

Bite Size Bible Study

Mary Magdalene #120

By Pastor Lee

*When the Sabbath was over, **Mary Magdalene**, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body*

*When Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to **Mary Magdalene**, out of whom he had driven seven demons. .*
Mark 16:1,9 NIV

In the NIV translation there are 13 references to Mary Magdalene.

Mary Magdalene, sometimes called **Mary of Magdala**, or simply the **Magdalene** or the **Madeleine**, was a woman who, according to the four canonical gospels, traveled with Jesus as one of his followers and was a witness to his crucifixion and resurrection. She is mentioned by name more often than most of the apostles and more than any other woman in the gospels, other than Jesus's family.

Mary's epithet *Magdalene* most likely means that she came from the town of Magdala, a freshwater fishing town on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee in Roman Judea. She was most likely called Miryam of Magdala.

Archaeologists have uncovered a 2,000-year-old synagogue at the site of an ancient settlement known as Migdal, or Magdala, from the Second Temple period of Jewish history. It most likely was the birthplace of Mary Magdalene.

The Second Temple period lasted between the late 6th century BCE and 70 CE and is widely seen as an era when Jewish culture developed a number of characteristics that define the Jewish experience today.

During the Second Temple period, Jews lived under Persian, Greek and Roman rule. The period ended with the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in 70 CE during the First Jewish-Roman war, which was a large scale revolt by the Jews of the Eastern Mediterranean region against the Roman Empire.

Migdal served as a main rebel base under the commander Flavius Josephus during this war.

According to a statement from the Israel Antiquities Authority, the latest discovery is the second synagogue from the era of Roman rule to be

uncovered in the settlement, and the first case of the existence of two synagogues anywhere from the Second Temple period.

The discovery of a second synagogue in this Galilean settlement casts light on the social and religious lives of the Jews in the area during this period, and reflects a need for a dedicated building for Torah reading and study and for social gatherings.

It's not hard to imagine Mary Magdalene and her family coming to the synagogue here, along with other residents of Migdal, to participate in religious and communal activities.

The Israel Antiquities Authority that unearthed ancient Jewish ritual baths, streets, a marketplace, and industrial facilities discovered the first synagogue in the settlement in 2009 during their excavations. The first synagogue is located only around 650 feet away from the second.

In the middle of the first synagogue's main hall stood a large stone portraying the Second Temple of Jerusalem, with a seven-branched menorah carved on one side. This finding highlights the connection between Jerusalem and subordinate communities. Its discovery is significant because it was carved on the stone when the Temple was still standing, This suggests that the local Jews saw Jerusalem as their religious center, but their local activities took place here.

The newly discovered synagogue was square-shaped and made of basalt and limestone. It had a main hall, in addition to two other rooms.

The first and second synagogues appear to have coexisted rather than one being a replacement for the other. This also suggests that the Migdala Jewish community was quite large, so large that the need for two synagogues was necessary to accommodate everyone on a Sabbath day.

Being one of the stronger rebel bases during the Jewish-Roman war, it was conquered and destroyed around 67 CE. It was scarcely settled in the following periods. Today it is an archaeological park surviving as a tourist attraction.

Learning about the people of the Bible from external sources fills in the blanks and makes the person more than a name, but a real person, from a real place, with a real family and community.

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