**Research on: Jesus’ Resurrection and Ascension**

Mark 16:9-11, 14, 15, 17-20

***MARY MAGDALENE:***

*The present Mary is distinguished from all others of the same name as “The Magdalene,” which identifies her with her place of birth, just as Jesus was called “The Nazarene” because of His association with Nazareth. Magdala means “tower” or “castle,” and in the time of Christ was a thriving, populous town on the coast of Galilee about three miles from Capernaum. Dye works and primitive textile factories added to the wealth of the community. It may be that “The Magdalene” was connected with the industry of the town for it would seem as if she was not without means, enabling her to serve the Lord with her substance.*

*She is mentioned fourteen times in the gospels, and from references to her we can see clearly what she did and how she did it. A striking feature in eight of the fourteen passages is that Mary is named in connection with other women, but she always heads the list, implying that she occupied the place at the front in service rendered by godly females. In the five times where she is mentioned alone, the connection is with the death and Resurrection of Christ (*[*Mark 16:9; John 20:1, 11, 16, 18*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2016:9,%20John%2020:1,%20John%2020:11,%20John%2020:16,%20John%2020:18)*). In one instance her name comes after that of the mother and the aunt of Jesus. She stood close by the cross with these women, but because of their relation to Jesus it would not have been fitting to put her name before theirs (*[*John 19:25*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2019:25)*).*

*Afflicted with nervousness, she may have been the victim of violent epilepsy, and when Jesus saw her with her peace of mind and control of will destroyed she must have been a revolting object to look at with her disheveled hair, glaring eyes and sunken cheeks. Her demonic possession did not affect her morals, only her mind. Badness of character did not ensue, only the derangement of her mental faculties.*

*Delivered, Mary became a disciple. Freed from satanic bondage she became harnessed to the chariot of the Lord, and her personal ministrations, along with those of other women who had been healed, greatly aided Jesus in His missionary activities as He went from place to place preaching and teaching His message. Grateful, these women became generous, ministering unto Him of their substance. Mary left her home in Magdala to follow Jesus.*

*Constantly on the move as Jesus and His disciples were, there were many details in connection with their personal comfort and well-being requiring attention to which these women could see. Quietly and effectively Mary would do what she knew needed to be done. Further, money was necessary for the Master’s campaign work. We never read of Him or His disciples asking for money, yet funds were necessary. Much of it came from Mary and other women like her who had been so richly blessed of the Lord.*

*Mary was one of the sorrowing group of holy women who stood as near as they could to comfort Jesus by their presence in the closing agonies of the crucifixion (*[*Luke 23:49*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2023:49)*).*

*Last at the cross, where Jesus died as the Lamb of God, Mary Magdalene was also the first at the garden tomb to witness the most important event in world history and the pivotal truth of Christianity, namely the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. What a great honor God conferred upon the faithful Mary Magdalene in permitting her to be the first witness of that Resurrection! (https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/all-women-bible/Mary-Magdalene)*

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“That Jesus was seen by his disciples during the forty days following his resurrection is a fact carefully authenticated and verified by the Gospel writers. By tarrying on earth the Master gave proof of his resurrection. Ten appearances are specifically recorded as having occurred during this period, five of these taking place on the day of Resurrection.

“In each of these five appearances he sounded out the understanding of those to whom he appeared. He found them slow to believe. The acceptance for centuries of the inevitability of death was so predominant that the realization of his living presence was almost beyond their grasp” (Shotwell 329).

“No ‘stone’ set or sealed by the authority of men could keep the Christ entombed, and early in the morning on the first day of the week came Jesus’ glorious resurrection . . . The Resurrection, confirmed by Jesus’ subsequent appearances, revived the fainting faith of the apostles and filled them with renewed spiritual strength and confidence. His physical presence convinced them of his resurrection and he became to them the Risen Christ. This rising gave incontrovertible evidence of the truth of his teachings and authenticated every precept he had uttered” (Shotwell 328).

9 Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.

“*When Jesus was risen early, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene*— “There is something very remarkable in this passage of the history. None of the apostles, or male disciples, were honored with the first visions of the angels, or with the immediate news of Christ’s resurrection, far less with the first appearances of Jesus himself. The angels in the sepulchre kept themselves invisible all the time Peter and John were there. Perhaps the male disciples in general had this mark of disrespect put on them, both because they had with inexcusable and shameful cowardice forsaken their Master when he fell into the hands of his enemies, and because their faith was so weak, that they had absolutely despaired of his being the Messiah when they saw him expire on the cross, [Luke 24:21](http://biblehub.com/luke/24-21.htm). How different was the conduct of the women! Laying aside the weakness and timidity natural to their sex, they showed an uncommon magnanimity in the whole of this melancholy transaction. Hence, in preference to the male disciples, they were honored with the news of Christ’s resurrection, and had their eyes gladdened with the first sight of their beloved Lord after he arose, so that they preached the joyful tidings of his resurrection to the apostles themselves” (Benson Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

“She had gone with the other women to the sepulchre (Mr 16:1), parting from them, perhaps, before their interview with the angel, and on finding Peter and John she had come with them back to the spot; and it was at this second visit, it would seem, that Jesus appeared to this Mary, as detailed in Joh 20:11-18.

To a woman was this honor given to be the first that saw the risen Redeemer; and that woman was not his virgin-mother” (Jamieson 3.214).

“That Jesus chose to make a woman the first witness to his resurrection was the most dramatic confirmation of his belief in her spirituality. He entrusted her with the most significant message of his mission on earth—that he had overcome death—and in so doing paid the highest tribute to her faith and to her love. Above all he held her up as the person most worthy of his trust” (Sergio 106).

“The plan was that the women should return first thing on the Sunday morning to complete the task of burying Jesus properly. Waking before dawn, meeting somewhere in the city, quietly going through the Garden Gate in the city’s wall, they made their way out to the disused quarry—a place now associated in their minds with barbaric torture, political injustice and human tragedy. It was likely to have been a damp, chilly April morning. They were a small group—probably four of them (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and another Mary). They hoped that they would not draw attention to themselves, and that their combined efforts would be sufficient to roll the stone away. Although a tiny expedition, it was destined to become perhaps the most famous of all time. For when they came within sight of the tomb, they could see that the stone had already been rolled away” (Walker 180).

10 And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept.

“Mary found the disciples in a state of mourning. While the people of Jerusalem were celebrating the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples were weeping, but not for long. Her witness to them was that Jesus was alive, and she knew it to be so because she had seen him. The reluctance of the disciples to believe her is certainly understandable. A resurrection is no ordinary event” (*EBC* 8. 789).

11 And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.

“*Believed not.* This is proof that they did not expect his resurrection; proof that they were not easily deceived; and that nothing but the clearest evidence could undeceive them” (Barnes 178).

“The most significant affirmation of woman in the New Testament may well be found in the tradition made prominent in all four Gospels that women were the ones to find the tomb of Jesus empty; that according to Mark and Luke the announcement of Jesus’ resurrection was first made to women; that according to Matthew and John, Jesus actually appeared first to women (in John to Mary Magdalene alone); and that according to all four Gospels women were commissioned to inform Peter and the other apostles as to the most fundamental tenet of the Christian faith, that Jesus is not dead but risen!” (Stagg 144)

One of the religious tenets of Christian Science states:

“5. We acknowledge that the crucifixion of Jesus and his resurrection served to uplift faith to understand eternal Life, even the allness of Soul, Spirit, and the nothingness of matter” (*S&H* 497).

14 Afterward he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen.

“Afterward he appeared unto the eleven - Judas was dead, and the apostles were then called "the eleven." This was done even when one of them was absent, as Thomas was on this occasion” (Barnes’ Notes, www.biblehub.com).

“The same evening, as the apostles (except Thomas), met together behind closed doors because of their fear of the authorities, Jesus suddenly stood among them” (Shotwell 331).

“*And upbraided them with their unbelief*&c. — “That after so many assurances from his own mouth that he would rise again the third day; and after the testimony of so many eye-witnesses, that he had performed his promise, they believed not” (Benson Commentary, www.biblehub.com).

“The rebuke Jesus gave his disciples is particularly severe - more severe, in fact, than any other rebuke he gives them elsewhere in the Gospels” (*EBC* 8. 789).

“*And upbraided them*. Rebuked them, or reproached them. This was done because, after all the evidence they had had of the resurrection, still they did not believe. . . This is a most important circumstance in the history of our Lord’s resurrection. It shows, conclusively, that they had not conspired to impose on the world; that they had given up all for lost when he died; that they did not expect his resurrection; and all this is the strongest proof that he truly rose” (Barnes 178).

15 And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.

“*Into all the world*. To the Gentiles as well as the Jews. This was contrary to the opinions of the Jews, that the Gentiles should be admitted to the privileges of the Messiah’s kingdom, or that the partition wall between them should be broken down. It was long before the disciples could be trained to the belief that the gospel was to be preached to all men; and it was only by special revelation, even after this command, that Peter preached to the Gentile centurion, Acts X” (Barnes 178).

*To preach* is *keryxate* in Greek and it means to “ herald (proclaim); to preach (announce) a message publicly and with conviction; preaching by a herald sent from God; stresses the victory of God’s Gospel-message in the totality of his ‘good news.’” (Thayer 2784).

The word Gospel in Greek is *euaggelion* and it means “the good news of the coming of the Messiah; God’s good news” (Thayer 2098).

17 And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues;

The word *signs* is “*semeion* in Greek and means a sign to confirm, corroborate or authenticate, miracle, a distinguishing mark, a sign of portending remarkable events soon to happen; of miracles and wonders by which God authenticates the men sent by him” (Thayer 4592).

“The Gospel of Mark ends with deeds, not words. *These signs shall follow them that believe.* There’s one of our foundational points again (Mark 1:15). Those who believe will have signs that follow. Otherwise we’re not believers. We can say all we want, ‘we’re believers in Jesus Christ,’ but we’re not unless signs are following. That is Jesus’ own definition of a believer.

“All of these signs are fulfilled in the Book of Acts except the sign regarding poison. This was accomplished in an early Christian tradition by Barsebus. He was forced to drink poison and recovered without any problem” (Crisler, *Gospels* 2.63).

“The signs referred to are the manifestations of the power of Truth to cast out error; and, correcting error in thought, it produces the harmonious effect on the body. ’Them

that believe’ signifies those who understand God's supremacy, --the power of Mind over matter. ’The new tongue’ is the spiritual meaning as opposed to the material. It is the language of Soul instead of the senses; it translates matter into its original language, which is Mind, and gives the spiritual instead of the material signification” (*Hea*. 7).

“Jesus said: ’These signs shall follow them that believe; . . . they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.’ Who believes him? He was addressing

his disciples, yet he did not say, ’These signs shall follow *you*,’ but *them* — ’them that believe’ in all time to come. Here the word *hands* is used metaphorically, as in the text,

’The right hand of the Lord is exalted.’ It expresses spiritual power; otherwise the healing could not have been done spiritually. At another time Jesus prayed, not

for the twelve only, but for as many as should believe ’through their word’ " (*S&H* 38).

*Believe* is *pisteuo* in Greek and “means to be persuaded to be true; to place confidence in; used especially of the faith by which a man embraces Jesus, i.e. ‘a conviction, full of joyful trust, that Jesus is the Messiah – the divinely appointed author of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God; to commit oneself trustfully to the name; to have faith directed toward” (Thayer 4100).

“*In my name*. By my authority, and using the power that I would in such cases, if bodily present” (Barnes 179).

“The promise of signs is not limited to the apostles. They will accompany ‘those who believe’” (*EBC* 8. 790).

18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

“SERPENT (ophis, in Greek; nacash, in Hebrew).

Subtlety; a lie; the opposite of Truth, named error; the first statement of mythology and idolatry; the belief in more than one God; animal magnetism; the first lie

of limitation; finity; the first claim that there is an opposite of Spirit, or good, termed matter, or evil; the first delusion that error exists as fact; the first claim that sin, sickness, and death are the realities of life. The first audible claim that God was not omnipotent and that there was another power, named evil, which was as real and eternal as God, good” (*S&H* 594).

“This is the ’new tongue,’ the language of them that ’lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover,’ whose spiritual interpretation they refuse to hear. For instance: the literal meaning of the passage ’lay hands on the sick’ would be manipulation; its moral meaning, found in the ’new tongue,’ is spiritual power, — as, in another Scripture,’"I will triumph in the works of Thy hands’ " (*Mis*. 248)

“*Drink any deadly thing*. There is no example in the NT., but John and Barsabas (Act 1:23) are said in early tradition to have drunk a cup of poison unharmed” (Dummelow 733).

“The word *hand* is *cheir* in Greek and means “the instrument a person uses to accomplish their purpose (intention, plan); figuratively it is attributed to God, symbolizing his might, activity, power in upholding and preserving” (Thayer 5495).

19 So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

“Then came that transcendent step, when Jesus Christ passed beyond the sight of men. . . His departure from the world of matter and of the flesh was fulfilled in the manifest act of the Ascension. . . ‘he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God’—in his rightful place of highest honor and power, to reign with his Father in heaven and on earth. While his visible being went beyond human sight, his invisible presence remains with us, and his words, ‘Lo, I am with you alway’ echo down the ages as the Christ-spirit continues to redeem and regenerate the lives of mankind” (Shotwell 333).

“*On the right hand*. The place of highest honor and power” (Dummelow 733).

20 And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.

“We have in this closing verse a most important link of connection with the Acts of the Apostles, where he who directed all the movements of the infant Church is perpetually styled ‘The Lord,’ thus illustrating his own promise for the founding and building up of the Church, ‘Lo, I am with you alway!’” (Jamieson 3.214).

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Abbreviation key:

*EBC = The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*

*Hea. = Christian Healing*

*Mis. = Miscellaneous Writings*

*S&H = Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*