

# **The Old Hickory Bulletin**

## **Old Hickory Church of Christ**

841 Old Hickory Blvd.  
Jackson, TN 38305  
*oldhickorycofc.com*

---

January 14, 2018

Volume 38, # 03

---

### **John Kitto's Beautiful Tribute to "Woman"**

John Kitto was born in Plymouth, England in 1804 to a family of little means. Schooling was rare in those days for poor folks, and little John had only three years of formal education in four different schools. His gracious grandmother taught him privately, and he learned to read well—which accommodated his insatiable thirst for knowledge. He read everything he could find to read.

Kitto's father was a stonemason, heavily disposed to alcohol, and young John was drafted into the family workforce at an early age—even though quite fragile in health. At the age of twelve, while working for his father, carrying slate tiles up a ladder, he fell to the ground thirty-five feet below. Though he recovered for the most part, he completely lost his hearing. He refused, however, to let the misfortune quench his spirit. With every cent he could muster, he bought books. His philosophy was rather like that of Erasmus, who once said: "When I get money, I buy books; if there is anything left over, I buy food and clothes."

At fifteen, John's parents (due to their impoverished circumstances) placed him in a workhouse where he learned the shoemaking trade. Conditions were so dreadful that on two occasions the lad toyed with the notion of ending his life; still, he persevered. He left the workhouse at age seventeen and hired out to a shoemaker. He was inept at his trade—his attention constantly being diverted to books. His master (who issued commands the lad could not hear) would occasionally beat him. Finally, after some six months of the ordeal, he was dispatched back to the workhouse.

Eventually, Kitto began submitting essays to a local magazine, the Plymouth Journal. His obvious writing skill began to attract attention. From this point on, his life would change dramatically. When he was nineteen he published a volume called, *Essays and Letters*, which elicited further admiration. Subsequently he entered a Missionary College where he was taught the craft of printing. In 1825 the missionary institute sent him to the island of Malta (where Paul was ship-wrecked) to distribute tracts, but declining health forced him to return to England within two years.

Shortly after returning to his native England, Kitto was secured as a tutor for the children of a prominent dentist, and in this role he was afforded opportunity to travel throughout Europe, Asia, and Egypt, soaking up knowledge along the way. At the age of thirty-one, John was asked by a publisher friend to prepare a Pictorial Bible; within two years he had completed the four-volume work. In 1839-40, he produced a Pictorial History of Palestine and the Holy Land.

In 1845, Kitto embarked upon what was to be his most ambitious work, the *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*, in which project he was aided by forty of the best Protestant biblical scholars on both sides of the Atlantic (a tribute to the stature he already had secured). This work was by far the best Bible dictionary yet published, and McClintock and Strong acknowledged their indebtedness to Kitto in the production of their own monumental, twelve-volume classic. This writer has treasured Kitto's two-volume set (1880 edition, a work of more than 1,800 pages) for many years. The self-made scholar also founded and edited the prestigious *Journal of Sacred Literature* (a quarterly).

John Kitto's final work was a small, eight-volume set titled, *Daily Bible Illustrations*. This work was designed to accommodate Christian families in their morning and evening devotionals. The entire set contained, therefore, some 720 brief essays of some five or six pages each—utterly delightful compositions, thrillingly rich. Over the years I have been able to acquire four of these precious volumes. These are still available, in both new and used series, via internet sources, but they are fairly expensive, and the older ones, from the 1800's—to match my set—are beyond my budget at this point in my life. But I delight in recommending them to others.

I have given you this biographical material to introduce you to but one of Kitto's essays. It is found in the volume called "Morning Series—July-September," and the title of the opening chapter is simply: "Woman." This article constitutes the finest piece of literature, in capsulated format, extolling the virtues of the great women of the Bible, of anything I have read in my entire life.

Someone has said that the Bible has done more to elevate the status of woman than all the rest of the world's literature combined. Though I certainly have not surveyed "all the world's literature," I do not doubt the statement. Below is this fantastic little tribute to godly women. Rather than scan it into my computer, I chose to type every word—so as to once more savor the full flavor of this grand composition. Kitto has made me appreciate dedicated women of God afresh. And their numbers are by no means extinct!

Writers of a bygone era penned their thoughts in a style different from that generally employed today, and therefore sometimes they are a little more difficult to digest. Take your time and read carefully this magnificent essay.

## WOMAN

by John Kitto

As if to prevent that man should take occasion, from her part in the sad history of the fall, to hold in too light esteem the appointed companion of his life's journey, holding her to be merely a "Fair defect of nature," God has chosen to confer singular honors upon woman through the sacred Scriptures. They who disparage her capacities, and pour contempt upon her understanding; they who condemn her faithfulness, and distrust her truth; they who make her man's household drudge, or the mere instrument of his pleasures or convenience—have none of them any warrant in Scripture for so doing.

Although we may not overlook the sad part which woman took in the fall of our race—yet that terrible damage, which was not, after all, wholly her work, may be held to have been fairly and fully counterbalanced by the part she had in bringing salvation. It was not without some such significance that the illustrious "seed of woman" who took upon him "to bruise the serpent's head," was "born of a woman," and nourished from her breast.

But let us look at the women mentioned in Scripture, and observe how few of them are undistinguished by some useful quality or holy grace. Some are seen to have been endowed before men with supernatural knowledge, being favored by the Spirit of God with the high gifts of prophecy—such were Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Anna. Others are noted for their sagacity and understanding, for which indeed they were proverbial—such as the woman of Tekoah, and the wise woman of Abel-Bethmaacah.

Sarah lacked not strong capacities of faith, and strong was the faith of Rahab, of Samson's mother, and of that alien woman whose faith won from Christ a blessing which then belonged to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" only. Some have shown greater courage for the church, and manifested firmer resolution, than men have done.

Did not Deborah encourage Barak to the war against the innumerable hosts and iron chariots of Jabin, and adventure her presence with him to the war, when, without her, he—the selected champion—was afraid to go? And who could be more resolved to jeopardize her life for God's people than the beautiful Esther, when she uttered and acted upon the memorable words, "If I perish, I perish."

Others are famous or memorable for various things. For attention to God's word—as the Virgin Mary, and as Lydia. For going far to seek knowledge—as the queen of the south to hear the wisdom of Solomon. For works of charity—as Dorcus. For works of pious zeal—as the women whose busy hands in spinning and needle-work, helped forward the labors of the tabernacle. For fervency in prayer—as Hannah. For patient waiting for God in daily fasting and prayer—as Anna. For the cordial entertainment of God's messengers for his sake—as the Shunamite woman, as Lydia, and as one of the gospel Marys. For the fear of God—as the midwives in Egypt. For courtesy to a mere stranger—as Rebekah. For humility and patience—as the aged Naomi; for truthful and devoted affection—as the beloved Ruth.

In Thessalonica, not only “devout Greeks,” not only humble persons, but “chief women not a few,” were among the first to receive the Gospel at the preaching of Paul and Silas; and among the learned of Athens, an Areopagite cannot become a believer without a woman, Damaris, to join with him. In what have men been, in fine, renowned, wherein some women have not been remarkable? In wisdom, in faith, in charity, in love to the word, in regard for His servants, in fervent affections, and in the desire of heavenly things.

If men have suffered imprisonments, cruel persecutions, and bonds for Christ—women have done no less. When persecuting Saul made havoc of the church, not only men but women were torn from their homes and committed to prison; and his commission had equally injurious respect to the believers, “whether they were men or women,” Acts 8:3; 9:12. And although we confine our illustrations chiefly to the Scripture itself, it is impossible in mentioning this, not to call to mind the numerous illustrious women who, in a later age, were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection, and who might say with Anne Askew in the prison house—“I am not she that lyst, My anchor to let fall. For every dryslynge myst; My shippe's substancyal” [I am not she that list, My anchor to let fall; For every drizzling mist, My ship substantial].

Nay, more than this, have not the female worthies of the Scripture often, in many respects, surpassed the men of their own day and generation? Who entertained Christ so much devotedly, and so often as Martha and Mary? Who are in any text noted to have contributed to our Lord's necessities, but women? Who, of all the ordinary followers of Christ, took note of the place where he was buried, but women? Who first went to the sepulcher to anoint his body with spices, but women? In Acts 16:13, we may read of a congregation of women to whom Paul preached, being gathered together at the accustomed place of prayer, as being more forward in their faith, it would seem, at that time, than the men.

Some might count it tedious, were we to mention all the notable things reported concerning women in the Holy Scriptures, and the excellent graces that were bestowed upon them. Yet may we not pass without a thought, the knowledge which Priscilla shared with her husband, in the ministry of the Gospel, which qualified her no less than him to instruct even the eloquent Apollos; nor Lois and Eunice, by whom the well-beloved Timothy was trained up in the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures; nor Persis, “who labored much in the Lord”—Phil. 4:3—as many other women did.

But not to dwell further on particular instances, it may be well worth our while to note one great matter that deserves to be mentioned to their praise, and to be held in everlasting remembrance. We have read of men once held in high esteem, who became apostates—Demas, Alexander, Philetus, and others; but never, by name, in all the New Testament, of a woman who had once been reckoned among the saints. This is great honor. But not only have women been thus honored with extraordinary gifts; they have been otherwise favored with special marks of attention from the Lord.

To whom but unto women did Christ first appear after his resurrection? Of what act did He ever so speak as to render it everlastingly memorable, but of that woman’s who poured upon his feet her alabaster box of precious ointment, and to whom he promised that, wherever in the whole world, his Gospel should be preached, there should her work of faith be held in remembrance!

Nor do the honors rendered to women in the Sacred Scriptures end here. One of the precious epistles of the beloved disciple is addressed to “the elect lady;” and in the Old Testament, two of the six non-prophetical books that bear the names of individuals, present to us those of women—those of Ruth and Esther.

## REFERENCES

John Kitto died November 25, 1854 in Germany at the age of only fifty. For one so handicapped, and with a very limited formal education (his only degree was honorary), he generated a prodigious quantity of scholarly biblical materials.

I have edited the foregoing article only in the following particulars. I have paragraphed lengthy segments for convenience sake. Older writers framed notoriously long paragraphs. I have converted older British spellings to the more common forms, e.g., honour to honor, and I have changed the Roman numerals in scripture references to Arabic numbers. Too, I have omitted the final paragraph of this lesson, which is but a transition section to the next segment of the series. WJ

## SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

1 Thessalonians 5; Acts 8:3, 9:12; Acts 16:13; Philippians 4:3

- > "Don't be like a wheelbarrow ... always having to be pushed, and very easily upset!"
  - > "You may be farsighted enough to see the faults of others, but too shortsighted to see your own faults!"
  - > "When we are foolish, we want to conquer the world; when we are wise, we want to conquer self!"
  - > "No room is more spacious than the room for self-improvement!"
  - > "Opportunity may knock only once, but temptation stays at the door for years!"
- 

**THIS WEEK'S LESSONS:** Sunday morning: *"Respecting God's Order!"* (Text: 1 Cor. 11:3); Sunday evening: *"Is This The Christ?"* (John 7:25-36).