The Strange and Wonderful Story of Scripture pt.8 1st Tim. 1:3-11

1. I hope you've taken this journey with us. Make sure you start at part one (May 26) and binge these if you must. We are taking our time – baby steps – but that's what's required when you face the enormous task of learning what the Bible is and how to read it.

2. We've seen that the Bible elevates women and God uses them as prophets, apostles, deacons and teachers. We see Jesus making it very obvious that he respected women, even or especially those women that religious people were supposed to scorn. When we come upon two verses in First Corinthians and two in First Timothy, we need to find out why they are there and what to do with them. We don't ignore them; we go deeper.

3. In our river of faith, passages like this are rocks. We placed lighthouses on them to make sure we know where they are. Now…WHY are they there?

4. If you've read your NT you've seen that most of the letters written to the churches were written to churches in crisis. They were under siege by false teachers, secular authorities, pagan culture, and more. If you do a word count, you find that 20% of Paul's words directly address crisis matters, but when you come to Timothy and Titus, the word count percentage goes much higher. Why? Because Timothy was in Ephesus and Titus was in Crete.

5. The churches in those regions were under assault by more than just the culture or those who wanted to reestablish Jewish law in the church. They were fighting goddess worship and Gnosticism. The goddess religions and Gnosticism were enemies of the church from day one. Anywhere those were strong, the church was under attack (1st Tim. 1:3-7). Myths were being taught as truth.

6. Let's start with Ephesus. Ephesus was the center of goddess worship. An incomplete list of their gods would include the Great Mother of the Gods, the Mountain Mother, Bellona, Cybele, Demeter, and Diana, aka Artemis. All of these pagan cults taught that a female god created the world and then created the first human being: a perfect female. They went further and taught that a lesser god made

the first man and that he wasn't made very well. It was he, they taught, who sinned and by his folly ruined the female paradise. They were standing the story of Adam and Eve on its head – and that is what gnostics still do.

7. We get a glimpse of this in Acts 19 when we see what the believers in Ephesus (where Timothy was) went through. The city was full of books of magic and myths and fanciful tales, taking bits and pieces from scripture, pagan religions, and their own imaginations to weave new religions. When Paul tried to preach there, a riot broke out and they would have killed him had it not been for the authorities gaining control and demanding bond be set by local believers. The Mother of God religion did not brook competition.

8. Paul was driven from the city but he kept in touch with others working there. He sent them warnings about the myths that surrounded them (Acts 20:28-30). He wrote to the Corinthians that he had to stay on at Ephesus because of the many who had opposed him (1st Cor. 16:8,9). These were not his usual opponents – Jews who taught that Christians had to obey the law – but gnostics and goddess worshippers.

9. Now that you know this, look at Timothy again. In 1st Timothy 1:3,4 people were teaching myths. In 1:6,7 they were speaking confidently about things they didn't understand. They were trying to use the Jewish law but getting it wrong (1:8). They had lost contact with Jesus, the center of our faith (1:19,20). That word meant to slip your anchor and cause wrecks by bashing about the harbor, endangering other boats and people. Since our anchor is Jesus, these people must have slipped him and anchored somewhere else.

10. Who were these people? While Gnosticism was still in its infancy, there was a philosophy already developing that said that only those enlightened could see the truth. They didn't leave many books behind for us so we know about them mainly from books written against them. In the 1940s the libraries of Nag Hammadi were found, They contained some gnostic literature that helped us fill in some important gaps. In some of their writings, Satan is a hero and Jesus is the evil brother of Satan. Their literature also taught that there were more than god. The one who created women and paradise was

superior to the one who made man and earth. Paul warns Timothy against this “so called knowledge” in 1st Timothy 6:20,21.

11. The Gnostics taught that the resurrection never occurred for they considered the body to be either evil or meaningless so…why would you want it back? That is why Paul goes into a long argument in defense of the resurrection right after talking to the women in 1st Corinthians 14 about being quiet and to stop teaching what they were teaching.

12. Knowing what was being taught by women in Ephesus and Corinth helps us make sense of some strange rules about widows in 1st Timothy 5:11-15 and his warning to Timothy in 2nd Tim. 3:6,7, And remember the warning from John the Revelator in Revelation 2:20-25 against a “synagogue of Satan” where a woman called Jezebel taught “Satan’s so called deep secrets.”

13. To correct their upside down teaching on Eve and Adam and the fall of mankind, Paul retold the story in 1st Timothy 2:13,14. He was not trying to keep women from saying a prayer, reading a scripture, leading at communion, or speaking to a mixed group of men and women about Jesus but was, instead, trying to get the women in these towns to readjust their attitude and be people of quietness and humility. He was calling them back to their true anchor – Jesus.

14. The tales they were telling from house to house were loosing people from their anchor and causing people to lose sight of Jesus, the unity of the church, and the fact that there was no more male or female in the church. Galatians 3:28.

15. We mentioned this before, but Paul’s word in 1st Tim. 2:2 and the word he uses in 2:12 means attitude, not volume. When Peter used it in 1st Peter 3:4, it is translated “meek and quiet spirit.” In 1st Thessalonians 4:11, it calls believers to a life that is orderly and constructive. It means to comply with the law and to live in harmony with your neighbors. Something is keeping people in Ephesus and Corinth from living these sweet, gentle lives we are called to live and Paul says it is a LACK of knowledge masquerading as a WEALTH of knowledge.

16. He calls all of us, men and women, back to the truth. And what is that truth? He says it right here, right in the middle of 1st Tim. 2:5,6.

17. Next week, we need to look at the lengths some will go to to make their low estimation of women a reality. It won't be pretty but it will be necessary. In the meantime, focus on Jesus.