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Christ who, by His being 'lifted up from the earth', draws all men to Himself. One way or another, the divine initiative in the salvation of believers is emphasized. Men's responsibility in the matter of coming to Christ is not overlooked (cf. John 5:40); but none at all would come unless divinely persuaded and enabled to do so. And everyone who has come to Christ will gladly confess:

He loved me ere I knew Him;
He drew me with the cords of love,
And thus He bound me to Him.

and I will raise him up in the last day.—For the third time in so brief a compass the resurrection of the believer is emphasized as the final and crowning stage of the saving work which Christ undertakes to accomplish in every one who comes to Him.

(*To be continued*)

MARY MAGDALENE

(Luke 8 : 1-3; Mark 15 : 40-47; John 20 : 1-18)

R. NORTH

Demon possession

There is no justification for identifying Mary Magdalene with 'the woman that was a sinner' (Luke 7:37), nor is there any evidence that demoniacal possession was connected with unchastity. We must also refuse a common notion that demoniacs were merely persons of disordered minds, or that seven demons are merely indicative of seven besetting sins. The testimony of the scriptures to the existence of demons is unquestionable. There is only one devil, but there are many demons. Whatever the symptoms of demoniacal possession, the actual dwelling of demons in a person is real.

During the course of His earthly ministry, our Lord cast out many demons. He also gave His disciples authority to cast out

demons. When the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in Thy Name' He said unto them, 'I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven' (Luke 10: 17, 18). The subjection of the demons to His Name was the earnest of His complete victory over all the power of Satan. Already they tremble before God (Jas. 2:19), knowing the fate that awaits them (Matt. 8:29).

Emancipation

Mary Magdalene is introduced, in Luke 8:2, as one 'from whom seven demons had gone out'. They did not go out of their own accord, or as the result of Mary's efforts to expel them: the Lord cast them out (Mark 16:9). Seven is the number which signifies completeness, whether of good or of evil. From the fact that seven demons went out of her, we learn that there was a time when she was completely dominated by Satanic power; and that, by the word of the Lord, she was completely delivered. The demons went out of her, never to return.

Devotion

Her deliverance was great: her Deliverer was greater. The Deliverer is always greater than the deliverance; the Person is always greater than His work. Mary doubtless rejoiced in the greatness of her deliverance, but she rejoiced still more in the Person of her Deliverer. In liberating her from the power of Satan, the Lord so touched her heart that He became paramount and supreme in her affections. Up to this time, demons had held undisputed sway in her soul. Now she has a new Object; and that which shines so brightly, in her spiritual history, is her unswerving devotedness to her Lord. She has an honoured place, in the Word of God, in company with certain women who ministered to the Lord and His disciples of their substance.

Mary's name is mentioned first of the devoted women who 'beheld from afar' the sufferings of the cross (Matt. 27:55, 56; Mark 15:40, 41). Perhaps it was the strength of her devotion that encouraged the others to be present, when their womanly instinct would naturally shrink from such a sight. What a solace for the heart of Christ, Who 'looked for some to take pity,

but there was none: and for comforters, but He found none' (Ps. 69:20).

It may have been comparatively easy to follow the Lord, when she first experienced His delivering grace and power; but to see the One Who went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil, crucified between two thieves, must indeed have been a test for loyal hearts. Would their affection still remain true and firm? The disciples, who had professed so much, had forsaken Him and fled. Yet these devoted women, who might naturally have been expected to flee, remained by his cross; and when Joseph of Arimathea asked for the body of Jesus, and laid Him in a tomb, 'Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Jesus, beheld where He was laid'.

Desolation

Last to leave the tomb, the women were the first to return again; foremost among them Mary Magdalene. They had bought sweet spices to anoint Him, and it must have been an added pang to her sorrow when this privilege was denied her. But have you ever considered the consequences, had she gone to the tomb and the Lord had been there? It would have meant that death was too strong for Him; that the power of Satan was too great for Him; that He had failed in His mission; that His word could not be relied upon, for He said that the third day He would rise again.

When Mary saw that the stone had been taken away, she concluded that somebody had rifled the tomb and stolen the Lord's body; they had not been content with crucifying her Lord, they had taken away His body from the resting-place where love had laid Him; and she wondered to what fresh indignity they had subjected the body of Him Whom they loved. Her grief was too great to bear alone; so she ran to tell Simon Peter and John what had happened: 'they have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre and we know not where they have laid Him' (John 20:2).

Stooping down, and looking into the sepulchre, John saw the linen cloths lying; and in all probability concluded that Mary had made a mistake, and that the Lord's body was still there. Simon Peter following him, went into the sepulchre, and his

comprehensive gaze took in more than John saw. Peter not only saw the linen cloths lying, but the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but wrapped together in a place by itself; a clear proof that the body had not been stolen by enemies, or taken away by friends, but that the Lord had risen in such a manner as to leave the grave clothes undisturbed by His rising.

John now entered the sepulchre, and perceived the significance of what he beheld; that He, Who had lain there for a while, but Whose body had disappeared, had been raised from the dead. Even so, it was a perception based on what he saw, rather than upon the Word of God; 'for as yet they knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead' (John 20:9). It was the teaching of the Lord after His resurrection that opened their understanding (Luke 24:45). Their mission accomplished, satisfied that the Lord's body was not in the tomb, and that Mary's fears were groundless, Peter and John went away again unto their own home. 'But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping'. Mary could not tear herself away. Although she appears to have been a person of means, she had no home where her Lord was not.

Stooping down, and looking into the sepulchre, Mary saw what neither Peter nor John had seen: 'two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain;' as if in peaceful contemplation of the place now vacant. She might have learned that God had given His angels charge concerning Him. She appears neither to have been alarmed nor surprised by their appearance. In John 20:13 there are two variations from v. 2. To Peter and John she had said, 'They have taken away *the* Lord', for He was their Lord as well as Mary's: to the angels she said, 'They have taken away *my* Lord'. To Peter and John she said, '*We* know not where they have laid Him'; to the angels she said, '*I* know not', unconsciously implying that the other women had gone back to the city. When she had thus said, she turned herself back, as though unwilling to continue a conversation that promised no help. No doubt they were 'ministering spirits, sent forth to minister' for the sake of one who was an heir of salvation (Heb. 1:14), but Mary was so absorb-

ed with the Object of her quest that even angels failed to hold her interest.

Various reasons have been suggested to account for Mary's failure to recognise the Lord. In her distracted state of mind, it was natural that she did not look up into His face, that she saw Him indistinctly through tear-dimmed eyes. He was the last Person she expected to see alive, when she was engaged in the search for His dead body. The only person likely to be in the garden so early in the day would be the gardener, who had probably removed Him secretly to another resting place. It is, however, a significant fact that our Lord was not recognised by any of His disciples, after His resurrection, until He manifested Himself.

Revelation

It is most affecting to see how the Lord revealed Himself to Mary. The angels said, 'Woman, why weepest thou?' Jesus went further in His enquiry and added, 'Whom seekest thou?' and, although she supposed Him to be the gardener, the floodgates of her heart were ready to burst at the mention of the Object of her search, and she exclaimed, 'Sir, if *thou* hast borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and *I will* take Him away'. Three times she used the pronoun 'Him', without once mentioning His Name. He so monopolized her thoughts that she took it for granted everybody else must be thinking about Him too; and, in her deep affection, she offered to do what her womanly weakness would have made a physical impossibility: 'take Him away'.

It was at this moment that the Lord revealed Himself by the single word, 'Mary'. He called His own sheep by name, and she knew His voice. Trembling with joy to the depths of her being, with rapture and delight she cried, 'Rabboni,' My Master! The cry of her desolated heart had been, 'Oh that I knew where I might find Him'. Now she had found Him, and had found Him living. Her faithfulness, loyalty and devotion were rewarded. 'He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons' (Mark 16:9).

Apprehension

The word 'touch' (John 20:17) means 'to cling to, to lay hold of', with the desire to retain; and, as the verb is in the present tense, the prohibition is not of an individual act, but of a continuance of the act. We can understand that Mary, in the impulse of her affection, would desire to cling to His bodily presence. Her feelings must have been like those of the bride in the Song of Songs; 'When I found him whom my soul loveth, then I held him and would not let him go' (Sol. 3:4). Under other circumstances, the Lord invited His disciples to handle Him, to confirm the corporeal reality of His Person; but there was no occasion for holding Him, in order, not to lose Him. As though gently disengaging Himself from Mary's retaining grasp, He said, 'Do not continue clinging to Me; for I am not yet ascended to My Father'. She had to learn, experimentally, the truth of His words, 'It is expedient for you that I go away' (John 16:7). His ascension to the Father involved the coming of the Holy Spirit, as a result of which Mary and the other disciples would be brought into a far more intimate union with the Lord than could have been possible in the days of His flesh. The Lord's prohibition of clinging to Him is indicative of the act that communion with Him, after His ascension, would be by faith, through the Spirit.

Commission

'Go to My brethren.' 'Go' is in contrast to the act of staying to enjoy His bodily presence. 'Brethren' expresses our relationship to the Lord in a way in which no other word could express it. His disciples had been previously called 'His own'; He had referred to them as 'My sheep', He had called them 'My friends'; but none of these terms indicated relationship in the same way as 'My brethren'. He also declares our new relationship to God. Before He went to the cross, He told His disciples He was going to the Father; He had spoken of God as His own Father. Now He says, 'I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; to My God, and your God'. These new relationships exist by virtue of His atoning death, His resurrection and His ascension.

To Mary was given the most wonderful message ever com-

mitted to human lips to carry, and it was her love that made her the suited messenger for the Lord to use. The other women were not there; the disciples were not there; but Mary was there, a vessel meet for the Master's use. Her affection put her in the place where the Lord could reveal Himself to her; her affection placed her in the position where He could use her as His messenger to others. How eagerly she would carry out her commission! How great her excitement and joy, as she burst in upon the disciples and exclaimed, 'I have seen the Lord', and disclosed to them the things He had spoken to her! Later in the day the disciples saw the Lord, but He appeared first to Mary Magdalene.

DANIEL'S FINAL PROPHECY

A. NAISMITH, M.A.

Daniel, Chapters 11 and 12

The final prophetic revelation given to Daniel is recorded in Dan. 11:2 to 12:4. In the three verses that follow (12:5-7) Daniel is permitted to hear a conversation between two celestial beings and the man clothed in linen Whom we have seen to be the Lord Himself (Dan. 10:8), but does not understand the answer given. Then Daniel, intent on learning more of the wonders of God's purposes at the time of the end, asks a question and receives a gracious answer from the Lord (12:8-13).

The prophecy itself predicts consecutive events, sometimes with long intervals between, from that very moment in Daniel's life till the time of the end. For us who live twenty-four centuries later, the events foretold are divided into two main sections, namely:

(i) those that have had their historical fulfilment before our time (11:2-35), and (ii) those predictions which are yet to be fulfilled at the time of the end (11:36 to 12:4).

The four Persian kings of Dan. 11:2 were known historically as Cambyses, Pseudo Smerdis, Darius Hystaspis and Xerxes the most opulent of the Persian kings. The names given to the first