

## Mike Ensley - They Were There

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What we're going to be studying is who was actually there at the foot of Christ's cross, and then as an extension from that, at Christ's crucifixion, and also who was there for his resurrection. There's quite a few that saw Jesus after his resurrection, but there was some that saw him very soon after his resurrection.

But before we get into those individuals, we are going to spend a little bit of time talking about who wasn't there.

I originally had this slide farther down on the study, but I decided that, you know what? I think I better get this disclaimer right out in front because I am going to be a little hard on the disciples here, and we really have to be careful to not be too much that way. So this is actually a quote from Brother Russell in reprint 3552, and it says we are not to think too severely of the apparent lack of courage on the part of the others of Jesus friends.

The popular bitterness which had led to the crucifixion of Jesus had extended in considerable measure to his followers. It was natural that they should be afraid. It had even been hinted that Lazarus would be put to death. So we think that we should keep in our hearts a similar sense of benevolence towards those who were close to Jesus but weren't at the foot of his cross. But at the same time, I think it is very proper for us to hold an extremely high regard.

Those who push themselves in to be near him, be a comfort to them the best he could at this, his darkest hour, and so that is the intent of this study. But before we talk about these individuals, we are going to talk a little bit about. About some of the ones who weren't there, and of course, I'm talking about the disciples, except John.

John was there.

Of course, Jesus knew that was going to happen. He had this prophecy in Ezekiel or Zechariah 13:7, where he says, strike the shepherd and the sheep would be scattered. So this wasn't a surprise to our Lord.

But I think it probably was a bit of a surprise to the disciples. They couldn't imagine any circumstances whereby they would desert their Lord. This is Matthew 26:31. Then Jesus said to them, you will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee. Peter replied to him, even if they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away, and Jesus said to him, Truly, I say to you this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times, and Peter said to him, even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you, and all the other disciples said the same thing.

And I'm sure that Peter was very sincere about it. I think that he really believed at that point in time that that statement was true, and I think all the other ones did, too. But why would they fall away?

What followed was an almost unimaginably confusing progression of unexpected events. They walked with Jesus through the cold, dark night to Gethsemane, where Jesus asked them to keep watch while he prayed.

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He came back to them and found them sleeping. Three times they were trying to be faithful. I thought there was another. Okay, so this happens the third time he comes back and it says, and when he came to his disciples, he said to them, are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners.

Get up. Let's go. Behold, the one who is betraying me is near.

And then things really start to spin out of control as far as the disciples are concerned. It says that while he was yet speaking, behold, Judas, one of the 12, came, accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs who came from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

The night before, Jesus had asked if anybody had any swords. He said, if you don't have a sword, buy your cloak. Buy one. He essentially instructed them to bring swords. Why would he do that?

Well, it needed to be demonstrated that he gave himself up of his own free will. But the disciples didn't really understand that Peter has a sword and he draws it and he uses it. Brother Russell, I think. Let's see. Was that in the.

Yeah, okay. Brother Russell, in reprint 2778, makes the statement that if Jesus had instructed the apostles to bring swords, it was appropriate for them to reason that they were for use and not for decoration. So when things really start to spin out of control here, Peter has a sword, and he draws it, okay? And then Simon Peter, since he had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest slave and cut off his right ear, and the slave's name was Malchus.

But Jesus responded and said, stop. No more of this, and he touched his ear and healed him.

Now, all of this took place so that the scriptures of the prophets would be fulfilled, and they all, and all of the disciples left him and fled. Can you imagine? Poor Peter?

I mean, he had told the Lord the night before he would be willing to die with him, and he has his sword in his hand. It must have been so confusing. In fact, the Lord kind of made him look silly with that sword. Not only wanting to put it away, he healed the guy that he was trying to defend our Lord against.

So it's not very surprising that they were so confused that they all ran away.

Who was there at the crucifixion? There are an account of the crucifixion in all four gospels and they're all just a little bit different. To limit our study, I decided to limit it to the John account. This is John 19:22 and it says, beside the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister Mary, the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. You say, oh wait a minute, I thought you said there was.

Did I say there was four? I'm going to talk about four individuals here and that's only three. So the other one is actually explained in the verse after this where it says, when Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, dear woman, here is your son, and he said to the disciple, here is your mother, and from then on this disciple took her into his home.

So we are going to talk about these four individuals and kind of try to understand in our minds a little better exactly who they were and why they were important. The first one we are going to talk about here are the four. There's Mary, the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Jesus and the apostle John, and I'm going to talk to him in that order just because it's just a little more convenient than the order they're actually given in the verse there. The first one is Mary, the

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wife of Clopas.

Now we don't know an awful lot about her and there's several different accounts as to exactly who she was. But I guess the one that I like the best is that she was married to one of Joseph's brothers because that would explain the description of her as being Mary's sister.

The idea that Mary would have a sister named Mary seems a bit odd. I mean, Mary was a popular name. I mean, there was a lot of Mary's in the New Testament. But the idea that parents would name both of their daughters, I mean, was it Mary 1 and Mary 2? I mean, it just makes a lot more sense to me that this Mary was actually her sister in law.

And that would explain the verse that I brought up. It was kind of the keynote of the talk here where it describes her as his mother's sister, anyway. So that thought kind of appeals to me.

She may have been the other Mary described in Matthew 28:1. It says that the other Mary was at the tomb. One thing we do know about her for absolute sure, and that was she was there, and we don't know an awful lot about her, but we know that she was one of the brave ones that was willing to be standing next to the cross of Jesus. Now, the next one that we'd like to talk about is Mary Magdalene.

We know a little more about her, but how much do we know about her? Well, you know, she's only mentioned 12 times in the New Testament, and that might not sound like an awful lot, but the fact of the matter is that is more than at least four of the apostles. Thomas, Bartholomew, James, the son of Alphaeus and Thaddeus are all mentioned less than 12 times. So we do know a little more about Mary Magdalene than you might think.

One of the ways that Mary Magdalene was important is she actually offered financial assistance to Jesus. He was one of the women mentioned in Luke the eighth chapter, verse one, where it says that soon afterward, Jesus began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and teaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses. Mary, who is called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Cruza, Herod's servant, and Susanna and many others were contributing to their support out of their private means. So.

So evidently Mary Magdalene was a woman of financial means. She was financially secure enough that she could afford to help Jesus and his apostles with their ministry. But that second verse in that passage also mentions that Mary Magdalene had been demon possessed, that she had seven different demons cast out of her. I thought modern art pictured that so well, because we do not know exactly what that means as far as the seven demons goes. But we know that she was a very ill woman and she was totally helpless to help herself until Jesus came into her life.

And Jesus healed her of all of her ailments that those seven demons brought to her and all the troubles that they were. But it's a little more significant than that. That number seven, I'm sure you recognize, is a very significant biblical number. I like to think of the number seven used to say that Mary Magdalene, before Jesus came into her life, was perfectly possessed or completely possessed, and Jesus saved her from that awful condition, and as she had been so completely possessed by the demons, after Jesus cast them out, she became completely devoted to Jesus.

I like to think that Mary Magdalene is kind of a picture of the Church in that way, because as Mary Magdalene was completely possessed by the Demas, the whole world of mankind, including us,

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were completely lost to sin through the fall of Father Adam.

So we are given the opportunity to understand that and to come out of that early because God has revealed his plan to us. We have an opportunity to come out of that awful condition that the whole world of mankind is in. So like Mary Magdalene, when we recognize it, our complete loss in sin and death has been covered by Jesus. If we take the advantage of falling in the narrow way, we are completely devoted to Jesus as Mary Magdalene was.

Now, Mary Magdalene traditionally is understood to have been a former prostitute, and so I wanted to address that issue, even though I find it a bit distasteful, because there is not one scripture that you can point to that would suggest that Mary Magdalene had ever been a prostitute. In fact, it is being widely accepted now that that's probably not true. Brother Russell wrote about it. This is reprint 2797.

And brother Russell writes, Mary Magdalene was honored in being the first to whom our Lord revealed himself. Scholars are generally coming to the opinion that it is a mistake to suppose that Mary Magdalene had ever been an unchaste woman, a mistake to identify her with the woman in Galilee at the house of the Pharisee who washed our Lord's feet with her tears and dried them with her hair, of which the account says she was a sinner.

That idea comes down to us from this guy. This is Pope Gregory the Great, or Gregory the Not so Great, considering what he did to Mary. But he decided that Mary Magdalene was the woman that Jesus encountered in the seventh chapter of Luke, and so it has just been accepted ever since, and it's widely been accepted. But even since Brother Russell's day, many have understood that that really isn't true.

And it really is kind of dishonoring to someone who was an extremely noble person.

Yeah, there's nothing in the seventh chapter of Luke that would suggest that that person was Mary Magdalene. Where they jumped to. That is. She's mentioned very early in the eighth chapter, but there's no real reason to connect her there.

We know quite a bit about Mary Magdalene simply by her name, Mary Magdalene. What is that? Magdalene eel there. Is that her last name? No, no, it has to do with where she's from.

She's from a small village called Magdala, which is actually on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and if I had my little pointer I could point to it. Can you see it up there? It's just down the shoreline from, from Capernaum a little ways. There it is.

Somebody's got a pointer. Good, thank you.

Anyway, Magdalene is being on the seashore, not really seashore, it's a huge lake, but they considered it a sea, and most of the people in that area were fishermen. Most of the income in that area was derived from fishing, and it's kind of interesting because that's probably where Mary Magdalene's family gained their finances, and it's also the way that many of the disciples did.

Many of the disciples were fishermen. Now one of the sources that I read for this study claimed that Magdalene was a hotbed for anti Roman activity. In other words, it was kind of a hotbed of sedition towards Rome, and why that's important, Mary Magdalene would have grown up witnessing firsthand the brutality of the Roman government, because they didn't put up with stuff like that.

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If they suspected that you were planning sedition against Rome. Yeah, crucifixion was the normal punishment for that, and so she would have grown up with that full knowledge because that was an activity that was very common where she grew up. This slide I thought was interesting because this is a picture of the remains or the ruins of what they feel like is an ancient synagogue in Magdala, and I put that scripture up there, I think we've read it before.

But Jesus actually, this is a different gospel, it's the same thought, and Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of diseases, disease amongst the people. Amongst the people. So it's kind of fun to look at that and think, okay, Jesus might have stood right there inside of this building that stood there before it fell down, and Mary Magdalene might have been in the audience.

It might have all happened right there.

So why is Mary Magdalene important? Well, Mary Magdalene is a key witness.

She's mentioned in three of the four gospels as being present at the cross of our Lord in Matthew, Mark and John, and this is interesting because women weren't considered trustworthy witnesses in those days. So if you were going to make up a fable and your key witness was a woman, especially a woman from whom seven demons had been cast out. Not very likely. If you were to make up a story, you'd want a better witness than that.

So the idea that they used Mary Magdalene would suggest that the whole story is true. The other reason why Mary Magdalene is important is she's mentioned in all four gospels at the resurrection. In fact, she was the first one that Jesus appeared to from the accounts in the Gospels, the first one to see Jesus after he was raised from the dead was Mary Magdalene. Have you ever stopped to consider how great an honor that was? There weren't too terrible many that saw him resurrected at all, but she was the first.

This is the touching interaction between her and Jesus. How are we doing? We've gone until. What is it? Oh, one o'.

Clock. Oh, well, I better not read the whole thing. But anyway, they talk to one another here. She wants to hug him. She wants to give him a big hug.

It's kind of like you haven't seen your brother for a long time and the first thing you want to do is give him a big hug. But he tells him, no, don't do that. We don't know exactly why. Maybe a person hugging a being as, you know, spiritual as Jesus was would have been bad for her. I don't know.

I don't know. But anyway, or maybe he just wanted to say, okay, you've hugged me enough, now it's time to go tell my disciples, you know, I've been raised. But anyway, whatever it is, I find it very touching.

And Jesus was seen by quite a few here, and this was kind of a rundown From Paul in 1 Corinthians of some of the people that had seen Jesus. I'm going to kind of paraphrase here. Cephas, you know, Peter saw him, 500 brethren saw him, all at one time.

James, Simon, and last of all, you know me, Paul, Paul, you see, Simon, the road to Damascus got knocked off his horse, all that, but Mary Magdalene was the first. Why was Magdalene, Mary Magdalene, the first to see Jesus? You know, I don't pretend to know the answer to that question, but I have to think that the fact that she had pushed her way through the crowd to be as close to

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him as she could possibly be had something to do with it.

She showed a lot of bravery in doing that because she's kind of one of my heroes of faith, and her loving example gives us a wonderful illustration of who we want to be if we, you know, we couldn't be there. We weren't there when this happened, and I don't know if we'd have been shown this kind of strength or not, but we would want to. We would want to be able to show that kind of strength if we were there.

Okay, the next one we're going to talk about is one of the other Marys this is Mary, the mother of Jesus. Now there stood by the cross, Jesus and his mother. In fact, she's the first one that's mentioned, except for Jesus himself. You know, we probably know just about as much about Mary his mother, as anyone in the scriptures. There's a lot written about her.

But one of the things we might not consider as often as we should is the fact that Mary, the mother of Jesus was a very brave woman, and she showed that through the whole interchange that we have on her. In the Scriptures.

We have the account where the angel announces the birth of our Lord, starting at Luke 1:28, it says, and coming in, he said to her, greetings, favored one. The Lord is with you, and she was very perplexed as to what this statement, and she was pondering what kind of greeting this was, and the angel said to her, do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and his name will be Jesus, and he will be great and be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will be with him, and the throne of his father David, he will give to reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end.

And then Jesus, or then Mary said to the angel, well, how is this going to be that I'm. Since I'm a virgin? I mean, that's a reasonable question. So the answer probably was pretty amazing to her. The angel said, the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.

For that reason also, the holy child that you bear will be called the Son of God.

If she was a selfish individual, if she wasn't thinking about herself at all, she would have been thinking, well, wait a minute now. What's the neighbors going to think?

A woman who was with child that wasn't yet married according to the law in Deuteronomy, could have been stoned. I mean, she could have been thinking of herself, but it doesn't look like that even crossed her mind.

In reassurance that God could do this thing, he brings up the fact that Elizabeth, her relative, was in her sixth month even though she was old.

And then Mary answers, behold the Lord's bondservant. May it be done to me according to your word, and the angel departed her. So she didn't ask any questions. She just said, okay, that's what we'll do.

Now, Mary had a connection with Jesus that was unlike anyone else. Well, he gave birth to him. Okay? It's a big deal. Any of you who have had children know it's a big deal.

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Can you imagine what it would have been like to be the mother of the Son of God? I think they were very close to each other throughout Jesus ministry. We have some.

Well, let's go through some of these first. This is the account that we have. In Luke the second chapter, verse 34, they took Jesus to the temple. Actually, we talked about that a little bit earlier, but this is a little bit different. Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel and as a sign to be opposed.

And a sword will pierce your own soul to the end that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.

I don't know to what degree Mary would have understood that prophecy because it's actually a pretty dark prophecy.

We remember when Jesus went to the temple and was left. Left there accidentally by his parents.

And I think we read this one too before. But this is, this is from Mary's perspective. This morning we were talking about the temple. Okay, so I'm going to start. Well, let's start at the beginning.

When Joseph and Mary saw him, they were bewildered, and his mother said to him, son, why have you treated you this way? Behold, your father and I have been anxiously looking for you, and he said, why did you not know where to look for me, that I would be here in my Father's house? And yet they did not understand the statement that he made to them.

And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and he continued to be subject to them, and, and his mother treasured all these things in her heart, and Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature and favor before God.

Mary treasured a lot of things in her heart because there were a lot of things going on, and I'm sure there's a lot of things that we're not informed about. His first miracle was at the wedding in Canaan, and Mary was the first one to notice that they didn't have wine. So she tells Jesus about it, that they're just about out of wine.

And he says in John the second chapter, verse four, dear woman, that's not our problem. Jesus replied, my Tammy has not yet come. But his mother told the servants, do whatever he tells you. What's kind of interesting about this is how do you get from dear woman, that's not our problem to her telling the servants, do whatever he tells you. I mean, she knows that something is going to happen.

She knows he's going to do Something, I think there's communication between Mary and Jesus here that isn't on the printed page, and of course we know what happens. He turns the water into wine. In the 11th verse, it says, this miraculous sign in Canaan, in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory and his disciples believed in him. After the wedding, he went to Capernaum for a few days with his mother, his brothers and his disciples.

Jesus went out to the lake with his disciples and a large crowd followed him, and they came to from all over Galilee and Judea, Jerusalem, Idiomia, from east of the Jordan river and even from as far north as Tyre and Sidon, and the news about his miracles was spread far and wide, and vast numbers of people came to see him, and Jesus instructed his disciples to have a boat ready so that the crowd would not crush him.

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He had healed many people that day, so all the sick people eagerly pushed towards him to touch him. Oh, boy, I'm too late. Essentially, the point I'm trying to make here is his ministry at this point changes from one of relative small numbers, family acquaintances and such, to very large numbers, and this must have been alarming to Mary because from that prophecy, she knows that something terrifying is going to happen. She doesn't know exactly what and how, but she knows eventually it will.

And that's essentially what this reprint article says, that Brother Russell writes that he moved to a ministry that was much more public and much more outgoing.

So at the cross, Mary no doubt remembers this prophecy. That a sword would pierce her own soul to the end. That the very thoughts, that many thoughts would be revealed.

She pushes to be close to his cross anyway.

Now I think that Mary, even though you can imagine the agony that she's in, but I believe that she knows that this isn't the end of her son, Jesus. He told his disciples that he would be raised from the dead. I have no doubt he told her to. In fact, the angel did. The angel said that God would make him great and that his kingdom would have no end.

The only way that could happen was be if he was raised from the dead. So I think that she understood that.

This picture, it kind of almost makes me cry every time I look at it. Because poor Mary, it must have been so devastating for her to experience that.

Did Mary see Jesus after his resurrection?

I don't know if we have a scripture that directly says that he did. But then on the other hand, I don't think we have a scripture that directly says that he didn't. I like to think that he did. If nothing else, she might have been in the group of women that went to the tomb, and if she didn't see him immediately, I think she did at some point.

In fact, John kind of adds a little disclaimer on the end of his gospel and says that Jesus did many other things, and if they were all written, I suppose the world could not contain the books written thereof. I think that this is one of them. I guess we all believe what we want to believe, really like to believe that he did. Okay, so the last individual we're going to talk about is John.

And we've read this scripture a couple times, so I'll just paraphrase it. They're at the cross, and Jesus tells Mary that this man is going to take care of you and tells John that this is your mother he wants. Why? The question that I had here is Jesus had siblings or half siblings. Why did he tell John that he wanted him to take care of Mary?

Well, I don't know. There again, this is just kind of a supposition on my part, and maybe I shouldn't bring those up, but I think it's fair to talk about.

All these siblings that he lists in this scripture aren't there, but John is. When Jesus looks down and he sees his mother there, and he sees this apostle that he loves standing next to her, I think he just decides, this is a person I want to take care of my mother.

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Not a really important thought, but it makes sense to me. John was there and his half brothers weren't. It's kind of that simple. John is also a key player in the resurrection scene. Remember this verse, running out of time?

So essentially, they're racing back to the tomb after they're informed that the Lord has been risen. John actually outruns Peter, but he's not the first one to go into the tomb. As Peter gets there, he just goes right in where John got there, and he stopped and waited for Peter to get there. But still, they both loved our Lord very much.

And of course, we have the incident where Jesus is standing on the shoreline. The apostles are out fishing, and Jesus calls to them to throw the net on the other side of the boat, and they do, and the boat is almost swamped from the fish. Well, John recognizes instantly there's Jesus.

It takes Peter a little bit more time. Peter's a little slower than John, I think. But after he, you know, John mentions it, he says, you know, it's the Lord. Got to be the Lord. Peter jumps in and swims to shore.

This is a famous painting that I put in here because essentially the name of the painting is the View from the Cross, and so that was the artist's conception of what the scene might have looked at like from Jesus perspective.

So why is it important for us to learn from these individuals? Well, the reason that we need to learn from them who were willing to be with Jesus in his very darkest time is because we want to be like them.

I'm sure we all do. We want to be brave enough to be one of the ones that would be there for our Lord in His time of greatest need.

Jesus had said the night before, greater love has no one than this to lay down one's life for one's friends, and not only for his friends. Jesus laid down his life for the whole world of mankind that they would have an opportunity to have life.

But what about us? We don't have the opportunity to stand at Jesus cross or to be near him physically. But we do. We have opportunity because he said in Matthew the tenth chapter that whoever gives one of these little ones even a cold cup of water, he will by no means lose his reward. These small acts of kindness are what we can do to show our love for the Lord.

It just for those around us that need our help and need a helping hand. This quote is actually taken from the quote of the sheep and the goats, which we believe is a kingdom picture, but I think it applies here. Eventually the King will reply, truly, I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me. So if we can serve the brethren in any way, it's as close as we can do to being like these brave brethren who are present at Jesus cross. I'd like to close with this verse.

This is Romans 8:35,39. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword, neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And may God add his blessing.