

‘Will the Real Mary Please Stand Up?’ (The Da Vinci Code or Con?)

Luke 8:1-3

Mary Magdalene has suffered a lot of bad press over the centuries since she walked this earth.

- **From** the old accusation that she was an immoral woman whose former life involved prostitution (which the Bible never mentions).
- **To** a host of fanciful legends that emerged during the Middle Ages. Some have even tried to make her into a kind mythical goddess figure.
- And **now** to the re-emergence of Gnostic ideas that are being widely promoted in Dan Brown’s thriller, *The Da Vinci Code*, where it is claimed that Mary Magdalene was the head apostle of the church.
 - That she actually secretly married Jesus of Nazareth, gave birth to their daughter, named Sarah.
 - And at the time of the death of Jesus, Mary escapes to France, where supposedly their descendants become kings in that country!
 - We’re told that the so-called ‘Holy Grail’, is not the chalice used at the Last Supper (which the Bible never mentions), the ‘Holy Grail’ is actually Mary Magdalene’s womb - for she bore Jesus’ daughter.

These things, Brown claims, the Christian church, especially the Roman Catholic Church has kept hidden for centuries. But the *Da Vinci Code* story suggests that such things have been guarded by a secret society, The Priory of Sion. We’re told that such men of history as Sir Isaac Newton were members of that society and the famous artist, Leonardo Da Vinci was also involved with this secret.

- These secrets are allegedly concealed in his paintings, such as the Last Supper - where Mary Magdalene is suppose to be present - sitting next to Jesus. It’s fascinating that Leonardo could live 1500yrs after the event - yet he apparently knew the truth of what really happened in the Upper Room in Jerusalem.
- Hence the title to the book and now movie, ‘*The Da Vinci Code*.’

Friends there is no way that we can go through and adequately consider all the issues that are being raised in the *Da Vinci Code* - that’s not our purpose tonight.

- Our focus tonight is to look more directly at the real woman of history, Mary Magdalene.

But in the midst of all these competing thoughts throughout history about Mary Magdalene, many are left today asking the question - who was the real Mary Magdalene? Did she marry Jesus?

- What was the true nature of Jesus’ relationship with Mary? Was it a romantic relationship?
- Or did Mary Magdalene submit to Jesus Christ as her Master and embrace Him as her personal Saviour?

In the midst of all these competing thoughts that are out there about Mary, we ask the question, “Will the Real Mary Please Stand Up?”

- In each of the Biblical gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John Mary Magdalene is mentioned.
- Though they don’t tell us a lot, they tell us enough to show that the Mary of Dan Brown’s writing is not a Code to break, but a Con to expose.
- The Biblical Gospels that have been accepted by Christians for over 1900 years help to strip away all the conspiracy theories; all the myths; all the deception and lies and present to us the Real Mary of History.

There are a number of Marys mentioned in the gospels - this Mary came from the town of Magdala, which was located on the western side of the Sea of Galilee.

- Magdalene is not her surname, but it is a reference to this town from which she came.
- In their day that was how they distinguished people from each other when they had the same name.
 - The Mary that we’re considering is Mary from Magdala - Mary Magdalene.
 - Let’s consider then firstly:

1. A HORRIBLE DARKNESS

The first time Mary Magdalene is mentioned in the chronology of the life of Jesus of Nazareth is **Luke 8:2**

- Here we see that she had previously been living in horrible darkness. Seven wicked spirits living inside her - making her life one of horrible darkness and misery.

We're not told of the occasion when Mary first met Jesus - but she was living in the very vicinity where Jesus lived and where Jesus engaged in much of His public ministry.

- On a number of occasions throughout His ministry, Jesus not only healed people of all types of diseases and physical problems, but He also helped those who were demon-possessed by casting out the demons.
- Liberating those people from their bondage to these dark spirits.

The symptoms of demonic possession in the Bible is varied.

- Demon-possessed people were sometimes insane, often extremely violent and possessed great physical strength. Sometimes they were given to the nightmarish habit of deliberately mutilating themselves.
- Most frequently, it manifest in physical infirmities, such as blindness, deafness, fits and seizures.

But we shouldn't think that the Bible teaches that all mental health problems, epileptics or disease is due to demon possession - **The Bible does make a clear distinction between demon possession and diseases.**

- Disease and sickness is in our world due to the consequence of sin - Adam and Eve's original choice to disobey God's command in the Garden of Eden brought sickness and death into God's harmonious world.

Demon-possession involves bondage to an evil spirit - a real, personal, fallen spirit-creature - that indwells that afflicted individual.

In every case in the gospels, demon-possession is portrayed as an affliction. These were tormented people.

- They suffered terribly at the hands of these demons of darkness. They had utterly ruined lives!
- They were miserable, fearful, often lonely, rejected, depressed; their lives were ones of horrible darkness.
- And friends, such as Mary Magdalene; she was tormented with **seven** demons.
- Perpetually restless; never able to escape the constant reality of that darkness.
- Joyless and hopeless; there was no earthly remedy for such a spiritual affliction!
- There was nothing any **mere** man or woman could do for her; she was enslaved to this horrible darkness.
- There was nothing she herself could do to get out of her condition. What a horrible darkness!

The Bible also teaches that every person who has not yet personally come to God for salvation is a member of Satan's Kingdom of Darkness. Every person born into this world, is born into the kingdom of darkness!

- I'm not sure where you are at, but if you have never turned from your rebellion toward God's rule over your life and cried out to Him to forgive you - then you are right at this very moment in horrible darkness!
- Enslaved in spiritual darkness; I'm not saying you're possessed by one of Satan's demons, but you are under his sway. You are living in his kingdom and held captive to do his will.
- You may only be a young person - if you have never had dealings with God over your soul, that soul of yours that will never die - then even you are caught in spiritual darkness.
- And my friend, like Mary Magdalene there is nothing any mere man or woman can do to bring you out of your darkness. There is nothing you can do. What a horrible darkness it is!

2. A WONDERFUL DELIVERANCE

Though she had this great problem, from which there was no human cure, Luke simply states for us that those seven demons came out of her she experienced a wonderful deliverance.

- Luke does not tell us when this happened nor even how this happened - but Mark says in **Mark 16:9** "*Mary Magdalene out of whom **He (Jesus)** had cast seven demons*"

- She couldn't help herself out of her darkness; no other mere human could help her ... Jesus Christ and He alone could help her! And the wonderful thing is - He did!
- Friends, the fact that Jesus cast out those seven demons shows us that Jesus of Naxareth was not just a man.
- He was a man, but He also God -- He was God in human flesh.
- And it was only He who could liberate Mary from the horrible darkness she was in.
- And Jesus in His gracious power did! We have here a wonderful deliverance!

And my friend, you too could have such a wonderful deliverance.

- Jesus Christ is the only One who can help you out of your spiritual darkness!
- You can't free yourself from Satan's dominion; no other mere human can liberate you from the kingdom of darkness! Jesus has all the power and grace to do this for you, just as he did to Mary Magdalene!
- *'The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, can shine into your heart - the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.'* 2 Corinthians 4:6

He calls you to seek Him while He may be found - He says to you, "*Call out to Me while I am near*"

- *He directs you to forsake your own stubborn way - to leave your life of rebellion and return to Him.*
- *He offers you forgiveness and freedom.* This is God's good news concerning Jesus Christ!

With Mary Magdalene now liberated from her bondage; wonderfully delivered from the horrible darkness - she now owed everything to Jesus Christ. Her subsequent life and love for Him reflected the profound depth of her gratitude to her Saviour, Jesus Christ.

- After Jesus saved her, we see a marvellous transformation. She was miserable before, serving only Satan and his wicked demons, now her life is dedicated to her newly found Saviour, which brings us to:

3. A FAITHFUL SERVICE

Luke 8:1-3 Mary Magdalene joined the close circle of disciples who travelled with Jesus.

- Verse 3 also tells us she, along with other women helped support Jesus out of their own financial resources.
- She had clearly left her former life behind. She was now giving her all to Jesus in faithful service.
- She gave up her time and energy, for she travelled great distances with Him, walking along the dusty roads.
- And she gave up even her money to provide for the physical needs that Jesus had in His humanity.

It was during this time that the opposition was growing toward Jesus from the religious leaders.

- They were looking for ways in which they could accuse Jesus of something; bring a charge against Him that would turn the people away from following Him and turn them back to them.
- If it was, as The Da Vinci Codes tries to suggest that Mary Magdalene's relationship with Jesus was romantic; if there was anything that might have had the slightest appearance of being improper or suggestive.
- If those men, with their spies would have been able to get a sniff of impropriety with Jesus, they would have very quickly raised their accusation; they would have readily flung that mud around.
- But friends, not once; not once anywhere in any of the Biblical gospels is there any hint of this.
- It's a CON Mr. Dan Brown! Mary Magdalene was not in a romantic relationship with Jesus.
- Jesus was her Saviour and Master and she was giving her all in faithful service to Him.

She did this at the time when the opposition and tensions were beginning to rise; many others were starting to forsake Jesus, but Mary remained faithful.

- When others became offended with Jesus' sayings, she stayed by His side.
- She followed Him all the way from Galilee, her home area, to Jerusalem, for that final Passover celebration.
- We'll see now that she ended up faithfully serving Him by the cross and even beyond.

Matthew, Mark and Luke all record that Mary Magdalene was present at the crucifixion of Jesus. By combining those three gospels, it is clear that she stood with Mary, the mother of Jesus, Salome and another Mary, the mother of James the Less.

- John's gospel seems to describe the events near the beginning of the crucifixion.
John 19:25 "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus ... the Marys, including Magdalene."
 - They were close enough to hear Jesus speak to John about caring for His mother.

But Matthew and Mark describe the end of the ordeal.

Mark 15:40 "There were also women looking on from afar, among whom was Mary Magdalene"

- When the crucifixion was going on; crowds taunting - the women probably drew back.
- Perhaps there was this enormous tussle within - they couldn't bear to look, but they couldn't bear to leave.
- They remained right to the bitter end ... they stood in the darkness ... they heard Jesus' signs and cries.
- Mary was a witness to Jesus enduring God's anger poured upon Him due to the sins of the people laid upon Him -- Such was Mary's love and loyalty to her Saviour - she faithfully remained near the cross.

When all disciples fled, except for John, Mary Magdalene bravely stayed till Jesus died. *Faithful service!*

- We read in Mark 15 that Mary Magdalene followed Joseph when he took Jesus' body to be buried.
- Mark goes on to tell us that as soon as the Jewish Sabbath was over Mary went to purchase some more spices, so she could go with her friends to anoint Jesus' body and give Him a decent and dignified burial.
- Why would she do this?
 - Because this was her husband and it was the last thing to do before she flees to France? NO
- Jesus was her Saviour; He had delivered her from Satan's dominion; He had saved and set her free and she now just wanted to all she could in her life to serve and honour her Lord.

And that meant that very early on the Sunday morning, even before the sun was up - Mary Magdalene, with her lady friends, went to the tomb and they found something there that they were not expecting.

- Jesus was gone! An angel said to them, "*Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.*"
- But something else happened to Mary at that tomb. The others seem to have gone and she is there still in a state of great grief and confusion --- seemingly disbelieving what she had just heard the angel say.
- John tells us what happened in **John 20:11-17**

Did you notice what Mary Magdalene's immediate, reflex response was when Jesus spoke to her? - '**Rabboni**'

- That's the word for 'teacher or master'. She doesn't say, 'My dear husband'; 'Sweetheart it's you!'
- And what does she do? She seems to throw herself down on the ground and worship at His feet.
- This is not a romantic embrace; she is bowed prostrate in submission and devotion to Her Saviour and Lord.
- After all that He had done for her, this is the Lord for whom she gave faithful service.
- This is the One before whom she just so naturally bowed in submission and worship.

What a transformation!!

- Her past life was one of hideous darkness and bondage - it was all about sin and Satan and self.
- But now that she had been set free; now that she had been saved by such a gracious and powerful Saviour, she wanted to give her all for Him; she wanted to selflessly serve Him; she'd even risk her life for Him.
- She bowed before Him (literally) and gladly worshipped Him and followed Him in her life.

And friend, God can do that very same thing for you.

- You too can experience that very same transformation! God can turn your life around completely!
- He can deliver you from bondage to sin and Satan! He can set you free from misery and darkness!
- He can change your life from service to sin, Satan and self and make you into a willing servant of Jesus.

Who would have ever thought that Mary Magdalene, whilst she was possessed of those demons, would ever live a life of faithful service to Jesus Christ, God's only Son?

- Maybe you're saying, 'I could never be a Christian.' 'Serve Jesus for the rest of my life?' 'Never!'
- Are you possessed of seven demons? I doubt that you are. But even if you were, Jesus can deliver you.
- Jesus' gracious power is able to save **you**. What He did for Mary Magdalene - He can do for you!

My friend, forget about Brown and his Da Vinci Code! It's a big CON! He obviously doesn't know this God!

We have asked the question: **Will the Real Mary Please Stand Up?**

- This is the real Mary of History. She stands up before us as an example of what God's grace and power can do in an ordinary person's life - even in your life.

I urge you then my friend ... *'seek the Lord while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near.'*

- *Forsake your way; forsake living your life your way and return to the God of heaven and earth.*
- *Pray to this very One that transformed Mary's life - ask Him to save you.*

He calls you to come to Him in faith. He calls you whether you are young or old.

- He calls you to surrender to Him; He calls you to leave your darkness and come to the light!