

Women in the Lives of Jesus and the Apostles : Part 1

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Recently, a Facebook friend from Africa sent me a private message in which he informed me that some people -- perhaps members of his church in Zaire, I am not really certain -- were claiming that it was unscriptural for women to partake of the Lord's Supper, or Communion, as it is commonly known. This friend asked me for my opinion, with the request that I provide Scriptural support for my position. I actually found his question rather interesting, because to my recollection, I have never been asked this before in all the years that I have been preaching and teaching the Gospel Message.

Upon reflecting on this person's question for a moment, and prior to conducting any Biblical research, my first reaction was to conclude that, based on my personal knowledge, there are no Scriptures which outright prohibit Christian women from partaking of the Lord's Supper; that is, the Bread and Wine. However, as is my custom, and as my friend requested, I determined to delve more thoroughly into the Scriptures in order to see exactly what they reveal concerning this topic. Allow me to now share the results of my investigation with you.

As many Bible-knowledgeable Christians will already know, in the four Gospels we discover that women were quite prominent in the life of Jesus Christ. Of course, the very first two women to make their appearance in Jesus' life -- at least in the Scriptures -- are his own mother, Mary, and Elisabeth, who was the wife of Zacharias, and the mother of John the Baptist. As you may recall, being led by God's Spirit, Mary went to visit Elisabeth in the hill country of Judea, about the time that Elisabeth was six months pregnant with John the Baptist, as we see by the following verses:

"And after those days his [Zacharias'] wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men. And in the sixth month

the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. 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. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, 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. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth." Luke 1:24-40, KJV

While it is quite a controversial subject -- at least with staunch Roman Catholics who insist on maintaining the false doctrine concerning Mary's supposed "perpetual virginity" -- the Gospels also lead us to believe that Jesus had at least two sisters, as we see by the following verses:

"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?" Matthew 13:55-56, KJV

"Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him." Mark 6:3, KJV

Another woman of note is the prophetess Anna, who at a very advanced age is blessed with seeing the Christ child in the Temple in Jerusalem, when Joseph and Mary took Jesus there in order to fulfill the Laws of Moses, as we see by these verses:

"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, KJV

In later years, once Jesus began His public ministry, we learn about other women who became associated with Him. No doubt, the most well-known of these women -- due to the fact that she was a former prostitute out of whom Jesus had cast seven devils -- was Mary Magdalene, or Mary of Magdala. What is unique and special about Mary, aside from the fact that Jesus marvelously delivered her from her demons and totally transformed her life, is that the Scriptures indicate that it was Mary to whom Jesus first appeared following His glorious Resurrection from the dead. We find Mary Magdalene mentioned in the following verses, as well as in a number of other verses which I will be sharing with you momentarily:

"And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance."
Luke 8:1-3, KJV

"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. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not."
Mark 16:9-11, KJV

"But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her."
John 20:11-18, KJV

Perhaps the next women who are probably most well-known to a lot of Christians are Martha and Mary, who were the sisters of the Lord's dear friend Lazarus. Even many non-Christians are familiar with the story regarding how Jesus raised their brother Lazarus from the dead. Following is an abbreviated account of that great miracle as it is found in the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of John. Please read the full chapter if you want all of the details concerning this miracle:

"Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her

hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus . . . And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house . . . Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go. Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him."

John 11:1-5, 19-20, 39-45, KJV

"Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

John 12:1-3, KJV

Within the Gospels we also find mention of another Mary who was mother to James the Less and Joses. The Scriptures seem to indicate that this particular Mary was actually married to Cleophas, and that she was in fact the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as we can determine by this verse:

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

John 19:25, KJV

As confusing as it may appear to the casual reader of God's Word, there appear to be at least five -- and perhaps even six -- different women named "Mary" -- or Miriam -- who are mentioned in the New Testament Scriptures. These women are as follows:

1. Mary, mother of Jesus, married to Joseph
2. Mary, sister of the mother of Jesus, married to Cleophas
3. Mary Magdalene, a.k.a. Mary of Magdala
4. Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus
5. Mary, mother of John whose surname was Mark
6. Mary, greeted by Paul in Romans 16:6

In addition to the aforementioned women, there were likewise

Salome, Susanna, Joanna -- who was the wife of King Herod's steward named Chuza -- and the unnamed mother of Zebedee's children; that is, James and John. The aforementioned women were present at different points in the life of Jesus Christ, including up to His Crucifixion, and also during the glorious events which followed His miraculous Resurrection from the dead. The Gospels inform us that these women assisted the Lord and "ministered unto him of their substance" in various ways during the course of His public ministry. All of these points are verified by the following verses:

"And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them."
Matthew 4:21, KJV

"Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren."
Matthew 20:20-24, KJV

"And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children . . . And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned. And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things . . . And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment."
Luke 23:26-28, 46-49, 55-56, KJV

"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."
Matthew 27:55-56, KJV

"And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw

that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God. 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." Mark 15:39-41, KJV

"In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre. And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." Matthew 28:1-10, KJV

"And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid. And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulchre; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they any thing to any man; for they were afraid." Mark 15:47-16:8, KJV

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be

delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles . . . Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said: but him they saw not."
Luke 24:1-10, 22-24, KJV

In fact, while some people may possibly object to this, we should probably even include the unnamed wife of the Roman governor of Judaea, Pontius Pilate. While she may not have been a direct follower of Jesus Christ, nevertheless, she specifically warned her husband to not harm the Lord during His trial before the angry Jewish mob in Jerusalem, because God had given her a disturbing dream, and she realized that Jesus was an innocent man, as we see by this verse:

"When he [Pontius Pilate] was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him."
Matthew 27:19, KJV

Of course, there are also other young girls and women who are mentioned in the Gospels, who simply are not as well known by some people as the previous ones who I have mentioned. For example, there is the woman who upon touching the hem of the Lord's garment was immediately healed of her issue of blood. There is also the ruler Jairus' young daughter who Jesus also raised from the dead. Consider the following verses:

"And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague . . . And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway

the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat."

Mark 5:22-29, 38-43, KJV

Let us also not forget the woman of Samaria who apparently liked to sleep around with men. One day she engaged in a very enlightening conversation with Jesus when she went to fetch water at the well. Not only did Jesus reveal to her that He knew everything about her, but He also taught her about true spiritual worship of our Heavenly Father. Equally important, He offered her the Water of Life as well, as we see by the following verses:

"Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he."

John 4:5-26, KJV

Let us also not forget how Jesus healed the Apostle Peter's mother-in-law of a fever in the Gospel of Matthew, as we see

by the following verses:

"And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them."

Matthew 8:14-15, KJV

"And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them."

Mark 1:29-31, KJV

In addition, let us also not forget that when Jesus fed the multitudes on several occasions, the Gospels inform us that both women and children were included in those groups, as we can determine by the following verses:

"And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children."

Matthew 14:21, KJV

"And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children."

Matthew 15:38, KJV

It is also worthy of note to mention that when Jesus spoke about His Return in both the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, and the Rapture of the Saints, He made it a point to include women in that discussion, as we see by the following verses:

"Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

Matthew 24:41, KJV

"Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

Luke 17:35, KJV

While I have not included every single mention of young girls and women in the Gospels in the previous paragraphs, the ones I have provided will suffice to make the following important points for my readers.

While all of the previous Scriptural evidence from the four Gospels may not provide us with a direct answer regarding whether or not women should partake of the Lord's Supper, nevertheless, these Scriptural examples do make a very loud statement, and offer us a clear look into the mind of Jesus Christ. That statement is that not only were women very much an integral part of His life and ministry; but He accepted them as friends, companions and Disciples. It is likewise evident that He loved some of them very dearly, and that He did not look down upon women as being lesser beings, who were any less worthy of His love and attention.

Quite to the contrary, as we have seen, aside from His own mother, Mary Magdalene in particular was apparently very special to Jesus. I don't believe that it is a coincidence

that she saw Jesus first after He had risen from the dead, even before His own Apostles. There must be a reason why He allowed events to occur in that particular order.

As I pondered this post-Resurrection event that transpired between Jesus and Mary, it occurred to me that maybe Jesus granted Mary this special favor, because He realized that she needed it. If we consider the life of prostitution from which Mary had been liberated, as well as the seven devils from which she had been delivered, perhaps in her heart she was still feeling dirty, guilty and a little bit condemned. Who knows; maybe Mary even doubted Jesus' love for her, as well as His forgiveness. Perhaps she even felt that she was less worthy than the Apostles and other Disciples, so Jesus decided to give her a little bit of extra encouragement by appearing to her first.

Obviously, there is no real Biblical evidence to support this possibility, and it is just a personal theory of mine, so please take what I am sharing here with a grain of salt.

Please go to part two for the continuation of this series:

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Women in the Lives of Jesus and the Apostles : Part 2

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Gospel Of Luke And Acts Of The Apostles Both Written By Luke, Jesus' Ascension To Heaven, Apostles Return To Jerusalem, The Promise Of The Baptism By Fire, Day Of Pentecost And The Holy Spirit Received, In The Upper Room With Mother Mary And Other Women, Mother Mary's Special Place Of Honor, Mary's Personal Sufferings As Jesus' Mother, Jesus Disappears At Age Twelve, Jesus Emphasizes God's Spiritual Family Over His Biological Family, Roman Catholic False Doctrine Regarding Mary Being A Co-Mediatrix And Co-Redemptrix, Bold Witnesses For Jesus And Thousands Added To The Church, Great Commission Is Fulfilled, New Testament Women Were Saved Baptized And Labored For The Gospel, Churches In The Home, Mary Rhoda Lydia Euodias Chloe And Syntyche, Aquila And Priscilla, Women Of Philippi And Thessalonica, Women Were Persecuted Imprisoned Tortured And Killed Just Like The Men, Consider Preponderance Of Evidence

Continuing our discussion from part one, being as the institution of the Lord's Supper was not implemented as a regular practice in the Church until some time after the events which are described in the four Gospels, in order to really understand the Christian women's place in the First

Century Church, we need to also examine God's Word from the Book of Acts, and forward.

As you may realize, it is commonly believed that the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel of Luke were written by the same author -- that is, the physician Luke -- and that the Book of Acts is really a continuation of Luke's Gospel. In fact, as you can see by the verses below, not only are both Books addressed to the same person -- named Theophilus -- but we also see that there is a small degree of overlap between the closing events of the Gospel of Luke, and the opening events of the Book of Acts:

"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."

Luke 1:1-4, KJV

"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen."

Luke 24:49-53, KJV

"The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Acts 1:1-11, KJV

With the conclusion of the Gospel of Luke, we are told that after Jesus returned to Heaven, the Apostles did as He had ordered them to do, and returned to Jerusalem in order to wait for the promise of the Baptism by Fire, that is, the Holy Ghost. You may recall that John the Baptist had spoken of this very same Baptism by Fire years earlier. Jesus also spoke of the Promise of the Spirit in the Gospel of John as well. As many Christians will also know, this Gift of God's Spirit became a reality in the second chapter of the Book of Acts. Consider the following verses:

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:"
Matthew 3:11, KJV

"John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:"
Luke 3:16, KJV

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you . . . But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."
John 14:16-17, 26, KJV

"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:"
John 15:26, KJV

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come."
John 16:13, KJV

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."
Acts 2:1-4, KJV

If you would like to learn more about this special treasure which we can possess in the earthen vessels of our bodies of flesh, I encourage you to read such articles as "A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: God's Promise of the Spirit".

But let us return to our discussion concerning what occurred

immediately after Jesus returned to Heaven. As I mentioned a moment ago, the Apostle returned to Jerusalem. In the verses which follow, we discover that due to the Lord's commandment for them to return to Jerusalem -- and possibly because they were being hunted down by the Jewish religious leaders -- it seems that the Apostles decided to remain in a single, large room, which we today commonly referred to as the Upper Room:

"Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren."

Acts 1:12-14, KJV

But what I would like to call to your attention is the fact that Mary and the other women -- which no doubt must surely have included some of the very same women who we discussed earlier -- are also given prominent mention in these verses. They were not viewed as outsiders or as lesser beings. They were treated with respect and dignity as fellow believers in Christ, and were clearly in close fellowship with the eleven Apostles.

You will also notice that Mary -- the mother of Jesus -- is in fact mentioned separately from the rest of the women, as if Luke's intention is to give her a special place of honor. Surely, this is a position which she had earned. After all, consider how much she must have suffered as she watched her own son being ridiculed and rejected by His own brothers -- at least at first -- by the rest of the Jews, and finally being tortured and murdered by those very same Jews as she looked on in complete agony. Many years earlier, Simeon had told her that a sword would pierce through her own soul, as we see by these verses:

"And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Luke 2:34-35, KJV

We can only imagine the anxiety that Mary must have felt -- as any loving mother would have experienced -- when at the age of twelve, young Jesus disappeared for three days, and was later found by His parents as He taught in the Temple in Jerusalem. Consider these verses:

"Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And

it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart."
Luke 2:41-51, KJV

In later years, there was also the time when Jesus seemed to not even acknowledge His own mother and His brothers as his biological family. We can only wonder if Mary understood at that particular time that it was very important for Jesus to teach His listeners concerning the spiritual nature of God's entire family which, unlike human families, is not limited by genes and flesh and blood family ties. Consider these verses:

"While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."
Matthew 12:46-50, KJV

"There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him, and they said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren without seek for thee. And he answered them, saying, Who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."
Mark 3:31-35, KJV

"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, KJV

Please note that the fact that Mary was shown respect by the Apostles and Disciples has nothing to do with the false Roman Catholic doctrine concerning Mary which erroneously insists that she is some kind of Co-Mediatrix and Co-Redemptrix. For the record, I soundly reject this Roman Catholic heresy. If you are interested in my views concerning this issue, please refer to such articles as "Mary Worship, Christianity And Roman Catholicism" and "Lying Wonders of the Endtime".

If we move up a few chapters in the Book of Acts to after that famous day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the Apostles, we discover that the Apostles and the Disciples had caught the Fire of the Spirit, lost their fear and timidity, and were boldly witnessing for the Lord. As a result, thousands of people were being added to the Church, and being baptized in Jesus' name. This included people who were from every strata of that ancient society, both rich and poor, and Jew and Gentile alike.

With the conversion of Saul of Tarsus in Acts chapter nine, and the vision that was given to Peter in Acts chapter ten, Jesus' mandate to go into all the world was finally being fulfilled. This "Great Commission" of ours is described in verses such as the following:

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

Matthew 24:14, KJV

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:"

Matthew 28:19, KJV

"And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Luke 24:46-47, KJV

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

Mark 16:15, KJV

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

John 15:16, KJV

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Acts 1:8, KJV

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things."

Romans 10:14-15, KJV

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"

1 Corinthians 9:16, KJV

"Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the

love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth:"
Colossians 1:4-6, KJV

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."
2 Timothy 2:2, KJV

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine."
2 Timothy 4:2, KJV

However, once again, what I would like to emphasize here is that all of this early Christian evangelistic work included a lot of women who were won to Christ, who were baptized in the Name of Jesus, and who labored for the Gospel. In fact, some of them also had Churches in their homes. For those of you who may be interested in additional reading, I discuss the issue of Churches in the home and home fellowships in the eight-part series entitled "Where Are The First Century Churches?". Contrary to what some people have been led to believe by certain biased religionists, the First Century Church was clearly not just comprised of a bunch of old, bearded men. This becomes quite evident in verses such as the following:

"And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)"
Acts 5:14, KJV

"But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."
Acts 8:12, KJV

"And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking: and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished."
Acts 12:11-16, KJV

"And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither.

And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us . . . But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city. And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed."

Acts 16:12-15, 37-40, KJV

"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ. And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few . . . And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few."

Acts 17:1-4, 10-12, KJV

"After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers . . . And Paul after this tarried there yet a good while, and then took his leave of the brethren, and sailed thence into Syria, and with him Priscilla and Aquila; having shorn his head in Cenchrea: for he had a vow . . . And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly."

Acts 18:1-3, 18, 24-26, KJV

"Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus . . . Greet Mary, who bestowed much labour on us."

Romans 16:3, 6, KJV

"The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in

their house."

1 Corinthians 16:19, KJV

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"

1 Corinthians 1:10-13, KJV

"Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life."

Philippians 4:1-3, KJV

Please notice that in the previous verses, Lydia, Euodias, Syntyche, Rhoda, Chloe and Priscilla are all Christian women. As I stated earlier, some of them not only opened their homes to the Apostles and Disciples, but they also had Churches in them as well.

It is also important to add that when persecution began against the First Century Church, there was no distinction made between Christian men and women. They were all hunted down by the Apostle Paul and his companions, and later by Rome as well. Along with the men and children, these women were persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and killed. Consider the following verses:

"As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison."

Acts 8:3, KJV

"And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem."

Acts 9:1-2, KJV

So let us consider the gist of the matter. While there are no Scriptures which clearly reveal whether or not Christian women were permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper -- that is, the Bread and the Wine -- in the First Century Church, I would ask you to consider the preponderance of Scriptural evidence which I have provided in this series, and be led by God's Spirit in your understanding. Allow me to enumerate once again some of the key evidence which I have shared with you:

1. The Lord accepted women as His friends, companions and

Disciples. Please note that I did not say Apostles.

2. As occurred with Mary Magdalene, the woman who had an issue of blood and Jairus' daughter, Jesus cast out their demons, healed them, and raised them from the dead.
3. Jesus greatly loved Mary and Martha and raised their brother Lazarus from the dead.
4. In the case of James and John, Jesus accepted a mother's two sons as His Apostles, although He was unable to fulfill her special request concerning them.
5. It was women who anointed the Lord's body following His death and burial.
6. Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene and other women following His Resurrection from the dead.
7. Jesus specifically mentioned women being taken during the Rapture event.
8. Jesus used women as an example of being prepared for His Return in the Parable of the Ten Virgins.
9. Mary -- the mother of Jesus -- and other women were in close fellowship with the Apostles in the Upper Room.
10. Women were accepted in the First Century Church, were baptized in the First Century Church, and also labored in the Gospel along with the men.
11. Some of the women had Churches in their homes.
12. Women were persecuted, imprisoned and killed along with the rest of the First Century Church.

Please go to part three for the conclusion of this series.

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Women in the Lives of Jesus and the Apostles : Part 3

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A Summation Of My Position, Ye Are All One In Christ Jesus, Is Excluding Women From Communion A False Doctrine Invented By Misguided Men, The Apostle Paul's Advice: Let Your Women Keep Silence In The Churches, Excluding Women Contradicts Spirit of Unity And Inclusion In New Testament, Appreciate Christian Women Of The First Century, Suggested Reading List

In summation, if the aforementioned women believed in Jesus Christ, were loved by Christ, had their lives transformed by Christ, followed Christ, were baptized in His Name, labored in His Name, risked their lives and died for His Name, were used as examples of patiently waiting for His Return, and are mentioned by the Lord as partaking in the Rapture, then in my view, to teach -- without any solid Scriptural proof whatsoever -- that they should not partake of the Bread and the Wine in the Lord's Supper -- or Communion -- is not only an injustice to them, but it contradicts the very spirit of acceptance, unity and inclusiveness that is clearly revealed in the previous Scriptures.

Stated another way, in my opinion, to adopt such a position creates an imbalance in our understanding of the proof that we do find in the New Testament. Why allow women to so fully engage in our Christian faith, only to deny them in this one thing? It does not make sense in my view. As the Apostle Paul wrote in his Epistle to the Galatians:

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 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."
Galatians 3:27-28, KJV

If we are truly all one in Christ, and if God the Father only sees whether or not we have been washed in the Blood of the Lamb, then who are men -- whoever they may be -- to invent a false doctrine which purposely excludes women in this way? Yes, while I can offer no proof, I do suspect that this false doctrine of excluding women from partaking of the Bread and Wine was probably invented by men somewhere. For what reasons I honestly do not know.

As I considered this matter further, I began to wonder what Scriptural proof such misguided people might possibly try to use in order to try to validate their wayward position. The only verses that I could think of -- and they are not really even related to this subject -- are the following ones where after discussing the Gifts of Tongues, the interpretation of Tongues, and the Gift of Prophecy, the Apostle Paul explains the position of women in a local fellowship gathering:

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."
1 Corinthians 14:34-35, KJV

As you may possibly know, the previous verses have caused a lot of trouble for some modern Christians, and have been at the center of controversy as well. If you are interested in learning my personal views concerning them, I invite you to read "Women Shepherds: The Family Sex Cult Exposed Again!". But insofar as our current discussion is concerned, I really don't see how anyone could possibly use them -- assuming that this is even the case -- to insist that women should not take part in Communion -- that is, the Bread and Wine -- during a

time of Christian fellowship, at mass, or in whatever the setting may happen to be.

As I have already stated, based on the Scriptural evidence I have shared in this article, it is my personal view that to do so is to contradict the spirit of unity and inclusion that we find in the New Testament. Whether or not you agree with my position, it is my hope that at the very least, you will have gained a new appreciation for the women who were a part of the life of Jesus Christ and His Apostles and Disciples. They were in large part responsible for helping to keep alive and preserve our faith, so that it would survive until this current day. No doubt, there are many other women whose names are not mentioned in the New Testament, who deserve this same honor as well.

With these words I will bring this article to its conclusion. I hope that you have found it informative, that you have been inspired by it, and that it has been a blessing in your life. If that is the case, please consider sharing its URL with all of your online friends. Likewise, if you have a user account with Facebook, Twitter or Google+, I would also appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information, you may want to refer to the list of resources below which were mentioned in this article, and which are likewise located on the Endtime Prophecy Net server:

A Treasure in Earthen Vessels: God's Promise of the Spirit
Mary Worship, Christianity And Roman Catholicism
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Where Are The First Century Churches?
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