



No.30 Mary Magdalene - Loved beyond words!

Matthew 27:56-61; Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:9-11; John 20:11-18

It is amazing that we finish this series with Mary Magdalene. She had the closest relationship with Jesus, just like Eve had at the beginning and is a fantastic example to all of us. We need to acknowledge all we have been set free from, **John 8:31-32; John 8:36; Romans 8:1-2**. Having done that we need to have a daily intimate relationship with Jesus, not returning to our past but building on all He has done and recognising that without Him we are nothing. Just as Eve was so thrilled to walk with God

in the Garden I am sure Mary Magdalene was just as thrilled to see Jesus, especially after the Cross.

Mary Magdalene's story is very closely linked with Jesus. We know very little about Mary herself as the Bible provides no personal details of her age, status or family. She certainly plays a lead role in the most powerful and important parts of Jesus' life on the earth. Mary Magdalene is the leader of a group of female disciples believed to have been present at the Cross after the male disciples, except John, had fled during His arrest and false conviction of blasphemy, also at His burial. Mary was a devoted follower of Jesus, entering into the close circle of those taught by Jesus during his Galilean ministry. She became prominent during the last days, accompanying Jesus during His travels and following Him to the end. 'These women were helping to support them out of their own means', **Luke 8:1-3**

Mary Magdalene is the only person named by three gospels as a witness to all three of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. **Mark 15:40, Matthew 27:56** and **John 19:25** mention Mary Magdalene as a witness to the crucifixion, along with various other women. **Luke 23:55** mentions "women who had followed Him from Galilee" standing at a distance.

In listing witnesses who saw where Jesus was buried by Joseph of Arimathea, **Mark 15:47** and **Matthew 27:61** both name only two people: Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary", who in Mark is "the mother of James".

In Matthew, Mark, and John, Mary Magdalene is the first witness to the Resurrection. **John 20:16** and **Mark 16:9** both says that Jesus' first post-resurrection appearance was to Mary Magdalene alone. Mary's role as a witness is unusual because women at that time were not considered credible witnesses in legal proceedings. The gospels of Mark and Luke record that the rest of the disciples did not believe Mary's report of what she saw, 'it seemed to them like nonsense'. In **Luke 24:4** the resurrection is announced to the women at the tomb by "two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning" who suddenly appeared next to them. **Mark 16** describes when Cleopas and an unnamed disciple walked with a fellow traveler they later realized was Jesus, which happened after the private appearance to Mary Magdalene. Neither Mary Magdalene nor any of the other women are mentioned by name in Paul's catalogue of appearances in **1 Corinthians 15**. In fact Paul writes that Jesus "appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve". After her disbelieved first report of a resurrection vision, Mary Magdalene disappears from the New Testament. She is not mentioned in **Acts**, and nothing more is written about her.

Among the women who are specifically named in the New Testament, Mary Magdalene's name is one of the most common. In **Matthew 27:56**, we find that the author names three women in sequence: "Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children." In Mark, he lists a group of women three times, and each time, Mary Magdalene's name appears first.

Finally, in the Gospel of Luke, the author shares the women who went to the tomb of Jesus, writing that, "It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them," which once again place Mary Magdalene at the head of the list. Because over and over Mary Magdalene's name is placed at the head of specifically name women, indicating her importance. As a result, it can be argued that Mary Magdalene must have held a very central position among the followers of Jesus, whether as a disciple or in some other capacity.

Her name, Mary Magdalene, suggests that she came from a town called Magdala. There is a place today called Magdala, 120 miles north of Jerusalem on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Its main business was fishing so as a woman living in Magdala, Mary may have worked in the fish markets. It was part of the Roman Empire, which placed a heavy tax burden on families, and often women paid the heaviest price. However, her name, Mary 'of Magdala', could suggest she was unmarried. A married woman would have carried her husband's name and Mary didn't. Unmarried women 2000 years ago were viewed with suspicion.

Perhaps this isolated Mary, but it wouldn't fully account for the negative image many have given her. It is possible that the description of Magdala as a place of fornication is the origin of the idea that arose in western Christianity that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute.

The whole story of Mary as a prostitute, who is fallen and redeemed, is a very powerful image of redemption, a signal that no matter how low we have fallen, we can be bought back by Jesus. Powerful as this image may be, it is not the story of Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene is mentioned in each of the four gospels in the New Testament, but not once does it mention that she was a prostitute or a sinner. At some point Mary Magdalene became confused with two other women in the Bible: Mary, the sister of Martha, and the unnamed sinner in Luke's gospel (**Luke 7:36-50**) both of whom wash Jesus' feet with their hair.

Possession

The Word tells us that Jesus cast seven demons out of Mary, **Luke 8:2 and Mark 16:9**. What could have caused her to be in this position? There are so many ways that demons have access and take up residence in our spirit.

- There are the obvious ways of us getting involved in occult practices which God's Word is so clear about, 'Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God', **Leviticus 19:31**.
- If we are born again of the Holy Spirit then demons have the ability to cling onto us and hold us back in our growth and relationship with the living God, but it is not possible to be demon possessed as the Holy Spirit will not live in our heart with any demons. Our flesh is affected but our spirit is sealed by the Holy Spirit.
- Situations happen and our ungodly response allows access to demon activity in our lives. For example we are offended by someone and that gives root to bitterness which we hold onto and it restricts us in other relationships and we do not love as Jesus loves.

Demon activity can be seen like a tree, there are several roots which then have branches that can then affect our behaviour and reactions. For example fear can be a very strong root with several branches causing us to respond negatively when things are spoken or seen in every area of our lives. Fear can have entered our lives when we are in the uterus but as the Holy Spirit leads as our counsellor, we can pray and He will highlight when we received any of the demons plans and break off his work in the Name of Jesus, **Matthew 16:19**. If we are not confident of praying in this way ask another mature Christian to pray with us. Remember the protection is in the Blood of Jesus and the power is in the Name of Jesus along with fasting **Mark 9:29**. Getting rid of the root cause is often more powerful than dealing with the symptoms and cuts off several branches at the same time. When Jesus looked on Mary in her deranged state, He saw by faith the wonderful minister He would need on His journey. He saw her heart not just her outward appearance, He saw her potential. He felt angry at what a mess the demons had made of her, He knew the power He had to change her life and her future.

What ever weakness Mary may have had that made it easier for demons to enter is not stated in the text. But we do know that when they met Jesus they were no match for Him as He declared 'He had come to destroy the works of the devil', **1 John 3:8**. At that time, people believed that the demons possessed people had done something wrong, and deserved to be possessed, whereas good, virtuous people were protected from demon possession. This does not seem to be the case for Mary as she was a single woman of means. Jesus was known as an exorcist. In all the gospels examples are given of Jesus speaking to demons, taking authority over them and setting people free from their influence. The exorcisms and healings probably go together with the teaching and preaching that the kingdom of God is at hand.

For Mary her deliverance seems to be the catalyst which makes her become a follower of Jesus, which was always His aim in deliverance ministry. The message that Jesus preached seems to have particular appeal for people who are on the margins of society.

When Jesus is crucified by the Romans, Mary Magdalene was there supporting Him in His final terrifying moments and mourning His death. She also discovers the empty tomb, and she's a witness to the resurrection. What a testimony for someone who had been an outcast because of her mental state and yet completely restored by one Word from Jesus. She was there at the beginning of a movement that was going to transform the whole world, and of which we are part today.

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Read all the notes about Mary Magdalene - Loved beyond words

1. What spoke to you in the notes? Describe what you think Mary's lifestyle must have been like after she met Jesus?
2. Are there any changes you plan on making yourself, having studied this amazing woman?
3. What encouragement do you receive from this story about 'demon possession'?

Looking back over the previous 30 studies which woman or women:-

4. Blessed you most? Why?
5. Challenged you most? Why?
6. Did you understand her behaviour or response?
7. Did you NOT understand her behaviour or response?
8. Write down the lessons you have learnt and the changes you have made during this time.
9. What areas are you still working on?
10. Reflect on how you feel about God writing all these stories in the Bible for us and how the Holy Spirit has made them relevant to us today.