

PORTRAITS OF COURAGE



STORIES OF
BAPTIST HEROES



Julie Whidden Long

ANN HASSELTINE JUDSON BAPTIST MISSIONARY PIONEER



Who: Ann Hasseltine Judson

Where: From the United States
to India to Burma

When: 1789-1826

What she did: Served as a missionary

As a teenager in 1806, Ann Hasseltine committed herself to Jesus. After finding the peace of God in her own heart, she wrote in her journal that she “longed to have all intelligent creatures love him.” She spent the rest of her life teaching others how to love God as she did.

After making her decision to follow Christ, Ann devoted all of her life to religious activities and service. She studied the Bible and read other Christian writings. She attended

Bradford Academy in Bradford, Massachusetts, one of the first schools for women, so that she could learn more and use the gifts God gave her.

As a young woman, Ann's interest in religion, particularly in missions, grew. One evening, her family hosted a dinner for twenty-eight ministers who came to Bradford to discuss church issues. One of those ministers was Adoniram Judson.



Adoniram's interest in missions excited him as a student at Andover Theological Seminary. He and other ministers met to plan an organization through which missionaries would travel to other places in the world. He came to Ann's hometown to ask this group of ministers to encourage their churches to support missionaries. Adoniram and his friends organized the first mission society, a group of churches committed to sending missionaries to foreign lands.

Ann impressed Adoniram when they met at her home, and he wrote to ask her to marry him, but Adoniram was going to be a Christian missionary in a foreign country. Ann's father did not want her to marry Adoniram. He said that he would tie her to a bedpost before he would let her live in another country.

Ann prayed for God's guidance in making her deci-

sion. She wrote:

I am a creature of God, and he has an undoubted right to do with me, as seems good in his sight. I rejoice, that I am in his hands—that he is everywhere present, and can protect me in one place as well as in another. . . . But whether I spend my days in India or America, I desire to spend them in the service of God.

Ann's father eventually gave her his blessing to marry Adoniram and to serve as a missionary with him. Ann and Adoniram married on February 5, 1812, and they left for India two weeks later. At this point, the Judsons belonged to a Congregationalist church. They were not yet Baptists.

The long trip to India tested Ann and Adoniram. Both almost died, and Ann grew so weak that she had to be carried off the ship. During their journey, both Ann and Adoniram read the Bible, and they studied the New Testament's teaching on baptism. As Adoniram studied the word "baptize," he realized that he agreed with the Baptists. Baptists believed that only those who could make a decision for themselves could be baptized, not babies. Baptists practiced believer's baptism by

Congregationalist

churches are a group of churches in which each church is independent in deciding its own mission, ministry, and organization. Congregationalist churches are like Baptist churches in the way that they are governed!



immersion, meaning that the believer's whole body was dipped in water.

At first, Ann told Adoniram that she would not become a Baptist. But as she studied with him, she changed her mind. When they left America, they were Congregationalists. When they arrived in India, Adoniram and Ann were Baptists

and were soon baptized by immersion by a British Baptist missionary.

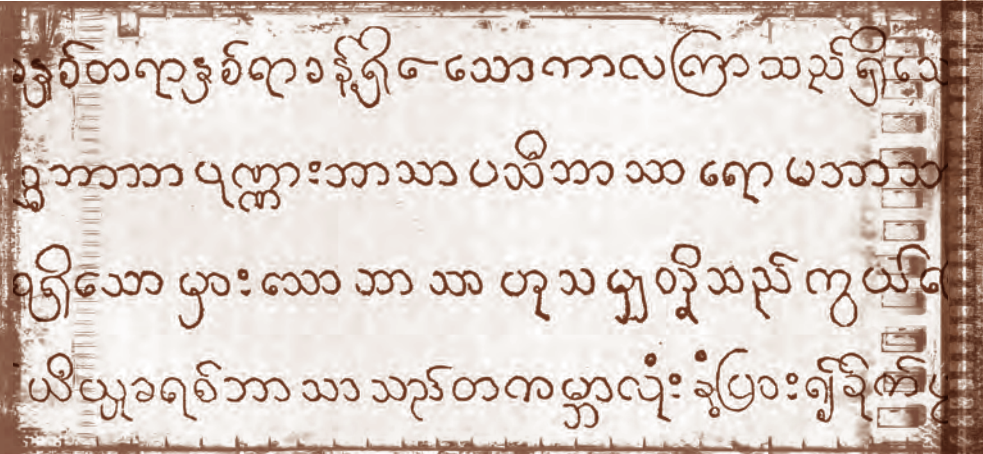
Adoniram and Ann were unsure if their Congregationalist mission society would continue to support them since they were now Baptists. Without the financial support of the Congregationalists, the Judsons could not stay in India as missionaries. Adoniram wrote to Baptists in the United States asking for support. The word spread, and soon American Baptists raised money for the Judsons.

While they waited for the news, William Carey, one of the British Baptist missionaries in India, gave them the funds needed to do their mission work. Carey encouraged the Judsons to leave India to do mission work in the nearby country of Burma. In 1814, Baptists in America formed a Baptist mission society, which they named the Triennial Convention because it met every three years. The Triennial

Convention supported the Judsons in Burma as well as future Baptist missionaries.

The Judsons' first year of mission work challenged them. They were lonely, missed Christian friends, and suffered from health problems as they adjusted to a new place. The Judsons' first child, Roger, was born, but he died only eight months later. His death saddened Ann and Adoniram deeply. Still, Ann worked with her husband to translate the Bible into the language of the Burmese people. She learned the language quickly since she talked with their servants and townspeople about her daily work.

Writing in the Burmese Language



She eventually translated the books of Daniel, Jonah, and Matthew for the Burmese Bible.

Ann became famous for the many letters she wrote back home to ask for support. Her letters were read in

homes and churches, and they told interesting stories about day-to-day life in Burma. Her letters and her visit to the United States in 1822 helped many Baptists learn about missions and encouraged them to support the Judsons and other missionaries.

Ann and Adoniram worked patiently. After six long years, Adoniram baptized the first Burmese Christian. After ten years, only eighteen Burmese had become Christians. Ann and Adoniram did not grow discouraged by the slow response of the people. They knew that being a Christian was dangerous, because the Burmese emperor had threatened to kill anyone who accepted the new religion. Nonetheless, they kept telling people about the one true God and God's son, Jesus Christ. They soon organized a Baptist church in Burma.

During a war between Burma and Great Britain, Adoniram was captured and put in prison. Ann worked for his freedom, writing letters to the government. She paid \$100 for permission to see him, and she walked two miles to the prison and back each day. She secretly exchanged notes with him in the spout of the teapot that she took to the prison each day.

Ann worried that Adoniram's translation of the New Testament into the Burmese language would be found and destroyed while he was in prison. She buried the manuscript in the garden at their home. Later, Adoniram asked her to dig it up and bring it to him. She hid it in "an old looking pillow, so hard that no jailer would ever want



Ann visiting Adoniram in prison

to steal it," so that Adoniram could sleep with it and protect it. When Ann delivered their second child, a baby girl, she missed visiting her husband for a few weeks. When baby Maria was only three weeks old, her mother took her to the prison to visit her daddy.

After spending nineteen months in prison, Adoniram was allowed to return home, and the Judsons set up a new mission in another city. Adoniram sought the Burmese government's permission to open the mission. While he was away working to set up that mission, Ann got sick with a fever and died. Baby Maria died six months later. These two difficult deaths depressed Adoniram, but he continued to work on his New Testament translations and preached to

the people.

Although she was Baptist only for a short while before her early death, Ann Hasseltine Judson painted a new portrait for Baptist missions. She served as one of the first American Baptist missionaries overseas, and she was the first female missionary sent by Americans to another country. Ann proved that a woman could serve as a missionary just as effectively as her husband could. Her letters and visits taught Baptists to believe in her and in the importance of missions.

In Burma, the Judsons launched a work that was continued until 1966, when the Burmese government ordered all missionaries to leave. Even so, a strong collection of Burmese Baptist churches continued what the Judsons started—sharing the message of Christ with the people there. Today, Burma is called Myanmar. Baptists are the largest group of Christians in that country, largely due to the work that Adoniram and Ann Judson began.

The Judsons opened the eyes of American Baptists with regard to missions, giving them a reason to start the Triennial Convention. Since that convention began in 1814, Baptist groups have sent and supported thousands of missionaries who have continued the work of Ann and Adoniram in Burma and around the world. Baptists around the world, but especially in Burma, can declare that Ann Judson is a Baptist hero.

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Written by Julie Whidden Long, this 128-page book, designed especially for younger youth and older children, presents the stories of Baptist heroes. These heroes lived in various countries and centuries and represent many phases of Baptist life. By highlighting the biographical dimension of the Baptist past, these inspiring stories help readers appreciate the personal contributions of heroic Baptist men and women.



Rev. Julie Whidden Long is the pastor of First Baptist Church of Christ in Macon, Georgia. She previously served as minister of children and families (2005–2013) and associate pastor (2013–2018) at FBCX Macon. Additionally, Rev. Long was the associate director of Baptist Women in Ministry (2018–2019) and launched a coaching and consulting practice in 2020. A native of Fitzgerald, Georgia, she is a two-time graduate of Mercer University, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in Christianity and History from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 2002 and a Master of Divinity from McAfee School of Theology in 2005. She is married to Jody Long, executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia, and they have two children.