Bible Study 98

Wednesday 11, Oct 2023

 “The Women of the Bible….(continued)”

 MARY

For someone who is restricted to a few sentences in the entire New Testament, Mary plays a crucial and important part. Churches, Temples, Cathedrals and Basilicas have been built in her honor. Whole towns, cities and countries have been dedicated to her. Religious Orders have been named after her. For Roman Catholic, Greek, Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox churches, a litany of titles are used of her. Each differing statue symbolizes an aspect of her unique place in their Christianity.

Something else that is rather unique and strange, there are major sites around the world that claim a vision or apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary, accompanied by vast pilgrimages, devotion, and miracles of healing. Included must be : Walsingham, England; Lourdes, France; Fatima, Portugal; Guadalupe, Mexico; and more recently Knock, Ireland and Medjugorje, Croatia.

Several Protestant denominations rebel against this sort of devotion, claiming that it is heretical. Their argument resides in the fact that Christ is the only means of salvation and anything else is idolatry. Yet there is no denying that Mary has a role to play, as great as any o the Apostles. Take the women out of the Story of Jesus and there is no Gospel.

We have to remember that there is a link and connection between the prophets of old and the call of the New Testament women. From the time of David onwards there is a Messianic expectation. It is the promise of a Messiah. The Messiah will, says Isaiah, be born of a virgin. “He will be great and called the Son of the Most High.”

Scholars refer to Mary giving her consent in two ways. They call it “The Annunciation”. It is also spoken of as Mary’s “Fiat’, a Latin verb that means “I will.” Mary is visited by the Angel Gabriel in Luke 1: 28f

“Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word.”

Mary herself is the daughter of Anna and Joachim. We are told that they are holy faithful people who still live in hope that the Messiah will appear in their lifetime. In Hebrew marriage is a two-step process with the first stage being called ‘erusin’ meaning a promise. During it Mary still lives with her parents.

There are things to ponder. Mary is so young and still a teenager. Second it is the Angel who names the child Jesus. The Angel also speaks of the birth of John the Baptist by Mary’s cousin Elizabeth.

Read Luke Chapter 1.