



## **THE WOMEN WHO FOLLOWED JESUS: PART II**

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Part I of this study introduced the women followers of Jesus and what is known about them. I demonstrated that these women were genuine disciples of Jesus who left their homes to travel with him through the towns and villages of Galilee. In Part II I will discuss what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus in first-century Palestine, and the contribution the women made to the Jesus movement.

## DISCIPLES AS STUDENTS

Important to the idea of discipleship is that a disciple is a student.<sup>1</sup> When first introduced, these women disciples of Jesus are found hearing Jesus' proclamation of the "kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1). Thus, Bauckham argues that at this point in Luke's narrative, "there is actually no differentiation between what discipleship means for the twelve (men) and for the women."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Jesus crafted his message in order to communicate effectively to men *and* women,<sup>3</sup> and the women for their part were expected to remember what they had been taught (Luke 24:6–8).

Being a female disciple required courage. Many men in first-century Palestine would have considered women as unsuitable candidates for discipleship, and possibly even dangerous to have in the company of men. Thus, Jesus was probably unique in welcoming women disciples.<sup>4</sup> The Jewish philosopher Philo, a contemporary of Jesus, believed that women were inferior to men and capable of beguiling and seducing men.<sup>5</sup> The *Testament of Reuben* 5:5 says that women have the capacity to "deceive men's sound minds." The first century Jewish historian Josephus wrote that the Essenes did not marry because they wanted to protect themselves

from the promiscuity of women (*War* 2.125). Ben Sira, writing in Palestine in the second century BCE, states that sin originated with a woman and thanks to her "we all die."<sup>6</sup> Consequently, Jewish men are advised by Ben Sira not to sit down with a woman (Sir 42.12). Similar advice appears in the Mishnah:

Talk not much with womankind. (The sages) said this of a man's own wife: how much more of his fellow's wife... He that talks much with womankind brings evil upon himself and neglects the study of the Law and at the last will inherit Gehenna.<sup>7</sup>

Although it may be argued that the Mishnah reflects only one school of Jewish thought and postdates the time of Jesus, at least one first century rabbi, Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, was supposed to have said, "Whoever teaches his daughter Torah teaches her obscenity."<sup>8</sup> There are a few circumstances where a rabbi might be willing to teach his wife or daughter,<sup>9</sup> but there is no evidence that women became disciples of a rabbi. Consequently, Meier concludes:

It is safe to say that, as a rule, Jewish religious teachers in Palestine of the [first] century [CE] did not admit women to the circle of their male disciples undergoing instruction, to say nothing of having married women travel in the company of such teachers without the women's husbands being present.<sup>10</sup>

Of course, one might argue that these literary sources are representative of educated men of a particular social class, and may not reflect the ideas of ordinary Galilean farmers and fishermen in first-century Palestine. But an incident in John's Gospel would seem to suggest that such attitudes were widespread. John writes that when the disciples found Jesus talking alone with a woman, they were astonished but did not ask him, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?" (John 4:27). Bailey explains that the idiom, "What do you want?" is common across the Middle East even today and "in this setting it would imply, 'Would you like us to get rid of her for you?'"<sup>11</sup>

In short, Jesus is remarkable for the way in which he included women among his disciples and welcomed them to accompany him on the road. Nowhere do the Gospels suggest that Jesus perceived women to be less intelligent than men. He does not

1 Carla Ricci, *Mary Magdalene and many others: Women who followed Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 182.

2 Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 112.

3 Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2008), 194–95.

4 Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 189; Ben Witherington III, "On the Road with Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and other disciples – Luke 8:1–2," in *A Feminist Companion to Luke*, eds. Amy-Jill Levine with Marianne Blickenstaff (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 134. John Paul Meier states that having "unchaperoned women sharing the preaching tours of a celibate male teacher" would have presented a "potentially shocking picture" in first-century Palestine. John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 3: 76.

5 Philo, *QG* 4.148. LCL Supp. I. Trans. Ralph Marcus (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961); *QE* 1.7. LCL Supp. II. Trans. Ralph Marcus (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961); *Hypoth.* 11.1–2, 14–18. LCL Vol. IX. Trans. F.H. Colson (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 425. Although Philo resided in Alexandria, he had sufficient contact with Palestine for his ideas to be plausibly representative of some, if not all, Jewish men of his social standing and education in Palestine.

6 Sir 25.24. Cf. 42.14; 25.26; 42.9–11.

7 M. 'Abot 1.5. *The Mishnah*. Trans. H. Danby (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 446.

8 M. *Sotah* 3.4.

9 Witherington "On the Road with Mary Magdalene," 135.

10 Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 3: 119, n. 122.

11 Bailey, *Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 212; cf. 203–205.

give them separate lessons to compensate for some intellectual deficiency. Neither does he treat them as if they need extra moral guidance because of some innate tendency toward immorality.<sup>12</sup> To quote James D. G. Dunn, “Jesus saw no deficiency in their status as women or in their innate capacity for service and ministry.”<sup>13</sup>

## WITNESS AND PROCLAMATION

However, the purpose of a discipleship was not merely to learn but also to imitate the teacher; not merely to “hear the word of God”, but also “to do it” (Luke 8:21). Thus according to Ricci, proclamation and witnessing are also “elements” of discipleship.<sup>14</sup> If Jesus had only sent out the twelve on mission to proclaim the kingdom then we might be justified in assuming that proclamation of the kingdom of God was an activity restricted exclusively to the twelve apostles (Luke 9:1–2). However, the sending out of the seventy-two disciples suggests that proclamation and witness were tasks required of all disciples (Luke 10:1, 9).<sup>15</sup> So were proclamation and witness also expected of the women, and were any of the women included

among the seventy-two? This is a valid question given that a passing comment from Josephus reads, “From women let no evidence be accepted, because of the levity and temerity of their sex” (*Ant.* 4.219).

There is no explicit reference in any of the canonical Gospels to a woman being sent out to preach the kingdom of God during the time of Jesus’ itinerant ministry. We might assume therefore that, given their historical context, the women disciples of Jesus were not expected to bear witness to the gospel. In his discussion on Luke 8:1–3, John Nolland contends that the women did not take part in what he calls “the apostolic witnessing function.”<sup>16</sup> He adds that the women’s only attempt at “bearing witness” was received as an “idle tale (Luke 24:11),” and that proclamation was neither expected of the women nor accepted.<sup>17</sup> It is important to note, however, that while the Twelve were being prepared for

their apostolic role, they were not the only disciples being prepared to bear witness and to proclaim the gospel (Luke 10:1, 8–9). The women and the other disciples journeying with Jesus and the Twelve were also witnesses to his ministry, and the expectation of a witness is that they speak about what they have seen and heard (Luke 12:8). Nolland even admits the important role of the women as witnesses to Jesus’ death and resurrection, and the fact that in Luke’s narrative they are the only ones to witness Jesus’ burial.<sup>18</sup>

It is also unfair to imply that the poor reception to the women’s first “independent attempt at bearing witness” somehow supports the idea that they were not expected to take up the role of bearing witness. The women were proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus, an extraordinary message and one which must have seemed unbelievable. Yet despite the reaction of the apostles, the women were not dismissed out of hand. Some of the men returned to

the tomb to investigate their report, and Luke writes that they found the tomb just as the women had said (Luke 24:24).<sup>19</sup> It is important to distinguish between the response of the apostles and

the narrator’s own position here. Within the context of the narrative the women are seen to be correct. They were faithful witnesses of Jesus and their word could be trusted.

Bauckham argues that women disciples were probably included among the seventy which were sent out to proclaim the good news.<sup>20</sup> Witherington also acknowledges the importance of the women as witnesses,<sup>21</sup> and concedes that some of them may have been “among the seventy.”<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately, these positive assertions are somewhat undermined by the laboured attention Witherington gives to arguing from Luke 8:3 for “social,” and “creation order distinctions” and the preservation of “traditional roles” for women such as “preparing food” and “serving.”<sup>23</sup>

The problem is, however, that as much as we would like to think of the women preaching the gospel during the time of Jesus, we cannot ignore their historical and cultural context. The only possible scenario where a woman might be part

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12 Witherington writes that “Jesus rejects much of rabbinic teaching on women’s ‘flightiness’, inferior nature, and monthly ritual uncleanness.” Witherington, “On the Road with Mary Magdalene,” 135.

13 James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 1: 357.

14 Ricci, *Mary Magdalene* 187–90.

15 Cf. Luke 9:60; 12:8.

16 John Nolland, *Luke 1–9.20*; WBC (Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1989), 365–66.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., 366.

19 Cf. John 20:2–7.

20 Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 112.

21 Witherington, “On the Road with Mary Magdalene,” 134–35, 138.

22 Ibid., 134.

23 Ibid., 135, 137–38.

of the mission of the seventy-two would be as a husband and wife team. Apart from this, it would be unthinkable in first-century Palestine (as indeed it is today in many Middle Eastern countries) for a married man to travel alone with any woman who was not his wife, whether widowed, divorced, or another man's wife. It is even less likely that Jesus would send women out in pairs to preach and to expect hospitality.<sup>24</sup> No matter how much Jesus may have wished this for his women disciples, he would not have placed them in a position where they would be subject to immediate ridicule and potential harm. As Ricci argues:

Even though Jesus was not afraid to act freely in relation to cultural conditionings... he could not have failed to take account of the hostility and even danger to which he would have exposed the women by asking them to undertake preaching missions in a socio-cultural environment in which they would have met with disdain, mistrust and scant consideration.<sup>25</sup>

Jesus' decision therefore, as Dunn rightly concludes, had nothing to do with "any theological rationale on the fitness or otherwise of women for mission/ministry." It was a decision determined by the "social custom and cultural mores of the time."<sup>26</sup> Having said this, it is clear that women were up to the task of witnessing and proclamation given that they were sent to proclaim the resurrection.<sup>27</sup> The significance of this should not be minimised. That the recipients were fellow disciples should not be used to undermine the significance of Jesus' endorsement of women as proclaimers, but rather to note that for the first time Jesus was able to send out his women because this time he knew he was not "exposing them to risk."<sup>28</sup>

Despite the fact that most of Jesus' women disciples would not have been able to take part in the mission of the seventy-two, we should not conclude from this that they engaged in no mission activity at all during Jesus' itinerant ministry. Within the protection of the larger group of disciples there must have been ample opportunity for the women to proclaim the gospel to other women as they met with

them around village wells, in market squares, and in the homes of Galilee. Some scholars may consider this to be mere speculation and grasping at straws. But if the women followers of Jesus were indeed genuine disciples as I have demonstrated, then they were required to bear witness to Jesus. To argue that they shut their mouths and said nothing is to argue that they were either disobedient, or not disciples at all. In the words of Bauckham concerning Luke 8:1–3, both the men *and* the women were being prepared to actively participate in Jesus' ministry.<sup>29</sup>

## MINISTRY AND BENEFACTION

Luke writes that Mary Magdalene, Johanna, and Suzanna also ministered (*diakoneō*) to Jesus and the twelve out of their own possessions (*ek tōn huparchontōn autais*, Luke 8:3).<sup>30</sup> *Huparchonta* refers to "that which one has,"<sup>31</sup> and can be translated as "means," "possessions," or "property."<sup>32</sup> Luke uses the word to denote "those (things) belonging to someone."<sup>33</sup> In light of this, the verb *diakoneō* is sometimes translated "provided for."<sup>34</sup> More often, *diakoneō* is translated as "served" or "ministered to."<sup>35</sup> This interpretation is in keeping with the use of *diakoneō* in Mark 15:41.

But the term "ministered to" is ambiguous in English. What exactly does this mean? Some scholars take *diakoneō* to mean "activities associated

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29 Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 112.

30 Luke 8:1–3; cf. Mark 15:40–41; Matt 27:55–56.

31 BDAG, 1029.

32 For examples, see Matt 19:21; 24:47; 25:14; Luke 12:33; 1 Cor 13:3; Heb 10:34; Eccles. 5:18 [LXX]; T. Levi 17:9; Plutarch, *Mor.* 226c; Philo, *QG* 4.148. Nolland, *Luke* 1–9.20, 367; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke* 1–IX; AB (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 698; Verlyn, D. Verbrugge, ed., "Huparchonta," *The NIV Theological Dictionary of NT Words*, 1346. It can also refer to one's livestock (Gen 13:6; 31:18; Ps 78:48 [LXX]); one's wealth in general (Prov 18:11; 19:14 [LXX]); or one's money (Prov 18:11; 19:14 [LXX]). Witherington, "On the Road," 137, n.18.

33 Luke 12:15, 33; Acts 4:32. I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Paternoster, 1978), 317. Cf. Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 698. For other examples of Luke's use of *huparchonta* see Luke 11:21; 12:33, 44; 14:33; 16:1; 19:8. The almost identical wording appears in *P.Oxy.* 1281 (= *CPJ* 414), a contract of a loan from Egypt between a Jew and a linen worker which dates to 21 CE. It reads *ek tōn huparchontōn autōi*, and has been translated, "upon all his property." Victor A. Tcherikover and Alexander Fuks, eds., *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, Vols. 1–2 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957, 1960), 184.

34 This position is argued strongly by David Sim, by which he means *financial* provision. David C. Sim, "Women Followers of Jesus: The Implications of Luke 8.1–3," *Heythrop Journal* 30 (1989), 52; Cf. the discussions in Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 164, and Ricci, *Mary Magdalene*, 177.

35 RSV, NRSV, JB, TNIV.

24 Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 537.

25 Ricci, *Mary Magdalene*, 189.

26 Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 537.

27 Matt 28:10; John 20:17. Ricci, *Mary Magdalene*, 189. In Mark 16:7 it is the angels who commission the women.

28 Ricci, *Mary Magdalene*, 189.

with domestic hospitality.” Thus Witherington claims that the women offered “hospitality,” “served” “cooked” and “possibly made clothes.”<sup>36</sup> We can dismiss from the outset the possibility that the women offered hospitality in the context of Luke 8:3. As Sim points out, the women were on the road with Jesus.<sup>37</sup> If anything, they were in *need* of hospitality. But what about cooking, waiting on tables, and making clothes?

After investigating the occurrence of *diakoneō* and related words in Greek texts from the Classical period through to the early Roman period, Collins concludes that these words best describe the activities of persons who act as a “go-between” or “mediator.”<sup>38</sup> This highlights one of the problems with translating *diakoneō* with the notion of “service.” One may be said to serve in all manner of ways but only certain functions can be described using the verb *diakoneō*. One such function is “table service.” There is ample evidence in Greek literature from in or near Palestine for *diakoneō* denoting “table service.”<sup>39</sup> In these cases, the *diakonos* is a “go between,” moving back and forth “between diner and kitchen,” bringing food or drink to those eating.<sup>40</sup> Today we would call such a person “a waiter.” Consequently, Collins concludes that “table attendance” must be what is meant in Luke 8:3.<sup>41</sup> Sim argues that table service could not apply in the context of itinerant ministry.

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But one does not need a literal table to be a waiter.<sup>42</sup> Dio Chrysostom, for example, describes a hunter and his wife reclining on the ground on animal skins and being waited on by their daughter.<sup>43</sup> Thus *diakoneō* in Luke 8:3 and Mark 15:41 could include the notion of waiting.

What about cooking?<sup>44</sup> Bauckham writes that since *diakoneō* “commonly refers to serving at table,” “by extension” it can also imply “other household tasks.”<sup>45</sup> It is true that the noun *diakonia* could refer to the organisation of a banquet, but it is not clear that *diakoneō* ever refers to cooking.<sup>46</sup> In the *Testament of Job*, Job performs a ministry (*diakonia*) by organising banquets to provide food for the poor (*T. Job* 10.1, 7). However *diakoneō* in this account does not relate to cooking.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in John 12:2 a distinction is made between those who made a meal for Jesus, and Martha who waited (*diakoneō*). This is not to say that Martha did not help with the cooking. But it is to say that *diakoneō* in this context means waiting, not cooking.<sup>48</sup> Collins writes that in contexts like this, *diakoneō* verbs refer to “attending to persons at table.” The *diakonos* “fetches” food and drink, and does not perform “any other activity.”<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, in Greek inscriptions commemorating public feasts, the *diakonoι* appear *in addition to* and often *alongside* the cooks.<sup>50</sup> They are *not* the cooks. So it is questionable whether the evangelists had cooking in mind when they spoke of the women ministering. Incidentally, the only people described in the Gospels as preparing a meal for Jesus were male disciples.<sup>51</sup>

Furthermore, of the hundreds of references to *diakoneō* and related words analysed by Collins, *not one* refers to the making of clothes. Thus Witherington’s suggestion that the women may have

36 Witherington, “On the Road,” 138; Cf. Ben Witherington III, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 112; Nolland, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 1223; and Luise Schottroff, *Lydia’s Impatient Sisters: A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1995), 210.

37 Sim, “Women Followers of Jesus,” 57.

38 John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). In terms of etymology, some scholars have suggested there may be links between *diakoneō* and *enkoneō* “to hurry,” or *diakoneō* and *diōkeō* “to run.” Collins, *Diakonia*, 89–90. In a number of contexts the terms include notions of movement and speed.

39 Cf. Luke 10:40; 12:35–38; John 2:1–12; 12:2; cf. Luke 4:38–9; *T. Job* 12.2; 15.1, 8; *Jos. Ant.* 11.163; cf. 11.188; 10.242; 18.193; and Philo, *Vit. Cont.* 70–72.

40 Collins, *Diakonia*, 245, 335. Cf. R.W. Paschal, Jr., “Service,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, eds. Joel Green, Scot McKnight, and I. H. Marshall (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1992), 747.

41 Collins, *Diakonia*, 245; Cf. Martin Hengel, “Maria Magdalena und die Frauen als Zeugen,” in *Abraham unser Vater: Juden und Christen im Gespräch über die Bibel: Festschrift für Otto Michel zum 60. Geburtstag*, eds. Otto Betz, Martin Hengel and Peter Schmidt; AGSU 5. (Leiden/Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1963), 247–48; Witherington, *Women*, 77, 112.

42 Sim, “Women Followers of Jesus,” 57.

43 Dio Chrysostom, 7.65.

44 Witherington, *Women*, 112; Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 163–64.

45 It should be noted however that Bauckham does not believe *diakoneō* should be interpreted this way in Luke 8:3. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 163–4.

46 For a discussion of the noun *diakonia* see Collins, *Diakonia*, 153.

47 *T. Job* 11.2, 4; 12.2; 15.1, 3, 8.

48 Cf. Luke 4:39; 10:40.

49 Collins, *Diakonia*, 245–47, 335.

50 *IG*, 774; *IG*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 247; 252; 248; 250; 251; 451; *IMag.* 109; *CIG* add. 1793b. See the discussion in Collins, *Diakonia*, 166, 314.

51 Luke 22:8; Mark 14:12; Matt 26:17.



made clothes for Jesus and the twelve is unfounded.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, it is difficult to imagine women making clothes while on the road. Tasks such as spinning and weaving were time consuming and required the use of bulky and heavy equipment.

One activity that has been overlooked in discussions on the ministry of the women, however, is that of the buying and supplying of goods. Lysias uses *diakoneō* to refer to the activity of a maidservant going to the market to shop for her mistress,<sup>53</sup> and Plato describes as *diakonoi* men who trade and move goods between communities.<sup>54</sup> In the *Testament of Job*, helpers who assist Job in the *diakonia*, travel to other cities to engage in trading (*emporeuomai*) and “buying in of supplies” (*T. Job* 11.2–4).<sup>55</sup> Consequently, the ministry of the women in Luke 8:3 probably included the buying and supplying of produce for the mission, especially given that Luke says the women drew on their own *huparchonta* to do this. Despite Philo’s assertion that women were barred from marketplaces and kept in seclusion,<sup>56</sup> this was not the case for women in Palestine.<sup>57</sup> Mark 16:1 states that Mary Magdalene, Mary, and Salome, “bought (*agorazō*) spices” while they were in Jerusalem to anoint Jesus’ body after he was crucified. Moreover, Jesus’ parable of the five young women who were told to go and buy (*agorazō*) oil from the sellers implies that Galilean women did indeed buy produce in the markets (Matt 25:9–10).<sup>58</sup>

So, in Luke 8:3, the women were benefactors of Jesus’ ministry, but they were not just handing over money.<sup>59</sup> Luke uses other terms to convey the idea of financial giving: “sell” the *huparchonta* and “give”

(*didōmi*, 12:33; 19:8),<sup>60</sup> or “distribute” (*diamerizō*, Acts 2:4). Luke also describes people selling their possessions and laying the proceeds at the apostle’s feet (Acts 4:35, 37). *Diakoneō* does not appear in these passages because no one is acting as a “go-between.” Furthermore, the imperfect tense *diēkonoun* makes it clear that the women did not hand over all their money up front. Thus *diakoneō* in Luke 8:3 should probably be understood to have the same meaning as in Mark 15:41. The women were acting as “go betweens,” purchasing supplies for Jesus and the twelve as they travelled with them, and doing so by drawing on their own *huparchonta*.<sup>61</sup>

Having said this, we must not see the ministry of these women as some kind of endorsement on the part of Jesus for maintaining “traditional roles.”<sup>62</sup> There was nothing “traditional” about the women leaving home, becoming disciples, and journeying with an itinerant rabbi alongside other male disciples. Like their male counterparts,

these women had “downed tools” and left behind their former work. They were no longer minding children, grinding flour, or working the loom. Instead they were ministering to Jesus in roles not exclusive to women: acting as *diakonoi* or “go-betweens,” buying, selling, and moving goods,

and perhaps also waiting or attending on those who ate. It is misplaced to see Luke’s description of the ministry of the women as some kind of endorsement on the part of Jesus for distinctive roles for men and women.

It is also of note that the practice of charity, so lavishly displayed in Job’s *diakonia* (*T. Job* 10–11), finds its first expression in the Jesus movement in the ministry of these women. In a very real sense, the women followers of Jesus set an example which continued in the early church.<sup>63</sup> The ministry of the women who followed Jesus is not unlike the ministry of the seven in Acts 6:1–3, except that in the Acts account it was the men who were ministering to a group of women.

So what sort of *huparchonta* might a first century Galilean woman have? And how might she have

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52 Witherington, “On the Road,” 138.

53 Lysias 1.16, see Collins, *Diakonia*, 97.

54 *Rep.* 370–71, see Collins’ discussion in *Diakonia*, 78–81.

55 Collins, *Diakonia*, 126, 165.

56 Philo, *Flacc.* 89; cf. *Spec. Leg.* 2; 3.169.

57 *Sir* 41.22; *Judith* 16.23; *m. Abot.* 2.7.

58 Cf. *b. Ned* 49b; *t. Nidd* 6.17; *m. Hal* 2.7; *t. Hal* 1.8; *y. Hal* 2.7; *m. BQ* 10.9. Such incidental references from the rabbis have the ring of historical credibility, given the conservative nature of these rabbis and their cautions against speaking with women in the market lest such engagement lead to sin (*b. Ber.* 43b; *ARNA* 2; *Gen. R.* 8.12; cf. *Jos. Ant.* 5.143). See Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995) 126, 128–29, 187. Some women even ran businesses like shop keeping or inn keeping, or engaged in occupations like hairdressing and midwifery (Ilan, *Jewish Women*, 187–89, 217). Such occupations would give women a degree of commercial know-how.

59 Contra Sim, “Women Followers of Jesus,” 53.

60 Cf. Matt 19.21.

61 This need not mean that the women came and went. Luke makes it clear that the women and the Twelve were *with* Jesus as he travelled (8:1–2). Thus they probably purchased the necessary supplies from the towns and villages as they travelled through them.

62 Witherington, “On the Road,” 135, 137–38.

63 Cf. Rom 16:1. See also Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, 535.

come by these? Numerous records from the first century indicate that women owned possessions and personal funds which they could dispense as they wished. Some even owned their own property. Papyri from the Judaean wilderness from 200 BCE to 120 CE provide evidence of Jewish women owning property.<sup>64</sup> The Gospels also refer to women owning possessions ranging from houses,<sup>65</sup> to personal items such as jars of expensive perfume.<sup>66</sup> John writes that the woman who anointed Jesus used about a *litran* of costly pure nard, which in one disciple's estimation could have been sold for three hundred denarii, i.e. about a year's wages for a day labourer (John 12:3–5). According to Josephus, one woman within the Herodian court drew on her own funds to pay a fine on behalf of some Pharisees (*Ant.* 17.40–41).

Bauckham lists “seven possible sources” by which a woman might receive “independently disposable property”: an inheritance from a father if he died without sons; a deed of gift of property; her *ketubbah*; her dowry; maintenance from a deceased husband's estate; inheritance from her husband if he had no children; and money earned by working for payment.<sup>67</sup> Three of these deserve specific mention.

Inheritance of property usually passed from fathers to sons, but the Torah did prescribe that an inheritance could be passed on to a daughter in the event that a man died without leaving any sons (Num 27:1–11, 36). However, literary sources from the early Roman period suggest a degree of inconsistency in the application of this.<sup>68</sup> Interestingly, a few rabbinical references indicate a move on the part of some Sadducees, prior to 70 CE, to pass property on to daughters as well as sons, a move which sparked vigorous debate with the Pharisees (*t. Yad.* 2.20; *y. BB* 8a).<sup>69</sup> One way to avoid the controversy, and payment of taxes, was to pass on property to a daughter via a deed of gift.<sup>70</sup> A deed of gift enabled a father, mother, or husband

to pass property on to his/her daughter or wife. These are recognised in rabbinic literature (*t. Ket.* 8.1; 9.1–2).<sup>71</sup> Evidence for the practice has also been discovered in the archives of Babatha and Salome Komaise in Nahal Hever. One deed of gift, dated to 120 CE, transfers “houses, courtyards, gardens and groves” in Mahoza, a village at the southern end of the Dead Sea, from Shimeon son of Menahem to his wife Miriam, daughter of Yehoseph (*P.Yadin*, 7).<sup>72</sup> Another, dated to 129 CE, is a gift of a grove from Salome Gropite to her daughter Salome Komaise (*P.Xhev/Se.* 64).<sup>73</sup> These deeds demonstrate the high probability that women could receive property as gifts in first-century Palestine.

A Jewish woman may also receive property as part of her *ketubbah* (Tob. 7.14). The *ketubbah* was “essentially a monetary arrangement between the bride and groom with the purpose of ensuring the bride's maintenance in the event of divorce or the husband's death.”<sup>74</sup> Rabbinic discussions on laws

relating to the *ketubbah* suggest it was practiced throughout the Second Temple period.<sup>75</sup> This is supported by the discovery of marriage contracts in the Judaean desert.<sup>76</sup>

Thus Mary Magdalene, Johanna, Suzanna, and others, with whatever property they had at their

disposal, became benefactors of the Jesus movement. While it is likely that some of the women did not have any resources at their disposal,<sup>77</sup> it should be noted that Luke's summary statement is a generalisation and his focus is not on the women who had limited means, but on those many women (*pollai*) who did have possessions and made them available to Jesus and the twelve.<sup>78</sup>

This contribution is particularly significant given that women were economically more vulnerable in the ancient world. Their generosity must be seen as an expression of their faith in Jesus and in the worthiness of his mission. Bauckham adds that when the Twelve left home to follow Jesus they probably

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64 See for example *P.Yadin*, 7; *CPJ* 29; 41; 47; 424; 426.

65 Luke 20:47; Acts 12:12.

66 Luke 7:37 Cf. Matt 26:7; Mark 14:3.

67 Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 121. For income earned by women's work, see Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 132–35.

68 *Ibid.*, 121–22.

69 Ilan, *Jewish Women*, 167.

70 Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 126. Cf. Yigael Yadin, *Bar-Kokhba: The rediscovery of the legendary hero of the last Jewish Revolt against Imperial Rome* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1971), 236.

71 Ilan, *Jewish Women*, 168–9; Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 126.

72 Yadin, *Bar-Kokhba*, 236–37. Another deed of gift is from Babatha's second husband Yehudah to his daughter Shelamzion (*P.Yadin*, 19).

73 Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 123.

74 Ilan, *Jewish Women*, 89; Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 127.

75 *b. Ket.* 82.b; *m. Ket.* 1.2. Ilan, *Jewish Women*, 90.

76 *Ibid.* Cf. Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 128–130.

77 Witherington, “On the Road,” 138, n.18.

78 Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 115.

left most of their resources with their families who were economically dependent on them.<sup>79</sup> Thus the ministry of the women was important for the success of the mission, and as Bailey states, “(Luke) wants his readers to know who paid for the Jesus movement when it was small and vulnerable.”<sup>80</sup>

Despite the women’s support, there were a number of occasions when supplies ran low, such as when the disciples ate grain from the stalks as they passed through ripened fields (Mark 2:23), or when the only food available for a large crowd was a lunch of five barley loaves and two small fish (Mark 6:38). Without the *diakonia* of the women, such occurrences may have been the rule rather than the exception.

## CONCLUSION

The women who followed Jesus have set an example for all disciples of Jesus. They remained with him, learned from him, bore witnesses to his ministry, and proclaimed his resurrection. Moreover, they ministered to Jesus and the twelve, and became *benefactors* of the movement.

It is interesting to note that the concept of “ministry” is picked up by Jesus to describe his own work in Luke 22:27. Jesus is like one who “ministers”

to others, and he challenges the apostles to have the same attitude.<sup>81</sup> If the men up until this moment in Luke’s narrative had considered the ministry of the women disciples to be insignificant, they were now being asked by Jesus to see their own work in similar terms.

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 114.

<sup>80</sup> Kenneth Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes*, 193. He adds that attitudes of men like Ben Sira against receiving financial support from women “are flatly rejected.”

<sup>81</sup> Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 3: 122, n. 133; Collins, *Diakonia*, 246.