

Sunday, April 23, 2017 PM

John 20:10-18 (tx: Mark 16:9-11)

MARY MAGDALENE

I. Her personal nature

II. Her resurrection encounter

INTRODUCTION

He is alive! that's the Christian's conquering cry.

- & we know Jesus lives because we experience His resurrection present & power each day.

But the reality of Christ's resurrection doesn't just rest on our feelings & experience.

- it is also based on the fact of history, & verified by the biblical testimony of those who actually saw all the evidence: the empty grave & burial clothes.
- & they saw Jesus alive, standing bodily before them, & they even touched Him.
 - they ate with Him around a table, & by a fire on a beach.
- & they all state: "Jesus is risen! He is alive!"

Now 1 of these eye-witnesses is **MARY MAGDALENE.**

- she was there when they crucified & buried our Lord, & after He rose up from the grave.
- & we can learn from her the real, saving meaning of Calvary & Easter.

So then let us consider: **1st, her personal nature.**

- & **2nd**, her resurrection encounter.

I. HER PERSONAL NATURE

Well, **Bible** doesn't tell us too much about **Mary Magdalene.**

- we do know she was a prominent woman among those NT. women who followed Jesus.
- now her name, MAGDALENE, indicates she was from Magdala, a small town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.
 - th'fore she was called Mary of Magdala to distinguish her from the other Marys in Scripture.
- Magdala could also mean steadfast of faith.
 - & Mary surely was that seen by her unwavering devotion & love to Lord.

Now there are those who claim **Mary Magdalene** was the prostitute who kissed & anointed Jesus' feet in the Pharisee's house, recorded in **Lk.7:36-50.**

- they claim this because they say Luke's incident is like Jesus' anointing by Mary of Bethany.

- & they claim then Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany, & prostitute of Lk.7 are the same woman.
- besides it is thought anyone who had 7 evil spirits like Mary Magdalene, had to be an evil woman.

But there is nothing in Bible to show that **Mary Magdalene** was that kind of woman.

- & even if she was, it only shows Jesus really came to seek & to save sinners so that He was a Friend of sinners, as Pharisees accused Him of in **Mat.11:19**.
- no, that doesn't mean Jesus approved of their sins because He became sin to save them.
 - but it does mean Jesus didn't remain at a distance or aloof, afraid to get involved with sinful people, even the most gross ones.

Instead He totally identified Himself with sinners to rescue us & bring us new eternal life.

- & surely that's something to think about in our outreach to people with the good news of salvation.
 - we too must get involved with people to bring them to Christ.
- & thanks be to God, as Jesus of Nazareth, He did come & enter the life of us sinners!
 - for it means His love & grace save all sinners no matter how gross we are in filth & falsehood.

But now **Scripture** does indicate **Mary Magdalene** had been possessed by 7 demons.

- it could mean she was mentally insane, as some claim.
- but more likely it was more than that: she was possessed by demons.

You see, when Jesus was on earth to defeat Satan he worked overtime to show his power & opposition to Lord.

- he did that by possessing certain persons, leading them to do his will, & causing them mental & spiritual & physical anguish & to do insane things.
- today, too, it seems this phenomenon of demon-possession is increasing.
 - for the devil senses his final defeat & destruction is getting nearer.
 - & so he is becoming more active, even as Jesus said he would near the end of time.

Well anyhow, **Bible** says **Mary Magdalene** was demon-possessed & Jesus healed her.

- & the result was she became a fanatical follower & friend of Jesus with unwavering devotion & dedication—she was always at His side wherever He went.
- with the other women, she aided Jesus & His disciples in their work, & took care of their needs.
 - & not just with their time & talents, but also with their wealth, Lk.8:25 says.

Th'fore **Mary Magdalene** was near Jesus until He died, was buried; & she was there when He arose.

- she remained there on Calvary, standing silently sorrowing to the very last.
 - then she saw them take Jesus' body down, & watched them bury it.

- & she was there bright & early Easter Sunday morning to pay her last respects.
- that's how committed she was to Jesus for what He had done for her.

Well, we might ask: are we so devoted to our God & Savior that we live real close to Him & for Him?

- are we? because He has done so much for you & me: saved us from sin & death & hell?
- & may be because He has also healed you or loved one, helped you through troubles & tragedies & tears with His ever-present power & grace.
- & He surely gives us all we need to live for Him in hope of eternal glory.

And so, like **Mary Magdalene**, we must respond to Jesus' love with real devotion & dedication, & stay with our Savior through thick or thin, no matter the circumstances.

- we must minister to Him with our time, abilities, monies in service to God's Church & Kingdom.
 - & by loving & caring for the least of His people.
- be like Mary who stuck with Jesus when the other disciples forsook Him when He was captured & crucified.

And, because of her great love & loyalty to our Lord she was the last one on **Calvary** & the first one at the grave on **Easter**.

- because she did, she received the honor of being the first to see the risen Lord, Mk.16:9 says.
- & she was 1st one sent to tell the good news Jesus is alive.

You see, that's the way is: faithful love & loyalty to Jesus always brings great blessings.

- the blessings of experiencing the risen Christ & His resurrection presence & power in this life.
 - & that means healing & salvation, joy, & peace.
- & it should cause the desire & delight to serve Savior by spreading salvation's glad message: Jesus is alive, & all who believe in Him will live forever.

II. HER RESURRECTION ENCOUNTER

Now **Bible** doesn't tell us exactly how Jesus arose from the grave on **Easter**.

- it just simply states the tremendous fact that Christ was crucified, died & was buried on Friday.
 - & then on Sunday He arose from dead!
- but it does give us strong, undeniable evidences He did come back alive from the grave.

As I said earlier, **Scripture** gives us the testimonies of those who saw the grave empty, the burial wrappings, & heard the angel's words.

- they also saw the risen Savior themselves, & Bible shows us how their lives were changed after their encounter with the living Jesus.
- all that positively proves Christ's bodily resurrection from the grave is real.

For, you see, these eye-witnesses in **Bible** couldn't have made it up.

- or seen a vision, or stole His body.
 - for not 1 disciple or 1 of those devout women ever expected to see Jesus alive again.
- instead the disciples had fled when Christ was seized & killed.
 - & the women were going to the grave to embalm a dead body.

Yet 3 days after Jesus' death & burial, His followers & friends were saying He is alive.

- & later some even suffered & died for claiming that.
 - now why claim that if it meant sure death? –it would be so foolish!
- well, there is only 1 explanation we can give: Jesus is really alive.
 - they saw all the evidence, the risen Savior, remembered His words He would die & rise.
 - & they believed.
 - & we must believe them so that we will see Jesus Christ, the living Lord & Savior, by faith & now live forever with Him.

Well then, **Mary Magdalene** met risen Jesus & went from grief over a dead body to joy with the living Lord.

- & when we put together all the Gospel records of Christ's resurrection, we can get some idea of what happened that 1st Easter morning.
- Scripture tells us early that Sunday morning Jesus' devoted female followers, including Mary Magdalene, went with sadness & sorrow to tomb to embalm His body.
 - but, when they saw, to their surprise the stone rolled away, immediately Mary Magdalene, blinded by extreme devotion to Jesus, jumped to the conclusion someone had stolen the body.
 - & without further investigation & delay, she ran to get help from the disciples.
- on the other hand, the rest of women went to investigate, saw the empty grave, heard the angels' words Jesus was alive, & learned what had happened.
 - & they went to tell the disciples, as the angels had command them to do.

Meanwhile, **Mary Magdalene** had run to **Peter & John** & told them her Lord's body had been stolen.

- notice again her devotion & love: to her Jesus was dead & gone.
- yet He was still her Lord who had healed her, & she was still faithful to Him.
 - she was, even though her commitment was directed in the wrong way, & blinded her to the real meaning of the cross & the resurrection.

Well, when **Peter & John** heard **Mary's** news, they ran to the tomb, saw it was empty, & went home.

- but Mary Magdalene, who had followed them, stayed at the grave, sobbing her heart out.
 - crying that Jesus, whom she loved so much, was dead, & now even His dead body was gone.

- but then she stooped & looked into the tomb, & saw 2 angels sitting where Jesus' body had lain.

Now Bible says the angels were in white, that is, they were shining with divine splendor & glory & purity.

- that meant they were from the very presence of God.
- & because the angels were there on Easter, like they were at Christmas, it means what happened in the garden grave was something very special or supernatural.
 - it showed God in action, working His wonderful work of salvation for us.
- so then God sent angel-messengers to roll the stone away, to guard the evidence of empty tomb, & to explain what God was doing for our salvation.
 - there were angels then at Christmas & Easter so there would be no mistake about their real meaning.

Someone said: "Though the tomb was the house of death; it really was a holy & blessed place for it was not there.

- "The grave clothes spoke of death, but now it spoke of the reality that death had been defeated by the One who had been wrapped & laid in them, & now was gone.
 - "Th'fore the grave now spoke of life (eternal life). It was the very gate of heaven, & so the angels of heaven belonged there.
 - "And these 2 heavenly witnesses, along with 2 earthly ones (the empty grave & burial clothes) all testify to reality that Jesus Christ had really risen bodily from dead & lives!"
- but Mary Magdalene, blinded by unbelief & tearful devotion to Jesus' body, didn't see the evidence.
 - or remember His words about His death & resurrection for the salvation of sinners.

And so the angels asked her in sympathy, but in admonishment too, "Woman, why are you crying so?"

- indeed, we want to ask too: "Mary, why you are crying for the loss of friend's dead body, for after all, this is time for great joy. Now you can have Jesus, who lives, as your Lord & Savior from sin & death.
- "Don't you remember His words about His suffering & death & resurrection for your & our salvation?
 - "Don't you recognize God's angels, the empty grave, the burial clothes all saying surely Jesus' dead body is not stolen, but He has risen from the dead to destroy death & sin & hell for us?"
 - "Don't you realize, if He were still in the grave, & you could have His body to embrace & embalm as you want, then death would have defeated Him?"
 - "And then we would all have to weep forever because there would be no rescue from death, no eternal life with God; but only eternal death of hell for us all."

Yet **Mary** didn't see **Easter's** saving joy & meaning because of her unbelieving sorrow & despairing devotion that made Jesus dead to her.

- & it made her declare all she wanted was that dead body; just to be near it; just to see & feel it.
 - that would be enough.
- that's why she answered the angels in anguish that someone had stolen body of her Lord.
- & that's why she didn't recognize the person next to her, but thought He was the Gardener, even when He asked her why she was weeping, & for whom she was looking.

Now note: the question of the resurrected Christ was one of compassion & concern.

- for, as the living Savior & Lord, Jesus is always ready to help & save us.
- note: Jesus put His question, not as what are you looking for, that is, for what thing or dead body as Mary Magdalene wanted.
 - but He asked: “Whom are you looking for?”
 - He was trying to get her to see the more glorious fact & look for a person & see & believe He has risen from dead.
- “Yes, Mary, open your eyes, & see the One talking to you is the One you are looking for. I am not in the grave, but I am standing before you alive!”

But still **Mary Magdalene** did not see & believe the real meaning of **Easter** which could bring her eternal salvation & joy & life through the living Lord.

- still blinded by a devotion to Jesus & her desire for His dead body, she said: “Please, Sir, if you have taken the body away, tell me where it is, so I can take it, lavish love on it in honor & devotion to my dearly departed Lord & Friend.”
- what sorrow was hers, all because she failed to believe Jesus' words & the blessed, saving meaning of the empty grave!

But be careful to blame **Mary**, for aren't we often like her & the other disciples too?

- how often don't we suffer & sorrow unnecessarily because we too are blinded to God's Word, & fail to really believe & obey it.
 - instead we want to make Bible say what we want, or we don't do all it says.
 - we try to live our own life the way we want, or question & complain against God's actions in our life or world.
- & so we suffer & despair, when, if we would just take God at His Word, believe & obey all He says for our lives, then we would have real salvation & a joyous life forevermore.

But, thanks be to God, Jesus doesn't give up on **Mary Magdalenes & doubting Thomases**, or people like you & me, when we waver in faith & wander from Him in disobedience.

- no, but we see Jesus stopping to reveal Himself to Mary.
 - He called her name, & caused her to recognize Him as her living Lord.
- & He does same with us—our Lord patiently deals with us too, doesn't He, to take away our blindness & unbelief & doubts?

- He meets us where we are in sorrows & sufferings; speaks our name as the Good Shepherd who knows each & everyone of us personally.
- & amid our pains & problems we recognize His saving voice, & in humble repentance & reverent faith, we cry, “Master!”
- & then we see Him, our Lord, alive, full of grace & truth.
 - & we experience His resurrection presence & power so we have all we need to live in peace & happiness no matter what.

But now, Bible says, when **Mary Magdalene** saw Jesus alive, she threw herself down in front of Him, & clung to Him with all her might.

- & then she learned real, saving meaning of Easter.
- for Jesus told her to stop holding on to Him, because He had yet to ascend to His Father.
 - & He commanded her to go tell His disciples He was alive & was returning to His God & Father & to their God & Father.

Now, Jesus didn't mean she couldn't touch Him to see if He were really alive.

- for the other women & the disciples & Thomas did that.
 - but what Jesus meant was to show that His former, family, physical bond of friendship & fellowship was now past.
- you see, Mary want to keep Jesus for herself & be with Him as it was before when He walked & talked with them on earth.
 - th'fore she held Him tight, not wanting to let Him go.

But, if Jesus stayed on earth with **Mary** in a physical way, then He wouldn't be able to carry on His work of saving sinners with His resurrection presence & power in the whole world.

- however Christ has risen from dead; He conquered death & won salvation & eternal life.
- & so He had to ascend to God His Father to rule over all & be present everywhere in the world.
 - that's only way He can save all those who believe in Him.
 - He surely couldn't do that if He stayed on earth.

Th'fore, from now on, after Jesus' resurrection, the bond between Him & the believer would be far greater & more glorious than that former, physical one.

- now it would be a universal, spiritual, & inner one in which Jesus, the living, reigning Lord, would be everywhere to save & live in all who call upon Him in faith.
- & so there would be a more intimate relationship of being brothers & sisters in God's family, for Jesus says He was going to His God & Father, & He is ours too.

O, yes, there is difference between Jesus' & the believers' relationship to God the Father.

- for God is His Father by nature, for He is the only, eternal, begotten Son of God.
 - & we believers are God's sons & daughters by grace that adopts us into His family.
- th'fore we must worship & praise Jesus as almighty God, & not treat Him as an ordinary friend.

But Jesus' statement His God & Father & our God & Father also means the fellowship between Him & us believers is a spiritual one.

- one that is a very close & intimate relationship of being His brothers & sisters in 1 family.
- of being co-heirs of eternal life with Jesus' God & Father, & ours too!

Now that's what **Mary Magdalene** had to see & believe so she had to stop clinging to a physical Jesus.

- instead she had to believe in the living Christ as her Lord & Savior.
- & then too not keep Jesus just for herself, but go & tell others He was alive.
 - & so He is able to save completely all who believe in Him.
 - to rescue them from sin & death, to restore them to life eternal with God.
 - & to bring them into a wonderful fellowship with Him as their Savior & Lord, Friend & Brother.
- then only would her grief turn to gladness, her lamenting into real life.

CONCLUSION

Well then, the question is: have you met the risen Savior yet?

- do you believe the biblical testimonies of eye-witnesses, like Mary Magdalene, who saw Jesus crucified, dead, buried, but risen from dead?
- or you are still holding onto a dead Jesus?
 - just honoring Him as a good & great man who died an untimely death & whom you try to follow as a good example?

But, you see, a dead Jesus will never give us real salvation & peace & the happiness of eternal life with God.

- instead we will just continue to weep now, & then forever separated from God & His eternal love & life.

And, **Christians**, are we too still clinging to Jesus so that His saving work is hindered in the world?

- are we just keeping Him & the good news of salvation to ourselves in our churches?
- & we aren't sharing the risen Savior with others in our homes, our schools, our business & community?

So J. says to us too: "Why do you weep?"

- "Look, the grave & burial wrappings are empty; see the risen Christ; believe He is alive!
 - "Be assured He has destroyed death so we can receive His resurrection power & life!
- "But then, don't keep Me & My cross & resurrection only for yourself!
- "Instead go & tell & live it so everyone will know Jesus lives & He saves!" AMEN