

## Mary Magdalene — Truth and Fiction

### Part 1

#### Introduction

The novel, *The DaVinci Code* by Dan Brown has provoked an outpouring of emotion; everything from fascination with "new ideas" about Jesus' life to anger over the falsifying of biblical truth. Although the author admits his book is fiction, his ideas, nevertheless, have gripped many readers bringing confusion and even acceptance for those not grounded in Scripture.

One example is Brown's promise that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married. This is not a new idea, but in light of the widespread publicity the book has received, I believe it would be wise to go to the Bible for the true picture of Mary Magdalene and her relationship with Jesus.

#### Our Study

Mary Magdalene probably came from the Galilean town of Magdala on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, north of Tiberia and south of Capernaum. In some respects, it can be said that her story really begins with an anecdote that has been erroneously credited to her.

#### **The Scripture: Luke 7: 36-38, 49**

*"One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with Him, so He went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. A woman who had lived a sinful life....brought an alabaster jar of Perfume and began to wet His feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and poured perfume on them."*

1. Where was Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who joined Him there? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What did she do? \_\_\_\_\_

#### **The Scripture: Luke 7:44-48**

*"He (Jesus) turned toward the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give Me any water for My feet, but she wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman has not stopped kissing My feet. You did not pour oil on My head, but she has poured perfume on My feet. Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven. Then Jesus said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' "*

4. What had Simon neglected to do? \_\_\_\_\_
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5. What had the woman done? \_\_\_\_\_
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6. What did Jesus say to the woman? \_\_\_\_\_

I repeat this story here because some traditions have confused this sinful woman with Mary Magdalene, calling her a former prostitute. Because of this mistaken identity, Mary Magdalene has been maligned for centuries, but nothing in this scripture relates her to Mary Magdalene.

The first mention of Mary Magdalene in the Bible is in the book of Luke.

**The Scripture: Luke 8:2-3**

*"Jesus traveled from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out, Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanne and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means."*

7. Who was traveling with Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

8. What had Mary Magdalene been healed of? \_\_\_\_\_

The Bible tells us that Mary's healing was from demon-possession; it says nothing about her being a prostitute.

9. Why were the women traveling with Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_

It's often hard for us to picture Jesus as an itinerant preacher dependent upon others for His support, but that is exactly what He was. Because Mary Magdalene is almost always in the company of older women, some authorities believe it is reasonable to assume that she, too, was a more mature woman, rather than a glamorous seductress. For a long period the Bible is silent about Mary Magdalene. She is not mentioned again until Jesus' crucifixion. After Jesus was arrested, He was brought before Pilate, the Roman governor.

**The Scripture: John 19:14-16**

*"It was the Day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour "Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews. But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!" "Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked. "We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered. Finally Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified."*

10. When did this happen? \_\_\_\_\_

The Day of Preparation refers to either of two days; one, the day preceding the weekly Sabbath and two, the day when the Jews prepared for the annual Passover festival. John tells us that this was the Preparation Day of Passover Week.

11. What did Pilate say to the crowd? \_\_\_\_\_

12. What did they shout? \_\_\_\_\_

13. What did Pilate ask? \_\_\_\_\_

14. How did the chief priests answer? \_\_\_\_\_

15. What did Pilate do? \_\_\_\_\_

**The Scripture: John 19: 25**

*"Near the cross of Jesus stood His mother, His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."*

16. Who watched the crucifixion? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

These women who had traveled with Jesus and helped support Him now followed Him to the foot of the cross. Imagine their despair. Everything Mary and the others believed about Jesus, all their dreams about what He was going to accomplish seemed to have come to an end. We have no reason to believe that at this point Mary's faith was any greater than that of the disciples.

Later that day, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent Jewish council member who believed in Jesus went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. When it was ascertained that Jesus was dead, Pilate granted his wish.

**The Scripture: John 19:38-39**

*"He (Joseph) came and took the body of Jesus away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it with the spices of linen. At the place Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid, they laid Jesus there."*

17. Who came with Joseph? \_\_\_\_\_

18. Who was Nicodemus? \_\_\_\_\_

19. What did the two men do? \_\_\_\_\_

**The Scripture: Luke 23:24-25**

*"The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how His body laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment."*

20. Who watched to see where Jesus was buried? \_\_\_\_\_

21. What did the women do afterward? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In the next part of this study, we will look at Mary Magdalene in light of Jesus' resurrection and ascension.

## The Answers

1. At a Pharisee's house
2. A sinful woman
3. She wiped Jesus' feet with her tears and her hair and then poured perfume on them.
4. To give Jesus water for His feet, a kiss of welcome, and oil on His feet—all common courtesies in that culture
5. Wet Jesus' feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair, kissed his feet, and poured perfume on them
6. "Your sins are forgiven."
7. His disciples and some women who had been healed by Jesus
8. Seven demons
9. They helped support Him.
10. On the Day of Preparation of Passover Week
11. "Here is your king."
12. "Take him away. Crucify him."
13. "Shall I crucify your king?"
14. "We have no king but Caesar."
15. He handed Jesus over to them to be crucified.
16. Jesus' mother, some other women and Mary Magdalene
17. Nicodemus
18. The man who had visited Jesus by night
19. They took Jesus' body, wrapped it in linen cloth and spices and placed it in a tomb, in which no one had yet been laid.
20. The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee [This would include Mary Magdalene]
21. Went home and prepared spices and perfumes. Then they rested on the Sabbath.

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