

# Mary of Magdala

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

## Introduction:

- A. Luke 8:1-3
- B. In the New Testament, Mary Magdalene is distinguished from other women named Mary as Mary (or Miriam) of Magdala (Migdal or the Tower), a fishing village on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. She was healed by Jesus from possession by seven demons.
- C. She is described in the New Testament as a devoted disciple of Jesus. She was one of many women that accompanied Jesus and the Twelve during His travels. Mary was at the cross and watched Jesus die, she sat and kept a vigil at His tomb, she was the first to witness the resurrected Christ, and was sent to tell the apostles the basic tenet of the faith -- that Jesus had risen.
  - 1. Matt. 27:55-56, 59-61; John 20:1-2, 11-18
  - 2. This is the last mention in the gospel accounts of Mary Magdalene, who returned to Jerusalem. She is probably included in the group of women who joined the Apostles in the Upper Room in Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension. (Acts 1:14) According to tradition, she departed to Ephesus with Theotokos (Mary, the mother of Jesus), where she died.
- D. Contrary to popular belief and historical Catholic Church doctrine, nowhere does the Bible say that she was a prostitute or had an intimate relationship with Jesus or any of the apostles. This view is attributed to Pope Gregory who misidentified her as an immoral woman and a meretrix or prostitute.
  - 1. Textual critics of the German school of liberalism 200 years ago in an effort to discredit Jesus, called her a prostitute that became a secret wife of Jesus. Martin Scorsese popularized this myth in his irreverent waste of film called The Last Temptation of Christ. Dan Brown promoted this in his waste paper book called the DaVinci Code
  - 2. Mary Magdalene is not the "sinful woman" depicted in Luke 7:36-50. It has similarities with another story of Jesus being anointed by Mary of Bethany near the end of his ministry and is often confused with it.
- E. Catholic traditions regarding Mary Magdalene
  - 1. Mary Magdalene is often portrayed holding a red Easter egg with the words Christ is Risen. For centuries, it has been the custom of many Christians to share dyed and painted eggs, particularly on Easter Sunday. The eggs represent new life, and Christ bursting from the tomb
  - 2. She is considered the patron saint of the contemplative life, converts, glove makers, hairdressers, penitent sinners, people ridiculed for their piety, perfumeries, pharmacists, tanners, women
  - 3. She is a central figure in later ersatz apocryphal Gnostic writings, including the Dialogue of the Savior, the Pistis Sophia, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Philip, and the Gospel of Mary

## **I. SHE WAS DESPERATE**

### **A. Luke 8:2**

1. The physical or mental effects occurring as a consequence of being possessed by a demon were varied. Some demoniacs were afflicted with blindness or the inability to speak (Matt. 9:32; 12:22). Some might be prone to violent convulsions.
  2. In three Gospel accounts, a young man had a demon that generated seizures. He suffered grievously, frequently falling into the fire or into water (Matt. 17:15). He was thrown to the ground and bruised badly (Mark 9:18; Luke 9:39); he foamed at the mouth, ground his teeth, and wasted away (Mark 9:18). This may suggest that his body became rigid so that he was incapable of motion (Arndt & Gingrich, 550)
  3. A demon-possessed man lived among the tombs on the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee had excessive strength. He had been bound with chains, but had broken the restraints into pieces, and no one could calm him (Acts 19:16). Further, he was characterized by both emotional illness and antisocial behavior (he wore no clothes Luke 8:27), but when Christ cast the demon from him, he was observed clothed, and in his right mind (Mark 5:15).
  4. If that is what a demon can do to a man, what did 7 of them do to Mary?
- B. She illustrates our condition in sin - Eph. 2:1-3, 12

## **II. SHE WAS DELIVERED**

### **A. Jesus had the authority and power of God in this world**

1. Power over diseases and physical ailments (Matt. 9:20-22).
  2. Authority over material objects (Matt. 14:15-21).
  3. Control over the elements of nature (Matt. 8:23-27).
  4. Suspended the force of gravity (Matt. 14:22-23).
  5. Power over death (Matt. 9:18-26).
- B. He would certainly have power over the minions of Satan, an Adversary weaker than Jesus; minions who could have done nothing to humankind if God did not permit it for a time and a purpose
1. He has the power to release us - Eph. 2:4-6; 2Cor. 5:17
  2. Imagine the confusion and terror she experienced with the voices of seven demons all making demands of her at once; imagine the peace she experienced the moment the Lord banished those voices; no wonder she gave her life to the Lord
  3. When He removed our sins and voice of guilt shouting in our minds, why have so many of us fallen short of Mary's gratitude?

## **III. SHE WAS DEVOTED**

### **A. Her devotion is seen in her finances - Luke 8:2-3**

1. Are we like Mary, or Judah? - Mal. 3:8-10
- B. Her devotion is seen in how she followed - Nearly everywhere Jesus went teaching in the Gospel accounts, Mary Magdalene was nearby.

1. She followed Him to Calvary and watched as He died, John 19:25. She followed His body to the tomb and remained there, Matt. 27:55-61.
  2. In other words, she went as far as was humanly possible.
  3. How far will we go to follow Him? I don't mean what we sing in songs; I mean what we have done, because is an indicator of what we are willing to do - Matt. 6:33, 16:24
- C. Her devotion is seen in her faithfulness - When all the others had gone away Mary Magdalene was still there. When the women and the disciples found the tomb of Jesus empty, everyone went away except for Mary. She stayed behind and became the first to encounter the risen Jesus. That was her reward for faithfully waiting for Jesus - John 20:11-18
1. When others are walking away and leaving standing alone in the cemetery, are you going to stay and wait for the Lord? - Rev. 2:10

Conclusion:

- A. Isn't it ironic that the first person to see the resurrected Savior and Son of God, and the first person to announce His resurrection to the apostles, an event for which the world had been waiting since the Garden of Eden, was a woman who had formerly been demon possessed?
  1. Isn't that a delicious poke in the eye for the Victorian attitudes of some men in the Lord's Church today?
- B. "Mary Magdalene was content to wait on the Lord without the notice of others. She was the kind of person who would do the dishes at the Last Supper."  
(David Markson)
- C. "As we read, ponder, and pray, there will come into our minds a view of the three gardens of God: the Garden of Eden, the Garden of Gethsemane, and the Garden of the Empty Tomb where Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene."  
(Bruce R. McConkie)