



Passion of Christ Study

Part Two

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INTRODUCTION

In the movie *The Passion of the Christ*, Mel Gibson tells the story of the last 12 hours of the life of Jesus from the perspective of three witnesses, Mary, the Mother of Jesus, John, the beloved disciple of the Lord and an unnamed woman that Gibson appears to identify as Mary Magdalene. In the next three weeks I want us to explore the life, death and resurrection of our Lord from these three perspectives as well.

Let's begin with the unnamed woman taken in sin (John 8). She lived in a time very different from ours but like so many of us she made mistakes and got herself into a lot of trouble. When she met the Christ she was in about as much trouble as a woman could get. Her story is our story, the story of a life redeemed and a heart won by the compassion of Jesus. Join me, as I explore *The Passion of the Christ* from the perspective of the forgiven sinner.

PART 2

FORGIVEN

John 8:1-11

In the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, Mel Gibson assumes that Mary Magdalene (who Scripture says supported Jesus' ministry, was at the cross when He died and was the first person He appeared to after His resurrection) was the forgiven sinner from John 8. The Bible is not clear that this is the case. This woman may not have been Mary Magdalene but her story is well worth examining.

Let's look at the story as it's given below:

"But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, they said to Him, 'Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now in the law of Moses commanded us to stone such a woman; what then do You say?' They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw an stone at her.' Again He stooped and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. Straightening up, Jesus said to her, 'Woman,

where are they? Did no one condemn you?’ She said, ‘No one, Lord.’ And Jesus said, ‘I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more’” (John 8:1-11 NASB).

Taken in the very act of adultery. How horrifying, how humiliating, how frightening this must have been. Adultery is a sin. It is self destructive in almost every case. And when adultery is publicly exposed, it becomes an embarrassment and a tragedy for all involved. But in the time of Jesus, adultery was a capital offense. The punishment was death by stoning. When the angry mob took the woman that day, she knew their intentions, but only in part.

This mob of men wanted to do more than condemn this woman when they brought her to Jesus. They wanted to trap Him as well. They asked Him, “Moses says to stone her, what do you say?” They knew if Jesus told them *not* to stone her, He would be violating the Law of Moses and thus offend the Jewish people. If Jesus told them to stone her, He would be calling for a judgment that violated the law of Roman occupation (the Romans would not allow the Jews to put anyone to death). Either way, they had Him. This day they would stone an adulteress and ensnare this so called Messiah.

But John tells us that Jesus, on whom the Spirit of Wisdom abided, gave an answer that dumfounded the cagey crowd. His words struck their hearts like hammer blows. “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”

What grabs my heart is that Jesus was the only man there that day who was without sin. He could have condemned her. He was the only One who had the right to do so. Yet, He did not. For perhaps the first time in her life, this woman looked into the eyes of a man and saw acceptance, forgiveness and dignity. Jesus lifted her up both literally and spiritually.

In the movie *The Passion of the Christ* we see the mob drop their stones and turn away. We see a hand reach out to touch the feet of Jesus. We see the woman slowly, hesitantly look at Him, and we see Him offer His hand to her. That day, her heart and her life were forever changed by His words, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more." These words still sound forth to all repentant hearts today. Have you received His forgiveness?

REMEMBER IT

Review the passage of scripture and answer these questions:

1. Jesus said to them, "He that is without ____ amongst you, let him cast the first ____."
2. The only person present that day who had the right to condemn this woman was _____.
3. When the mob heard these words they were _____.
4. They left from the _____ to the _____.
5. Jesus said to the woman, "I do not _____ you either. Go. From _____ no more."

APPLY IT

Whether the woman in John chapter eight was Mary Magdalene or not, she met Jesus in her most desperate hour. She had no time to make herself presentable. She had no time to get her life straightened out, to make amends for all her mistakes and sins. She fell at the feet of Jesus just as she was. She expected condemnation. But her life was transformed by the words of the Lord. Jesus forgave her, He forgave the thief on the cross, He forgave those who crucified Him even as they taunted Him. He will forgive you. Confess your sins to Him. Humble yourself before Him as this woman did. Reach out to Him. He will show you the same love, forgiveness and respect He showed her.

EXPRESS IT

Jesus, thank You for Your mercy. Your love has touched me today, I humble myself and reach out to You. I confess my sins to You. I repent for the wrongs I have done. Thank You for forgiving me, for loving me, for giving me dignity. Help me to live everyday in the knowledge that You love me.

What We Do Know About Mary Magdalene and What You Did Not See In the Film

Mary Magdalene, called such because she was from the town of Magdala, a city near Capernaum, supported Jesus ministry with her material possessions (Luke 8:2). And we see from scriptures like Matthew 28:1-10 and Mark 16:1-7 that Mary followed Jesus not only to the cross but to the tomb as well. These scripture record that she was the first person He appeared to after His resurrection. She was the first person to spread the good news that He had risen from the dead and though the disciples did not believe her at first, they soon discovered she was telling the truth and they recorded her message.