

John G Paton

The group of Islands that come towards the north of Australia is called New Hebrides. The people who lived here were barbarians and cannibals until the 18th century. A missionary by the name John William had been to this Island to share the gospel. The people there killed him and ate his flesh. When people came in search of him, only his bones were returned to them. This incident that took place in 1839 shocked the world. It also challenged the Christians living in British and Scotland. 12 youngsters rose up and said that they would go to the same spot as missionaries again. John Paton was one among them.

John Paton was born in the year 1824 to a poor Christian family in Scotland. His Godly father was a business man. For almost ten years Paton ministered with a true burden of souls in the place where he stayed. A missionary from the reformed 'Presbyterian Church' informed John Paton about the pathetic condition of the people at New Hebrides and the desperate need of the gospel among them. The Holy Spirit inspired Paton to surrender himself for this seemingly perilous task. John Paton stood up and committed himself for this work of the Gospel. Many who heard this discouraged Paton rather than encouraging him. But the parents of Paton joyfully sent him to be a missionary. In the year 1858, John Paton along with his newlywed wife Mary Ann started his journey towards New Hebrides.

The tribal people who lived in this island were those daring to do cruel things without any sense of humanity. They would eat the flesh of people. They feared evil spirits and sought their aid. They worshipped the evil spirits out of fear and made images from woods and stones to worship them. They did witchcraft to please the evil spirits. The sorceress and diviners had much respect in such a corrupted society. When the husband dies, they would strangle the wife to death and bury her along with the husband. When aged people become a burden to the family, they would kill them. They had never heard about the name of Jesus Christ.

After they reached New Hebrides, within a year, a boy baby was born to them. When the baby was three weeks old, his wife died of a viral fever. Within a week after that, even the baby died. He buried his wife and his child with his own hands. Paton who was in exceeding pain said that he would've lost his mind if not for the fellowship he had with the

Lord Jesus Christ. His life was always at stake. The tribal people stole all of his belongings. Once, two diviners tried to kill Paton by their witchcraft. But, when all their efforts failed, they wanted to know more about this Jesus.

He worked at an island called Aniwa. The people there accepted him gladly. The ministry was established and even the village chief accepted the Lord Jesus Christ. He taught people to cover their nakedness by clothing. He taught them about the importance of education. The entire island of Aniwa turned to the Lord. In the year 1899, Paton released the copy of the New Testament translated in the Anewa language. After 10 years of extreme struggle, the Gospel penetrated to all the nearby islands. By his earnest efforts, two orphanages, schools and many churches were built. A separate school was built exclusively for girls. He also established a bible college to train people into ministry. He spent his last years in the same place and translated the entire bible in the Anewa language. At the age of 83, on 28th January 1907, he went on to be with the Lord.