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## Gospel, Resurrection and Mary Magdalene

### Outline

1. Mary Magdalene — the first eyewitness of the Resurrection
2. Resurrected Body of Jesus

Read John 20:1-18

### 1. Mary Magdalene, the first eyewitness of the Resurrection of Jesus

*John 20:9* For they did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead. The disciples did not perceive from the Old Testament prophecy that Jesus had to rise from the dead, so they did not make a resurrection story to fit apreconceived understanding of OT prophecy (read Luke 24:25-27, 32,4-46).

Expert historians (whether Christian or non-Christian) would not consider the New Testament as a sacred document revealed by God. They would examine it like any other ancient document by two criteria for its accuracy of **any event mentioned in them**.

- Having **at least two reliable, independent early eyewitnesses** of any historical event
- Having **reliable ancient documents** written close to the historical event.

Expert Historians consider Mary Magdalene a reliable eyewitness because she lived in a period when people considered women unreliable as a witness in court and considered them of inferior status in society. Yet the gospels mentioned her as the first eyewitness of the resurrection. If the gospel writers were to invent the resurrection, they would not have chosen a woman to be the first eyewitness. Instead, they would have chosen men of some status like Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus. Also, Mary had a notorious background as Jesus had cast out seven demons out of her (Luke 8:2). Considering Mary Magdalene with a notorious background and being a woman was the first eyewitness meant the writers did not invent the resurrection story. She was indeed the first eyewitness of the resurrection. (Matt 28:1-8, Mark 16:9, John 20:11-18).

### Mary Magdalene's understanding of Jesus:

Mary was the first to visit the tomb, and Peter and John came. The men saw the empty tomb and left soon after. But Mary remained, weeping and still looking for the body of Jesus. Then, having conquered death, the risen Jesus meets her, unlike a flashy victorious superhero. Instead, He **gently** asks her, "*Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?*" (*John 20:15*). Thinking He was the gardener, Mary replies that she seeks the body of Jesus. But Mary could never have found Jesus:

- despite her passionate, single-eyed devotion to Him,
- despite knowing that Jesus could raise Lazarus from the dead and
- despite knowing His claims that He is the resurrection and the life.

Yet Mary's mindset could never have comprehended who Jesus is. He is beyond her understanding. Mary was still looking for a dead Jesus and not a risen one.

Jesus reveals Himself to her, calling her "*Mary*". Then she recognised Jesus, calling Him *Rabboni* (Teacher). From this meeting in John 20:16, we learn:

- i. Jesus is too wonderful and is beyond our understanding. We can only know Him by revelation from the Father in heaven. But the gates of hell will not overpower the church built by revelation (*Matt 16:16-18*)
- ii. All our culture, upbringing, education, and everything human about us will be of no advantage to understanding who Jesus is because our minds cannot comprehend Him. Only Jesus coming to us can break through our tiny minds. But as we seek Him with all our hearts as Mary Magdalene did, He will come, and He comes to us gently (*Jer 29:12-14 Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you.*<sup>13</sup> *And you will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.*<sup>14</sup> *I will let Myself be found by you,' declares the Lord*)
- iii. Choosing Mary, a reformed woman with a notorious past, to be not only the first eyewitness and also the first person commissioned by Jesus to go and tell others of His resurrection (*John 20:17*) — shows that Jesus is saying that I don't choose you by your status, your intellect, your work, your education, your character, your gender — but entirely by My choice and My grace. He saves us by grace through faith, not by our works, so that no one can boast (*Eph 2:8-9*).
- iv. Jesus calls her by her first name, "Mary", with tenderness and gentleness. Jesus would contact us the same way. It means He loves us dearly, cares for us immensely, and calls us to intimate friendship with Him. If we grasp this truth, we would not be seeking our identity from the praise or respect the world offers. Our company with Him would wholly satisfy us.

## 2. The Resurrected Body of Jesus:

*John 20:17-18 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" 18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.*

Mary Magdalene recognised and clung to the risen Jesus. He told her not to do so as He had not yet returned to the Father (*John 20:17*). This means we, too, would have something similar to Jesus' resurrected body. The resurrected body had the following properties:

- It was not a spirit or ghost-like because Mary could cling to Him
- It could travel in space, travel through walls, and could eat food (*Luke 24:37-43*)
- It could become invisible and disappear (*Luke 24:30-31*)
- It could disguise itself so even friends would not recognise it (*Luke 24:13-30*)
- It could **not** be in different places at the same time. Mary clung to Him and did not want to lose Him. But Jesus had to do many things before He ascended. But once He ascended to the Father, He would send the Holy Spirit to be with every one of us anywhere at any time. (Similarly, our resurrected bodies cannot be omnipresent like God is.)
- It is of imperishable flesh and blood and, therefore, eternal. (*1 Cor 15:52-54 For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.*<sup>53</sup> *For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.*<sup>54</sup> *When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory".*