



**Jesus & Mary Magdalene**  
**GCSP – 04/07/2007**

I was raised in a church in Illinois that sent their young people to a week of church camp every summer. I never attended the junior camps but I did go every year during my high school years. If you never experienced church camp, you missed out.

We would arrive at camp on a Monday morning or afternoon and head back home on Friday some time. There were plenty of sports and activities, a lot of hellfire and brimstone preaching, a good dose of guilt-ridden teaching, and an abundance of really bad food. Some of the speakers were adept at getting the teens to make commitments they really were not committed to and some were more in tune with simply helping the teens on their journey to spiritual maturity.

The culmination of youth camp came on Thursday night. A large bonfire would be lit and we would all gather around. It was sometimes an emotional gathering. Tears would flow over sin issues repented of, over saying goodbye to friends from other churches you would not see again until next year's camp, and some were even tears of joy over salvation experiences and rededicating your life to Christ. But for most of the teens, the bonfire was about only one thing – getting a "date" to attend with you.

I was a pretty naïve teenager and my first youth camp was freshmen year. Up until this point in my life, I had never been on a date – unless you count my older cousin bringing me along with him, his girlfriend, and his girlfriend's younger sister, to watch Kelly's Heroes at the movie theatre the previous year. The pressure to get a date for the bonfire was overwhelming for a fragile and innocent youth such as myself.

Some of the guys talked me into asking a certain girl in our youth group. Not only was this girl popular, she was a sophomore! Little did I know I was being thrown to the lions. All day on Wednesday I agonized over asking this girl to go to the bonfire with me. I finally managed to get alone that evening and nervously got the words to come out of my mouth. My lip was twitching and I am sure I was sweating, but I finally said the words; "Will you go to the bonfire with me?"

She looked me in the eyes, leaned forward slightly, and said, "No!"

The blood drained from my head, my throat tightened, I felt queasy and weak-kneed, I hung my head, and I walked back to my cabin. I had been rejected! Life was over as I knew it. It is a miracle of God that I ever spoke to a girl again. There was no way I ever wanted to feel like that again.

Ladies, I don't know if you ever realized how much power you had back in those days. You could literally crush a guy's spirit and will to live with that little word, "No."

How many of you have experienced rejection before? It still has a tremendous affect today. I still have a twinge of some of those same responses my body had, as a 13-year old at youth camp, when I get a letter back from the credit card companies telling me I can't have a VISA card. I'm not good enough for them. I'm rejected.

Tonight, in our annual look at the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, I am going to look at a different aspect of the account. Along with looking at the Lord Jesus Christ, we are also going to zero in on another one who had experienced rejection and scorn, but who also found love and acceptance – her name is Mary Magdalene.

Before we dive into this tremendous story, let's pray.

Let me begin by telling you a little about Mary, and in the process, clear up some lies and misconceptions about her.

Magdalene was not Mary's last name, but was simply a designation of the town she was from; the town of Magdala.

Mary was not a prostitute, contrary to how the Catholic Church labeled her in 14<sup>th</sup> century. It was during this time that the church identified Mary Magdalene as the sinful woman in **Luke 7:37**. There is absolutely no evidence that this woman is Mary, and it would take a rather large and unsubstantiated assumption to even place her in the same town at this time in biblical history. But not only did the pope of that time make this assumption, when the church established homes for wayward women of the day, the first being in Naples in 1324, they called them "Magdalene Houses." From that time, the term Magdalene became synonymous with prostitution.

Mary was also not married to Jesus, nor did she have a child by Jesus, as you have been led to believe in the fictional novel, "The DaVinci Code" – the key there being, fictional novel. Leonardo DaVinci did not paint Mary sitting next to Jesus in his famous painting of the last supper and Jesus did not intend for her to be the leader of the church. And just about everything else you may read about her in Dan Brown's novel is complete fiction with not even a hint of factual basis for his story. Again, the key being, it is a fictional novel. If we are going to start believing fiction as fact, then maybe David took a sling and a stone, and killed Paul Bunyan instead of Goliath. Hmm, maybe there's a book and movie deal in my future if I develop that thought.

What we do know about Mary comes from the only reliable source we have – God's Word. So let's look at a few passages that will help us understand a little about this woman.

Chronologically, the first mention we have of Mary is in **Luke 8:2**.

### **Luke 8:1-3**

We immediately learn many things about Mary from this one account.

- She traveled with Jesus and the twelve disciples, at least during His Galilean ministry, as He was "**proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God**" (NASB). Mary was a devoted follower and disciple of Jesus. She had the privilege of learning from the Master in person. The wisdom she gleaned and the miracles she witnessed place her in a very select group of people who have ever walked this earth.
- She was a woman who had been possessed by seven demons. As I mentioned last week, demon possession was and still is real. Those who were demon possessed in that time, were outcasts. They were left to live in the streets or in the countryside. They were shunned and rejected by the overwhelming majority of society. Demon possession typically meant living the life of a raving lunatic.

The demons would often cause the person being possessed to cause great harm to their bodies and to bring great shame to their lives by ripping their clothes off and running around naked, bruised, and bleeding. We do not know if these specific issues happened to Mary, but we have other accounts in Scripture of the condition of those who were demon possessed, so it is quite possible, or even likely the same things happened to Mary.

She would have been rejected, ridiculed, and scorned by those around her, and even friends and family. The fact that she followed Jesus freely probably meant there was nobody at home that wanted her, and it also means she had to be single.

- She was apparently a woman of some financial means. Mary, along with many others, financially supported Jesus as He traveled from town to town. In **Matthew 27:55** and in **Mark 15:41**, Mary is named as part of a group of women, "**who had followed Him and cared for His needs.**" Magdala was a wealthy town, known for its textile and dye works, so it is possible Mary came from a family of means or she had become prosperous on her own working with fabrics and dyes.

However it is she came about having money, she used her money to help care for the needs of Jesus. Remember the words of Jesus, when addressing a teacher of the law who desired to follow Him: "**Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head**" (**Matthew 8:20** – NIV). Jesus was dependent upon others for food, shelter, and His other financial needs, as He did the work of the ministry God gave Him to do, much like the pastors of today, are primarily supported by those in the churches they minister in.

The Scripture indicates and implies, Mary had a major role in financially supporting Jesus and His ministry.

The next mention we have of Mary in Scripture takes place at the death and at the resurrection of Jesus. All four gospel accounts mention Mary.

- Matthew mentions her at the tomb, when Joseph of Arimathea buried Jesus there, and then he speaks of her at the tomb when Jesus had risen from the dead.
- Mark mentions Mary, along with some other women, watching the events of the crucifixion, and also at the tomb when He was buried, and at the tomb after He rose from the dead.
- Luke only mentions her at the tomb after the resurrection.
- John mentions her near the cross with Jesus' mother, Mary, two other women, and John the disciple. John also gives the account of Mary Magdalene at the tomb after the resurrection, and the account of the risen Jesus showing Himself to Mary first, and telling her to go tell the other disciples He was alive.

So let's turn to John's gospel, since he gives us more information than the others concerning Mary, and see what else we can learn about her.

### **John 19:25-42**

Matthew and Mark add to this account that Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, followed Joseph and Nicodemus to the tomb and witnessed the burial of Jesus.

We learn a little more about Mary based on these accounts:

- She loved Jesus deeply. How many are risking their lives by even approaching the cross of Christ? The Bible only lists five. John is the only representative of the twelve apostles – all the others have fled for their lives – and four women stand alone at the foot of the cross. One is Jesus' mother, one is His aunt, one is someone we only know as Mary the wife of Clopas, and the other is Mary Magdalene. Mary Magdalene, along with these four others, represent the only ones willing to risk their lives for Jesus at this time.

- She was devoted to Jesus. She went to the tomb to see this horrific event through to the end.

I still remember my wife at the grave of our oldest son, Clint, arranging the flowers and smoothing out the dirt, after it had been filled in over his casket. She was there to the very end taking care of her boy.

This was Mary. She was so devoted, she had to be there for every last detail of Jesus' existence. She had to know with her eyes exactly where He was buried.

### **John 20:1**

Mark (**16:1**) and Luke (**24:1**) tell us that Mary and another came to the tomb after the Sabbath with more spices to anoint the body of Jesus. Spices were used in much the same way embalming is used today – to preserve the body for as long as possible. Mary could not bear the thought of Her Lord's body decaying. Although she had no idea how she would be able to move the stone from the front of the tomb, as Mark records for us (**16:3**), she was going and bringing her spices nonetheless.

This tells us Mary was a woman of faith. She acted without knowing how her goal would be accomplished. But as we read, the stone was already rolled away.

### **John 20:2-10**

Mary, after seeing the empty tomb, runs to tell the disciples. She only finds Peter and John, who quickly run back to the tomb to verify what Mary had told them. After the investigation, both Peter and John return to their homes; Peter still confused and uncertain, John believing with a glimmer of hope.

But what of Mary?

### **John 20:11**

Mary stays at the tomb. She doesn't know what to think, say, or do – except weep. She is heartbroken yet again. Not only has her Deliverer, Master, and Lord been cruelly murdered, but now His body has been taken away too. She can't even come and visit His burial place now. In despair, she stoops down and looks one more time into the tomb.

### **John 20:12-13**

This is fascinating. I don't know how many of you have ever seen two angels, knowing they were angels, and then carry on a conversation with them. Mary did. She didn't care. Now in Luke's account (**24:5**) it says Mary bowed down before the angels, but no matter, she was still focused on finding the body of her Lord even in the presence of angels. Mary had determination.

### **John 20:14-15**

The Bible does not tell us how big or how strong Mary was, but let's be realistic, she most likely could not carry or drag the body of Jesus anywhere, but she was willing to any and everything to take care of her Lord and Savior.

## **John 20:16-17**

Can you even begin to imagine the emotions that are shooting through Mary at this point? From unbearable weeping and despair to unimaginable joy and excitement in the blink of an eye. He's alive! He's alive! Praise God He's alive! And she falls at His feet and wraps her arms around them.

Here stands the man who delivered her from the torment of having seven demons possessing and ruling her life. This is the man who accepted her, loved her, encouraged her, and called her one of His own, when all the world rejected her, and ridiculed her, and scorned her, and cast her away. He's alive!

Then Jesus makes a stupendous statement. In telling Mary to deliver a message to His disciples, he also tells her, that the Father is her Father; that God is her God. Mary, rejected, ridiculed, outcast Mary is a child of God. Forgiven of all her many sins, accepted into the family of heaven, unconditionally loved by the Savior of the world.

Mary became a woman of privilege. If it was not apparent enough in John's account, Mark flatly states, "**He appeared first to Mary Magdalene**" (**16:9** - NIV).

Beloved, I know many of you have experienced tremendous rejection, ridicule, and scorn in your life. Your past may be shaded with many events and choices you are not proud of. There may be parts of the country where you choose to not be seen in because of shame and dishonor. You sat here tonight, and you identified with the rejection and shame Mary experienced – and you don't have to be a woman to identify with Mary.

The same Jesus who lifted Mary's head, can lift yours tonight. You can hold your head high in the forgiveness and privilege that is yours through Christ if you would only believe. In the verse we just read, when Jesus spoke Mary's name and she recognized the voice of her Lord and Savior, you can substitute your name, for He is calling you just the same tonight.

He is calling for you to forget about your past; forget about how you have treated Jesus before; forget about your unbelief, and instead, realize the truth of the resurrection, accept His forgiveness, and live with knowledge of eternal life in heaven with Mary's Lord and your Lord, Mary's Father and your Father, Mary's God and your God.

Let's pray.