

# Scripture Texts About and Not About Mary Magdalene

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## Mary Magdalene in the New Testament

*Some texts are in multiple categories because they refer to different aspects of Mary Magdalene's role in the gospels.*

### **Principal texts that refer to Mary Magdalene:**

Matthew 27:55-56, 61; 28:1-10

Mark 15:40-41, 47, 16:1-9

Luke 8:1-3, 23:49, 23:55-56, 24:1-12. Luke 9:18-22 illuminates Luke 24:6-8. It shows that the three women named were among the close disciples who heard Jesus' prediction of his death and resurrection.

John 19:25, 20:1-18. John 10:1-4 highlights the significance of Mary Magdalene recognizing Jesus when he called her by name.

### Disciple from Galilee, Member of Jesus' Inner Circle, Patron of His Ministry <sup>Note1</sup>

- Mt 27:55-56 “Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. <sup>56</sup>Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.”
- Mk 15:40-41 “There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. <sup>41</sup>These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.
- Lk 8:1-3 “Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. <sup>2</sup>The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them [or “him” per other ancient sources] out of their resources.”
- Lk 23:49 “But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.” (*Note: Even though Mary Magdalene is not named in Luke 23:49 it is clear from Lk 8:1-3 that she is among the women from Galilee.*)
- Lk 23:53-56a “Then he took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. <sup>54</sup>It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. <sup>55</sup>The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. <sup>56</sup>Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments.” *Note: Even though Mary Magdalene is not named in Luke 23:55 it is clear from Lk 8:1-3 that she is among the women from Galilee.*

### Faithful Witness and Presence to Jesus as He Died on the Cross

- Mt 27:55a, 56 “Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; ... <sup>56</sup>Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.”
- Mk 15:40 “There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome.”
- Lk 23:49 “But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.” (*Note: Even though Mary Magdalene is not named in Luke 23:49 it is clear from Lk 8:1-3 that she is among the women from Galilee.*)
- Jn 19:25 “Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.”

## Witness at Jesus' Burial

- Mt 27:61 “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.”
- Mk 15:46-47 “Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. <sup>47</sup>Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.”
- Lk 23:55-56 “The women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. <sup>56</sup>Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.” *Note: Even though Mary Magdalene is not named in Luke 23:55 it is clear from Lk 8:1-3 that she is among these women from Galilee.*

## Discovered the Empty Tomb on Easter Sunday Morning

- Mt 28:1-2 “After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup>And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.”
- Mk 16:1-4 “When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. <sup>2</sup>And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. <sup>3</sup>They had been saying to one another, ‘Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?’<sup>4</sup>When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back.”
- Lk 24: 1-2 “But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. <sup>2</sup>They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup>but when they went in, they did not find the body.”
- Jn 20:1 “Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb.”

*Note: The image of Mary Magdalene and other women disciples bringing spices to the tomb is in Mark and Luke. Matthew and John do not include spices; perhaps instead, their focus is on the women going to the tomb to be present to Jesus, the Messiah.*

## Encountered and Commissioned by One or More Angels at Jesus' Tomb

- Mt 28:2-7 “And suddenly there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup>For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup>But the angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup>Then go quickly and tell his disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.’ This is my message for you.’”
- Mk 16:5-7 “As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. <sup>6</sup>But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. <sup>7</sup>But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.’ <sup>8</sup>So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.”

*Note: The commands, “Do not be afraid”, “Do not be alarmed”, and in John 20:17, “Do not hold unto me” indicate that the women are about to have a visionary experience. <sup>Note 2</sup>*

## Encountered Angels at Jesus' Tomb but not Commissioned

- Lk 24:3-8 “...but when they went in, they did not find the body. <sup>4</sup>While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. <sup>5</sup>The women were terrified and bowed their

faces to the ground, but the men said to them, ‘Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. <sup>6</sup>Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup>that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again.’ <sup>8</sup>Then they remembered his words ...” (see Luke 9:18-22)

- Jn 20:11-13 “But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look (or “go into”) into the tomb; <sup>12</sup>and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. <sup>13</sup>They said to her, ‘Woman, why are you weeping?’ She said to them, ‘They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.’”

### **Jesus Appeared First to Mary Magdalene in Matthew and John and in the Addendum to Mark. He Commissioned her to Proclaim His Resurrection in Matthew (with the “other Mary”) and in John.**

- Mt 28:9-10 “Suddenly Jesus met them and said, ‘Greetings!’ And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’”
- Mk 16:9 “Now after he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.” (Note: In the Addendum to Mark, even though Jesus does not give Mary Magdalene the command to “Go and tell” in v. 10, she does go and tell the others.)
- Jn 20:16-17 “Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to him in Hebrew, ‘Rabbouni!’ (“[My] Teacher”). <sup>17</sup>Jesus said to her, ‘Do not hold on to me, because I have not yet ascended to the Father. But go to my brothers [and sisters] and say to them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”’”

### **Proclaimed the Resurrection**

- Mt 28:8 “So they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples.” (Note: Matthew does not present a scene in which the women proclaim the news to the others. However, in 28:16 the disciples go to the mountain in Galilee as instructed, so the women must have given them the news - <sup>16</sup>“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.”)
- Mk 16:10 “She went out and told those who had been with him, while they were mourning and weeping. <sup>11</sup>But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.” (From Addendum to Mark)
- Lk 24:8-12 “Then they remembered his words, <sup>9</sup>and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. <sup>10</sup>Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. <sup>11</sup>But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <sup>12</sup>But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.”
- Jn 20:18 “Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, ‘I have seen the Lord’; and she told them that he had said these things to her.” (It is stunning that Mary Magdalene’s words are quoted, not just described as in the other gospels.) <sup>Note 3</sup>

### **Healed of Infirmities and Evil Spirits**

- Mk 16:9 “... he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons.” (In the Addendum to Mark.)
- Lk 8:2 “The twelve were with him, <sup>2</sup>as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, <sup>3</sup>and Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others ...”

Note: There are no descriptions of “Mary Magdalene healed of seven demons” in Matthew, John or the original Mark.

## Scripture texts that add to our understanding of Mary Magdalene

### Jesus The Good Shepherd calls his sheep by name<sup>Note 4</sup>

- John 10:1-4 “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. <sup>2</sup>The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. <sup>3</sup>The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <sup>4</sup>When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.”

*Note: In John 20:16 Mary Magdalene recognizes the risen Jesus when he calls her by name. In John 10:1-4, Jesus had assured his disciples that true disciples will know him when he calls their names.*<sup>Note 4</sup>

### Jesus Foretold His Death and Resurrection to a Group of Close Disciples Including the Women

- Luke 9:18-22. “Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, ‘Who do the crowds say that I am?’ <sup>19</sup>They answered, ‘John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others that one of the ancient prophets has arisen.’ <sup>20</sup>He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Peter answered, ‘The Messiah of God.’ <sup>21</sup> He sternly ordered and commanded them not to tell anyone, <sup>22</sup>saying, ‘The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.’”

*Note: In Luke 24:6-7 angels reminded the women at the tomb that Jesus had told them he would die and rise again. Mary Magdalene and other women disciples were members of this group of close disciples in Luke 9:18-22.*

### On the Road to Emmaus

- Luke 24:17-26: And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup>Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?’ <sup>19</sup>He asked them, ‘What things?’ They replied, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup>and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. <sup>21</sup>But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. <sup>22</sup>Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, <sup>23</sup>and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. <sup>24</sup>Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.’ <sup>25</sup>Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! <sup>26</sup>Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?’

*Note: The other disciple with Cleopas could have been his wife. The two tell the stranger that “some women from our group astounded us” when they told them of the empty tomb and of their “vision of angels who said he was alive.”*

## Women who are Not Mary Magdalene. They Have Been Swept up into the Legends - Their distinct roles should be honored<sup>Note 5</sup>

### Unnamed Women Who Prophetically Anointed Jesus’ Head as “Christ” (the anointed one) in Preparation for His Burial

- Mk 14:3-9 “While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. <sup>4</sup>But some were there who said to one another in anger, ‘Why was the ointment

wasted in this way? <sup>5</sup>For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.’ And they scolded her. <sup>6</sup>But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. <sup>7</sup>For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. <sup>8</sup>She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. <sup>9</sup>Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.’”

- Mt 26:6-13 “Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, <sup>7</sup>a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. <sup>8</sup>But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, ‘Why this waste? <sup>9</sup>For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money given to the poor.’ <sup>10</sup>But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, ‘Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me. <sup>11</sup>For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. <sup>12</sup>By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial. <sup>13</sup>Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

*Note: It is only in Matthew and Mark that Jesus promises, “... wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”*

### **Mary of Bethany Prophetically Anointed Jesus’ Feet in Preparation for His Burial:**

- Jn 12:1-8 “Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup>There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. <sup>3</sup>Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus’ feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup>But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, <sup>5</sup>‘Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?’ <sup>6</sup>(He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) <sup>7</sup>Jesus said, ‘Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup>You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.’”

### **Unnamed Forgiven Woman Who Showed Great Hospitality; aka “Sinner from the City” or “Penitent Prostitute” who washed, anointed, and dried Jesus’ feet**

- Lk 7:36-50 “One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house and took his place at the table. <sup>37</sup> And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. <sup>38</sup> She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. <sup>39</sup> Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, ‘If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner. <sup>40</sup> Jesus spoke up and said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’ ‘Teacher,’ he replied, ‘speak.’ <sup>41</sup> ‘A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup> When they could not pay, he cancelled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?’ <sup>43</sup> Simon answered, ‘I suppose the one for whom he cancelled the greater debt.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘You have judged rightly.’ <sup>44</sup> Then turning towards the woman, he said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. <sup>45</sup> You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. <sup>46</sup> You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. <sup>47</sup> Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.’ <sup>48</sup> Then he said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ <sup>49</sup> But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, ‘Who is this who even forgives sins?’ <sup>50</sup> And he said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you; go in peace.’ *Note: In v. 27 the narrator, not Jesus, labels her a*

'sinner.' In v. 39, the Pharisee calls her a 'sinner'; Jesus doesn't. To Jesus she is a person who has sinned and has now been forgiven; her whole being is not defined as the 'sinner'. In v. 44 Jesus identifies her as "this woman", to him she is a specific person.

### **Unnamed Woman Caught in Adultery (Not Mary Magdalene)**

- Jn 8:3-11 "The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, 4 they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. 5 Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' 6 They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her. 8 And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. 9 When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. 10 Jesus straightened up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 11 She said, 'No one, sir.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.'"

*Note: This is the only woman Jesus told to, "Go and sin no more." Or "Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."*

### **End Notes:**

<sup>Note 1</sup> C. Ricci, *Mary Magdalene and Many Others*, (First Fortress Press, 1994) 53, 59. *In her analysis of Luke 8:1-3, Ricci concludes that Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susana were members of Jesus' intimate circle and his patrons.* "The particular news this little passage provides is the information that a group of women followed Jesus constantly on his travelling since the beginning of his public activity in the land of Galilee. A circle of women: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and many others; they set out with him, leaving home, family, relations, their village, their everyday life, and stayed with him, listening, speaking, travelling, offering goods and services, living with him, in short, and in the end followed him to the cross, where they, the only faithful witnesses, were to see him die." "The twelve, or at any rate a group designated by the term disciples, and the women of 8:1-3 are constantly with Jesus."

<sup>Note 2</sup> M. R. D'Angelo, "The Miriamic Vision", in *Mariam, The Magdalen [sic], and the Mother*. ed. D. Good (University of Indiana Press, 2005) 104-108.

<sup>Note 3</sup> B. E. Reid, OP, *Choosing the Better Part? Women in the Gospel of Luke*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical press, 1996) 204. "The women in the Fourth Gospel—the Samaritan woman, Martha and Mary of Bethany, and Mary Magdalene—enter into theological discussion with Jesus (John 4:7-26, 11:21-27, 20:14-17), make profound faith proclamations (John 4:29, 11:27, 20:18), and act as prophets and apostles (John 4:28-30, 39-41; 12:3-7; 20:18) over the objections of Jesus' male disciples (4:27, 12:5). Such stories would only have made sense in a community in which women acted as theologians, teachers, prophets, preachers, and apostles and were approved for doing so."

<sup>Note 4</sup> S. M. Schneiders, *Written That You May Believe* (New York: Crossroad, 2003) 218. "[In John 20:16], When Jesus speaks her name, as most commentators have recognized, he is calling his own by name (see 10:3). Mary did not, as some have suggested, recognize Jesus by the sounds of his voice in the ordinary sense of the word, for she had already spoken with him, heard his physical voice, without recognizing him (see v. 15). It is being called by name that effects the conversion. Jesus knows his own as the Father knows him and he knows the Father (see 10:14-15). He calls his own sheep by name, and they know his voice and they follow him (see 10:3-5). Consequently, the evangelist makes certain that the reader does not miss the significance of Mary's response, "Rabbouni." He tells us that she spoke in Hebrew and that the word means, "Teacher." ... Here Mary, symbolic representative of the new Israel, the Johannine community and the readers, makes the salvific choice. Jesus, and Jesus alone, is the Teacher, even, according to the Fourth Gospel, for the Jews."

<sup>Note 5</sup> Carla Ricci, *Mary Magdalene and Many Others: Women who followed Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 37-38. "In his full 1969 commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Heinz Schürmann declares decisively in favor of differentiation. This can be seen in his long analysis of Luke 7:36-50, which he does not consider a variant of the anointing recorded in the other Gospels (Mark 14:3-9; par. Matt 26:6-13; John 12:1-8), and in his comment on Luke 8:1-3, where he writes explicitly about Mary Magdalene: 'The new introduction of this 'Magdalene' prevents one from seeing in her, as the old tradition did, the 'sinner' of 7:36-50, the more so since 'sin' and 'diabolical possession' in the New Testament are not the same thing.'"