

Hymns: 89 Were You There? 13 In the Garden (closing)

An eyewitness is a key figure in any courtroom. The Bible has many witnesses, but few compare with the one we'll consider today. She mysteriously pops up in scripture, witnesses some of the most **significant events in history**, and after giving her testimony, just as mysteriously **vanishes from the scene**.

We're going to revisit not only what she saw but also consider how she must have felt as **her heart leaps up from the pages of scripture and strikes a chord** with anyone who considers the account of these momentous events. In the process, we'll see one of the most **tender moments** in all the Bible.

Next time (in two weeks), we'll review the *story* of Christmas. This week we're going to consider the *reason* for Christmas. You've heard the expression "*Merry Christmas.*" So in the spirit of the season, I thought it fitting to consider one of the *Marys* in the Bible. This *Mary* is particularly intriguing.

What do we know about her?

- Her name appears in all four Gospels
- More references to her occur in the Bible than to any Mary except the mother of Jesus
- Jesus cast seven demons from her (Luke 8:2)
- She followed Jesus as He preached in Galilee (Luke 8:1)
- She supported Jesus (Mark 15:40-41; Luke 8:2,3)
- She was one of the women who watched the crucifixion from afar (Matthew 27:55-56; Mark 15:40)
- She stood at the foot of the cross along with Jesus' mother just before He died (John 19:25)
- She attended the burial of Jesus (Matthew 27:61)
- She witnessed that the stone that sealed the tomb had been rolled away (Matthew 28:2)
- She was first to see and speak with the risen Lord (John 20:1,16)
- She heard from the angel who announced that Jesus had risen from the dead (Matthew 28:6)
- She went to tell the disciples (Matthew 28:8)
- And on the way she was met by Jesus (Matthew 28:9)

There are still many basic things that we don't know about this woman:

- Her age (Jesus' age, younger, that of his mother, that of a grandmother)
- Her lineage – who were her parents?
- Her financial status
- Her occupation
- Her social status
- Or even when she died

Which Mary is this? What is her name?

It's Mary Magdalene – *Magdalene* indicates that she came from the town Magdala on the west bank of the Sea of Galilee.

As we already learned, Mary Magdalene appears in all four Gospels. Let's now move through the key actual accounts of her there to get a clear picture of this remarkable woman.

We find the first mention of her in Mark 16:9 and Luke 8. We'll use the passage in Luke 8.

[1] *And it came to pass afterward, that **he** [Jesus] went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,*
[2] *And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, **Mary called Magdalene**, out of whom went seven devils,*
[3] *And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, **which ministered unto him of their substance.***

Jesus saved her from **spiritual bondage**. How **joyful** the moment must have been for her when she was delivered from demonic possession. She responded to His love, it says, with practical devotion to Him. Jesus is still in the business of freeing souls from spiritual bondage if they only turn to Him in faith.

We now move from **great joy** to **the depths of sorrow**. Where do we find Mary Magdalene mentioned next? At the crucifixion of her Lord and Savior.

Matthew 27 (also Mark 15:40; John 19:45)

[35] *And they crucified him...,*

[50] *Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.*

[54] *Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.*

[55] *And many women were there **beholding afar off**, which followed Jesus **from Galilee, ministering unto him:***

[56] *Among which was **Mary Magdalene**, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.*

[57] *When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple:*

[58] *He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.*

[59] *And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,*

[60] *And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.*

[61] *And there was **Mary Magdalene**, and the other Mary, **sitting over against the sepulchre.***

Mark 15 tells it this way:

[47] *And **Mary Magdalene** and Mary the mother of Joses **beheld where he was laid.***

Picking up the story we switch to

John 20

[1] *The first day of the week cometh **Mary Magdalene** early, **when it was yet dark**, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.*

[2] *Then **she runneth**, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, **They have taken away the Lord** out of the sepulchre, and **we know not where they have laid him.***

After Peter and John verified Mary's story and obviously gave her no insight into what had actually

happened...we skip down to verse ten and read:

[10] Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

*[11] But Mary stood without at the sepulchre **weeping**: and as she **wept**, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre,*

[12] And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

*[13] And they say unto her, Woman, why **weapest** thou? She saith unto them, Because **they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.***

Mary's great sorrow multiplies. Notice these four verses contain three references to a form of the word *weep*. Notice she also testifies that Jesus Christ is her Lord. Note too the repeated words of Mary in verses 2 and 13. Clearly, she like virtually every other follower of the Lord, could not even consider the thought that Jesus had risen from the dead as He had repeatedly told them he would do. Even the Pharisees knew Jesus had claimed He would rise the third day. That was their motivation for sealing the tomb and placing a guard there.

[14] And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.

*[15] Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why **weapest** thou?*

Notice that here Jesus just repeated **the exact question** posed to her by the two angels in verse 13.

This indeed was a very sad moment for Mary. We can only imagine her tears of grief. Her Lord had been **unjustly beaten and killed**, and now **his body had been stolen**.

*whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the **gardener**, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.*

*[16] Jesus saith unto her, **Mary**. She turned herself, and saith unto him, **Rabboni**; which is to say, Master.*

Here was the moment of unimaginable joy. Just a minute before, all seemed lost---her grief overwhelming. And now, suddenly all turned around with **the sound of her name from His lips** and the **glimpse into His loving eyes**. No one has ever experienced a moment quite like that. It's hers alone to remember and cherish forever.

While her head was still spinning and her heart leaping for joy, Her Lord, directed her priorities back to His own.

*[17] Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: **but go to my brethren**, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and **your Father**; and to my God, and **your God**.*

She'll have eternity to worship Him. Her mission for the moment was to make practical use of her devotion to Him and tell the disciples He is risen from the dead. Some of us may need that reminder too. While worshiping Him is important, we must never forget the priority He has for us to share the Gospel with others.

Note also here, Jesus confirms to her and makes it clear to us (if there be any doubt) that her Father is

God. Mary dutifully, obeyed secure in the knowledge she would see Him again. Parting is such sweet sorrow.

*[18] Mary Magdalene came and **told the disciples** that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.*

Mark 16 fills in a few details about why she came back to the tomb:

*[1] And when the sabbath was past, **Mary Magdalene**, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had **bought sweet spices**, that **they might come and anoint him**.*

*[2] And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre **at the rising of the sun**.*

Matthew 28 gives the following account:

*[1] In the end of the sabbath, **as it began to dawn** toward the first day of the week, came **Mary Magdalene** and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.*

[2] And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

[3] His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:

[4] And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

[5] And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.

Then come some of the most glorious words ever spoken.

*[6] **He is not here: for he is risen, as he said.***

Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

*[7] And **go quickly, and tell his disciples** that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.*

*[8] And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and **great joy**; and **did run to bring his disciples word**.*

*[9] And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and **worshipped him**.*

When we see Him, we will do nothing less.

*[10] Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: **go tell my brethren** that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.*

This time **two** Marys gazed upon Him and heard Him speak to them. Mary Magdalene was not dreaming.

Finally Luke 24 adds the following sad details:

*[10] It was **Mary Magdalene**, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things unto the apostles.*

*[11] And **their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not**.*

After all, both Peter and John had just inspected the tomb themselves. While the body was gone, they saw neither angels nor the risen Lord. How frustrating it must have been for these women to have

delivered such joyous news and been met with such callous unbelief.

The Composer C. Austin Miles wrote the following:

One day in March, 1912, I was seated in the darkroom where I kept my photographic equipment and organ. I drew my Bible toward me; it opened at my favorite chapter, John 20...That meeting of Jesus and Mary lost none of its power to charm.

As I read it that day, I seemed to be part of the scene. I became a silent witness to that dramatic moment in Mary's life, when she knelt before her Lord, and cried, 'Rabboni!'...Under inspiration of this vision I wrote as quickly as the words could be formed the poem exactly as it has since appeared. That same evening I wrote the music. (From *Forty Gospel Hymn Stories*, by George W. Sanville).

This excerpt was taken from *Crusader Hymns and Hymn Stories* by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, 1967.

The title of the hymn he wrote was "In the Garden." Let's quickly use the analysis technique we learned last time to carefully look at the words of this beloved hymn.

1. I come to the garden alone, While the dew is still on the roses; And the voice I hear, falling on my ear, The Son of God discloses.	Who (Mary Magdalene) v.1 Where (by the garden tomb) v.15 How (first met Him alone) v.1 When (early morning) v.1 vv.15-17 v.16
2. He speaks, and the sound of His voice Is so sweet the birds hush their singing; And the melody that He gave to me Within my heart is ringing.	vv.15-17 v.16 What (Joy)
3. I'd stay in the garden with Him Though the night around me be falling; But He bids me go through the voice of woe, His voice to me is calling.	v.17
Chorus: And He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own; And the joy we share as we tarry there None other has ever known.	Why (His presence)vv.15-17 v.17 (Psalm 16:11)

Now before the closing prayer and benediction, let's sing *In The Garden* keeping in mind what we've learned. Each of us who come to Him must do so in a similar manner. He's there waiting. We may not recognize Him at first, but His voice through His Word is clear. If we know Him, His call has reached our hearts as well, and we love Him because he first loved us.

Benediction

Jude 24-25

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory **with exceeding joy**, To the only wise God **our Saviour**, be **glory** and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

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