

# The 'complete gospel' revisited: Middle East and African influences

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The author focuses on the historically-reliable gospel pericopes in which a woman is the lead character. She argues that these women provide the complete gospel – Jesus teaches, heals, preaches and is anointed in the context of female-based stories and, of course, the women take him from conception to resurrection. Jackson argues, not only from an analysis of the texts themselves, but also from her personal experiences in the Middle East and Africa.

## Prologue

A woman was carrying a jar full of meal. While she was walking along a distant road, the handle of the jar broke and the meal spilled behind her along the road. She didn't know it; she hadn't noticed a problem. When she reached her house, she put the jar down and discovered that it was empty. (Grant & Freedman 1993:97)

The little girl Tutala walked from one rural village in Namibia to another with a large bowl of fruit on her head. While journeying, a monkey in a tree stole the marula, a climbing snake lifted the pawpaw, a bird took the orange, and the giraffe snatched the guava—all unnoticed by Tutala. But then a springbok rammed a miracle fruit tree and the dislodged red berries all fell into Tutala's bowl which she shared with her friends upon her arrival. (Camara & Sim n.d.)

'The parable of the empty jar immediately follows the parable of the leaven in the gospel of Thomas and, in contrast to the woman baking' with yeast, the woman whose jar is empty will not have meal with which to prepare any bread (Jackson 2001:34). Thus, according to traditional interpretation, God's imperial rule slips away and 'God's domain is unnoticed, perhaps invisible, unexpected, and modest' (Jackson 2001:34; cf. Funk, Hoover & The Jesus Seminar 1993:524; Grant & Freedman 1993:187; Ludemann 2012:637; Meyer 2004:103). My experience in the rural areas of Africa, however, indicates that most commentaries on this parable are incorrect in regard to the blatant or subtle judgement of the woman who has not noticed that the mealie-meal has been emptied from the jar; meaning that once an object is on the woman's head, the weight of it is both incomprehensible and unimportant. Indeed, I have seen loads that take two men to lift onto a woman's head that she then carries with ease. And she would not have felt the mealie-meal draining out or trickling down her body, because she undoubtedly had a baby wrapped on her back and was carrying water jars in each hand. In most African cultures, men do not carry objects on their heads, that is women's work, and it is most probable, therefore, that neither Jesus nor the author of Thomas did either. I, frankly, have come to resent the fact that the parable states that 'she hadn't noticed a problem.' Either Jesus, Thomas or used this story of the woman inappropriately or we continue to misunderstand its meaning. In any case, the woman should not have to bear the brunt of the lesson here!

Indeed, there is a beautifully illustrated, unscripted children's book from Namibia, quoted above, which replicates this exact story, of the little girl Tutala walking from one rural village to another with a large bowl of fruit on her head (Camara & Sim n.d.). The woman in *Thomas*, carrying the mealie-meal, is not 'inattentive' or lacking in any way whatsoever, but only carrying the load naturally. I fear that the status and role of women in historical and cultural contexts continue to be overlooked and that their uniqueness is ignored altogether, understated, undervalued and misinterpreted. We western women do not carry large loads on our heads nor babies on our backs and, therefore, lack the experience that is required to understand the context of the story and have, therefore, allowed the woman with a jar of mealie-meal to be offered up as a negative example. Whilst Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's hermeneutic of suspicion opened up new worlds of feminist criticism, we need to continue to do an even better job of relating to the cultural world of the 1st century.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>We must also celebrate the academic work of countless feminists since Fiorenza's *In memory of her* in 1984 as well as the ever-growing library of research coming out of Africa, Asia, and South America.

## Thesis

With this lengthy prologue complete, I now turn to the issue at hand. Several years ago, I somewhat facetiously entitled an article 'The complete gospel: Jesus and women via the Jesus Seminar' (Jackson 2001:27–39, 2004a:83–95), which was a reference to the Jesus Seminar's product, *The complete gospels* (Miller 2010).<sup>2</sup> At the time I used only the red and pink colour-coded sayings and deeds of Jesus as designated by the Jesus Seminar. (Red – historically plausible, i.e., reliable; pink – reliable to the point of verifiability; grey – historically doubtful, and can also mean an average vote; black – historically unreliable.) The story (or complete gospel) that I imagined admittedly had gaps, and one of the stories I wanted to include was the anointing woman. As it was colour-coded grey, however, I did not select it. Further consideration has convinced me that it does reflect an historical moment in Jesus' life and so I have rewritten my 'complete gospel' to reflect that change. The following discussion includes an introduction, my revised complete gospel, and an argument for the historicity of the anointing woman via tradition-history as well as Middle Eastern and African rural cultures. Moreover, it emphasises the need for including the experiential in academic research.

## Introduction

According to the Jesus Seminar and because there was a 'lack of agreement on the history of the story [of the anointing woman], the conclusion was the inevitable gray that accompanies indecision' (Funk & The Jesus Seminar 1998:136). But the Seminar's discussion says otherwise and is, therefore, misleading for those of us trying to reconstruct authentic stories of Jesus based on the colour-coded database, especially stories regarding the historical Jesus and women.<sup>3</sup> This particular pericope (Mk 14:3–9) also highlights a worrisome tendency in the commentary of the Jesus Seminar. That is, of the seven or eight pericopes (depending on how one counts them) in Mark's narrative and parallels in which women are positioned as major characters, only three of these are colour-coded pink (reliable to the point of being verifiable), four are grey (historically doubtful or simply an average vote) and one is black (historically unreliable).

In other words, the database for authentic sayings and deeds of Jesus excludes the familiar stories of Jairus' daughter, the Syro-Phoenician (Canaanite) woman, the widow's mite, the anointing in Bethany, and the women at the tomb, as being

2. *The complete gospels* is a collection of the canonical and select non-canonical gospels, all of which give similar as well as dissimilar stories and understandings of first-and-second-century Jesus traditions. One of the purposes of the title (as well as content) is to provide all readers with the knowledge that biblical scholars have; that is, the four canonical gospels are and were not the only ones written at the time to tell a story of Jesus. This unique volume is a collaborative effort by the Jesus Seminar that includes discussions of each document's historical context, translation issues, some tradition history, and cross-references between the gospel narratives. For complete disclosure: I am a Fellow of the Jesus Seminar and have argued that a 'complete gospel' can be imagined in which only female characters play the critical roles in Jesus' rise as an ethical teacher and ultimately, his resurrection.

3. I have argued since I became a Fellow in 1996 that we need at least five colours; that is, a fifth colour needs to be included for indecision, rather than the colour grey, designating both indecision on the scholars' part and a genuine vote that the information is unreliable.

historic scenes in Jesus' life. The ones that are found in the 'historically accurate' database in Mark include the stories of Simon's mother-in-law, the bleeding woman, Jesus' family, and the witnesses at the crucifixion and burial. Matthew's story (along with Luke's and Thomas's) of the woman concealing leaven in fifty pounds of flour is colour-coded red. The widow of Nain in Luke is black; the mention of Mary of Magdala is red whilst Joanna and Susanna are grey; the story of Mary and Martha arguing over household responsibilities is colour-coded black, as is the healing of the woman on the Sabbath. However, Luke's stories of the lost coin and the woman who demands justice from the corrupt judge are pink and, of course, Mary is the mother of Jesus. All of the female-specific stories in John are, not surprisingly, grey or black although special attention is given to Mary of Magdala. The remaining sayings where women are found in Thomas are, for the most part, grey or black; the one exception is the woman with the empty jar: it is colour-coded pink (Jackson 2001:31).

The problem is as follows: the commentary on the part of the Jesus Seminar indicates that others *could* be, in essence, colour-coded pink, but for an unknown reason are not. For example, the story of Jairus's daughter (Mk 5:21–43; 9:18–26; Lk 8:40–56) is regarded by the Jesus Seminar as fictional, but not fictional enough to be colour-coded black, hence, originally there may have been a relatively simple healing story that was developed into an elaborate resuscitation tale (Funk & The Jesus Seminar 1998:83). Incidentally, John P. Meier argues that the story is not the pure invention of the early church, although it has been 'expanded and reinterpreted by Christian faith' (Funk & The Jesus Seminar 1998:83). The essence of the meat of the sandwiched stories, or the haemorrhaging woman, is regarded as reliable by the Jesus Seminar and perhaps even verifiable, hence it is colour-coded pink, and is pink in print. Interestingly, Meier indicates that a firm judgement about this story's historical value is not possible (Funk & The Jesus Seminar 1998:81). I have argued elsewhere that the pericope of the bleeding woman has been misused to justify anti-Judaism (Jackson 1998:85–98), and should not be, of course.

The inconsistency develops further in the Jesus Seminar commentary on the story of the Syro-Phoenician, or Canaanite, woman (Mk 7:24–30; 15:21–28) because it is colour-coded grey in both Mark and Matthew. However, the discussion reveals that 'the Fellows awarded some hypothetical core of the story a pink weighted average' (Jackson 1998:97), but not pink in print. Likewise, the story of the widow's pittance (Mk 12:41–44; Lk 21:1–4) could be a story that Jesus told; that is, 'we cannot know for sure. Yet there is nothing in the story that is out of character with what we otherwise know of Jesus; [and yet,] a gray designation is all the facts permit' (Funk & The Jesus Seminar 1998:130).

Likewise, at the death of Jesus, the account of the women observing from a distance is relegated as reliable or pink. However, their presence at the tomb on the first day of the week is unreliable and colour-coded black.

## The story

In my earlier rendition of the ‘complete gospel,’ I argued that:

[T]hose gospel stories that are thought to be fairly reliable historically and which include women as major characters capture the authentically historical Jesus. Furthermore, the stories that concern women—starting with the unmarried pregnant woman Mary and ending with a woman’s vision of the resurrected Lord—when set down together, provide the essential and complete Gospel. (Jackson 2001:27)

At this point, I want to add the story of the anointing woman. And the complete story is as follows:<sup>4</sup>

Mary was pregnant; she gave birth to a son (Lk 2:5, 7). Now eight days later, when the time came to circumcise him, they gave him the name Jesus (Lk 2:21). He was about thirty years old when he began his work (Lk 3:23a). [And] Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her right away. He went up to her, took hold of her hand, raised her up, and the fever disappeared. Then she started looking after them (Mk 1:30–31; Mt 8:14–15; Lk 4:38–39). And it so happened soon afterward that he travelled through towns and villages, preaching and announcing the good news of God’s imperial rule. The twelve were with him [*maybe, i.e., grey*], and also some women whom he had cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary, the one from Magdala, [*and perhaps, i.e., grey*] Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources (Lk 8:1–3). And there was a woman who had had a vaginal flow for twelve years. When this woman heard about Jesus, she came up from behind in the crowd and touched his cloak. And the vaginal flow stopped instantly, and she sensed in her body that she was cured of her illness (Mk 5:25, 27, 29; Mt 9:20, 22; Lk 8:43–44). When the Sabbath day arrived, he started teaching in the synagogue; and many who heard him were astounded and said so: ‘Where’s he getting this?’ and ‘What’s the source of all this wisdom?’ and ‘Who gave him the right to perform such miracles? Isn’t he Mary’s son? And who are his brothers, if not James, Josef, Judas, and Simon? And who are his sisters, if not our neighbours?’ And they were resentful of him (Mk 6:2–3; Mt 13:54–57a). Jesus [*said*], Heaven’s imperial rule is like leaven that a woman took and concealed in fifty pounds of flour until it was all leavened (Mt 13:33; Lk 13:20–21; Thomas 96). Jesus said, The [*Father’s*] imperial rule is like a woman who was carrying a [*jar*] full of meal. While she was walking along [*a*] distant road, the handle of the jar broke and the meal spilled behind her [*along*] the road. She didn’t know it; she hadn’t noticed a problem. When she reached her house, she put the jar down and discovered that it was empty (Thomas 97). Or again, is there any woman with ten silver coins, who if she loses one, wouldn’t light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? When she finds it, she invites her friends and neighbours over and says, ‘Celebrate with me, because I have found the silver coin I had lost’ (Lk 15:8–9). [*He told them another parable*]: Once there was a judge in this town who neither feared God nor cared about people. In that same town was a widow who kept coming to him and demanding: ‘Give me a ruling against the person I’m suing.’ For a while he refused; but eventually he said to himself, ‘I’m not afraid of God and I don’t care about people, but this widow keeps pestering me. So I’m going to give her a favourable ruling, or else she’ll keep coming back until she wears me down’ (Lk 18:2–5).

4. Translation is taken from the *Scholars Version*.

[And] when he was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper [*a fellow disenfranchised friend*], he was just reclining there, and a woman came in carrying an alabaster jar of myrrh, of pure and expensive nard. She broke the jar and poured the myrrh on his head. Now some were annoyed and thought to themselves: ‘What good purpose is served by this waste of myrrh? For she could have sold the myrrh for more than three hundred silver coins and given the money to the poor.’ And they were angry with her. Then Jesus said, ‘Let her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done me a courtesy. ... She did what she could—she anticipates in anointing my body for burial. So help me, wherever the good news is announced in all the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her!’<sup>5</sup> (Mk 14:3–9; Mt 26:6–13; Lk 7:36–50; Jn 12:1–8). [*And so after performing many more miracles and teaching many more parables, many of which went against the Establishment*], they seized him and held him fast (Mk 14:46). And [*the male disciples*] all deserted him and ran away (Mk 14:50). And they brought Jesus before the high priest (Mk 14:53; Mt 26:57–68; Lk 22:66–71) [*and*] the ranking priests bound Jesus and led him away and turned him over to Pilate, the Roman governor (Mk 15:1; Mt 27:11; Lk 23:3; Jn 18:33–37). Pilate had Jesus flogged, and then turned him over to be crucified (Mk 15:14; Mt 27:26; Jn 19:16). And the soldiers crucif[*ied*] him (Mk 15:24; Mt 27:38). Now some women were observing this from a distance, among who were Mary of Magdala, and Mary the mother of James the younger and Joses, and Salome. These women had regularly followed and assisted him when he was in Galilee, along with many other women who had come up to Jerusalem in his company (Mk 15:40–41; Mt 27:55–56; Lk 23:49). [*And later*], Mary of Magdala goes and reports to the disciples [*what she has seen in a vision*], ‘I have seen the Master’, and relates everything he had told her. (Jn 20:18)

My argument is that whilst this female-based story provides many unexpected turns in the road within 1st-century Judaism, it captures the essence of the complete story. It blasphemously and shockingly begins with an unmarried pregnant woman and ends with a woman who was at the least a best friend, and probably is the one responsible for the spread of the gospel story (cf. King 2003).

## Argument for the anointing woman via tradition history

The Jesus Seminar justifies its grey vote on the pericope of the anointing woman by saying the following:

This story has been recorded by all four narrative gospels. There are significant variations in the four versions, yet there is also remarkable agreement on the basic ingredients of the tale. The setting of all versions is a meal, or symposium, at which the owner of the house is present. A woman anoints Jesus during the meal (not before or after it) with a jar of perfume. Members of the party object to the woman’s action and Jesus defends her. The similarities in the setting and plot suggest that one incident or story lies behind the four versions. Yet because of the variation in other details, the Fellows of the Seminar decided that the original version of the incident is irretrievable. A divided vote on the historicity of the incident produced a grey weighted average for all forms of the story. A symposium in the house of Simon the Leper is the setting in Mark [*and Matthew*] for the appearance of the woman with her jar of expensive myrrh. [*The setting is at the*

5. This paragraph indicates the addition from my earlier ‘complete gospel’.

home of a Pharisee in Luke, it is earlier in the narrative, the woman is defined as a sinner, and she anoints Jesus' feet rather than his head; the setting in John is the home of Lazarus and the woman is Lazarus' sister Mary who also anoints Jesus' feet, not his head.] Because [the woman in Mark] is assumed to be respectable, her appearance is a potential source of scandal. She pours the perfume on Jesus' head, she anoints him, which hints at his role as the Anointed, as the messiah, although the anointing of head and face, and the washing and anointing of feet, were commonplace at such banquets.<sup>6</sup> The objection to the woman's action on account of the expense involved seems contrived, and the connection with Jesus' burial is an afterthought. In the original story the woman's act was probably interpreted by Jesus as a 'courtesy', which Jesus would have expressed with the Greek term *kalon*, which can be understood as either a good or a beautiful act. The double meaning of the term would have been understood as a clever reply to the criticism levelled at Jesus by his disciples (vv. 4-5). In view of the lack of agreement on the history of the story, the conclusion was the inevitable grey that accompanies indecision. (Funk & The Jesus Seminar 1998:135-6)

In terms of the colour-coding in Matthew's nearly identical version, the Jesus Seminar says the fellows were almost evenly divided on whether the story had a historical kernel or not (Funk & The Jesus Seminar 1998:248).

In checking other sources, one must read early on in Fiorenza's *In memory of her*; the title, of course, originating from this pericope. Fiorenza (1984) theorises that the earliest story followed this pattern:

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him and Jesus went to the Pharisee's house and sat at table. And behold a woman having learned that he was sitting at table in the Pharisee's house, and standing behind him at his feet weeping, began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it he said to himself: 'If this man were a prophet, he would have known what sort of a woman this is who is touching him; that she is a sinner.' In response Jesus said to him: 'I have something to say to you,' and he answered, 'What is it, Teacher?' 'A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay he remitted their debt, graciously. Now which of them will love him more?' And turning to the woman he said to her: 'Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace (shalom).' (p. 129)

Fiorenza suggests that the story probably circulated very early amongst the Jesus disciples and that they undoubtedly claimed it was Jesus himself who told the story, but that the tradition-history has not been resolved (Fiorenza 1984:128).

Burton Mack suggests that the original *chreia* may have been: 'When Jesus was at table, a disreputable woman entered and poured out a jar of perfumed oil on him. He said, "That is good"' (Mack 1988:200). E.P. Sanders (1993:127) also argues that 'these stories probably rest on memories ... [and that it is] evident that Jesus attracted women who were not "followers", but who admired him, heard him with pleasure and wished to serve him'.

<sup>6</sup>The ceremonial washing of hands before meals in many African cultures is still practiced.

Kathleen E. Corley (1993:102-106, 2002:27-52.) acknowledges the debate regarding the historicity of the story and adds it to the collection of evidence that women were indeed followers of the historical Jesus. In a later article, she argues that based on both the criteria of multiple attestation (i.e. it is included in all four gospels as well as in Ignatius [Eph 17.2] and of dissimilarity [i.e. the expectations for women's proper behaviour at meals in the Hellenistic world]), the story of the anointing woman should be added to the basic historical-Jesus core (Corley 2003:61). Whilst scholars have long argued that a historical core lies behind the basic account of the anointing woman, Corley points out that the problem lies in its connection in Mark with Jesus' burial, 'assuming as it does a post-Easter Christology' (Corley 2003:63) and not with the story itself. She maintains this context with the following:

[It is] unlikely that the Church would have created a scandalous story involving the improper anointing of Jesus at a banquet replete with sexual innuendo and impropriety. Furthermore, the story of the anointing coheres with the tradition that Jesus was accused of eating with 'tax collectors and sinners' which ... included women. Finally, Jesus' approval of the woman's action coheres with his more general acceptance of those of lower classes. (Corley 2003:72)

Mary J. Marshall (2005) adds that the story is:

[H]istorically based, but [has] been recounted in different ways by the evangelists according to their particular theological agendas. John's account is clearly a sanitised version, in which socially inappropriate elements have been modified. (p. 4)

I call this the stained-glass window syndrome; that is, everything in the biblical stories must be pretty and polished. Marshall contends, against others, that Luke's version treats the unnamed woman most favourably (Marshall 2005:7).

Finally, John Dominic Crossan's (1992) suggestion is the best of these; that the woman may have been the author of the Gospel of Mark:

One could surely, by the way, make a better case for Mark-as-a-woman obliquely signing her manuscript by that sentence at 14:9 ['So help me, wherever the good news is announced in all the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her!'] than one ever did for Mark-as-a-man obliquely signing his by that flapping nightshirt in the garden at 14:51-52. (p. 416)

## Argument for the historicity of the anointing woman: Middle Eastern and African rural cultures

As I have argued many times, I think scholarly activity should be reinforced by experiential learning whenever possible; accomplished by travelling to cultures and areas where people can shed light on circumstances in 1st-century Palestine. For example, during a visit to Zimbabwe, I worshiped at Hilltop United Methodist Church on Palm Sunday. Hilltop is located in the oldest, poorest part of the city of Mutare. More than 2000 worshipers were gathered in a relatively small church sanctuary where probably at least one-third of the people are dying of malaria, HIV-related diseases, and schistosomiasis. That fact did not keep a single one of them from waving

palm branches, singing joyously, and proclaiming the gospel message. And what was the gospel message on that day? That if Jesus were a Mozambican who travelled over the Eastern Highland Mountains into Zimbabwe, he would see his people and know their needs; that is, that they needed to be freed of political and economic oppression. And because of that, the Zimbabweans would greet him with palm branches, dancing, and singing. That sermon on a pre-election Sunday was not just powerful, but probably the only time that Palm Sunday has ever made any actual sense to me. It also resulted in the pastor's arrest (Jackson 2004b:81–90). But I digress.

In her discussion of the anointing woman, Corley (2003) points out that:

[D]uring Hellenistic times those women present for dinner parties with men were stereotypically considered to be prostitutes of some kind, or at least promiscuous, whatever their social status or occupation. This ideology concerning women's proper behaviour at meals can be found throughout Hellenistic literature, even Jewish Hellenistic literature. (p. 64)

One need not read exclusively through ancient literature to discover this; for example, when I was travelling with Prof. Andries van Aarde on an 8-hour bus ride from Cairo to the Sinai, whenever we had a stop, I would engage anyone or everyone in conversation – at least anyone who spoke English as I have yet to learn another language with which I can converse. I noticed that Andries seemed a bit agitated by the third or fourth stop, and, in fact, he finally took me aside and said, 'You know that they think you're a prostitute, don't you?' When I picked my mouth up off the ground, I asked why. He said, 'Look around. Do you see any other women travelling on the bus? Do you engage any women in conversation at the bus stops? And, worst of all, you're laughing with the men *and* looking them in the eye.'

My travels in the Middle East also reveal that, at least amongst the Bedouin from whom I have received spontaneous invitations, meals are still taken by men by themselves as they recline. Young boys wait on the men whilst the women prepare the food outside. It is very easy for anyone to come upon the scene and enter, I have done it. Marshall also notes that 'the woman's ability to enter the ... house is explained by the relative accessibility of Palestinian homes in the New Testament period' (Marshall 2005:5). I simply say that the same thing can and does occur today; I have been an unexpected guest on numerous occasions and have always been treated with the utmost Middle Eastern or African hospitality. I have also seen men already on the scene and reclining with their food annoyed at the appearance of a woman; and yet the host always welcomes me. Greeting the foreigner is more important than gender discrimination. When I was in Jordan, it was the wife of the Bedouin who, for cultural reasons, did not enter the home after we arrived. She and her young daughter stayed outside to cook. The sons ate with their father and us. In fact, on this particular trip, it was another male friend and I who travelled to Machaerus

7. For more on that adventure, cf. Jackson (2011:11–16).

in Jordan, and the Bedouin who invited us in for tea and goat's cheese was quite interested in the notion that Prof. Don Rappe and I were not married, but travelling together. This same dynamic has played itself out on many occasions in various countries in Africa, especially in urban areas, but also often in rural areas. The mix of symposia and meals remains common in the Middle East. My trips to Jordan and Qatar included several invitations for a symposium, eating and reclining at table. Additionally, in Alexandria, Egypt, when Prof. Van Aarde was busy talking with our guide, a neighbour couple in the same apartment building invited me, a complete stranger, in for fish and tea.

## Conclusion

Thus, the piece that was missing from my original 'complete gospel' regarding Jesus and women was someone recognising Jesus as messiah. I included pericopes with women when teaching, preaching, and healing were involved, but I did not crown him, so to speak. The anointing woman with modern parallels from the Middle East and Africa solve that problem, and now I do have the 'complete gospel'. Evidence from those parts of the world has convinced me that the story of the anointing woman is, indeed, historically reliable. Furthermore, the travel I have been afforded in rural areas of Africa and the Middle East has convinced me that New Testament methodology must include the experiential when considering context, historicity, and interpretation of ancient documents. We must, of course, be diligent that we do not impose today's understanding of the world on life two thousand years ago, but those who continue to live in non-technologised cultures do have knowledge and wisdom regarding those texts and we must include their voices in our studies. Their insights help to correct an altogether-too-often western-globalised worldview.

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