

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

John 20: 11-18

About 7:00 am on Sunday the seventeenth of Nisan

DIG: Why did Jesus appear to Mary Magdalene even before He appeared to His own apostles? What finally breaks through her grief and confusion? How does her return to the Eleven contrast to that in John 20:2? What term does Jesus use for His talmidim here? What is new in their relationship from now on (John 15:15)? Yeshua Messiah clearly chose Miryam from Magdala to be the first to see Him after His resurrection. Why was His appearance to Mary so important and significant?

REFLECT: How has Christ spoken your name in a time of grief? How did it affect you? What does it mean to you that our Savior is your brother?

If this account of the resurrection was a fabrication, this would not be the way to do it. Under Jewish law the testimony of a woman was not accepted. This is why the talmidim do not believe the women right away. A person making up a resurrection lie would have told it men, or a group of men, at least two or three, in accordance with the Jewish concept of testimony. Therefore, having the first appearance of the resurrection be seen by a woman actually authenticates the resurrection account.¹⁶⁶¹

By the time Mary Magdalene made it back to the tomb, Peter and John had already come and gone. Alone now, feeling lost and beside herself with grief, her sorrow surged and she stood outside the tomb sobbing uncontrollably. Her Savior was dead, and someone had taken His body. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. Even though the angels had announced to her on the first visit to the tomb that Messiah had risen (Luke 24:5b-6a), Mary still did not understand. So in light of the previous announcement, they asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" If she believed their message that Yeshua had risen, there would have been no need for tears. Mary's reply revealed her interpretation of the empty tomb. Through her broken-hearted sobs, Miryam cried out: They have taken my Lord away and I don't know where they have put Him (John 20:11-13). To this the angels made no reply.

It was just then that **she turned around and saw Jesus standing there. This was the first appearance of the resurrected Christ.** At first, through her tear-filled eyes, **she did not realize Him at all (John 20:14).** Incidentally, **she** was not the only one who didn't instantly perceive who **He** was after **His** resurrection. Later that day two of **His** disciples traveled some distance with **Him** on the road to Emmaus before **their** eyes were opened (**Luke 24:13-35**). **His** face was different - glorified. **John** would later describe **Him** like this: **The hair on His head was white as wool, as white as snow, His eyes were like blazing fire, and His voice was like the sound of rushing waters (Revelation 1:14-15).**

Yeshua repeated the angels' question and asked her: **Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?** Not only did **she** not recognize **His** appearance, **she** also did not recognize **His** voice. **Jesus Christ** was the last person **Mary** expected to see alive. Thinking **He** was the gardener, **she** said: **Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have put Him, and I will get Him (John 20:15).**

All **He** had to say was **her** name, and **she** instantly recognized **Him**. **He** calls **His** own sheep by name . . . and they know **His** voice (**John 10:3-4 NKJV**). Then **Yeshua** called **her** by name, saying: **Miryam**. When **she** turned to look at **Jesus** - really look at **Him** - **she** accepted the fact of **His** resurrection and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" or my Teacher (**John 20:16**). **Mary's** grief instantly turned to inexpressible joy.

Why would the risen Lord start by appearing first to a grieving **Miryam from Magdala**? Why would **He** entrust this vital, history-altering revelation to a woman who, according to society's rules, wasn't even a credible witness? Just think, if **He** had only arrived a little earlier, **He** could have revealed **Himself** to two of the greatest apostles, **Peter** and **John**. Wouldn't that have been better? Nevertheless, the **Messiah** chose **Mary Magdalene**, and from what we know of **Jesus**, neither **His** timing nor **His** choice was an accident. **Miryam** was a perfect person for the supreme honor of being first to see the risen **Christ** - fitting, strangely enough, because **she** was a woman.

After being held for who know how long in the power of seven demons, who else better than **Mary Magdalene** to be the first to witness **Christ's** decisive victory over the Adversary? **She** knew from painful personal experience how the Enemy really operated. **Jesus** did far more for **Mary** than simply free **her** from demons. By **His** death and resurrection, **Jesus** not only broke the power of sin and death, **He** conquered **her** former tormenter, the devil.

The outcome of the war between **the seed of the serpent** and the **Seed of the woman** (**Genesis 3:15**), was decided here. And how fitting for **Jesus** to ask **Mary: Women, why are you crying?** Although it seems like an odd thing to ask in a cemetery, in this case, the question is profound. **Miryam** was weeping over **the empty tomb**, the one historical event that brings hope to all our tears. If **Mary** found what **she** was looking for - a dead **Messiah** - we would all have reason to weep in despair. Instead, **He** was the victor! Hope is alive, no matter how grim things look, **Yeshua** has won the war, and the rest of history is merely mopping up. The Adversary is a defeated foe, and **Mary's**, and our, liberation was complete.

We can only imagine the cheerful look of surprise of **Mary's** face when **she** recognized **Him**. The worst of sorrows changed in an instant to the best of joys. We're sobbing our hearts out. We can't find **Jesus**. We've lost all hope. Then **Yeshua** comes. **He** speaks our name. Suddenly the cloud lifts and our troubles are bearable. We feel a rush of excitement. **The Messiah** seems so near, and so does our hope.¹⁶⁶²

When we put this information with what we gleaned from **Luke's** gospel tells us that **Mary** was one of **the women** who traveled with **Jesus** (see **Eg - Mary Magdalene and Some Other Women Supported Jesus Out of Their Own Means**), it is clear that **Miryam** was a student in the school of Rabbi **Yeshua**. **She** was blessed with more than the average opportunities to hear **His** word and to observe and interact with **Him**. Once again, if this were a made up story you wouldn't use **a woman** here, because **women** were unreliable witness in the Jewish culture.

At that point **Miryam** must have tried to hold **Him** as if **she** would never let **Him** go. But **Jesus** said: **Stop clinging to Me, since I haven't yet gone back to the Father** (**John 20:17a NASB**). **The Lord's** words testified in a unique way to **Mary Magdalene's** extraordinary character. Most of us are too much like the apostle **Thomas** - hesitant, doubting, and pessimistic. **Yeshua** urged **Thomas** to touch **Him**, in order to verify **the Lord's** identity (**John 20:27**). It is remarkable and sad (but true) that most of **Christ's** disciples, especially in this postmodern age, constantly need to be coaxed *nearer* to **Him**. But **Mary**, by contrast, didn't want to let **Him** go and held on for dear life!¹⁶⁶³

From what **He** says here and from what **He** says in **Hebrews 9:11-12, 24** and **10:12**, we know that **Jesus** offered **His** own blood in **the Most Holy Place**, the more perfect **Tabernacle** that is in heaven. So **He** could not be held until **He** had ascended to heaven. **But instead go to My brothers** (Greek: *adelphos*) **and tell them that I am going back to My Father and your Father, to my God and your God** (**John 20:17b CJB**). *Adelphos* can be used of physical **brothers**, or **brothers** in **the Lord**. The context determines how it should be used. Here the context is **the apostles**, so it would be **brothers** in **the Lord**.

The Jehovah's Witnesses use this verse to prove that **Jesus** cannot be **God** because **He** is inferior to **God the Father** (to read more about this see **Kr - The Holy Spirit Will Teach You All Things**). The Witnesses are going to say that this is the resurrected **Christ**, not **Jesus** as a man ministering on earth, saying: **I haven't yet gone back to the Father**. Could **Jesus** make such a statement if **He Himself** were not **God**? This verse reveals perhaps one of the most important features of the doctrine of the person of **the Messiah**.

Jesus Christ, when **He** walked this earth, combined two natures: a divine nature, on the one hand, which is the nature of **God**, and a human nature, or on the other hand, which is the nature of man. **Jesus** was both **God** and man at the same time. **He** was not fifty percent **God** and fifty percent **man**; **He** was one hundred percent **God** and one hundred percent **man**.

An interesting exercise to undertake is to go through the *Gospels* and note carefully the sayings and the activity of **Christ** and see how at times the divinity of **Christ** is emphasized, then at other times, the humanity of **Christ** is revealed. For example, in **John 4**, **Jesus** was sitting at the well talking with the Samaritan woman because **He** was tired from **His** journey. Only a man gets tired; **God** does not grow tired or weary (**Isaiah 40:28**). Another example of the humanity of **Christ** is seen when **He** was hanging on the cross. **He** was dying and **He** was saying **His** final prayers to **His Father**. Of course, when **Christ** died, it was the humanity of **Jesus** that died, not the divinity of **Messiah**, because the divine **Christ** could never die. Therefore, when **Yeshua** was resurrected from the dead, it was the humanity of **Christ**, the human **Jesus** that rose from the dead.

The Jehovah's Witnesses teach the when **Jesus** was resurrected **He** gave up **His** humanity forever. They believe that when **Yeshua** died and **His** human body went into the tomb it was *dissolved* by **God the Father**! They paint themselves into a theological corner because they believe that **Christ** was Michael the Archangel before he was somehow transformed into the human of **Jesus** in the womb of Mary. I am not making this up! So after **His** death on the cross, **Yeshua** had to rise from the dead as a spirit in order to become Michael the Archangel once again. Oh, what a tangled web they weave!

Therefore, to illustrate the divine nature and the human nature of **Yeshua**, we only need to look at the two special titles applied to **Jesus** throughout the *Gospels*: **The Son of Man** and **the Son of God**. **Messiah Himself** used those two titles. **Yes, indeed! I tell you that there is coming a time - in fact, it's already here - when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who listen will come to life. For just as the Father has life in Himself, so He has given the Son life to have in Himself. Also He has given Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man. Don't be surprised at this; because the time is coming when all who are in the grave will hear His voice**

(John 5:25-28).

Son of God is the title showing the divinity of **Messiah**, so notice the action that accompanies it. Those who hear **the voice of the Son of God** will live. Only **God** can give eternal life! On the other hand, when we look at **verses 27 and 28** we see that **God** has given **Christ** authority to **execute judgment because He is the Son of Man**. His divine nature is **the One** who performs the miracle of giving eternal life (see **Ms - The Eternal Security of the Believer**) and His human nature is the one who is associated with judging mankind. So here **John** was emphasizing the humanity of **Christ** when **He** identified **Himself** with His talmidim as **My brothers** (**John 20:17b** above).¹⁶⁶⁴

He would return to Galilee and **the Eleven** were to meet **Him** there. With the new joy that came from her understanding of the resurrection, **Mary** went to the apostles with the news, **"I have seen the Lord!"** And she told them that **He** had said these things to her (**John 20:18**). **Hers** was an extraordinary legacy. No one can ever share that honor or take it from her. But we can, and should, seek to imitate her deep love for **Messiah**.