

Joanna: The Provider

(Lesser Known Characters)

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Luke 8:1-3; 24:9-10

We are doing a series called Lesser-known Characters in the Bible. After Abigail and Obadiah, we come to **Joanna** who appears twice in the Gospel of Luke (chapters 8 and 24).

Jesus had 12 disciples. Also in addition to those disciples, there were men and women who followed him. They listened to His teachings. They, too, seriously accepted Jesus' identity and His ministry; they even provided financially to the ministry of Jesus.

120 went to the Upper Room to receive the Holy Spirit to continue the ministry of our Lord. We don't know all the names of these people. In the Gospel of Luke, we read for example the names of three women **Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna**. These women served together. We don't have enough materials written about them, yet they had an important role in the ministry of Jesus. Beside Luke, the Gospels of Matthew and Mark inform that women accompanied Jesus throughout Galilee and unto Jerusalem (Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40-41),

Today, I will take one name from this trio: Joanna.

Joanna means, "**Jehovah hath shown favor**" or "**The Lord is grace**". She was married to King Herod's **household manager** called **Chuza**. This word (Greek *epitropos*) means a commissioner, domestic manager, guardian, steward.

When I say King Herod, notice there were many Herods. This was **Herod Antipas (tetrarch)** the king of the Jews from 4 BC to 39 BC.

-Who was Joanna?

a-It looks like Jesus had healed Joanna.

and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,³ and Joanna, the wife of Chuza. (Luke 8:2,3 ESV)

We read that Mary Magdalene had been healed of evil spirits. I am not sure if Joanna had the same problem, but she was listed as one of the ladies who were healed by Jesus. One thing is clear that she became a dedicated follower of Jesus at all costs.

Whoever came into contact with the Lord never left the same. Some went away happy, (four men who came with paralyzed man, the woman who was caught in adultery, the blind man from his childhood, one of the thieves who was crucified next to Jesus); while some went away angry – the rich young ruler, the Simon Pharisee, the Chief Priest....

It seems Joanna was touched by Jesus; we see she was faithful follower of Him.

b- She was the wife of an important man from the court of **Herod Antipas.**

Joanna knew very well how Herod felt about Jesus.

Herod Antipas' (Herod tetrarch) father was Herod the Great who tried to kill Jesus at birth. In fact, he killed all the male babies under the age of two, so that no new king would be born. **Herod the Great** was living in extreme paranoia. He even killed his own wife and his two oldest sons, so that no one would take his throne. His son **Herod Antipas** was no better than his father. He was the one who beheaded John the Baptist. Herod was in panic regarding Jesus. In Matthew 14, we read that Herod thought Jesus was the incarnation of John the Baptist. **At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus, and he said to his servants, "This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these miraculous powers are at work in him"** (Matthew 14:1-2 ESV). It is very probable that Joanna and her husband were among those servants mentioned in this chapter. (Maybe)

Both Chuza and Joanna had witnessed all this in the court. **Yet nothing stopped Joanna from becoming one of Jesus' disciples.**

What can we learn?

1. She provided for the ministry of Jesus. It was risky.

... and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means (Luke 8:3 ESV).

How could Joanna, a woman, support Jesus? I wonder if Chuza knew about his wife's faith. I wonder if he was believer as well, and worked silently by backing his wife's ministry to Jesus. Why does Luke mention Joanna's husband's name, and Chuza's position in the court? I don't have any proof, I am speculating this: It looks like both Joanna and Chuza took the risk by supporting Jesus financially.

2. She was one of the women who witnessed the resurrection of Jesus.

And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things. (Luke 23:49 ESV)

The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. (Luke 23:55 ESV)

and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles (Luke 24:9-10 ESV).

Joanna was among the last at the cross, was among the first to witness the empty tomb, and was among the first to proclaim that the Lord whom she loved dearly was raised indeed.

She saw the empty tomb with the other women. She also witnessed to others of what she saw. The women were the ones who told the story of the empty tomb.

She loved Jesus so much that she wanted to go to the tomb first. When the other disciples were afraid, she took the initiative to go in the morning.

She went mourning; she came back rejoicing.

3. She witnessed for Jesus

We read in Acts 13 names of people who believed in Jesus. **“Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.”** (Acts 13:1 ESV). I wonder if Joanna and Chuza who were in Herod’s court had anything to do with Manaen’s conversion, a good friend of Herod’s. I don't know, I am speculating this, I don't have any proof. Yet, I will not be surprised if this couple, more Joanna was silent concerning her faith towards Jesus.

4. She was one of the “Other” women

Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles (Luke 24:9-10 ESV).

Who were those other women Joanna was associating with? Joanna was from the court, a wife of an important man. She was with Mary Magdalene, a woman possessed by evil spirits, Mary the mother of Jesus, a woman usually accused of pregnancy without marriage. She was supporting the disciples of Jesus who were fishermen Andrew, Peter, James & John, and tax collectors like Matthew. She had the financial means and she used it with others who were not like her.

How wonderful is that when we meet Jesus social classes are broken! Through Jesus we all are the beloved children of God.

Application:

1. What does it mean to support a ministry? Some do it financially, others by offering their time or talent. What is your contribution literally to the work of God in the church and outside the church?

2. Joanna who was from the upper class joined the lower class of the society. Christ binds them. Besides having friends from your community and background, can you also be open to associate with others who are not like you? Can you see how Christ can bind us?