

JOANNA . . . the prime minister's wife who followed Jesus
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(LUKE 8 : 3)

The Countess of Huntington was fond of quoting Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 1: 26-27, "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. The great lady quietly reminded her listeners that Paul said, "not many noble are called." Had Paul stated "not any noble are called," the countess would have been prevented from joining the ranks of the blessed. In all probability she would have welcomed an opportunity of speaking with Joanna, the wife of Herod's prime minister. These two ladies of highest society would have had much in common.

Her Deliverance by Christ

"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 :2-3). It is most suggestive that the name of this eminent woman is second on the list of lady disciples. It is not clear whether she had been delivered of evil spirits or healed of some infirmity, but we know that a great sense of need had brought her to the Saviour. Her position in society, and the prosperity which probably attended her station in life, guaranteed for her the best medical skill available in the land. Her elegant home had been visited by the king's own physicians, and no expense had been spared in the urgent quest of seeking relief from her complaint. Yet every attempt had failed, and finally this lady had been left with the unpleasant prospect of being ill for the rest of her life. And then she thought of Jesus of Nazareth. She came to Him, and "was healed of her infirmity."

Her Devotion to Christ

The true greatness of her soul was fully revealed in the events which followed that wonderful day. Her husband would naturally rejoice, but it is problematical whether he would be prepared for what was still to come. His master, King Herod, was not kindly disposed toward the Nazarene, and the evil influences of court life would not be helpful to anyone whose interests were with the Saviour. Had Joanna been content to remain a respectable convert, or even to give liberal donations to the work of the Teacher, she would have had the support of all her friends. Yet when she ministered to Jesus; when she helped prepare meals, and did the mundane tasks of daily life, it seemed that she was disgracing her position. This was entirely beneath her station in life, and Herod would certainly express his keen displeasure. Joanna's actions could have easily been misunderstood, and her husband might have been critical of her constant attention on another man. Serenely, she followed her Lord, and her devotion increased in intensity daily.

Her Dependability for Christ

When it became evident that Jesus was to be sentenced to death, many of His followers left Him, and finally only a few were left to witness His death. "And the women also, which came with Him from Galilee, followed after,

JOANNA . . . the prime minister's wife who followed Jesus 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. Now upon the first day of the week . . . they came unto the sepulchre . . . It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James . . ." (Luke 23:55; 24:10). Against the depression of those dread days, the names of these devoted women shine as stars in a dark sky. Not even the disappointment occasioned by the cross had altered for one moment their intense loyalty to the Lord. Dependability is a great characteristic, but never is it seen to greater advantage than in the story of these brave women. Much of Joanna's account is hidden from us. We wonder whether or not her husband disowned her; whether her former friends scorned and ridiculed her; whether she was obliged to sacrifice everything in order to follow the dictates of her conscience. She became a princess in the royal household of heaven, and her name has been immortally inscribed among those whose love for Christ outshone all else in life.

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