



# MINUTES WITH MESSIAH

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## PASSION

A free-style rap in 3 with a chorus mostly in 4.

I saw the Passion of the Christ;  
The thorns, the beatings. Oh the price  
He paid for all my sin,  
So that I might enter in  
To his eternal dwelling.  
And that is why I'm telling  
The world about my savior  
And how he gave me favor  
To be who I ought to be,  
To be saved, to be his, to be free.

Lord, give me a passion for your Christ;  
A need, a desire to be nice  
To ev'ryone around,  
To all who hear the sound  
Of my voice as I shout it,  
There is no doubt about it:  
He has forgiven me.  
His child I delight to be.  
Lord, let people hear your voice  
As I tell them about your joys.

Lord, give me a pas-sion for your pas-sion. Give me grace to tell of your

grace. Give me mer-cy and love, com-pas-sion. Let my face In all your

glo-ry Be a re-flec-tion of your face.

The theme of the 2014 Spiritual Explosion youth rally at Riverside church of Christ in Albuquerque was "Passion" This song was written for that event. It is a slight departure from my usual songs because the verses are written as a spoken rap. The format was suggested by a song by TobyMac, which also was a rap with a musical chorus.

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# MIRIAM OF MAGDALA

She was a prostitute. She was married to Jesus. She was the woman caught in adultery. (Jn 8) She was an alien from outer space. Well, maybe that last one hasn't been suggested before, but it makes as much sense as the others. The "she" in question was Mary of Magdala, commonly called Magdalene. A lot of people have come up with a lot of theories about who she was, and most are not supported by scripture. In fact, we know very little of this particular Mary other than her village of origin. So what are the facts?

## Magdala

As mentioned, the one thing we know best about Miriam was that she came from Magdala. Some sources question whether she was born there, or lived there. That makes little difference. In a society that was not notoriously mobile, many people lived their whole lives in one town. Another question, though, is where Magdala was. There are two candidates for this woman's home village, both on the coasts of the Sea of Galilee.

Some consider the least likely to be a village near Gadara, on the southeastern tip of the sea. This is in the area known, in Jesus' time, as the Decapolis (ten cities),

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Miriam was apparently a woman of substance, possibly married into money.

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and was outside the Jewish territory. (It is now part of the nation of Jordan.) We do know that Jesus visited the area around this particular Magdala. Mark (chapter 5) and Luke (chapter 8) tell of an incident in the region around Gadara. It was there that Jesus cast the legion of spirits into a nearby herd of pigs, which drowned themselves in the sea. Since, as will be shown, Miriam also had a multi-spirit possession, one might speculate that this was an area in which that was common, and so she may have come from this region.

The other, and generally considered more likely, Magdala is on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was near the city of Tiberias (which also lent its name to the Roman name of the lake, the Sea of Tiberias). It is south of Gennesaret, where Jesus healed many people. (Matt 14:34-36; Mk 6:53-56) This may or may not be the Magdala mentioned in the King James Version in Matthew 15:39. Other sources, including the original

Greek, call that city Magadan. The western Magdala has the advantage of being near Nazareth and Capernaum, and so it is more likely that Miriam might have met Jesus there. This was a center of the fishing industry on the Sea of Galilee, so Jesus may have visited there with James, John, Peter, and Andrew.

## A woman of means

Miriam was apparently a woman of substance. We are not told where she got her money. It is highly unlikely that it was gained through prostitution; more likely she was married to a man of some wealth. The only reference to Miriam that is not directly associated with the crucifixion and resurrection can be found in Luke 8:1-3.

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

Here Mary is listed among several women who "ministered unto him of their substance." This is generally taken to mean that these women gave financial support to Jesus and the apostles throughout his ministry. Considering that at any given time Jesus may have been accompanied by anywhere from 25 to 150 people, this wealth may have been necessary.

Among the other women listed with Mary is Joanna, the wife of a steward of one of the Herods. This woman was also with Mary at the tomb after the resurrection. (Lk 24:1-10) So, at least at the time she accompanied Jesus, Miriam was associated with women of considerable social standing.

This is also the passage, along with Mark 16:9, that says that seven devils had come out of her. The scripture gives not details of this healing. It is something that is thrown out somewhat casually, as if it were something relatively common. But it is also presented as an identifier. Since Miriam was a common name for Jewish women, because of Moses' sister, there had to be some fact about this Miriam to distinguish her from the mother of Jesus and countless other women. Now that we use surnames, and in Russian areas patronymics, today she might be known as Miryam Heptdaimon. What is not told is the nature of these demons, or whether the possession of them made Miriam engage in illegal or immoral acts. Most demon possessions recorded in the Bible resulted in

symptoms of illness, not immorality. Nothing can be surmised about Miriam's character from this passage other than that she was generous.

## Golgotha and the garden

Most of the passages that mention Mary Magdalene are about the death and resurrection of Jesus. In most of those she is only mentioned along with other women.

There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; (Who also, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him;) and many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem. (Mk 15:40-41)

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene." (Jn 19:25) This reference to "the three Marys" is an example of how common the name Miriam was among the Jewish people.

"And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid." (Mk 15:47)

"It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and other women that were with them, which told these things [about the resurrection] unto the apostles." (Lk 24:10)

All three of these passages mention Miriam of Magdala, and probably Miriam the mother of Jesus. (Mary the mother of Jesus is probably also called the mother of James "the less" and Joseph. From Matthew 13:55 we learn that these were names of Jesus' brothers.) They also mention several women disciples. Then, as now, it seems, women were among the most loyal believers.

"Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils." (Mk 16:9) John gives a more detailed account of this incident.

But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, 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. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? 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. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. 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. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her. (Jn 20:11-18)

Why was Miriam the first to whom Jesus appeared? Was there some special relationship between the two? Was it mere chance that Miriam was the one who hung around in the garden? We could speculate all day, and many do. Since the scriptures do not say, it is impossible to know the why and wherefore. All we can know is that Miriam of Magdala had the honor to be the first to see the risen savior, and to announce it to the other companions.

But what of the speculations? Do they have any basis?

One of the most popular theories today is that Jesus and Mary were secretly (or otherwise) married. The

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## Miriam (Mary) was a common Jewish name.

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gospels give no indication that Jesus ever married, but it would not destroy the essentials of salvation if he were. Had he married, it is possible, but not likely, that it would have been to Miriam. She was, after all, with his mother at his death. She was the first to see him after the resurrection. Against that theory, though, is the statement that she was one who supported him. Unless she was independently wealthy (which is a possibility), she was most likely using her husband's money. It is very possible that she was married to someone else.

The most persistent theory is that Miriam was a prostitute. This is likely the result of a conflation of two separate incidents. Luke 7:36-50 tells of a woman, an unnamed prostitute, who washed Jesus' feet with her tears and anointed them with ointment. This happened at the house of a Pharisee named Simon. John 11:2 mentions that Mary the sister of Lazarus had similarly anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. The details of that occurrence are then recounted in John 12:1-8. This was in the house of her brother, Lazarus. But because one Mary wiped his feet with her hair, and an unnamed prostitute did the same, many falsely assume they were the same woman.

Miriam of Magdala was important in Jesus' ministry on earth. She did have a history with demon possession. To go from that to prostitution and other theories about the woman is merely gossip and speculation. Christians should be above such a base activity.

# ***CONSERVATION OF MASS***

There is a principle in physics called the conservation of mass. This states that in a closed system matter may change in form, but does not increase or decrease. If it appears that something has reduced in volume, something else must necessarily have increased. The total mass of the system remains constant.

It appears that one of the psalmists believed that to be true in God's system as well. "Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil." (Ps 90:15)

We don't live in a stable world. Things change daily. Circumstances change constantly. The pessimist fears that because things are going well, they are bound to get worse. The optimist believes that when things are going bad, they must get better. The pragmatist says both are right. This psalmist tends toward the optimist view because he knows God.

Some things happen to everyone. God is no respecter of persons. "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." (Mat 5:45) Good and bad, drought and flood, light and dark. All are going to happen, and God does not step in to control these things. He allows nature to take its course according to the rules he established at the creation.

That could tend to be a depressing thought, if one does not know God. During the Dust Bowl people wondered if there would ever be an end to the drought. Today, however, Oklahomans say that if God wanted Texans to have grass he would have given them Oklahoma. The cycle continues, no matter how long it takes.

This psalmist prays that the cycle works in equilibrium. For those who follow God, let there be balance. Good equals bad. Joy equals sorrow. He asks that God give joy in proportion to affliction. What does that mean to us?

It means that we can take the optimistic view. When people persecute us because of our beliefs we can know that no matter how bad it gets it will be just as good. When people berate us for our beliefs, God will give us praise in equal proportion.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (Mt 5:11-12)

But what about when things are going good? Are we to take the pessimistic view that no matter how good it gets we can expect it to get just as bad? It appears that the psalmist believes it is only a one-way equation. Any force acting upon God's system tends toward goodness. If good acts on the system it doesn't result in an equal amount of evil; it results in an equal amount of good. When evil acts upon the system it results in an equal amount of good. This only makes sense. It is, after all, God's system and God is good.

God has established laws and principles in the physical world. It seems that some of those principles are mirrored in the spiritual world, as well.

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