

Easter - Meeting Jesus

Mary Magdalene

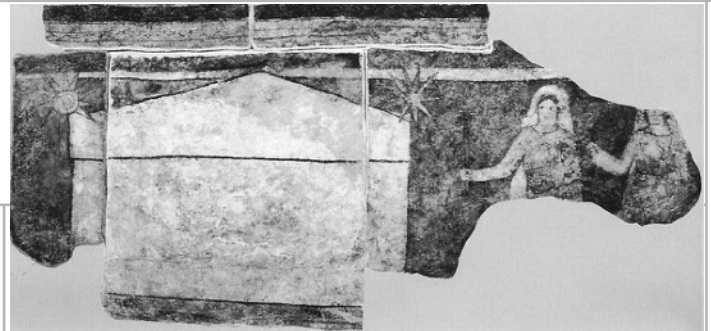
Foundation

Bible passage : John 20

Mary Magdalene is mentioned on four occasions in the gospels, three of which have to do with the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Luke tells us that she was one of a group of women disciples who provided for Jesus and the others “out of their means”. (He also mentions that she had been exorcised of demon possession, a fact Mark alludes to near the end of his gospel.) (Centuries later some claimed that she was the same Mary as the sister of Martha and Lazarus but that was a new idea and one which most people now reject.)

Matthew, Mark (15.40-47) and Luke tell us that she was one of the women who witnessed the crucifixion when most of the men had been scattered as Jesus had said they would. She was still there as the sun began to set when Jesus’ body was taken down from the cross. Normally the body would be anointed for burial at that point but as the Sabbath was about to begin (at sunset) this could not be done. But Mary was among the women who had seen the body carried into the tomb and laid there.

The third incident sees the women on a shopping trip presumably to a local market which opened on the Saturday after sunset when the Sabbath ended. This day they were buying the necessary herbs and spices to prepare Jesus body properly for burial. Their shopping, as much as the men’s flight, show that the disciples were not expecting Jesus to rise again despite the fact that he had said so several times (eg Mtt 16.21) and despite the fact that even his enemies knew He had said so (Mtt 27.63).



Fresco in the oldest known house Church, at Dura-Europas in Syria. It apparently shows Mary Magdalene and at least one other woman carrying torches and spices to the tomb. Dated about 240AD.

On the Sunday Mary and the other women had evidently arranged to meet at the tomb shortly after first light. After experiencing the earthquake and finding the stone rolled away from the tomb she raced to tell the disciples and then returned to the tomb. When she got there she saw two angels who asked her why she was crying and when she turned away she became the first witness of the risen Lord. At first, through her tears, she did not

“I have seen the Lord”

look properly or did not recognise Him until He spoke her name. At that time the testimony of a woman would not have carried as much weight as that of a man but this shows the truth of what happened, the disciples would not have invented it.

Mary has a relatively small, and yet incredibly significant part in the gospels. Yet through all the uncertainty, and doubts after the crucifixion, and though she had clearly not grasped what was going to happen, we find Mary faithfully there at these key incidents and being the first, on earth, to experience and rejoice in the joy of the resurrection of Christ.



Mary, like the others, had not fully understood Jesus’ teaching but remained faithful when others ran away.