah the spiritual foundation of faith was laid. Sarah spent her years here on earth in total devotion to her husband, Abraham. She believed God's promise to Abraham that he would make him a father of many nations. When the Lord spoke to "Abram" to leave his father's house and sojourn to a new place, "*a land that I will shew thee*", Gen 12:1 Sarah was right there by his side.

The Scriptures tell us that Sarah was "*fair to look upon*" Gen 12:11. So beautiful was she that when they traveled to Egypt Abraham pressed upon her to convince Pharaoh that she was his sister, which was, of course, only half true as they shared the same father but had different mothers. (Marriage to one's half sibling was common in these times.) Abraham feared he would be killed if he were thought to be her husband because of her great beauty. The Lord visited plagues upon Egypt as

a result of this little facade and soon Pharaoh discovered the truth, confronted Abraham with it and escorted them out of Egypt. A similar instance occurred in Gerar when Sarah was close to ninety years old!

God constantly reassured them that He would fulfill his promise, but there were times when Sarah's faith wavered. She was getting on in years and had probably lost all hope in giving to Abraham the promised son, when she offered him her maidservant, Hagar, to bear him a son. I am sure she experienced emotional and spiritual upheaval during this period of time in her life. Why didn't God fulfill His promise and give us a son? How can I stand in the way of Abraham having the promised son? – were probably some of the questions she asked the Lord. It's evident she believed the promise; she just couldn't believe the means by which the promise would come. It was most likely in desperation that she suggested Abraham take Hagar as a wife and bare him a son (Ishmael) because she realized as soon as Hagar conceived and turned against her that what she had done was wrong. Years later after Isaac's birth, Sarah had to cast her out of their presence because Ishmael, we are told, mocked Isaac. Abraham was grieved but God told him to obey Sarah's command *"for in Isaac shall thy seed be called."* Gen 21:12

Alas, when "Abram" was ninety-nine and "Sarai" was ninety years old God appeared to Abram and proclaimed the covenant to him. *"I am the Almighty God; walk before me and be thou perfect."* Gen 17. It was in this visitation that God commanded "Abram" to change his name to Abraham and "Sarai" to Sarah. Something new was about to happen! *"And I will bless her, and give thee a son also of her: yea, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of people shall be of her."* Gen 17:16. Both Abraham and Sarah laughed when they heard the news and the Lord's

reply to Sarah was this: *“Is anything too hard for the LORD?”* Gen 18:14. She soon found out with the birth of Isaac a year later and they all had a good laugh! *“And Sarah said, God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me. And she said, Who would have said unto Abraham, that Sarah should have given children suck? for I have born him a son in his old age.”* Gen 21:6 & 7

The faith held by Sarah is the epitome of the faith true believers must possess in order to be partakers of “the promise”. We must aspire to be a spiritual daughter/son of Sarah. It is really quite simple – believe God’s Word and act on it, as Sarah did when she bore Isaac. God’s covenant to His people was born of faith by the freewoman. Hagar, the bondwoman, represents the flesh that rears its ugly head now and then to try to keep us from partaking of the promises. As Sarah, apparently so ruthlessly banished Hagar to wander in the wilderness with Ishmael, we must also banish the works of the flesh and strive to live by the spirit.

Galatians, chapter four sums it all up rather nicely:

“For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise ...

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.” Gal 4:22-31

Widow of Zarephath & Syro-Phoenician: Submission

No Fear - A Widow In Need

**Fears not – Believes the Word of the Lord – A widow in need
– No Queen like the Whore – She Made Room and provision
for Elijah the prophet**

She's not even mentioned by name, this obscure widow who was at her wit's end in trying to endure the famine and drought that had come upon the land of Israel after the prophet Elijah's decree to wicked King Ahab that there would be no rain except by his command. Imagine the thoughts that went through her head when, while she was out gathering sticks for herself and her young son, Elijah suddenly appeared begging for water and food. *“And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a*

barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.” 1 Kings 17:11&12. All hope was lost. How could she go on? How could she hope to sustain herself and her child with only a handful of meal and no relief in sight? “Fear not” said Elijah to her. “For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth.” 1 Kings 17:14

Did she believe Elijah? How would there be enough food when only a few morsels of meal lay at the bottom of her barrel? How would she cook with only a few drops of oil? Where would the next meal come from? A fearful widow would have been asking these questions. Not this widow. She took the advice from Elijah, submitted to him and **feared not.** “And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.” 1 Kings 17:15-16 She went and did according to the saying of Elijah is just a way of saying that she believed and submitted, subjected herself to the word of the Lord.

It’s that simple. She put her fear aside, trusted the word of the Lord and was willing to give all that she had, believing Elijah’s promise of more. There were many around her who didn’t. Jesus, in referring to himself and his own countrymen rejecting the word of the Lord from Him, tells us in Luke 4:25 & 26, “But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent,

save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow." From there on the widow went on to make a place, room, for him in her house. She was a widow yet she let him in and was willing to support him with whatever she had to give him. For this generosity she was rewarded with all the provision she needed even in times when things were in short supply.

Tribulation was to come in another form as it so often does for Christians when they are trusting and believing in God's word. Any parent will tell you that they can endure just about anything, but when it comes to the welfare of their child all bets are off. The test of all tests happened when the widow's son fell sick until there was *"no breath left in him"*. *"And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?"* So Elijah took her son to his loft and cried unto the Lord saying, *"O Lord my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son?"* Stretching himself upon the child three times, he cried unto the Lord to let the child's soul come into him again. *"And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived."* Although she wavered slightly, in a moment of terror, she emerged victorious in this battle of faith and proclaimed to Elijah, *"Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth."* ¹
Kings 17:18-24

Friends, learn this lesson from the humble widow who demonstrated the type of faith all believers should aspire to by, first, casting out fear and then, simply, believing His word and providing living space for Him in her own

dwelling place and this is the true act of submission providing place for our Lord to rule in our heart. *“And this beleaguered woman too...”*

Syro-Phoenician: Woman in Submission

She searches Jesus out and falls at his feet for mercy – does not deserve attention by God – persisted – worshipped him – recognize position of unworthiness it may be done unto you as thy will if faith is applied – branches grafted in by faith – continue in that faith – will gladly take on the reward of her faith, God's name, the Bride's name and the new name of Christ, her husband's name.

The Syro-Phoenician woman (also known as the Canaanite woman) spoken of in Matthew 15:21-28 and Mark 7:24-30 doesn't even have a name. The only thing we know about her is that she had a daughter who was *“grievously vexed with a devil”* (vs 22), so described in Matthew and having *“an unclean spirit”*, as stated in Mark. Her concern and care for her troubled daughter prompted her to search Jesus out and fall at His feet for mercy for her daughter. At her first plea, Jesus didn't even answer her. His disciples wanted to send her away because she was a nuisance. But He answered them saying, *“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel”*. Matt 15:24. But she persisted, and the scriptures tell us she came and worshipped Him and again begged for help. His answer to her was, *“It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast*

it to dogs". Matt 15:26. That's a pretty harsh statement. What does it really mean? Edith Deen, in her work *All of the Women of the Bible*, reassures us that it was not meant to be offensive, but it was the evidence of the picturesque manner of speech for peoples of this particular time who understood that a metaphor should not be taken literally but received respectfully and submissively for its intended purpose. Jesus often spoke to His people in metaphors or parables and they understood them as such.

She then answered Jesus with, "*Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table*". Matt. 15:27. Jesus responded, "*O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.*" Matt 15:28. Her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Who are the "*children*" Jesus is referring to? The woman initially referred to Jesus as "*thou Son of David*". She knew she was an outsider, not worthy of the promises meant for the children of the God of Israel, yet she sought after them with diligence. Jesus had mercy upon her by healing her daughter, sight unseen. We know her faith played a major role in the process by Jesus' response of, "*Great is thy faith.*" Though she was not one of the chosen "*children*" Jesus speaks of, she believed with all her heart that He could heal her tortured daughter. But she had to submit to His glory and power. This story of this unnamed woman reveals the essence of God's ultimate mercy able to be bestowed upon the submissive will. It is the same mercy he bestowed upon Ruth, the Moabitess, who stuck by her widowed mother-in-law's side and eventually became the grandmother to King David.

It is through the teaching of the olive tree, which

symbolizes the Jews, in the eleventh chapter of Romans, that this same mercy is demonstrated to an unnamed people, the Gentiles. By being grafted into the “good” olive tree we become participants of the promises of the God of Israel as we see in verse 17: *“And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree”*. Just like the Syro-Phoenician woman, we, who have that same faith in Christ, are a wild olive tree. God, in His infinite mercy, has allowed us to be grafted into the “good” olive tree and enjoy all the same fruits of that tree.

Although the Scriptures don’t tell us what becomes of the woman, they do reveal what becomes of the “branches” who don’t continue in faith as we read in Romans 11:22, *“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off”*

This seemingly insignificant story of a woman with no name is, forever, a very significant example of what can be accomplished when we fall at Jesus’ feet and beg Him for mercy. The letter to the Philadelphia Church exemplifies this truth of us Gentiles, the ‘Goyim’, of no-name for among the promises to this little and disrespected, but beautiful fellowship of believers is given an enormous promise of inheriting the name of God and all rights reserved for those named by Him and given His personal ‘pet’ or favored nicknames. Revelation 3:12 gives this abundant promise, pregnant with metaphorical promises of names, for those who overcome by faith: *“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he*

shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my NEW NAME.” Christ will give her the name of His Father, the name given to His Bride (for the New Jerusalem that comes down from heaven is none other than The Bride as revealed among the last great passages of the Bible in Revelation 21) and also Christ’s new name with all its implications of adventure and expanding universe. She will take on the name of her husband in glory.

Ruth: Loyal & Separated

Ruth the Moabitess - Widow Given New Life

Chose God – cleaves to God's people – a new life – leave everything behind; her family, her country, her gods, to start afresh – dead to traditions of parents – the stranger, the fatherless and the widow be allowed to “glean” the fields after the harvest – We have to be willing to lay ourselves at His feet and be at His mercy, to give up our own desires and be willing to be married to Him – inheritor of royalty.

The story of Ruth is a wonderful example of God's mercy and grace for all people who believe in Him and are willing to submit to being separated from their own world and traditions and be brought into the kingdom of God's very own Son, Jesus Christ. Ruth was a Moabitess who married the son of Elimelech and Naomi, Israelites who had traveled to the land of Moab from Judah to escape a terrible famine that had fallen on the land. While there,

Naomi's husband and two sons died, one of them Ruth's husband. When Naomi heard that the famine had ended in Judah she decided to return and told her daughters-in-law to stay behind with their own families, and prayed that *"the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me."* Ruth 1:8 Both Ruth and her sister-in-law, Orpah, at first resisted, but eventually Naomi was able to convince Orpah to return to her family, but Ruth *"clave unto her"* Ruth 1:14, as the scripture says.

After much persuasion from Naomi, Ruth answered with this heartfelt plea that has to be the cry of our hearts to the Lord, as well, *"Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."* Ruth 1:16-17

So, you see, Ruth was very determined to go with her mother-in-law and in doing so, she was choosing Naomi's God to be her God. She had to leave everything behind; her family, her country, her gods, and start afresh. She had to be separated from her former life if she was to acquire the new. The two settled in Bethlehem where a very wealthy relative of Naomi's husband, Boaz, also happened to live. Provision was made under the Law of Moses that the stranger, the fatherless and the widow be allowed to "glean" the fields after the harvest. The reapers were instructed to not reap the corners of the field and to leave whatever had fallen so that the poor could gather it up. Boaz was a very generous man and when he learned of Ruth, he not only granted her permission to glean in his

fields, but insisted that she go nowhere else to glean and even arranged for her to glean alongside the reapers of the harvest and take whatever she wanted. At Boaz's generosity, Ruth asked "*Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?*" Ruth 2:10 Boaz's reply was this: "*It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore. The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.*" Ruth 2:11-12 In that brief statement we find the mercy and simplicity of salvation. Like Ruth, we have to, spiritually and figuratively, leave the land of our birth and choose to follow and *trust* the Lord. Without being separated we cannot be sanctified and purified in the way the Lord wishes His Bride to be.

Ruth gleaned in the field until nightfall and brought back an abundance of food. When Naomi learned of Boaz's generosity to Ruth, she asked Ruth if she did not want to seek rest (marriage) knowing that Boaz's responsibility as a relative, under the law, was to take Ruth as his wife. Ruth followed Naomi's command and agreed to go to the threshing floor at midnight where Boaz would be sifting the barley. After he had eaten and drunk, Ruth quietly went in, uncovered his feet and laid down at them. At midnight Boaz awoke in fear to find a woman at his feet and asked who was there. Ruth answered "*I am Ruth, thine handmaid; spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.*" Ruth 3:9 With that Boaz was blessed

that Ruth had showed Naomi kindness in her willingness to marry an older man and had not gone after a younger man. There is a wonderful lesson in this of how we must come to Christ. We have to be willing to lay ourselves at His feet and be at His mercy, to give up our own desires and be willing to be married to Him.

Boaz agreed to marry Ruth, but there was one obstacle in the way – a nearer kinsman than himself who, by Jewish law, was first in line to take Ruth as his wife. Boaz went to him with the offer to redeem Naomi’s land and to marry her daughter-in-law to raise up the name of the dead. The man was unable to redeem it because it would damage his own inheritance. When Boaz made public the fact that he could marry Ruth, those present rejoiced and asked the Lord to make his and Ruth’s house like that of Rachel and Leah, from whom the whole nation of Israel descended. So Boaz married Ruth and they had a son named Obed and the women of the city celebrated and blessed the Lord for giving Naomi an heir and for Ruth, who is *“better to thee than seven sons.”* Ruth 4:15 Under the law, it was the duty of a man to marry his relative’s widow and bring up the children as if they were the dead man’s; in so doing Boaz was giving up his own inheritance, as well, to fulfill the law and do what was right in the sight of the Lord.

This act of obedience would not go unnoticed by God, for Ruth and Boaz’s son, Obed, would then become the father of Jesse who was the father of David, the Great King of Israel whose line eventually bore the one and only, the Greatest King of all, Jesus Christ! What mercy! What symbolism for the Bride. The Lord granted Ruth as the reward of her characterization of faith of the Bride, who

was not even of the house of Israel, a stranger, a Moabitess, the privilege of partaking in the lineage of Jesus Christ, and through the line of David as king and authoritative ruler. Why? Because she was willing to leave everything behind, to come out from among them and be separate, and give herself totally to the Lord under whose wings she had come to trust like any Bride ought to do for her husband.

Elisabeth: Obedient

Mother of John The Baptist - Waking Obedient to The Spirit

**Preserved blameless, but not sinless – priesthood
descendants – barren for the works of God to be manifest –
her pregnancy a source of inspiration to Mary.**

Scriptures tell us that Elisabeth, mother of John the Baptist, along with her husband, Zacharias were *“both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.”* Luke 1:6 Devoted to the service of the Lord, Zacharias was a diligent servant performing priestly duties, and Elisabeth, a descendant from the line of Aaron, the first high priest, was faithful in her support of her husband. Like Sarah, Abraham’s wife, Elisabeth was well on in years and childless. Barrenness was considered a curse in biblical times. Rachel, Jacob’s beloved wife, remained barren for years while her sister Leah bore Jacob six sons. Hannah wept before the Lord begging Him to give her a child. These are women who all

found favor in God's eyes. Why then, did he "shut up their wombs"? Why, in particular, did he shut up Elisabeth's, who was found to be blameless before Him? The only explanation that seems likely is the same one given for the blind man, whom Jesus healed with the clay. When His disciples asked him what caused his blindness, his sin or his parents, Jesus answered, "*Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.*" John 9:3

Elisabeth was righteous in the Lord's eyes, walking in His ways probably all her life, but I am sure she had her periods of disbelief when the years went by and she still had no children. Children were a heritage of the Lord and much hope was put in the children to continue the lineage and tradition of their forefathers. Being from the priestly line of the Levites, this was probably of particular concern to both Zacharias and Elisabeth. Why the Lord would allow them to suffer the reproach of barrenness and not bless them with heirs to carry on the priestly duties was a question they both probably asked the Lord many times? The angel, when he appeared to Zacharias to announce the good news, told him to "*Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son.*" Lk 1:13 indicating it was something Zacharias could have prayed for on a daily basis.

Elisabeth, unlike her husband who was consequently stricken with dumbness for a time for his unbelief, believed what the angel had told her, and prepared herself for this blessed occasion by hiding herself away for five months. Her prayer had been answered! "*Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away*

my reproach among men.” Lk 1:25 As we know, the Lord sent the angel Gabriel to the distant city of Nazareth to bring Elisabeth’s much younger cousin, Mary, the glorious news that she, too, would bear a Son, a Son of the Highest. Edith Deen in her *All of the Women of the Bible* suggests that Elisabeth’s pregnancy was a source of inspiration and faith to Mary when she wondered how this miracle could have taken place seeing she “*did not know a man*”. “*For with God nothing shall be impossible*“, Lk 1:34,37 was the angel’s reply to Mary concerning both Elisabeth and herself.

Elisabeth is a fine example to not only women, but all believers, of how, when the Lord speaks to us, we should be ready and willing to do whatever it takes to stand firm and persevere. We must be obedient to His call and His desire and will. When the angel first appeared to Zacharias he also told him that he should call his son John. When, upon the occasion of his circumcision on the eighth day, it was assumed by all their family and friends that he would be called Zacharias. Elisabeth spoke out and said “*Not so; but he shall be called John*“. Lk 1:60 That took great courage for there was none in the family named John and she was breaking with years of tradition, but she was obedient to the Spirit. Zacharias, still without speech at this time, wrote: “*His name is John*” Lk 1:63 and he immediately regained his speech and praised God! Elisabeth spent her remaining days bringing up her son as she had prior to his birth righteously walking in all the Lord’s commandments and being obedient to God’s every wish. But she seems to have lost him early as he went into the wilderness almost as soon as he was able to go and

even in this she was submissive and exhibited a spirit of yielded obedience to God.

Deborah: Service

Mighty Prophet - Judge

Served him because no one else would – One and only woman leader among people of God, took it by default – only the Lord will get the glory – she will encourage the battle.

Now, as our portrait of the Bride begins to take shape we see a picture that includes redeemed souls with attributes in a combination of belief, submission, separation from the world to God and with obedient hearts. These four alone are qualities when put together in any combination are beautiful in the sight of God. When together, all or part, and coupled with service to God they are exemplary as exquisite things with utility in the kingdom of God. Deborah, the only woman leader in Jewish biblical history, served as judge and prophetess in pre-monarchic Israel, between the time of Joshua and Saul, ruling and judging a people who were constantly in and out of God's favor. She

insisted on working for God, her true husband, and giving him the glory in all things. The book of Judges records seven periods of apostasy and resulting oppression by different nations and the subsequent deliverance by a judge. The judge served in a capacity as an administrator of the law, deliverer and sometimes prophet, as in Deborah's case.

The Scriptures tell us that the Lord, himself, raised up the judges as we see in Judges 2:16 *“Nevertheless the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.”* Verses 17 – 20 tells us what transpired with the people after they were delivered.

“And yet they would not hearken unto their judges, but they went a whoring after other gods, and bowed themselves unto them: they turned quickly out of the way which their fathers walked in, obeying the commandments of the Lord; but they did not so.

And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them.

And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way.

And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and he said, Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant which

I commanded their fathers, and have not hearkened unto my voice.”

Deborah certainly had her work cut out for her in her duties as a spiritual leader. When the children of Israel cried unto the Lord after twenty years of oppression under Jabin, she was there ready and willing to go to battle against his mighty army of 900 chariots. When she called upon Barak, son of Abinoam from Kedesh, to take ten thousand men to confront Sisera, Jabin’s captain, he replied, *“If thou wilt go with me, then I will go: but if thou wilt not go with me, then I will not go.”* What a woman of great faith, strength and fortitude Deborah must have been to instill such confidence in Barak. How could one person inspire such trust unless it was for the divine anointing of the Lord. Her wisdom and devotion to the Lord is seen in her reply to Barak: *“And she said, I will surely go with thee: notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the LORD shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh.”* Judges 4:8-9 Deborah refused for anyone but her Lord to take any credit for the ultimate victory that would ensue at, as she had prophesied, the hands of the woman Jael when she drove a stake through Sisera’s temples (see Judges 4:17-24).

Deborah, calling herself a mother in Israel (Judges 5:17), characterizes the forgiveness God has for his children. What mother, when her children come crying to her for help, turns them away? What mother, when her children are suffering at the hands of an oppressor isn’t willing to

lay her own life down to whisk them away from the terror? What mother, when her whimpering children come to her over and over again for mercy, isn't right there waiting with open arms? Deborah truly personifies the longsuffering and forgiveness that the Lord bestowed upon his children, Israel. Dedicated service means to not faint when the going gets tough. Deborah is a source of inspiration for us to not weary in the battle. Her mighty example should inspire us to put on the full armor of God and be ready to withstand the enemy when called upon. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians he exhorts us to ready ourselves spiritually, much like Deborah, no doubt, had to ready herself before the battle with the mighty and powerful Jabin.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness;

*And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;
Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.*

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Eph 6:13-17

It was not her own strength that she relied on but the mighty arm of the Lord. Deborah stood strong with her loins girt with truth, taking up the shield of faith, the shield that protected her people in the face of possible annihilation. The shield that was able to destroy the

unsuspecting enemy after he ran off with his tail between his legs, so to speak, at the hands of a woman. Deborah took advantage of the victory to proclaim to the world the following:

Then sang Deborah and Barak the son of Abinoam on that day, saying,

Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves.

Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes; I, even I, will sing unto the Lord; I will sing praise to the Lord God of Israel. Judges 5:1-3.

Let us take Deborah's words of encouragement to Barak as they were about to embark on the battle as a personal charge in our individual battles of faith: "**Up; for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand: is not the Lord gone out before thee?**" Judges 4:14

Esther & Hannah

Heroes of Courage

***Esther:* Orphaned – to replace rejected queen – fair young virgins as in parable – approached the king – interceded for God's people – if I perish I perish – hero.**

and...

***Hannah:* Gave her child over to God. Would not recant or backslide – felt pain and mocking of people and fellow wife who belittled her – hero.**

Call me a cynic. Call me cold-hearted, but I just can't seem to get all choked up about the death of a "princess". I sit here formulating my thoughts for this article amidst the unbelievable commotion permeating the world over the untimely and tragic death of Diana, "Princess of the People", as she has suddenly been dubbed. Indeed, my heart goes out to her children and family for the loss they are suffering. It is always tragic when someone so young loses their life so senselessly. But truly, what makes her so

different than any other woman? I admit, I didn't really pay much attention to her when she was alive. I don't read the tabloids, so I'm not up on her vast exploits. I didn't even know she was a high school dropout until the day after she died.

A hero? Heroes, in my opinion, are ordinary people who do extraordinary things in difficult situations. They are the people you never, ever hear or read about. I am sure you know some. Look around you. True heroes are those who put their faith and trust in God in impossible situations. Queen Esther was a hero. Like Diana, she was robbed of a childhood pleasure – parents. Brought up by her uncle Mordecai in the Hebrew tradition, Esther was very devoted to her people. Mordecai was an official of the palace of the Persian King Ahasuerus in the period around 404 – 358 B.C. After being refused by Queen Vashti of her presence during a palace feast, the king stripped her of her royal estate and later summoned to himself all the fair young virgins from the provinces to choose for himself another queen. Mordecai brought Esther while commanding her not to mention her heritage. The king set the royal crown upon her head and she became Queen of Persia. Meanwhile, a man named Haman, ruler of the king's princes conspired against Mordecai because he would not bow down to him. When Haman told the king that there was 'a people' in the land who did not keep his laws, the king agreed to have them destroyed and a decree was published in all the land to destroy and kill in one day, all Jews, both young and old. Esther got word of what was happening and agreed to go into the king's presence, uninvited – which is something that was not done, lest

ye die. She instructed Mordecai gather together all the Jews and pray and fast and, likewise, so would she and her maidens, and she would go into the king “*which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.*” Est 4:16 She was willing to put her life on the line for the salvation of her people. Through an interesting series of events (read it for yourself in Esther 4-7) the Jewish people were spared and Haman was hanged upon the very gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai.

& Hannah

Devoted mother? Hannah was certainly that. In contrast I wonder how many sleepless nights Diana spent waiting for her 15-year old to come home? I wonder how many sports practices, music lessons or jobs she drove them to, to keep them off the streets and off drugs? How many material possessions did she give up in order for her kids to have a pair of sneakers, or a winter jacket, or go to college? Did she ever wonder if her children would turn their back on the Lord?

Hannah was no princess though she was a devoted mother destined to give birth to a judge and a prophet of the people of God. Her longing for a child brought her many times to her knees begging the Lord to open up her womb. Hannah was the “favorite” wife of her husband, Elkanah. Each year Elkanah and his two wives and children journeyed to Shiloh to worship and sacrifice to the Lord. It was during one of these sojourns that Peninnah, the other wife who had children, provoked Hannah so much about her barrenness that she wept

bitterly at the temple, and as the scriptures say; *“And she vowed a vow, and said, a LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.”* ^{1 Sam 1:11} Hannah, as we know, gave birth to Samuel and cared for him diligently until it came time to fulfill her promise to the Lord. After sufficiently weaning him, she brought him up to the temple and presented him to Eli, the priest, where she said. *“Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And she worshipped the LORD there.”* ^{1 Sam 1:28} Hannah’s prayer/song in chapter two is a testimony of her trust and faith in the God who is Lord of all. She was willing to give her child back to the Lord and in so doing gave back to her people one of the greatest judges in Jewish history. Take some time and read about these courageous women of the bible and decide for yourself who the true heroes actually are.

Anna: Waiting

Looking for Redemption

“And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.

And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” Luke 2:36-38

Aнна had been in the temple serving God with prayer and fasting for eighty-four years. The Scripture does not say she had been waiting for the moment when the Christ would be revealed, but it says she responded “*in that instant*”. A widow in God’s house she was as a bride waiting for her beloved, the bridegroom. Instantly, like we who

wait for the Lord's return, she saw the Lord and gave God thanks. Her discernment of the Lord in an instant brings to mind the verses of 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 which talk about the rapture saying, "*we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump*". In a moment, in an instant we shall be delivered and look upon our redemption. For eighty-four years Anna served God with patience and when she saw the Lord she told everyone in Jerusalem that also looked for redemption about his coming.

Anna's ministry from that instant on was to tell believers and encourage them about the coming of the Messiah. It is a good ministry, in these last days, for saints to tell one another of the second coming and the soon appearing of the Lord in the clouds. Teaching one another to wait on the Lord is consistent with so many of the pleas that come forth from the Psalms. 1 Thessalonians 4 ends by telling us to comfort each other with the words of the rapture. This ministry of Anna is a good ministry.

Anna and Simeon truly loved Christ's first appearing. They are examples that we should remember Christmas with our mind's eye turned toward the second appearing of Jesus. Take some time not just to thank God for the first coming of Jesus, but thank Him for the promise that He will return. God has promised a crown for those who love Jesus' appearing. Paul, in his second epistle to Timothy, 4:8 put it like this: "*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*" Keep looking up, "*...for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.*" Rm 13:11

Mary Mother of Jesus: Humble

Humble virgin – Surrendered whole being to his will – slandered – kept the promises of the Lord in her heart and pondered them – she did make mistakes, as when letting Jesus wander off and then being mad at him, and when she bothered him into doing miracles before the time he preferred because she wished to be vindicated – but submitted to being given to John for care.

Much has been written over the centuries about Mary, the humble virgin girl who became the mother of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. She made mistakes and was presumptuous but she never failed to keep watching for the fulfillments of Jesus her Savior. Edicts have been handed down over the centuries about her presumed perpetual state of virginity, her “immaculate conception” and, finally, her “assumption”. Speculation has filled the pages of many a book on the subject of Mary. But let’s now

look to only one book to uncover the story of Mary, the one book we need to look to, the Holy Bible.

The story begins with Mary's cousin, Elisabeth, and her husband, Zacharias, a priest in the days of King Herod. The two, as the scriptures tell us, "*were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*" Luke 1:6 The childless couple were getting on in years when the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias to declare that their prayers had been answered and indeed Elisabeth would bear a son and call his name John.

In the sixth month of Elisabeth's pregnancy the same angel Gabriel was sent from God to Mary, a virgin espoused to Joseph of the house of David, to proclaim to her the good news. As the scripture says:

"And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Luke 1:28-33

Mary, perplexed, answered; "*How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*" The angel replied; "*The Holy Ghost shall come*

upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” Lk 1:34-35 The angel then informed her of her cousin’s pregnancy and reminded her that with God nothing is impossible. With that Mary replied, *“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.”* Lk 1:38 Mary was submissive and humble, courageous and at the request of the Lord, believing too. Mary then travelled to visit with Elisabeth where the miracle was confirmed by her as well as by the baby within her womb, who leaped upon Mary’s arrival. Mary’s cry of praise at Elisabeth’s proclamation confirms her humble and contrite spirit; *“My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.”* Luke 1:46-48 (see also Luke 1:49-55)

Are these the words of one who would want to be adored and worshipped above God? Are these the words of a woman who would not cringe at the highly embellished stories of her life immortalized over the years? Was Mary the kind of woman who desired legions of devoted followers for the simple fact that she believed God’s word and was willing to surrender her whole being to his will, no matter what the circumstances? Are these the words of a woman who realized that her child was sent to complete the redemptive plan of God and that she had no more to do with it than birth him and bring him up in the ways of the Lord?

Let’s take a look at some of the fallacies surrounding Mary and you can decide for yourself. The first and most blasphemous is the notion of her “immaculate

conception” which asserts that Mary was, herself, conceived and born without sin which, in turn, perpetuates the idea that she was the mother of God, to be held in higher esteem than God, Himself. Let’s call this belief the “Madonna Syndrome”. The citron originated with Semiramis and Tammuz and has continued in various and sundry forms over the centuries in many cultures. The Greeks worshipped Irene and the boy Plutus. The Egyptians worshipped Isis and Osiris. The Roman Catholic Church officially decreed the worship of Mary and Jesus in the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. Rev. Alexander Hislop, in his celebrated work, *The Two Babylon’s*, points out that frequently in mother and child worship the powerful one or the first person in the Godhead was practically overlooked and that the majority of adoration and worship was directed toward the mother and child. We see this same pattern in the adoration of Mary and her son, Jesus. It is nothing more than remnants of paganism incorporated by Papal decrees in the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. The scriptures unequivocally disprove the notion that Mary is “sin-free” for “As it is written, *There is none righteous, no, not one.*” Rom 3:10 and “*Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For **all** have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*” Rom 3:22-24 Even Mary had to accept God’s plan of salvation.

The second notion, though not blasphemous but serves to substantiate the first notion, is the “perpetual virginity” notion. That Mary remained a virgin throughout her life

and marriage to Joseph is highly unlikely, especially since the Scriptures, themselves, mention the fact that Jesus had brothers and sisters. We see this relayed in Matthew 13:55-56 when Jesus returns to his own county to teach and he is rejected by the people he had known from childhood. *“Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?”* Brethren is a term in the scriptures used often to describe spiritual ties, but this verse clearly demonstrates the earthly ties Jesus had with Mary and her other children. To believe that Mary, indeed, did bear more children is to believe that Mary was a mere human and not to be the object of devotion. (See also Matt 1:25 & Luke 2:7)

The third notion, “The Assumption”, serves to perpetuate the others in maintaining that Mary is of equal or more importance than God, Himself. The doctrine of the “Assumption” falsely declares that Mary was bodily assumed into heavenly glory upon her death and was declared a dogma by Pope Pius XII in 1950. I like to call it “The Great Assumption”, because that is what it actually is – an assumption – since the scriptures tell us nothing of Mary’s death. In fact, after the initial account of the birth of Christ to the beginning of his ministry, Mary is only mentioned four times. Though it is not prefigured or mentioned in our canvass in the overall portrait of the Bride here represented, a major part of the Bride’s courage and demands of patience is to endure persecution and slander without cracking or giving in under the pressure. Mary was great in this, she even

endured the horrific pain of watching the crucifixion and dealing with the surrounding blasphemes that took place.

Now that we've touched on these notions of Mary let's concentrate on what the bible says and on the woman she truly was. What's curious is that there isn't a great deal written about Mary in the Scriptures. Again, as previously mentioned Scriptures show us from her proclamation, *"For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden"* we know that she was a humble woman born into the royal line of David through Heli, her father. She was a virgin betrothed to Joseph when she became impregnated by the Holy Ghost. What faith she must have had to display during that period of her life when even Joseph desired to *"put her away privily"* Matt 1:19 so as not to make a public example of her, until the Lord spoke to him in a dream. What do you think was going through Mary's heart and mind when, after giving birth, the shepherds came to the stable to glorify God. Did she know what was in store for her newborn son? *"But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."* Luke 2:19

How did Mary feel when, after traveling for three days in return from their yearly trip to Jerusalem, she realized her 12 year old son was not among their company. Even though Mary possessed great faith, do you think there was no sense of panic? And upon finding him in the temple amongst the elders, did she not wonder at his reply of *"How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"* Luke 2:49. The Scriptures also tell us, *"And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them."* Luke 2:50 And, again, *"his mother kept all these sayings in her heart."* Luke 2:51

The ultimate test of Mary's faith came in the aforementioned moment when she had to stand by and watch her son die a humiliating death on the cross. Did all the things that she had kept in her heart give her any comfort in this great hour of anguish and suffering? She remained faithful to her son and her Lord for she was numbered among the loyal followers of Jesus in the upper room at Jerusalem where they all "*continued with one accord in prayer and supplication*" Acts 1:14

Mary's faith had to be truly great, but no greater than the faith any believer must possess in order to gain eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Saviour! She never thought more of herself than she ought.

Arguably the greatest metaphorical event in the life of Mary was the amazing moment which took place at the foot of the cross on Calvary. In his dying throes, Jesus looked upon his mother who was there with His aunt and Mary Magdalene and performed His final hope and dictate, which centered around the 'family' of God.

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." John 19:25-27

That this centers around Christ's Will that the family of God in the household of faith take precedence over blood

family should be apparent. His brothers, James, Joses, Simon and Jude, whom we are told did not believe in him (Until after the resurrection) though seeing many miracles and hearing his sermon on the mount (John 7:5), did not even show up at the crucifixion. Jesus emphasized time and time again that it was not a bloodline that made brothers and sisters and mothers but obedience to the voice of God, the Spirit. (Matt 12:50; Mk 3:32-34, 10:29-30; Lk 8:19 – 20, Lk 14:26, Lk 18:29-30) When Jesus told Mary Magdalene to go to His brethren to tell them He was resurrected she went to the disciples, not His blood brethren. Jesus' encounter at the moment of death with Mary and John emphasizes this very point. His mother had a slew of children (Mk 6:3) but Jesus in a dying inspiration told first, Mary that her son was John and second that John was to take her into his house as his mother. She had all sorts of children to take her in but John was her son in the real and greater family, the family of God. How outstanding a truth is this that Jesus wanted to establish in his mother as one of His final acts of His first coming. After all the slander against Mary, with all the phony faith and blasphemous lies about her being the mother of God he established her as the poster-child for the spiritual family of the body of Christ.

“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.” John 19:28

It may not be a stretch to believe that he said this right

after his exchange with John and his mother, to say he thirsted after the bonds of love in the family of God more than anything else. He had told the Pharisees and Sadducees that there would be no marriage in heaven, only perfect relationships without gender or separation by differences in nature. This he thirsted after.

“Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put [it] upon hyssop, and put [it] to his mouth.

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.” John 19:29-30

After the vinegar, the taste that it would not happen until the day of His kingdom come, He said it is finished. A remark that gives us courage to believe that in that day we will all be family and bloodlines will be no factor in its reality of truth. Only love will be the bond. Let us take the time in these last days to ponder the same thing in our hearts that Mary had to ponder... *“For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.”* Luke 2:11

Mary of Magdalene: Swooning over Jesus

Unrivaled Love

Devoted follower – not a great deal is known – witnesses crucifixion and resurrection – 14 times 2x7 associated with the generations of Jesus –delivered from her complete array of devils – she ministered unto Jesus of her substance in His most difficult hour – bore the good news of Christ to the Church of his resurrection.

Our continued study of Women in the Bible we will take a closer look at Mary Magdalene, the devoted follower of our Lord. Not a great deal is known about Mary. She is mentioned 14 times in the scriptures and mostly as witnessing Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. In Luke 8:2 and Mark 16:9 we learn that Mary was delivered of seven devils. *“Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.”* Mark 16:9 *“And certain women, which had been*

healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils” Luke 8:2. There are no other details of what exactly these seven devils were. It is inferred, in the Greek, from Luke 8 that infirmities connoted mental disorders. Perhaps Mary not only suffered from evil spirits, but was also feeble-minded. It is interesting to note that her name, being derived from the word Magdala, means tower. Imagine, then, what a pitiful person Mary must have been prior to her deliverance from the seven devils and ponder the miracle of the person she became – a tower of faith.

Mary stood by Jesus during His most difficult hour and the scriptures tell us she “*ministered unto him*” Luke 8:3 of her very substance. Apparently, she left everything behind to follow her Lord and Master. She was there at the crucifixion when the Roman soldiers removed His limp body from the cross and again at his burial in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. She brought spices to anoint the Lord, only to find that the heavy stone door of the tomb was rolled away and there was no Jesus to be found inside. It was Mary who Jesus first appeared to after he had risen and it was Mary who had the auspicious privilege of bearing the “good news” to the others.

As a representative of the Bride Mary Magdalene is one of the greatest of all time, encompassing in such a short time so many of the enduring qualities of the end-times Bride of Christ. Mary embodies what every believer should possess undying devotion to the Master. Mary gave everything she had and devoted her full attention to ministering to the Lord. She did not want to leave his side for a moment and only cared about His needs. What total

unselfishness she portrayed. Her life is an example to us of what every Christian should attain to on a spiritual level, daily, all the time.

Priscilla: Pillar in the Church

Married

Teach and spread his word – displaced from her old life – church in home and great hospitality – worked together with Paul (others) in the same craft – they taught the eloquent Apollos, who knew only John’s baptism, the way of God more perfectly – Priscilla and her husband always mentioned together, one flesh example – The generosity, perseverance, diligence and courage of Priscilla and Aquila is certainly an inspiration to all those who wish to serve the Lord, especially those couples who aspire to serve Him together and to those who have a church in their home.

A woman of great influence in the early church, Priscilla, along with her husband, Aquila, was used mightily by God to teach and spread His Word. After being expelled from Italy by the emperor Claudius, when he ordered all Jews out of Rome, Priscilla and Aquila settled in Corinth. It was here that they met up with Paul and took

him into their home for a time. Priscilla was, no doubt, a woman of great hospitality for it is mentioned several times in the scriptures of the church in her home. Priscilla and Aquila also happened to be tentmakers as Paul was and probably even shared their work with him when he stayed with them. Acts 18:3 tells us, “*And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.*”

When Paul left Corinth some time after an insurrection by the Jews to the Roman deputy, Gallio, who wanted no part of their dispute, (see Acts 18:12-17) Priscilla and Aquila travelled with him to Ephesus where they remained for a while. Perhaps their greatest “claim to fame”, if you will, was their encounter with the great Apollos. It was during their stay in Ephesus that Apollos, “*an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures*” Acts 18:24 sat under their Godly tutelage. Although well versed and diligent in the things of the Lord, he was lacking in the full knowledge of Jesus Christ, knowing only the baptism of John as the Scriptures tell us. When Priscilla and Aquila heard about his preaching in the synagogue, they took him and expounded unto him “*the way of God more perfectly*”. Acts 18:26 Apollos, thereafter, became a mighty force for the gospel of Jesus Christ in the early church, converting many Jews by publicly showing by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

It was their diligence, faithfulness and willingness to risk their very lives for Paul that endeared them to his heart. The Scriptures don’t go into any detail at all on the circumstance of how they risked their lives but it could be speculated that it occurred during the riot at Ephesus

incited by Demetrius the silversmith whose source of income was making silver shrines for the goddess, Diana. Demetrius stirred up his fellow silversmiths to rise up against Paul for preaching the gospel. Not only was their business in jeopardy with Paul preaching against idolatry and “*saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands.*” Acts 19:26 but the image of the great Diana, whom the whole world worshipped, would be tarnished with these piercing words of truth. The uproar took on such enormity that the partakers soon became confused and some actually could not even remember why they had come together.

In his letter to the Romans, indicating that they eventually moved back to Rome, Paul calls Priscilla and Aquila his “*helpers in Christ Jesus*” Rom 16:3 and greets them and the church that is in their house. This loving, devout couple, who labored together in the Lord, are mentioned five times in the New Testament, neither without the other, which attests to the true nature of a marriage in the Lord where the two become one flesh. Three of those times Priscilla’s name appears first, signifying the true equality attained through Christ, Jesus. “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*” Gal 3:28 These two epitomized this verse in that they inseparably labored with Jew and Gentile alike in their work at hand which was to spread the gospel to all who would hear and to establish a church in their home. These most generous servants opened their home and made it possible for believers to come and be refreshed with the Word of God. The generosity, perseverance, diligence and courage of Priscilla and Aquila is certainly an inspiration to all those who

wish to serve the Lord, especially those couples who aspire to serve Him together and to those who have a church in their home.

Women of the Bible

JOANNE M. SMITH

When the author wrote this series of vignettes on great women of the Bible in the late 1990's for The Christian Spirit Magazine, she selected a roster of women who most impressed her for their faith and love toward God. The selections included a cross-section of women from both the Old Testament and the New. Instinctively, she zeroed in on women with distinctive aspects of Brideship which stood out as being representative of the perfect wife. Not that any one of the women's acts and lives of faith depicted a comprehensive view of Brideship in itself. Generally, their tests of faith and show of virtues brought to life aspects of Brideship ultimately depicted in the final visions of the Bride recorded in the New Testament. It was not until we put the articles together that we discerned that these lives could be presented together to further The Outcast Eagle's (www.elishasoutcasteagles.com) major theme of the journey to Brideship. It was realized how each individual woman owned its own set of outstanding representative qualities that directly correlates to the mystery of Brideship. At the same time each of the women has her own individual identity, each a beautiful cameo in its own right, carved out in Scripture displaying a

personal set of virtues, amounting to her very own beautiful testimonial, worthy of representing the Bride by its quality and spiritual holiness and beauty.

The array of 'Illustrious Women of the Bible' presented in this writing are not to be thought of as an all inclusive list of the women who demonstrate attributes of the Bride. Women like Rahab, the woman at the well, the woman healed of the issue, the widow who gave her last penny, Bathsheba, Leah and of course, Eve, all endured tests of faith indicative of bridal elements of faith, humility or oneness with Christ. Other primary portraits such as the five wise virgins, the beloved one of the Song of Solomon, and the Sun-Clad woman in Revelation are given full attention in their proper place. Regardless of the magnitude of the Bride's expression throughout Scripture, we think the following gallery of 'brides' paints a full portrait of Brideship qualities, if not complete in this hand-picked group, then nearly so.