

THE WOMEN'S EVANGELISTIC CORPS

by

Patricia Bedell

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He healed the sick; he made the blind see; he raised the dead; Jesus did many things which caused people to be amazed, and yet the URANTIA book tells us that "of all the daring things which Jesús did in connection with his earth career, the most amazing was his sudden announcement: 'On the morrow we will set apart ten women for the ministering work of the kingdom.'"(1678) Imagine the stunned silence that must have followed that statement. I'm sure one or two of the apostles must have thought he didn't hear the Master correctly. For centuries, dating all the way back to the beginnings of society, women were thought of as being inferior to men. Naturally, Jesus' statement was amazing and shocking. How could he do such a thing? --permit women to teach the gospel. Why, women were spiritually inferior to men!

Today the subject of equal rights for women is discussed everywhere -- you see it in newspapers, books and television, hear it on the radio and listen to it in sermons. How interesting it is to learn what Jesus, two thousand years ago, believed, taught and preached concerning just that same topic. The URANTIA book states: "The most astonishing and the most revolutionary feature of Michael's mission on earth was his attitude toward women."(1671) "In one generation Jesus lifted women out of the disrespectful oblivion and the slavish drudgery of the ages."(1671) Let's take a quick look at the history of this "disrespectful oblivion and slavish drudgery" as related in the URANTIA book.

In the paper The Dawn of Civilization we learn that having to care for a helpless baby determined the early activities of male and female. The woman also had to maintain a permanent homesite where she could cultivate the soil and in this way she became a necessary partner for survival. "She was a food provider, a beast of burden, and a companion who would stand great abuse without violent resentment, and in addition to all of these desirable traits, she was an ever present means of sex gratification."(765)

"There were four great steps in the forward march of civilization. They were: 1. The collection stage (food gathering), 2. The hunting stage, 3. The pastoral stage, and 4. The agricultural stage."(768) The second step, the hunting stage, was a period of cooperation between the sexes. It was man's job to provide the meat, and woman's job to provide the vegetables; full-time jobs for both. It was the third step, the pastoral stage which "reduced woman to the depths of social slavery."(768) This phase of civilization

was made possible by the domestication of animals. "Man learned to live on the interest of his capital, the increase in his flocks; and this provided him with more leisure for culture and progress."(768:8)

* Woman, on the other hand, besides caring for children and home, still had to go out and work very hard to produce the vegetable necessities of life. Man needed only to go to his herds to provide the meat. "Man...became relatively independent of woman; throughout the entire pastoral age woman's status steadily declined."(768)

* She was the first slave, a family slave. Woman also was enslaved as pastoral man's inferior sex partner. This sort of sex slavery grew directly out of man's decreased dependence upon woman.(778-779)

* By the close of this era she had become little more than a human animal, working and bearing offspring, much as the animals of the herd were expected to do. "The men of the pastoral ages had great love for their cattle; all the more pity they could not have developed a deeper affection for their wives!"(768-769)

A brief re-statement of these same facts are found in the paper entitled Primitive Human Institutions. It reads: "When man was a hunter, he was fairly kind to woman, but after the domestication of animals, coupled with the Caligastia confusion, many tribes shamefully treated their women. They treated them altogether too much as they treated their animals. Man's brutal treatment of woman constitutes one of the darkest chapters of human history."(778:8)

We learn that throughout history taboos have kept woman strictly in her own field, with man choosing the more agreeable work, leaving the routine drudgery to woman; and that even though man has always been ashamed to do woman's work, woman hasn't minded doing man's work. And the book adds, "But strange to record, both men and women have always worked together in building and furnishing the home."(774:2)

In the paper entitled Marriage and Family Life we learn that not all the blame for man's low opinion of woman is to be put on him. A good deal of the blame is to be put on woman herself. For example: "She failed to get social recognition during primitive times because she did not function in an emergency; she was not a spectacular or crisis hero. Maternity was a distinct disability in the existence struggle; mother love handicapped women in the tribal defense."(934:2) The URANTIA book states that "women naturally love babies more than men do."(774:1) So, it is easy to understand how a mother would react if the tribe came under attack -- rather than pick up a weapon and fight, she would pick up her baby and protecting it, would probably hide or run! Definitely not spectacular. In addition, primitive women also made themselves more dependent on men by admiring and applauding their ability to fight and their masculinity. "This exaltation of the warrior elevated the male ego while it equally depressed that of the female and made her more dependent; a military uniform still mightily stirs the feminine emotions."(934:3)

"Woman's first liberation came when man consented to till the soil, consented to do what had (previously) been regarded as woman's

* work."(934:7) It was a great advancement for women when male captives were no longer killed but were instead forced to work in the fields. "This brought about the liberation of woman so that she could devote more time to homemaking" and caring for the children.(934)

* Going on a bit more with the "disrespectful oblivion" from which Jesus liberated women we find that primitive society had barbaric methods of determining the guilt or innocence of a person accused of some transgression of the law. The accused often had to pass a test of pain, fire or poison in order to be declared innocent. One of these kinds of tests recorded in the Old Testament was given to wives whose husbands suspected that they might have been unfaithful. A priest of the temple along with her husband, would make the woman drink a mixture of holy water and floor sweepings -- if she became sick, she was guilty.(795)

* Adam tried to teach sex equality to the inhabitants of the Garden. Eve worked in the fields right along side her husband, and that was quite a revolutionary thing for a woman to do in those times. He also taught that the mother as well as the father contributed to creating the life of a child; up until then it was believed that only the father produced life, and that the mother's body merely nurtured the unborn child.(836:12)

* Next, we'll take a quick glance at the status of women in Palestine in Jesus' lifetime. At the time of Michael's bestowal on our planet, women enjoyed much more personal freedom in the Roman Empire than in Palestine. But, the loving care and family devotion of Jewish homes was far superior to that found in the gentile world.(1335) After Michael chose URANTIA as the planet for his final bestowal, "Gabriel made a personal visit to URANTIA, and, as a result of his study of human groups and his survey of the spiritual, intellectual, racial, and geographic features of the world and its peoples," he decided the Hebrews were the best choice for the bestowal race.(1344:2)

* Both Joseph and Mary were well educated -- more so than most people of their social status. Mary was an expert weaver and better than average in most of the household arts of that day. "Both of them were good teachers and they saw to it that their children were well versed in the learning of that day."(1349:3) We learn in the paper, The Adolescent Years, that the synagogue schools did not permit girls to attend, and so it was customary for the girls of Jewish families to receive very little education. But, Jesus maintained (and Mary agreed) that girls should go to school the same as boys so there was nothing to do but conduct a home school especially for them.(1396)

A most interesting article published in the magazine Catholic World is entitled "Jesus Was A Feminist." The author of this article is Leonard Swidler, an editor of the Journal of Ecumenical Studies. Mr. Swidler states: "By 'feminist' is meant a person who is in favor of, and who promotes, the equality of women with men, a person who advocates and practices treating women primarily as human persons

(as men are so treated) and willingly contravenes social customs in so acting." He then goes about proving that Jesus was indeed a feminist, using Hebrew Scripture, the New Testament, and other documents as his source material.

In this article Swidler states that women were not allowed to study the Scriptures (Torah), quoting a first-century rabbi, Eliezer, as saying "Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman.....Whoever teaches his daughter the Torah is like one who teaches her lasciviousness." Also, women, along with children and slaves were not obliged to recite the Shema, the morning prayer, nor prayers at meals. In the daily Thanksgiving prayers of Jewish men, would be said the following: "Praised be God that he has not created me a gentile; praised be God that he has not created me a woman; praised be God that he has not created me an ignorant man." Women were also restricted in public prayer. In the great temple at Jerusalem they were limited to one outer portion, the women's court, which was five steps below the court for the men. In the synagogues the women were also separated from the men, and of course were not permitted to read aloud or take any leading function. The URANTIA book states that women seldom went to the Passover feast at Jerusalem because they were not required to be present. One year when Jesus went to Passover with his parents he was greatly shocked when his mother left them to go to the women's gallery.(1377:4)

*

Publicly women were definitely treated as second-class citizens. Swidler's article states that it was considered beneath the dignity of a rabbi to speak to a woman in public. We've learned from the URANTIA book that it was against the rules of social conduct for any man to speak to a woman in public. One of the rules contained in the 'Proverbs Of The Fathers' says: "Speak not much with a woman." A portion of Jewish scripture reads: "One is not so much as to greet a woman." Men were not even supposed to speak to their own wives in public.(1671) Some rabbinic sayings about women were: "It is well for those whose children are male, but ill for those whose children are female.....At the birth of a boy all are joyful, but at the birth of a girl all are sad.....When a boy comes into the world, peace comes into the world; when a girl comes, nothing comes..... (and here's the best one of all) Even the most virtuous of women is a witch..." Except for the rarest instances women were not allowed to bear witness in a court of law. Husbands could easily obtain divorces from their wives; women, on the other hand, were not allowed to divorce their husbands. The URANTIA book states that a man could divorce his wife if he didn't like her cooking, her housekeeping, or her looks. And the Pharisees had even gone so far as to teach that this kind of easy divorce was a special dispensation granted to the Jewish people, particularly the Pharisees.(1839:2)

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Before I get into Jesus' attitude and teachings, I would like to add this from the URANTIA book: "Primitive women did not pity themselves as their more recently liberated sisters...do. They were, after all, fairly happy and contented; they did not dare to

* envision a better or different mode of existence."(936:5) And I think this must have held true for the women of Palestine. Customs and attitudes had been formulated so far back in history that it simply wasn't in their natures to think of living differently. So, in spite of their obvious (to us) inferior status in society, they too were fairly happy and content.

The disciples learned quite early that the Master had a very deep respect and sympathetic regard for every person that he met, and they were most impressed by the consideration which he consistently gave to all sorts of men, women and children. (1545:11)
* Jesus attempted to make it very clear to them that in the kingdom of God women were equal with men.(1546) Many months before that astounding announcement in January, A.D. 29, concerning the ten women of the evangelistic corps, Jesus had taken the apostles on two preaching tours covering many cities of Galilee; the first tour beginning in January of the previous year (A.D. 28). The URANTIA book states: "The apostles were always shocked by Jesus' willingness to talk with women, women of questionable character, even immoral women. It was very difficult for Jesus to teach his apostles that women, even so-called immoral women, have souls which can choose God as their Father, thereby becoming daughters of God and candidates for life everlasting."(1614)
*

The URANTIA book relates many instances when Jesus chose the presence of a woman to help teach his God-revealing truths; or to reveal a startling truth about his divinity or the nature of his mission on earth. Remember the Samaritan woman, Nalda, at Jacob's well? Jesus was alone waiting for the return of the apostles, and he was thirsty but had no way of getting out the water. To the well came a woman from nearby Sychar with a water pitcher, and Jesus asked her for a drink. She was very surprised that a Jewish man would speak to her; first, she was a woman, and second, she was a Samaritan. In the course of their conversation Jesus revealed to her that he was the Deliverer. The URANTIA book's comment concerning this incident states: "This was the first direct, positive, and undisguised pronouncement of his divine nature and sonship which Jesus had made on earth; and it was made to a woman, a Samaritan woman, and a woman of questionable character in the eyes of men up to this moment, but a woman whom the divine eye beheld as having been sinned against more than as sinning of her own desire and as now being a human soul who desired salvation, desired it sincerely and wholeheartedly, and that was enough."(1614)
*

To the former keeper of a high-class brothel of Jerusalem, in the presence of several influential Jewish men, Jesus said: "There are present in this woman tremendous spiritual possibilities for the future. Some of you may not stand high in actual levels of soul and spirit, but you are making daily progress on the living way opened up, through faith, to God. There are tremendous possibilities in each of you for the future. Better by far to have a small but living and growing faith than to be possessed of a great intellect with its dead stores of worldly wisdom and spiritual unbelief."(1653:2)
*

From May 3 to October 3, A.D. 28, Jesus and the apostolic party lived at the Zebedee home at Bethsaida. Throughout this five months period of the dry season an enormous camp for training evangelists was maintained by the seaside near the Zebedee home. This seaside camp, which had been greatly enlarged to accommodate "the growing family" of Jesus, numbered from five hundred to fifteen hundred. * "The sick of different types were segregated and were under the supervision of a believer physician, a Syrian named Elman." (1657:1) For a period of four months he was assisted by a corps of twenty-five young women and twelve men, organizing and conducting the kingdom's first hospital. (1658:5) *

By mid-January, A.D. 29, Jesus and the apostles had spent the past year preaching the gospel, ministering to the sick, and training scores of disciples and evangelists. They were in Bethsaida preparing for a third preaching tour of Galilee when Jesus made the shocking stunning announcement that on the next day they were to form a group of ten women "for the ministering work of the kingdom." (1678) * He asked David Zebedee to send his messengers calling to Bethsaida ten of the devout women who had served so well at the former encampment and hospital. Many times these women had listened to the instruction given to the young evangelists, "but it had never occurred to either themselves or their teachers that Jesus would dare to commission women to teach the gospel of the kingdom and minister to the sick." (1678) * These ten women selected and commissioned by Jesus were: Susanna, the daughter of the former chazan of the Nazareth synagogue; Joanna, the wife of Chuza, the steward of Herod Antipas; Elizabeth, the daughter of a wealthy Jew of Tiberias and Sepphoris; Martha, the elder sister of Andrew and Peter; Rachel, the sister-in-law of Jude, the Master's brother in the flesh; Nasanta, the daughter of Elman, the Syrian physician; Milcha, a cousin of the Apostle Thomas; Ruth, the eldest daughter of Matthew Levi; Celta, the daughter of a Roman centurion; and Agaman, a widow of Damascus. (1679:1) *

The women were authorized by Jesus to create their own organization, and he directed Judas to give them enough money to outfit themselves in needed equipment and pack animals. The women's corps from that time on was self-supporting, providing all their own funds, and never again needing to use money that Judas held for the apostles. * The ten elected Susanna as their leader, and Joanna treasurer. (1679:2)

There is very little mention of these women in the New Testament. The Bible Dictionary states that the Gospel of Luke is full of the evidence of Jesus' understanding of and sympathy with women. This dictionary mentions several women who were influential in Jesus' background including "the women who accompanied the disciples on missionary journeys and who provided for them out of their means." This refers to the gospel according to LUKE 8: 1-3 (R.S.V.) which states: "Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities; Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's

steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means."

Remember now, if you were a woman of Palestine you wouldn't have even been allowed on the main floor of the synagogue. Think of the exhilarating, joyful experience it must have been for these women to finally be able to participate in, and contribute towards the spiritual uplift of women through public ministry. Jesus said: "Forget not that I will stop at nothing to restore self-respect to those who have lost it, and who really desire to regain it."(1765:5)

* Jesus was truly restoring the self-respect of women. Think of the astonishing, revolutionary experience it must have been for the apostles to see and hear women being recognized as "authorized teachers of the new gospel of the kingdom." According to the URANTIA book: "The charge which Jesus gave these ten women as he set them apart for gospel teaching and ministry was the emancipation which set free all women and for all time; no more was man to look upon woman as his spiritual inferior."(1679:3)

* This was indeed a shock even to the twelve apostles, in spite of the fact that many times they had heard Jesus say; "In the kingdom of heaven there is neither rich nor poor, free nor bond, male nor female, all are equally the sons and daughters of God."(1679:3)

The apostolic party which the women joined consisted of about one hundred persons which included Abner with the apostles of John, Andrew with the apostles of Jesus, and about seventy-five young evangelists.(1678:3)

*

The apostles were dazed again to learn that the women were going to travel with the men. As the apostolic party left Bethsaida, the women traveled in the rear. The women's corps caused great excitement everywhere. It must have been the topic of conversation around the whole country. The book tells us that the enemies of Jesus really had a "field day" with this issue, but everywhere, in cities and villages women believers in the good news bravely supported their chosen sisters and voiced firm approval of this "tardy acknowledgement of woman's place in religious work."(1679:3)

*

More and more, women had become believers in the gospel of the kingdom, and up until this time any woman who wanted to speak with Jesus or one of his apostles always had to go through a big hassle in order to do it. Now all this was changed. Whenever a woman believer wished to talk with Jesus or one of the apostles all she had to do was go to Susanna, who in turn would direct her to one of the women in the corps, and together the two of them would immediately go right to the Master or an apostle.(1679:4)

*

The evangelists were sent out in groups of five, while Jesus and the twelve traveled together most of the time. Sometimes, as the occasion came up, the apostles would go out by twos to baptize believers. "They visited Magdala, Tiberias, Nazareth, and all the principal cities and villages of central and southern Galilee, all the places previously visited and many others."(1678)

*

It was at Magdala that the women first demonstrated their usefulness and proved to all the wisdom of having a women's evangelistic corps. Andrew, the leader of the apostles, had directed his associates to follow rather strict rules when doing personal work with women, especially with those of questionable character. When the party entered Magdala, these ten women evangelists were free to enter the houses of prostitution and preach the glad tidings directly to the women living in them. And when visiting the sick, these women were able to empathize, to understand the feelings of women, and thereby "draw very close in their (personal) ministry to their afflicted sisters."(1680:1)

At this place, Mary Magdalene became a believer in the gospel of the kingdom as a direct result of the ministry of these ten women (afterward known as the twelve women). The URANTIA Book states: "Through a succession of misfortunes and in consequence of the attitude of reputable society toward women who commit such errors of judgement, this woman had found herself in one of the nefarious resorts of Magdala. It was Martha and Rachel who made plain to Mary that the doors of the kingdom were open to even such as she. (She) believed the good news and was baptized by Peter the next day. Mary Magdalene became the most effective teacher of the gospel among this group of twelve women evangelists." (1680:1) In fact, she was so good that about four weeks after her conversion, Mary was teamed with Rebecca, daughter of Joseph, and the two of them were "set apart" from the others to teach and minister together to those in need. (1680:2) (The book isn't explicit here, and doesn't tell us how long Mary and Rebecca worked together, so perhaps they remained a team for as long as the women's corps was intact.)

After spending two or three days with one group of evangelists, Jesus would move on to join another group, being informed as to the whereabouts and movements of all these workers by David's messengers. Through the messenger service each of these groups was kept fully informed concerning the progress of the tour. This being their first tour, the women remained much of the time with Jesus. (1683:5) evenings of this third preaching tour were spent in wonderful discussions with Jesus. These younger groups of both men and women were more inclined to enter into these discussions when the older apostles were away.(1683:4)

You will recall that Joanna, the treasurer, was the wife of Chuza who was Herod's steward. She was probably a very good public relations person serving the interests of Jesus. At one time Chuza informed Herod that "Jesus did not propose to meddle with the affairs of earthly rule; that he was only concerned with the establishment of the spiritual brotherhood of his believers, which brotherhood he called the kingdom of heaven." Herod had such confidence in Chuza's reports that he refused to interfere with Jesus' activities.(1717:2)

While in Tiberias, upon instructions from Jesus, Andrew put the women in charge of the Sabbath services. The women chose Joanna to be in charge, and the meeting took place in the banquet room of Herod's new palace. At this time Herod was away in Perea. Joanna read from

* the Scriptures concerning woman's work in the religious life of Israel, making reference to Miriam, Deborah, Esther, and others.(1680)

* The next mission in which the women's corps participated was the Decapolis tour which lasted four weeks, from August 18, A.D. 29, to September 16. The women's corps and some disciples remained with Jesus, while the apostles and twelve evangelists preached throughout the cities and villages of the Decapolis."(1762;1) "On Sunday, September 25, A.D. 29, the apostles and the evangelists assembled at Magadan. After a long conference that evening with his associates, Jesus surprised all by announcing that early the next day he and the twelve apostles would start for Jerusalem to attend the feast of tabernacles. He directed that the evangelists visit the believers in Galilee, and that the women's corps return for a while to Bethsaida."(1783:1)

* The women's corps was present at the encampment at Magadan in November for the ordination of the Seventy as Gospel messengers. (1800)

* The next mention of the women's corps is in connection with preparations for Jesus' last mission, the three month's tour of all Perea, before entering Jerusalem for the final days of his life on earth. "It was no longer necessary for Jesus to go abroad to teach the people. They now came to him in increasing numbers each week and from all parts, not only from Palestine but from the whole Roman world and from the Near East. Throughout this period the headquarters of Jesus and the twelve apostles was maintained...at the Pella camp. The Master "spent much of his time at the...camp, teaching the multitude and instructing the twelve."(1808)

* The women's corps also prepared to go out by twos, with the seventy evangelists to work the larger cities of Perea. This original group of twelve women had recently trained a larger corps of fifty women in the work of visiting homes and ministering to the sick and troubled. Perpetua, Simon Peter's wife, became a member of this new division of the women's corps which was under the supervision of Abner.(1808) Perpetua was a very competent woman, and she worked for years in the women's corps.(1552) After Pentecost she remained with her husband, and when Peter was driven out of Jerusalem she accompanied him upon all his journeys to the churches as well as on all his missionary tours. "And on the day Peter was crucified in Rome, she was fed to the wild beasts in the arena."(1808) This new women's corps also had as members the wives of Philip and Matthew and the mother of James and John Zebedee, whose name was Salome.

* Throughout this tour of Perea the women's corps, now numbering sixty-two, took over most of the work of ministering to the sick. The higher spiritual aspects of the gospel of the kingdom were developed during this tour, and so, there was an absence of miracle working. This is the part of Palestine in which Jesus' apostles and disciples worked hardest. And this is where the largest numbers of citizens from the better classes accepted the Master's teaching.(1827)

Many times during this tour of Perea the Pharisees tried to draw Jesus into arguments concerning divorce. But even though Jesus refused to play that game, he did exalt marriage as the most ideal and highest of all human relationships. Also, Jesus "intimated strong disapproval of the lax and unfair divorce practices of Jerusalem Jews." (1838:4) "He never sanctioned any divorce practice which gave man any advantage over woman; the Master (approved) only those teachings which accorded women equality with men." (1839:2) Jesus helped the apostles gain higher ideals regarding marriage, and increased their respect for women and children and for the home. (1839:6)

I suppose because I am the mother of two children I especially enjoy the narration concerning the time when Jesus blessed the little children. The word had spread all over Jericho the evening before about Jesus' message regarding marriage and the blessedness of children. So, bright and early the next morning before breakfast time, scores of mothers carrying and leading their children arrived saying they wished Jesus to bless the little ones. The apostles went out first to see what these mothers were up to, and then tried to talk them out of their idea and get them to leave. The mothers would have none of it; they refused to leave until Jesus laid his hands on their children. The apostles, becoming more than just a little irritated with these steadfast women, began to loudly rebuke them. As you remember, Jesus heard the noise, came out and "indignantly reproved" his apostles, saying those dear and often repeated words: "Suffer little children to come to me; forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven...whosoever receives not the kingdom of God as a little child shall hardly enter therein to grow up to the full stature of spiritual manhood." (1839-1840) And then Jesus did lay his hands on all the children speaking words of hope and courage to their mothers. I think he understands better than anyone the love and hopes that parents have for their children.

Jesus spent many hours patiently teaching his followers the truth concerning women; and the status of women in Palestine improved a great deal because of it. (1840) Nevertheless, much of his teaching was lost in later generations -- even the apostles slipped back to some of their former ways of thinking. The Apostle Paul was a follower of the cult of renunciation and humiliation. (977) And sexual gratification was high on the self-denial list. "Many of the world's great religions have been adversely influenced by this ancient cult, but none more markedly than Christianity." Paul's "personal views are reflected in the teachings which he fastened onto Christian theology: 'It is good for a man not to touch a woman.' 'I would that all men were even as I myself.' Paul well knew that such teachings were not a part of Jesus' gospel, and his acknowledgment of this is illustrated by his statement, 'I speak this by permission and not by commandment.' But this cult led Paul to look down upon women." (977:2) In the early days of the Christian church women teachers and ministers were called deaconesses and were granted general recognition. But Paul, despite the fact that he agreed to all this in theory, "never really incorporated it into his own attitude and personally found

* it difficult to carry out in practice."(1679) The New Testament records (R.S.V.) in Paul's first letter to Timothy, 2:11, 12: "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent." And Paul's personal opinions have long influenced one of the world's great religions.(977:2)

* The original twelve women of the evangelistic corps along with many others accompanied Jesus and the apostles on that final mission into Jerusalem; most of the women staying at the home of Joseph of Arimathea, Rebecca's father. And when the final tragic episode of Jesus' life was unfolding, even though all of the apostles fled except John, these women were all present and not one denied or betrayed Jesus.(1680)

* During the last hour that Jesus was dying on the cross "less than thirty people were present, only the thirteen Roman soldiers and a group of about fifteen believers. These believers were all women except two, Jude, Jesus' brother, and John Zebedee..."(2010) And when the Master finally died, there were five present at the foot to his cross; Jude, Ruth, his sister, John, Mary Magdalene and Rebecca, onetime of Sepphoris.(2010-2011) This is not the Rebecca who worked in partnership with Mary Magdalene, rather this is the woman who fell in love with Jesus when he was just nineteen, and who wanted to marry him. As it turned out, Rebecca never married, and in later years she followed Jesus devotedly, and unknown to him was among the joyful crowds welcoming him into Jerusalem.(1402-1403)

* You will recall that Salome Zebedee once went to Jesus with her two sons, James and John, and asked him to promise in advance to grant whatever request she might make. Jesus didn't promise. Nevertheless she asked him to promise her that her sons would have places of honor with him when he established the coming kingdom in Jerusalem; that her sons be chosen to sit at his right and left hand. Jesus said: "Woman, you know not what you ask." And so, as Salome viewed Jesus dying on the cross with dying thieves at his right and left hand she remembered her foolish request regarding special honors for her sons.(1868:3)

There is mention in each of the four gospels of "the women who followed Jesus" being present at the crucifixion. These references from the King James version are as follows: MATTHEW 27: 55,56... "And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him, among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children. MARK 15: 40,41..."There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the Mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem." LUKE 23: 49..."And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off; beholding these things." JOHN 19: 25..."Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the

the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene."

* Mary Magdalene took a prominent part in proclaiming the Master's
 resurrection...she was the chief spokesman for the women's corps,
 as was Peter for the apostles. Mary did not lead the women workers,
 but she was their chief teacher. She was first to discover the empty
 * tomb (2026)...the risen Jesus first appeared to Mary (2026)...and of
 the first five morontia appearances of Jesus, Mary Magdalene witnessed
 * four.(2033)

I will end this address with the inspiring account of the
 fifth morontia appearance of Jesus which occurred in the presence
 of some twenty-five women believers assembled at the home of Joseph
 of Arimathea: "Mary Magdalene had returned to Joseph's house just
 a few minutes before this appearance. Suddenly they beheld in their
 very midst the fully visible form of the risen Jesus. He greeted
 them, saying: 'Peace be upon you. In the fellowship of the kingdom
 there shall be neither Jew nor gentile, rich nor poor, free nor
 bond, man nor woman. You also are called to publish the good news
 of the liberty of mankind through the gospel of sonship with God in
 the kingdom of heaven. Go to all the world proclaiming this gospel
 and confirming believers in the faith thereof. And while you do this,
 forget not to minister to the sick and strengthen those who are
 * fainthearted and fear-ridden. And I will be with you always, even
 to the ends of the earth." (2033)

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