John And Betty Stam: Martyred Missionaries To China (Part 1)

It was in a splendid Christian environment that John C. Stam entered the world on January 8, 1907, at Paterson, New Jersey, the seventh of nine children. John and his brothers and sisters were early taught the things of God. They took part in the family devotions and were present each morning at the family altar. Christ truly was the head of the Stam home. John's father, Peter Stam, was a stalwart Christian and an earnest worker in the church. A contractor by trade to support his family, he also started Star of Hope Mission in Paterson. At first his outreach was to Jews in the city, but later the work was extended to jails, poorhouses, hospitals, factories and street preaching.

John's mother, a wonderful Christian character, was both a Mary, ready to sit at the Lord's feet, and a Martha, who was willing to serve. Each of the children was dedicated to the Lord for His service at his birth.

Although John was brought up in this fine Christian atmosphere and was taught the way of salvation by praying parents, he was not converted until he was fifteen years of age. The whole family was engaged in the evangelistic work of the Mission. He was accustomed to seeing the transformation that took place when a heart opens to receive Christ in all His saving power, but he did not see himself like the drunkards, down-and-outs and those who did not know the Gospel who were saved at the Mission. He had grown up hearing the Gospel and believed it, yet he was all the more in danger because of his self-righteousness.

One week a blind evangelist, a man who really knew God, came to the Mission. The evangelist's message seemed directed right at young John. It was during this series of meetings that John gave his heart to the Lord and was very definitely born again. The Lord got hold of him in a real way. From that time on John knew that he was no longer his own and rejoiced more and more to be at the service of his Master.

For two years John attended business school and was employed as a stenographer and clerk in various business houses. He was also an active worker and an invaluable assistant to his father at the Mission. As often as five or six times a week, John went with his friends to the slums and on street corners of Paterson to hold open-air meetings. Many were the times that the Lord richly blessed as the Gospel was proclaimed. During all this, John felt the call of God on his life and was anxious to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

God's Work in Betty's Life

On February 22, 1906, Elizabeth Alden Scott was born at Albion, Michigan, where her father, Charles Ernest Scott, was pastor of the Presbyterian Church. Betty was the first of five children. Six months after Betty was born, Dr. and Mrs. Scott accepted a call to the Shantung Province in China. This was the start of the Scott's long and illustrious missionary career. For

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twelve years Betty lived with her parents in Tsiangtao, China. Early in life she developed a deep and lasting love for the Chinese people. She was anxious to see these benighted Chinese come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus.

Betty returned to the United States, her parents remaining in China, to study at Wilson College in Pennsylvania. It was after her freshman year, at a summer Bible Conference in Keswick, New Jersey, that she gave her life to Christ in full surrender. She shared with her parents: "I don't know what God has in store for me. ...It's as clear as daylight to me that the only worthwhile life is one of unconditional surrender to God's will, and of living in His way, trusting His love and guidance." At the conference she took as her life motto: *"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* It was not long thereafter that her call to China became predominant in her life. She had always planned for missionary work in China, but now she felt certain that it was God's plan for her life to bring the message of salvation to these people she so dearly loved.

Following her graduation from Wilson College, Betty attended the Moody Bible Institute in order that she might be better equipped for her life's work. It was here that she and John Stam first met.

Training at Moody Bible Institute

In September 1929, after a long period of serious and prayerful consideration, the way opened for John to enter Moody Bible Institute. He took part in many of the student activities and in much of the Christian work of the school. He served on the executive committee of the Missionary Union, on which Betty also served. Here the two young students first realized that both were interested in missionary work in China. Sometime previous to this, at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Isaac Page of the China Inland Mission (CIM), John had set his face toward China, believing that God wanted him there to spread the Gospel and tell of Christ's power to save.

From the time that CIM sent out its call in 1929 for 200 new workers, Betty volunteered for the unevangelized sections of China and was accepted. She sailed for China alone in the autumn of 1931, yet not alone, for she and John had an understanding that they would be united in marriage when John came to China a short time later, if it were God's will. John graduated from Moody in the spring of 1932, a year later than Betty. He was speaker of his class and at his graduation expressed his quiet trust in God by using the verses from Lamentations, *"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness"* (3:22-23).

It was difficult for John and Betty to separate when she went ahead to China, but both of them knew that the will of the Lord came first and that their lives were His. They had surrendered themselves wholly to the Lord, knowing that if He wanted them to be together, it would come to pass. They had the assurance that this was best left in His hands.

In September 1932, John sailed for Shanghai under CIM. It so happened that when the ship arrived, Betty was also in Shanghai for medical treatment. It was a brief and unexpected reunion, but it confirmed to both of them that the Lord intended for their lives and ministries to be joined together. They were again separated for another year during John's language study

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at Anking, but on October 25, 1933, John and Betty were united in marriage at the home of her parents in Tsinan. Rev. Reuben A. Torrey, Jr. presided and the guests, both Chinese and foreigners, seemed to feel a reverence and sacred joy in witnessing the union of two such devoted, consecrated young lives.

(To be continued)

– Adapted from *An Hour With John And Betty Stam: Martyred Missionaries To China* by T. W. Engstrom, and supplemented with information from *The Triumph Of John And Betty Stam* by Mrs. Howard Taylor.

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