**SERIES 03 (PREACHED IN 1904) - THE PREACHING OF G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

**02. JESUS AND MARY OF MAGDALA by G. CAMPBELL MORGAN**

*"Soon afterwards, he went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of God's Kingdom. With him were the twelve, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out; and Joanna, the wife of Chuzas, Herod's steward; Susanna; and many others; who served them from their possessions."*

*Luke 8:1-3*

*"There were also women watching from afar, amongst whom were both Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; who, when he was in Galilee, followed him and served him; and many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem. When evening had now come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathaea, a prominent council member who also himself was looking for God's Kingdom, came. He boldly went in to Pilate, and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate marvelled if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead long. When he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. He bought a linen cloth, and taking him down, wound him in the linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb which had been cut out of a rock. He rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of Joses, saw where he was laid."*

*Mark 15:40-47*

*"Many women were there watching from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, serving him. Amongst them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee. When evening had come, a rich man from Arimathaea, named Joseph, who himself was also Jesus' disciple came. This man went to Pilate, and asked for Jesus' body. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given up. Joseph took the body, and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut out in the rock, and he rolled a great stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb. Now on the next day, which was the day after the Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees were gathered together to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember what that deceiver said while he was still alive: 'After three days I will rise again.' "*

*Matthew 27:55-63*

*"But standing by Jesus' cross were his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene."*

*John 19:25*

OUR SUBJECT this morning is so large that there is room in almost each recorded incident in which Mary Magdalene takes a part for a separate study.

In Luke (8:1-3) she is introduced to us, among the rest, as Mary of Magdala, "from whom seven demons had gone out." The other reference that brings us back to the fact of the first meeting is not told until afterwards, just incidentally, when Mark comes to the end and says, Jesus appeared first on the resurrection morning to "Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons." So there are two incidental references almost buried, the fact of Christ's first meeting with Mary, of Mary's first contact with Christ. Remember that that is all you know of her past, yet it reveals a discipleship that is loyal and magnificent to the end.

Now, what is this thing we know? We know that Jesus cast out of this woman at some time, under some circumstances, seven demons. But that does not for one single moment necessarily mean that Mary of Magdala had ever been a woman of sin. The whole subject of demon possession is one of very great interest. First of all there is a great distinction always drawn in Scripture between devil and demon. They are never the same and never used interchangeably, and in the Revised Version that distinction is made. There is a great controversy in the minds of some as to what demons really are. The demons referred to in Scripture are probably fallen spirits, all of them under the control of the great archfiend, the devil himself. In the days of our Lord's life upon the earth, demon possession was very common. That it is still in the world is the contention of Dr. Nevius' great book on this subject, in which he deals with demon possession in China. In the book Dr. Nevius asks the question why demon possession is not manifest today in Christian nations as it was in Judea, and as it still is in China, and goes on to say that the reason is very evident, that demon possession is never continued where the Spirit of the Christ has come. Here we have seven demons. Demon possession sometimes issued in immorality, but not always; and if in the demon-possessed, immorality was the result, not the cause, then even the immorality resulting from it the person guilty of, was not responsible for. So even if we could prove, which we cannot, that the fact that this woman was possessed by seven demons and being so possessed gave herself over to immoral courses and conduct, this possession of a being was the act of Satan himself, and the responsibility ended with the moment of possession...

Mary was simply a daughter of Magdala, suffering from demon possession, and somewhere Jesus met her, and cast out the demons, and with their passing there passed whatever disability she had suffered from.

Let us now look at this woman in her subsequent discipleship, in three places: first, in the life of the Lord; secondly, in connection with the Lord's death; and finally, in connection with the Lord's resurrection. From Mark 15:40, 41 and Luke 8:3, we find Mary was one of those women who ministered to the Lord of her substance, and the inference is that she was a woman of wealth. When our Lord left His home, and entered upon the public ministry, He was without worldly possession. He was supported by this little company of godly and wealthy women. As He went from place to place with His disciples, they were accompanied by these women. In all probability Jesus cast these demons out of Mary of Magdala in the early part of His ministry, and immediately she consecrated her life to Him, and expressed it in following Him from place to place, and ministering to Him of her substance. In the commonplace of everyday life she watched Him, and waited on Him, and provided material things for Him with the rest of the disciples...

Matthew 27:55, 56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25 tell us that Mary of Magdala watched at the cross. A woman delivered, a woman who has served along the line of the commonplace, has come to the point where she cannot help Him anymore, and there she is watching. When the other disciples have forsaken Him and fled, Mary and just a few loyal women watch Him at the cross. It would seem that if anybody might have been excused, it was the women. We would never criticise the women if they had hurried away. But it is here that the real strength of womanhood comes out. The feebler fibre is stronger at such times, and those women waited, and watched. Mary's soul is torn with agony, and yet, wrapping up her heart's agony, she is more conscious of His, and we see her in the shadows of the cross watching the awful suffering of the Lord.

If you will look at Mark 15:47, you will find something else. She not only watched Him at the cross, but she watched them as they buried Him. "And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid." She watched at the cross until the whole tragic thing was over, and He was dead. She watched at the cross as they came and lowered the sacred body, those tender hands of Joseph and she watched as they carried Him to the quiet garden of Joseph of Arimathea, and she watched as they laid Him there. The watching woman, watching in despair, watching when she can minister no longer to His necessity, watching when all her heart's highest hopes are being blighted and dying, watching, watching still.

And yet again, there is something that is not always noticed, in Matthew 27:61,62,63, "And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre. Now on the morrow, which is the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees were gathered together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said while he was yet alive, After three days I rise again." The enemies of Jesus did not set the guard over the tomb until the day after He was crucified. There was one long, lonely night in which no one watched the grave but Mary of Magdala and the other Mary. The Roman guard was not there the first night. The first night of the entombment of Jesus He was watched not by brutal Roman soldiers, inspired by devilish priests, but by two lonely women. So we see Mary of Magdala watching Him at the cross in despair, watching Him as they buried Him, and then sitting by all the long night, watching the grave. And I cannot but think that heaven rejoiced during those long hours, that there were two souls who though they could not help in any way yet watched in the midst of the darkness.

Finally, we come to the story of Mary of Magdala in connection with the resurrection. It is not easy to tell this chronologically, for Matthew and John seem to tell stories which are at some points unlike. I will state them in the order in which I think they happened, and you must receive this order or not according to your own searching and patient following of the Scriptures afterwards. I think what happened is this: She watched them bury her Lord, she watched all through one long, dark night in the garden; but when the soldiers came I think she went. And now I find her coming again on the first day of the week and her first coming is to bring spices, to embalm the body of her Lord. She has carefully noted the place, watched when no one else was watching, to see that all things were right, that no one could take Him away, and so she hurries to get the spices, and on the first day of the week we see her coming back. When she came, she saw that the stone was rolled away. She did not wait for anything, but ran in her fright to tell some of the disciples. She found Peter and John, and told them, and they at once came to see for themselves. They went into the sepulchre, then coming out went away home.

Mary meanwhile "stood without, weeping." But after Peter and John had gone away, I believe that she went in herself to look at the tomb, and when she came to look in, she saw the angels. Peter and John did not see them, if they were there. There are visions plain to some and not to others. This woman watching at the cross, and watching at the grave through the long night's agony, has now come to embalm Him, making a great mistake, and yet a mistake of a great love. Imagining it is a dead Christ she is going to serve, she looks, and sees the angels, and the angels say to her: "Fear not, I know that ye seek Jesus ... He is not here." Mark the little quiet sweet rebuke: "He is risen as He said. Come, behold the place where the Lord lay."

She cannot understand it, but is greatly perplexed, and she turns back from the grave to the garden. There is a Man standing there, and she thinks He is the gardener. I never hear what she said to Him without my heart getting full. "Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Dear heart, as though she could carry a dead man. But love can do anything. Love is prepared to try at least, and then in the sunshine of that morning, as that dear, stricken heart, making such great mistakes, coming to embalm the Master Who had told her that He would not be dead but alive, willing to carry Him, dead, and get possession of him, and watch over Him, she stands there stricken and smitten with grief, the great love of her heart making the grief sorer than ever, the Man looks into her face, and says, "Mary." How often she had heard Him say it! How familiar she was with the tone of that voice: "Mary"!

And now she makes another mistake, "Rabboni." He said "Mary," that was the old name. She said "Rabboni," that was the old name, too. It is different now. He is no longer her Teacher merely. "Touch me not." I cannot help feeling that the marginal reading is of tremendous advantage here. Take not hold on Me. It is not a case of, Touch Me not, but, Do not take hold of Me, that is to say, Mary, do not regard Me in that old relationship. I am beyond that. I am not yet ascended. There is a new relationship. It cannot begin just now. "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." I am the same, but different. You have lost and found Me, and yet you have found so much more than you have lost.

And then what happened? He said, Go and tell My disciples to come and meet Me. And she started with the other Mary to tell the news. On the way He appeared again, and this time He spoke first, saying, "All hail," and Mary went down and worshiped. She has a glimmer of the new truth. I do not think Mary understood it. She never will until the great fire baptism of Pentecost, but she has a glimmer of the truth. And now when He met them, it was not a case of, Do not make physical contact. She came to worship, and He let her touch even those risen feet that presently were not there, and yet came again through closed doors. And the women went on and told the story.

We have no other record, but there can be no doubt that Mary of Magdala was present in that upper room, when there came the rushing, mighty wind, and the tongue of fire, and the new presence of Christ by the Holy Ghost. And then she took hold of Him, for He had ascended to His Father and her Father, and to His God and her God. And she learned in that upper room that it was no longer merely Rabboni, my Teacher, but it was the Lord Jesus Christ, the great name that means so much more than Jesus, so much more than the Christ. He is the crowned Saviour. He is the anointed King. And so she found Him in spiritual revelation. The first thing that men ever said to Jesus when He was declared to be Messiah was said on the bank of the Jordan, when the herald actually pointed Him out, "Behold the Lamb of God. " Two men followed Him, and Jesus turned to them and said, What do you want? and they said, "Rabbi, Teacher, where abidest thou?" and He said, "Come, and ye shall see." After the resurrection a woman wants to repeat it, and she is rebuked. He says, No, not that, take not hold on Me. I am more than that now. How many people call Him Rabboni, Teacher. It is one of the tendencies of the hour to make Him a moral Teacher. He does not say to us, I have not yet ascended. He says, Take not hold of Me as Teacher merely. I have ascended to My Father and your Father. Take hold of Me first as the risen, crowned Saviour. He will be the Teacher, too. It is not wrong that we should call Him Rabboni, my Teacher. But first see to it that we have crowned Him Lord of the life, trusting in the mystery of the cross, and in the fact of resurrection, and in the certainty of a present ascension reign.

The chief interest attaches to the discipleship of this woman. The cure was wrought by Jesus Christ. And then? She followed and ministered to Him so far as she had light, and how beautiful that day-by-day commonplace ministry, in which she just looked after Him! I think this woman, and the rest of them will always have some high place in heaven, because they fed Him with commonplace bread. I would somehow rather have done that than anything else I know. And then when she cannot do it any more, she watches in despair at the cross, and burial, and then ministers in despair when she brings spices to anoint Him dead. It is very easy to say that she ought not to have brought them. He had told them that He would rise again, and she and all the rest might have known that no spices would ever be needed to embalm Him. But she did not learn it, dear, sweet, strong heart, and who shall blame her? She had never really heard and understood and believed that which in itself is beautiful beyond telling. She comes with spices. Hope is gone. He is dead. Then she will minister to Him dead if in no other way.

If only we could learn it. We get in despair, and feel we cannot do anything and we cease doing anything. If it is a blunder to bring spices, I am glad she brought them. It is teaching me a lesson that when I cannot hope or believe any longer, I am to go on bringing spices and serving Him in despair. Then that waiting in the garden, that breaking of day, that eternal outburst of light upon this woman, that Rabboni, rebuked, and that final worship, full of beauty, full of glory. It is a radiant and beautiful picture of a truly consecrated life.

One thing more. He consecrated her life. We are never quite correct when we speak of consecrating ourselves. He consecrates, we dedicate. He consecrates by delivering her from false possession. That is always what He does. Get into contact with Christ as the woman did who touched, and He will consecrate you to Himself by casting out the evil thing. I am not discussing any doctrine of sanctification. I am saying He casts demons out, He never imprisons them within. And when He had consecrated her by deliverance from false possession, she abandoned herself to the new possession, His possession of her, and so she dedicated, by yielding herself to Him in the heroism of commonplace, of looking after His daily bread. Then she dedicated herself to Him in the midst of tragedy, in the days in which hope was dead. She made mistakes, bringing the spices, and calling Him Rabboni, but they were mistakes that were blameless. It is a revelation of the fact that a soul may be blameless but not faultless. She was walking in the light so far as she had it, and answering the impulse of her heart, and so Jesus corrected her, and led her out, and mistakes dropped off like the chrysalis of a butterfly as it comes out to fairer light. We shall go on making blunders. We shall blunder in our devotion; but He will love us as we blunder. All we have to do is to dedicate that which He consecrates. He consecrates by casting out the things that spoil, and mar, and wreck, while we say, Lord, this was under the dominion of the demon, it is now under Thy dominion.