

Fatima

I prefer not to use historical records in my understanding and interpreting the abundance of revelation in this Book. Most of the human evidences seem to be tainted by prejudices and at times intentional twisting of facts. Some of my own observations lead me to think that some historians were honest and faithful to the real facts. In Acts 20: 18-35 we can imagine that in some regions a generation of faithful disciples was succeeded by some degenerated nominal religious blind leaders of the blind followers. That church, or group of churches, was defeated by the beast and spiritually dead. Evil worldly leaders crave to use dead church to enslave the ignorant. At our Lord's appointed time, His Spirit brings some of these dead, misguided believers out of darkness into the light of faith and knowledge of our Savior and Lord. These new disciples bravely witness the Gospel Truth in spite of persecution and martyrdom. A new battle is raging, and our Savior's loyal witnesses ascend to His glory. In my early teen years a personal testimony of an elderly widow seriously influenced me to turn away from sin and to seek our Lord's mercy unto salvation. In a country the state church had its artificial name "Orthodox national church". The entire practice was meaningless rituals the priests perform and teach basic civil rules. Life of the masses was typical gentile way: let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we'll die. An eighteen years old village girl married a villager that lived in a well established agricultural household with his mother, a widow, and a single sister. The name of the newly married young woman was Fatima. It was a foreign name. Since the household was considered upper class, Fatima was not expected to work with her husband out in their fields. Most of her time Fatima was taking care of the house, cooking, feeding animals and trying to satisfy the supervision of her mother in law. It was wise for Fatima to ignore the idle and aimless life of her sister in law. Sunday morning and on holidays they would put on solemn apparel and attend the liturgy performed by a priest in the traditional priestly array. Usually the same day they would enjoy special meal, wine and at times

some visitors. This young woman came from a peasant family that worked every day to meet their basic needs of life. After the usual work was done most of the days, Fatima would take time to clean the house. She started from one end and continued to the last room. Days past, and the house was cleaned. Fatima went up to the attic that was used as storage. Cleaning the thick layer of dust, Fatima noticed a book on a beam, right under a roof tile. Under the front cover she read the title: New Testament. Every day she would read the small book. One evening sitting around the supper table, she mentioned to her family that she read the book and that she would like to find out if there are some people that believe, observe, and practice the teaching of the New Testament. Both, her husband and his mother demanded that she never mention her wish again and to quit reading that book instantly. They threatened her with physical abuse if she would not comply with their demands. She was putting on her church garb Next Sunday while her husband and his mother waited outside to beat her. As soon as Fatima was dressed up, she swung the door open wide and ran out. They were not able to grab her firmly, but they managed to hit her a few times. She ran downstairs to the backyard, through the gate and she ran down the street as fast as she was able. Her husband and the mother in law ran after her. She was faster. Some neighbors standing in their gates and watching were amused by unusual drama in the village. Fatima slowed down at the end of their street to regain her breath and looked back. Her family apparently gave up their chase. She continued on the dirt-road downhill, uphill, some 6 – 7 miles and reached the next village – by a river. While she walked briskly through the main street wondering how to find out if there are any New Testament believers, knowing not what could be the reaction of the local people to any such question, through the silence of village Sunday morning, some very soft singing reached her hearing for a moment, & then reappeared again. As she was going on, she heard the melody clearer. She was moving toward the source. The singing was very different than anything she ever heard in the national church and even more different than the songs of their folklore or small village bars. The

sound was coming from a yard behind a wooden fence with a small gate. Fatima slowly opened the gate and peaked inside. In the rear part of the parcel was a small house with two windows and an open door between. She came to the door and saw simple benches aligned along the two sides of the room and a small table in the center with a large Bible book on top of it. Men were sitting on the left side. On the right side of the table were women. Fatima walked to the last bench behind the women and sat down. All the people were middle aged or elderly. One man stepped to the table, opened the Book and announced his selection for reading a passage from the Bible. After the reading they knelt down for a prayer led by the man. The meeting lasted about 1½ hour. When she perceived that the meeting was ended, Fatima quickly walked out and returned home. Some tension was felt in the family, but none commented about Sunday experience until the following Sunday when the same drama was repeated. Third Sunday, the main reaction was a stony silence. Apparently they gave up their intension to prevent her from going to the “strange religion meetings”. Fatima became a sincerely committed believer in our Lord Jesus Christ. Later her sister in law decided to join her. Her mother followed. After awhile there was a group of disciples from Fatima’s village walking to the other village. Every Sunday morning, regardless of the weather and seasons, the group would walk together. The entire village knew who they were and what was the reason for their leaving early and returning late every Sunday. I believe that this is one more testimony of our Lord’s Spirit giving life to the dead and my conversion was an echo of it.

Fatima was an elderly sister when she shared her personal testimony with me, a fourteen years old youth at that time. I had the privilege of knowing the next generation of believers in the same location. It was a blessing to see how well established in the faith they were. Most of them have been transferred to their destiny and so will we.