

## MARY MAGDALENE

The people who followed Jesus came from many backgrounds. Some from the business world, such as the fishermen Simon, Andrew, James, and John ... and Matthew worked for the authorities as a tax-collector. Another Simon belonged to a nationalist political group known as the Zealots. Luke the Gospel writer was a medical doctor, Barnabas was a landowner, Saul of Tarsus was a rabbi. They came from various regions, for example, Barnabas from Cyprus, Paul from central Turkey. There were also people from the other end of the social scale like Bartimaeus, Legion the demon-possessed man, and Mary Magdalene.

What would it have been like to meet Jesus? Some people met Him simply to take advantage of His healing powers, - they were healed, and they were gone! ... Others had made up their minds to hate Him even before they had met Him. ... But some others deeply loved His company. Some like the woman who made her way through the crowds to touch the hem of His garment ... and another woman who washed His feet at the meal ... or Zacchaeus who invited Jesus to his home.

One of His most faithful followers was a woman whose life was changed when she met Him. Mary Magdalene was her name. ... 'Mary' was a very popular name of course. ... His mother was called Mary; Martha and Lazarus' sister was called Mary (of Bethany); another Mary was at the cross; John Mark's mother was called Mary; and Paul greeted a Mary in the church at Rome (Rom. 16:6).

Mary Magdalene came from a busy prosperous fishing and trade town on the west coast of the Sea of Galilee known as Magdala, three miles to the north of Tiberias, the provincial capital of that region. ... She became one of the most devoted followers of the Lord Jesus.

**Mary identified with THE CAUSE OF CHRIST**      Lk. 8:1 And it came to pass afterward, that he [*Jesus*] went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, <sup>2</sup> And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils <sup>3</sup> And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance. ... After the twelve disciples, Mary Magdalene is the first woman mentioned in this list of women. That illustrates how respected she was. However, she wasn't always a woman who was respected for Jesus had found her when she had been at the bottom of

society. In fact, Pope Gregory I in 591 AD gave his opinion that she was a prostitute (591 AD). He may or may not be correct for there is neither historical nor Biblical evidence to support such a claim, but what we *do* know is that before Christ met her, her life was not her own for she was demon-possessed. She was in an absolute mess!

Demon possession simply means being possessed by a demon or demons. Is it plausible to believe such a thing, or is it fantasy? ... Let's answer the question starting from another angle ... As a Christian, *you are possessed* by the Holy Spirit, **I Cor. 6:19** *know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you...?* ... When you became a Christian, God the Holy Spirit came to 'dwell' in you, **II Cor. 6:16** *for ye are the temple of the living God ...* and Paul also adds, **Eph. 3:17** *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ...* As the chorus says, "It's no longer I that liveth, but Christ that liveth in me" ... You are God's possession ... *possessed* of God.

Scripture teaches Satan has an intractable craving to be like God, - to imitate God ... and just as God possesses His children, the devil also possesses his ... and that is what constitutes demon possession. Demon possession introduces a number of issues to consider, but as far as our present study of Mary Magdalene is concerned, she was *possessed* by no less than seven demons, evil and malicious, ruining and running her life. They turned her into one of the most wretched women in the town of Magdala. She was not her own for she was under the control of *devils*.

There is a God in Heaven Who is holy and pure ... there is also a devil who opposes Him and everything He has made. Now, the devil is not confined, - he is not incarcerated or imprisoned. In fact, far from it because *your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour* (I Peter 5:8). ... And whatever God is determined to do, the devil wants to disrupt, and one of the ways he is most successful is by trying to imitate God *for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light* (II Cor. 11:14). The devil is as corrupt, vile, evil, destructive, malicious ... and a host of other similar adjectives ... and he would love to be as God, but he never will! ... He doesn't have the power God has and he is restricted to work within the scope God permits.

The devil cannot be everywhere, as God can, so he uses demons. And he doesn't know everything, as God does. He is not eternal either for God created him ... You might ask why God created him ... I must confess I

do not know, but He did (cf. Is. 14), and I know the devil is no match for God for Jesus had previously cast the seven demons out of this woman. ... God freed Mary Magdalene from the grip of Satan and saved her! And that is exactly how the Lord saves every sinner, as Paul explained, **Eph. 2:4** God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, **5** Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved). ... One day, Jesus went to this town to find this woman, and through His grace, He set her free from demonic possession and He gave her a brand new life with Him in the centre.

And **she identified with the cause of Christ** for she became His follower, - she was not ashamed of Him. She didn't *use* Him to get out of her old life and then abandon Him. ... She didn't pick Him up and then drop Him! There was nothing seedy, nor sleazy about her for she loved Jesus with a pure and perfect love gifted to her out of the abundance of God's grace. ... Also ...

**Mary identified with THE CROSS OF CHRIST**      **Jn. 19:25** Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. ... Mary, the mother of Jesus is at the beginning of this verse (rightly so, for emphasis) ... and *this* time the name of Mary Magdalene is at *the end* of the sentence, *also* for emphasis.

Back in Lk. 8:3 Mary Magdalene's life had been changed, and she left her old company and began associating with other women whose lives had been similarly changed. ... She was learning from them, and together they were 'ministering' unto him [*Jesus*] of their *substance*. And the word for 'ministered' is διακονέω, from which we get 'deacon' ... Now, these women weren't a type of early leadership within the church, but it was their privilege to serve ('minister to') the Saviour with what they had, of their *substance* ... their property, their possessions ... What of any earthly value did Mary Magdalene own?! Most likely, very little ... but what she did have, she committed it to the Lord.

Similarly, when we come to the cross, Mary Magdalene was there again with other women *ministering* unto Jesus. That's what they were doing, - they 'ministered' to the Saviour on the cross by their presence. ... Back in Jn. 16:32, Jesus told the disciples they would desert Him when He needed them most, **Jn. 16:32** Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone ... Where

were the disciples at the cross? ... They had abandoned the Saviour, while the women ‘ministered’ to Him in the hour of His greatest need. And among them was Mary Magdalene.

Yes, indeed, women *are* servants of the Lord, together with the men. The New Testament did not include them in leadership, but they are an integral part of the fellowship and us men would be lost in the work without them! ... And here at Calvary, in her service for the Lord, **Mary identified with the cross of Christ**. ... We cannot do any better than to imitate her example ... As a new creation (II Cor. 5:17), she **identified with the cause of Christ and the cross of Christ**. Lastly ...

**Mary identified with THE CONVERSATION ABOUT CHRIST**     Jn. 20:18

Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her. ... The first time we find her in Scripture she was *ministering* to Christ, in the second occasion she was *mourning* at the cross, and on the third occasion she became a *messenger* because she had a message for the disciples! ... Before Peter, or any of the rest of them ... Mary *first* declared the risen Christ! ... And that is the meaning of the word behind ‘told’ (*ἀπαγγέλλω*), to declare, to report, to proclaim, to make known. It is the word the apostle John used at the beginning of his epistle to emphasise his experience, **I Jn. 1:1** That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; **2** (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and *shew* unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) **3** That which we have seen and heard *declare* we unto you ... That’s the force behind the word Mary Magdalene used to tell the disciples about the risen Lord!

When no one else was in the garden beside the tomb, Mary Magdalene, - a converted demon-possessed outcast, - *she* was there, and she was privileged to be the first to meet the resurrected Jesus. ... Then, after the meeting, she rushed from the garden, and along the streets to find the disciples ... and she found them mourning and weeping ... But can you see her as she interrupted their despair? ... Can you see her face *beaming*? She’s ‘glowing’! ... “He’s alive! He’s alive! Jesus is alive!”

Everything we are, I trust, hinges upon what God we believe in, and what He has done for us. Like Mary Magdalene, He has changed our lives. He has given us a new direction, new friends. He is changing us from the

inside out. He has given us an enjoyment we did not have before. ... If you try and explain this to someone who is not saved, they won't understand, ... but when the Lord touches your life and saves you, you willingly hand over all you have and are to Him, as the hymn says,

O wondrous love! so great, so vast, So boundless and so free!  
Low at Thy feet my all I cast; I covet only Thee.

This woman, Mary Magdalene ... Jesus had taken from nothing and had made a new person out of her. She was no longer a stranger to Him, but the closest of friends. He was her reason for living. ... *That* is what being a Christian means, - it is not a 'make-over' on the outside, but a 'take over' from the inside. Being a Christian is not about coming to church, nor doing the best you can. Such things follow on, but the real proof comes by presenting Christ in your life ... just like Mary Magdalene.

Anything less, and your relationship with Him will not work. Trying to live the Christian life half-heartedly is a waste of time. ... Belonging to the Saviour is 'all or nothing'. ... And that is how Mary Magdalene shows us how it works for she could remember when Jesus came to her town and freed her from those demons, and how He took her out of the back streets and raised her up to become His follower. She has a new name now, with a new reputation ... and that is why we are studying her ... Consider again how much has God done for you, ... "For all the Lord has done for me, I never will cease to love Him".

And what entitles you to love Him is no less than why He loved Mary Magdalene for He came and found you too when you didn't know where to look. He saved you by washing away your sins and making you His own. He is keeping you, and He is with you now, as close as any brother, sister, or dearest friend for Mary Magdalene's Jesus is your Friend also,

"All may change, but Jesus never!  
Glory to His Name!"