

Bite Size Bible Study

Mary Magdalene #189

By Pastor Lee

We know very little of Mary from the Gospels and nothing from Paul's letters. She is only mentioned 11 times in the Gospel accounts. We know that she traveled with Jesus during His three-year ministry. She is often mentioned with two other women that also traveled with Jesus and His disciples. She is mentioned as being at the crucifixion and at the gravesite when Jesus was raised from the dead. Luke tells us that Jesus healed her of seven demons. Beyond this we have no more information from the Bible.

But we can learn a little more about her by the study of the culture in which she lived.

First we can know that her name was actually Mariam a very popular name among the Jewish people of the time. From the Jewish translations that don't Anglicize the names we find that she was called Mariam of Magdala, meaning that she was from Magdala, an ancient Jewish fishing village on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, 5 km north of Tiberius. It was a center for the fishing trade.

Luke 8 mentions Mary Magdalene as one of the women who traveled with Jesus and helped support his ministry out of their own resources, indicating that she was probably wealthy. This same passage also states that seven demons had been driven out of her.

After this, Yeshua traveled about from town to town and village to village, proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God. With him were the Twelve, ² and a number of women who had been healed from evil spirits and illnesses — Miryam (called Magdalit), from whom seven demons had gone out; Yochanah the wife of Herod's finance minister Kuza; Shoshanah; and many other women who drew on their own wealth to help him.

Luke 8:1-3 CJB

We all have had times when there was something that overwhelmed us. Maybe it was the loss of a job, or the death of a person dear to us. No matter what it was the depression that comes with it occupies our mind and sometimes our body 7/24. We don't call these demons today but they overwhelm us nonetheless.

Just try to multiply one of the times you were in one of these situations and multiply it by 7. This is what Mary of Magdala was experiencing before she was healed.

**Stop here and see if you
can feel and empathize
with what her life was like
before Jesus heals her.**

When Jesus healed her, a great weight was lifted from her and her response to His grace was to follow Him and assist Him wherever she was able.

**Stop again and see if you
can feel and empathize
with how she felt with
this burden removed.**

Paul tells us that we all have sinned. That should cause us to have a great burden and anxiety. But Jesus died and paid for those sins and lifted the burden and that allows us to be free to follow His living example.

For it makes no difference whether one is a Jew or a Gentile, since all have sinned and come short of earning God's praise. By God's grace, without earning it, all are granted the status of being considered righteous before him, through the act redeeming us from our enslavement to sin that was accomplished by the Messiah Yeshua.

Romans 3:23-24 CJB

Mary's faithfulness is shone in all the four canonical gospels; Mary Magdalene was a witness to the crucifixion of Jesus. In Matthew, Mark and Luke; she was also present at his burial. Again in all the four gospels she, either alone or with a group of women, is witness to the empty tomb and Jesus's resurrection.

Mary of Magdalene seems to be an actual person in history as opposed to a fictional character. Some have speculated that Mary was also an illustration of Israel of that era. Israel, as a nation, had lost its way and was no longer representing God. Although they kept the festivals and followed the rituals, it had become an obligation instead of the joy that God had intended it to be. The leaders taught the correct ways but didn't generally live that way themselves. Some groups were separating themselves from the temple and living in other locations. Others were constantly trying, on their own, to overthrow Rome and become an independent nation again.

Jesus once said: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate.

Matthew 23:37-38 NIV

The reality of His lament came true in 70 AD when the temple was destroyed and to the Jewish mind God had left them, because God lived in the Holy of Holies. Only the true Messiah, which they had rejected, could heal the demons within them.