

## Mary Magdalene: Facts versus Fiction

Mary Magdalene is probably the most well-known woman in the New Testament after Mary the mother of Jesus. Except that we actually know fairly little about her, with the consequence that rumours abound.

Some authors portray her as a prostitute or immoral woman. This includes the musical 'Jesus Christ Superstar' and the novel 'The Davidson Affair' by Stuart Jackman, which tells the Easter story from the angle of a TV journalist. Whilst both of these are valuable resources, they do her a gross injustice.

Likewise novels such as 'The Da Vinci Code' by Dan Brown, which are purely fictitious, encourage the reader to speculate that Mary may have been the secret wife of Jesus.

The main historical evidence about her comes from the gospel of Luke. Luke was a contemporary, writing only a few years after the events with the opportunity to interview many of the key players. In chapter 8 of his gospel he wrote:

<sup>1</sup>After this, while Jesus was travelling through some cities and small towns, he preached and told the Good News about God's kingdom. The twelve apostles were with him, <sup>2</sup>**and also some women** who had been healed of sicknesses and evil spirits: **Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out**; <sup>3</sup>Joanna, the wife of Chuza (the manager of Herod's house); Susanna; and many others. **These women used their own money to help Jesus and his apostles.** Luke 8:1-3 NCV

The fact that she was wealthy enough to support Jesus financially, infers that she is likely to have been a respectable lady of some social standing. The lack of any mention of a husband or children would indicate that her children could have left home. She may have been widowed, or had a measure of freedom due to her husband's goodwill or her own social status (as did Joanna). She could well have been past child bearing age and many years older than Jesus. Her healing had left her deeply indebted to him and there are many ways in which we can love people.

So where does the idea of her being a prostitute come from?

In the previous chapter Luke had written:

<sup>36</sup>One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to come to his home for a meal, so Jesus accepted the invitation and sat down to eat. <sup>37</sup>**A certain immoral woman** heard he was there and brought a beautiful jar filled with expensive perfume. <sup>38</sup>Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them. <sup>39</sup>When the Pharisee who was the host saw what was happening and who the woman was, he said to himself, "This proves that Jesus is no prophet. If God had really sent him, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!" Luke 7:36-39 NLT

Apart from the fact that the name 'Mary' was very popular at this time, this earlier woman is not even named. Although many prostitutes did follow Jesus, there is no reason at all to jump to the conclusion that this is the same person. Luke would surely have told us as Mary Magdalene was such a prominent figure.

It is the Easter story which really made Mary Magdalene famous as she appears to have been the first person to see Jesus after his resurrection.

See also <http://www.gotquestions.org/was-Jesus-married.html>

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