

## Mary Magdalene



Do you know what is the greatest treasure on the Earth? Guess! The Quest TV surveyed about what is the greatest treasure on the Earth in the year 2013. The answer was “The Shroud of Jesus” that is kept in the royal chapel of the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist in Turin, northern Italy. Once there was a fire in the church, and a firefighter bravely went into the church, only rescued the shroud that was kept in triple bulletproof glass... breaking them with axes. Because it is regarded as the proof of Jesus’ resurrection. There were intense debates about this shroud

regarding its origins, and images among theologians, historians, and researchers. But the cloth is proved to be the authentic burial shroud of Jesus, based on disciplines ranging from chemistry to biology and medical forensics to optical image analysis. I heard that the image was printed at the moment that resurrection power was active. The image on the shroud is much clearer in black-and-white negative than in its natural sepia color as we see it. What do you see? What do you think about the linen cloth that covered Jesus’ head is the greatest treasure of the planet Earth?

Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a center of Christian faith. It is undeniable. It is merciful, gracious, and wonderful! There are many rational proofs that Jesus resurrected. There were hundreds and hundreds of witnesses who met Jesus after Jesus’ resurrection. In the writings of Paul, we read that there were living witnesses at that time here and there. People were able to meet those who met Jesus in this village and that village. These people’s lives were dramatically and radically changed. Jews never believed that a man could be God. Hundreds of Jews changed overnight their world view. Evidence is enough. Paul said that Jesus even appeared to 500 people.

Today’s story serves as the central message of Christianity. In our sacred texts, we encounter Mary Magdalene. According to Luke, she was afflicted by seven demons. Can you imagine the state of a person possessed by seven demons? She would likely appear as someone with severe mental illness, wandering aimlessly, homeless, speaking to herself, and shouting alone. The situation would be utterly distressing. Mary must have endured immense emotional or psychological trauma. She would have been physically battered and bruised, injured, and in excruciating pain.

Jesus healed her, and after that moment, she remained devoted to Jesus faithfully. Mary Magdalene didn’t falter in her pursuit of Jesus until they were physically separated. Even when

all the disciples had disappeared at the moment of Jesus' crucifixion, she stayed with Mary the mother of Jesus, as is mentioned in John 19:25.

On the third day, when Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early in the morning to take care of Jesus' body, she found that the stone had been rolled away. She ran to Peter and the disciple, the one Jesus loved, who was John, and talked to them. Peter and John reached the tomb first, and Peter second.

The Bible mentions that Peter witnessed the burial cloth and concluded that Jesus had risen. Some believe that the linen burial cloths remained unwrapped, appearing empty like a cocoon. However, the head cloth was folded. The Greek word for "saw" implies that Peter observed intently, seeking evidence. Peter engaged in thought and reasoning to comprehend the unfolding events. The Bible said that Peter believed. They returned home.

From the beginning era, Christianity was attacked a lot by the worldly philosophers. Celsus was the first person. One of the strongest reasons to attack was Mary Magdalene. At that time, women's witness was not at all acceptable in the court. Women had no right at all. He says, "How can any rational man listen to the testimony of a hysterical female?" It was misogynic time. Women's status was very low, not at all treated as human beings.

### **Jesus' gracious coming**

In the scripture, we can read that Mary Magdalene was clearly more devoted to Jesus than Peter and John. She was weeping, which means she was lamenting at that time. She was searching for Jesus, asking herself, "Where is his body?" A commentator said that she was looking for a human Jesus in her limited worldview, a small category. She was searching for the dead Jesus. She had heard that Jesus is the light of the world and that he will return to judge the world. She had heard those words, but she was living in too small human categories. She couldn't see Jesus as he truly is. Jesus had to come to her through that. When she was searching for Jesus, he came to her and asked her a question: "Women, why are you crying?" The resurrected Jesus is glorious God, but he comes to her gently. If Jesus hadn't come to her, she might never have found him.

If you look for Jesus, Jesus will come to you. If your inner world has set a mode looking for Jesus, Jesus comes to you. It is what I have experienced again and again. If you want to meet personally Jesus, Jesus comes to you. Jesus is God, and you are enclosed a narrow human boundary. So, Jesus comes to you and breaks your narrow world, which was shaped by family, school, culture, and living environment. Humanly speaking, faith is impossible. Only if Jesus Christ breaks through, only if he comes first, opens your eyes, we can find him. Even reasoning, unless Jesus helps you with it, you can't find him. Faith is impossible thing. But Jesus comes, and opens our eyes by grace!

He chose Mary Magdalene as the first person in history to witness his resurrection and commanded her to “go and tell everyone else!” She visited his disciples and proclaimed, “I have seen the Lord!” Did she possess exceptional academic records or a remarkable reputation? Did she perform something extraordinary for the Lord? Was she physically strong? Not at all. The grace and mercy of Jesus are evident so beautifully and clearly in this story of mercy and grace. It is our story. Jesus empowers us. He gently opens our eyes to the true nature of Jesus, broadening our narrow perspective. Jesus comes, Jesus saves.

## **Identity**

He unveils himself to us. How does he do this? By calling our names. As you hear his calling, you recognize the identity of Jesus and your own. Both entities are revealed. There’s a poem by Annie Dillard, “I had been my entire life a bell, and I never knew it until that moment when I was lifted and struck.” Who are you?

We all yearn to know our true selves. Culturally, we introspect, define our identities, and assert them. We disregard external opinions. What are your thoughts on this worldly perspective? A secure sense of self emerges when someone we admire adores us, or when someone we respect respects us. Imagine encountering the greatest being in the universe, the creator God, who loves you with an unconditional love, calls your name, and treats you as God’s only child. This divine love fills your heart with fulfillment, leaving you with no desire for anything else. God’s love for us is eternal and profound, a love that transcends worldly standards and analysis. Through this self-discovery, we shape our true selves, becoming more like Jesus and God in every aspect of our lives.

“Mary!” This voice of calling her name revealed who he is, and this calling revealed who she is to herself! God’s voice is incredibly gentle and loving. You know how God is, you know how much you are loved. This true identity shapes you.

“Don’t cling to me, Mary,” Jesus meant. “Don’t cling to the memory of Christ; instead, cling to the majesty of his glory today.” It meant that “I will go to the Father and send you another Savior, the Holy Spirit. This Savior will never leave you or forsake you, we will be fully united. Then I will never leave you alone, even in the darkest dungeon.”

To the lovers of Jesus, Jesus still is speaking. I will be fully united with you. I will fill you! I have poured my glory into the vessels of flesh and blood. I am the majestic Lord of all creation. Wait, you will find me in wonder. This is how life with God is meant to be; captivating, delightful, and exciting.

Mary Magdalene was the first witness of Jesus resurrection, whom Jesus talked to her, “Go find my brothers and tell them I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”