

## 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, Zacchaeus, 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 who 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 had Jesus in his home.

One of His most faithful followers was a woman whose life was changed when she met Jesus. 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 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. ... Mary Magdalene is the first woman mentioned in this list of women ... after the twelve disciples, *she* is mentioned first. That indicates how respected she was. However, Jesus had found her when she had been at the bottom of society, - in fact, the sixth century

Pope Gregory I aired the view she was a prostitute (591 AD). There is neither historical or Biblical evidence to support his 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 an absolute mess!

Demon possession ... what does that mean? It simply means being possessed by a demon or demons. Is it plausible to believe such a thing? ... Let's consider this 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 become a Christian, God comes to 'dwell' inside you, **II Cor. 6:16** *for ye are the temple of the living God ... Eph. 3:17* *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ... In my heart ...* or as Paul puts it in the previous verse, **16** *That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.* ... In other words, Jesus is at the centre of your life ... You belong to God for you are His possession.

... The opposite of which is demon possession. Demon possession brings up a number of issues to consider, but as far as our present study of Mary Magdalene is concerned, she did not have God living in her life. Instead, she was *possessed* by 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. Mary Magdalene was not her own for she was under the control of *evil*.

There is a God in Heaven Who is holy and pure ... there is also a devil who opposes Him and everything He has made. Whatever God is determined to do, the devil sets out to disrupt. 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 for he is limited to work within the scope God permits. Neither can the devil 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 took Mary Magdalene out of 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 freed her from demonic possession and He gave her a 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 ... and *this* time the name of Mary Magdalene is placed at *the end* of the sentence for emphasis.

Back in Lk. 8:3 Mary Magdalene's life had been changed since Jesus met her, and she had left her old company and was 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 some 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.

Similarly, when we come to the cross ... Mary Magdalene was there again with other women *ministering* unto Jesus. At the foot of the cross, they 'ministered' unto the Saviour as best they could by their presence. ... Back in Jn. 16:32, Jesus had 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 ... The disciples had abandoned Him, while the women 'ministered' to Him at the cross. And among those women 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 ... She **identified with the cause and the cross of**

**Christ** for the old things in her life had gone, - they had been taken away, - and now she was a new creation (II Cor. 5:17). 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 we discover she was a *messenger*! ... She had a message for the disciples! ... Before Peter, or any of the rest of them ... Mary *first* declared the risen Christ!

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 risen Lord. ... 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 shining, - she's 'glowing'? ... "He's alive! He's alive! Jesus is alive!"

Everything we are, I trust, hinges upon what God 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 of Him we did not have before. ... If you try and explain this to someone who is not saved, they won't understand, - they will struggle, - ... but when the Lord touches your life and saves you, you willingly hand all you have and are over 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 wasn't 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, or about doing the best you can. Such things follow on, but the real proof comes from the inside as you present Christ first in your life ... just like Mary Magdalene.

If you fail to do anything less, your relationship with Him will not work. If you try to live the Christian life half-heartedly, - you ‘pick it up and you set it down’, - you are wasting your time. There is no serious commitment comes from a half-hearted Christian ... Belonging to Christ is ‘all or nothing’.

Mary Magdalene shows us how it works for she could remember when Jesus came into her town and freed her from those demons, and how He took her out of the back streets and raised her up and privileged her to become His follower. She has a new name now, and a new reputation ... and that is why we are studying her today ... How much has God done for you ... and do you appreciate it? As the hymnwriter put it, “For all the Lord has done for me, I never will cease to love Him”.

What entitles you to love Him is the same as Mary Magdalene, - He came and found you when you didn’t know where to look, He saved you by washing away your sins, making you His own ... and He is keeping you today. He loved you long before you even thought of or began to love Him. And He is with you now, as close as any brother, sister, or dearest friend. ... All of us have had close friends in the past, but over the years, we have lost contact and we don’t know where they are ... but Mary Magdalene’s Jesus is our Friend Who never leaves us ... He is our Lord, and Master forever,

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