

**Series #24: Women of the Early Church**  
**Session #1 – Mary Magdalene & The Women at the Tomb**  
**Tuesday, April 20, 2021**

Readings

- Matthew 28:1-10
- Mark 16:1-8 [9-11]
- Luke 24:1-12
- John 20:1-18

Several women are named in the Gospels as being the first witnesses of the Resurrection:

- Mary Magdalene (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1, 9-11; Luke 24:10; John 20:1-18)
- Mary, the mother of James (Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10)
- Salome (Mark 16:1)
- Joanna (Luke 24:10)

What do we know about these women...or what does church tradition teach us?

**Mary Magdalene**

St. Mary Magdalene is one of the greatest saints of the Bible and a legendary example of God's mercy and grace. She is also called "Apostle to the Apostles," "Equal-to-the-Apostles," and "The Myrrh-bearer." The precise dates of her birth and death are unknown, but we do know she was present with Christ during his public ministry, death and resurrection. She is mentioned at least a dozen times in the Gospels. Mary Magdalene has long been regarded as a prostitute or sexually immoral in western Christianity, but this is not supported in the scriptures. It is believed she was a Jewish woman who lived among Gentiles, living as they did. The Gospels agree that Mary was originally a great sinner. Jesus cast seven demons out of her when he met her. After this, she told several women she associated with and these women also became followers. There is also debate over if Mary Magdalene is the same unnamed women, a sinner, who weeps and washes Jesus' feet with her hair in the Gospel of John. Scholars are skeptical this is the same person.



Despite the scholarly dispute over her background, what she did in her subsequent life, after meeting Jesus, is much more significant. She was certainly a sinner whom Jesus saved, giving us an example of how no person is beyond the saving grace of God. During Jesus' ministry, it is believed that Mary Magdalene followed him, part of a semi-permanent entourage who served Jesus and his Disciples. Mary likely watched the crucifixion from a distance along with the other women who followed Christ during His ministry. Mary was present when Christ rose from the dead, visiting his tomb to anoint his body only to find the stone rolled away and Christ, very much alive, sitting

at the place they laid Him. She was the first witness to His resurrection. After the death of Christ, a legend states that she remained among the early Christians. After fourteen years, she was allegedly put into a boat by Jews, along with several other saints of the early Church, and set adrift without sails or oars. The boat landed in southern France, where she spent the remaining years of her life living in solitude, in a cave.

In art and iconography, she is often pictured with a jar of the oil with which she anointed Jesus' feet, and a red egg. According to tradition, during a dinner with the emperor Tiberius Caesar, Mary Magdalene was speaking about Christ's Resurrection. Caesar scoffed at her, saying that a man could rise from the dead no more than the egg in her hand could turn red. Immediately, the egg turned red. Because of this, icons of Mary Magdalene sometimes depict her holding a red egg. Also, this is believed to be an explanation for dyeing eggs red at Easter.

St. Mary Magdalene's feast day is July 22. She is the patroness of converts, repentant sinners, sexual temptation, pharmacists, tanners and women, and many other places and causes.

[https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint\\_id=83](https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=83)  
[https://orthodoxwiki.org/Mary\\_Magdalene](https://orthodoxwiki.org/Mary_Magdalene)

### **Mary, the mother of James**

Along with Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of Cleopas, she is known as one of the Three Marys. We are told practically nothing about this particular Mary, save that she was the mother of two children one of whom Jesus chose as an apostle, namely, James (Matthew 27:55-61; Mark 15:40, 47; 16:1; Luke 24:10, see Luke 23:49-56). Some writers identify her as “the other Mary” (Matthew 27:61), or as the wife of Cleopas or Alphaeus (Matthew 10:3; Luke 24:18), or as a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. We do know that she was one of the women who followed Jesus and, having sufficient wealth, ministered unto Him and His disciples in material things thereby assisting them in their work (Luke 8:2, 3). The narrative suggests that her two fine sons likewise followed her from Galilee to Jerusalem. “It is interesting to note that two mothers with their sons joined the company of the disciples and that three out of the four became members of the apostolic group.” We feel that Mary's sons were older than Jesus else they probably would not have dared to interfere with Him by force (Mark 3:21). These facts are evident:

1. Mary was among the women from Galilee who followed Jesus to Jerusalem there to witness His death on the cross (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40).
2. She was likewise a spectator at the tomb and fled when told by the angels that Jesus was not there (Mark 16:8).
3. She was among the first to bear spices to anoint the dear dead body of her Lord, and with joy went forth to declare that He was alive forevermore.

She was the mother of a son who became an apostle, known as “James the Less,” or James the Little to distinguish him from the more conspicuous apostle of the same name. She thus sacrificed both her sustenance and her son for the service of the Master.

Motivated by the inner urge of gratitude to Him for all He had done for her, she became generous, faithful, loving and true. Hers was a simple faith and a trusting love. Thousands of Christian women down the ages have been likened to her because she loved her Lord and served Him unobtrusively.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/all-women-bible/Mary-Mother-James-Joses>

## **Salome**

Not to be confused with the legendary daughter of Herodias and Herod Antipas who asked for the head of John the Baptist.

Saint Mary Salome, a daughter of Saint Mary of Cleophas, was first called simply, Salome. Salome is likely a Hellenization of the Hebrew name *Shelomit*. She added Mary to her name in honor of the Blessed Virgin. Her father and her mother both were saints. She was the wife of Zebedee, who was not a saint. But she was the mother of Saint John and Saint James the Greater. And her brothers were Saint Simon, Saint James the Less and Saint Jude, Apostles, and Saint Joseph Barsabas, a disciple of Our Lord. She is mentioned in Matthew 20:20, in which she petitions Jesus to let her sons sit with him in Paradise. Saint Mary Salome was one of the “three Marys” who stood by the Cross of Jesus when He died, and to whom He appeared on the first Easter Sunday. She and her mother, and Saint Mary Magdalen, Saint Martha and companions, were put on a boat which had no sails and no oars, during a persecution by the Jews in the year 47, and were pushed out to sea. The boat miraculously floated unharmed to the south of France. Saint Mary Salome died in France. She is still venerated there with great love and devotion.

Her name does appear in the NT Apocryphal texts of *The Gospel of Thomas* and *The Secret Gospel of Mark*. The controversial *Secret Gospel of Mark* contains a further mention of Salome which is not present in the canonical Mark at 10:46. Clement of Alexandria quotes the passage in a letter: "Then he came into Jericho. And the sister of the young man whom Jesus loved was there with his mother and Salome, but Jesus would not receive them." The lines complete a well-known lacuna in Mark as the text currently stands.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salome\\_\(disciple\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salome_(disciple))

<https://anastpaul.com/2019/10/22/saint-of-the-day-22-october-saint-mary-salome-first-century-disciple-of-jesus/comment-page-1/>

## **Joanna**

Her name is derived from Ioanna (Greek: Ἰωάννα) is the feminine version on the name John (Heb: יְהוָה, Johanan), and means "Yahweh is gracious". It is derived from Yah, the shortened form of the name of God, and the verb יָנַן, "to show favor, to be gracious."

<https://bible.wikia.org/wiki/Joanna>

She is mentioned in two places in Luke's Gospel:

1. Luke 8:1-3 – After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases:

Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

2. Luke 24:9-10 – When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles.

Joanna was a disciple of Jesus. As typical of many women during the Biblical era, virtually no background information is written about her. We don't know whose family she came from, what village she grew up in, or if she had any children. What we do know, according to the Bible, is that Joanna:

- 1) was married to King Herod's steward;
- 2) was healed by Jesus either from an evil spirit or disease;
- 3) personally financed Jesus' missions;
- 4) was present when Jesus' tomb is rolled away after the crucifixion; and,
- 5) served as a witness to the 12 apostles upon Jesus' resurrection.

And even though she is included in only two lines in the New Testament, Joanna becomes a huge force in Jesus' ministry. To glean who she was as a person and what constituted a major portion of her life, we must first study her through the reflective mirror of the men that encompassed her life: King Herod, her husband Chuza, and Jesus Christ.

<https://womeninscripture.com/joanna/>