

A Bible study on Mary Magdalene and the fourth gospel

By J. Phillips

Was Mary Magdalene the one who “leaned on Jesus”?

The idea that Mary Magdalene was the one “whom Jesus loved” pre-dates Dan Brown’s book, *The Da Vinci Code*. But as this book has helped to popularize this idea in our day, herein I may, for the sake of brevity, refer to this claim in relation to *The Da Vinci Code* (such as *The Da Vinci Code’s* proposition, etc). Still what follows will not be attacking *The Da Vinci Code* or any of the non-Bible sources that are cited in that book. The idea that it was Mary Magdalene who “leaned on Jesus” at the last supper and that she was therefore the beloved one who wrote the fourth gospel can be disproved apart from any reference to the specifics in *The Da Vinci Code* and that is what this study will do.

Using nothing but the word of God, below you will find sufficient evidence to prove that the idea that Mary Magdalene was the beloved disciple is not true. This study will tackle three fundamental and critical flaws with the idea in order to demonstrate how evidence found in the Biblical record proves that the Mary Magdalene idea is false. The three flaws will be called: The Superman Problem, The Honesty Problem and The Nothing Problem.

The Superman Problem

Anyone who knows that Superman and Clark Kent can never be in the same room at the same time also knows why. It’s because these ‘two’ are actually one in the same person so they cannot both be present at the same time, hence the name for this problem.

Reason lets us know that Peter is ruled out as a candidate for being the beloved disciple because in scripture he is seen talking to the one “whom Jesus loved”. Likewise, if Mary Magdalene was the one “whom Jesus loved”, then she could not be in the same place and at the same time as this unnamed disciple and she wouldn’t have been talking with this unnamed disciple. But both of these happen in scripture.

“The first [*day*] of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him. Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.”
(Jn. 20:1-3)

“Mary Magdalene... cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them” means that Mary Magdalene cannot be the one “whom Jesus loved”.

This in and of itself is sufficient to prove that the beloved disciple and Mary Magdalene were two separate individuals. Moreover **this isn’t the only passage in the Bible where *this* problem occurs**. But there is even more compelling evidence that exposes the idea that Mary Magdalene was the one “whom Jesus loved” as a false teaching.

The Honesty Problem

The Da Vinci Code's proposition that Mary Magdalene was the one “whom Jesus loved”, the one who “leaned on Jesus” at the last supper, also stands in direct contradiction to other facts we see in scripture. Consider the following passage from when Jesus is dying on the cross:

“When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own [*home*].” (Jn. 19:26-27)

If Jesus was referring his mother to the beloved disciple when he said, “Woman, behold thy son!”, then it is clear that Jesus here is identifying this unnamed disciple as a male. But this should come as no surprise to anyone because the Bible repeatedly identifies the beloved disciple as a male. For example, the passage just cited says, “that disciple took her unto his own” – note that “his” (*not* “her”) is the word the God inspired author of this gospel used to refer to the beloved disciple. And this is just one of numerous instances in the Bible where we find the words “he” and “him” are used of the beloved disciple.

The idea that the beloved disciple was Mary Magdalene, or *any* woman for that matter, is clearly contrary to the scriptures and is therefore a false teaching. Anyone who claims to respect the word of God simply needs to stand where the Bible stands on this issue.

Those who want to believe in this idea have devised a way to rationalize away the fact that the Bible identifies this person as a man. TheDiscipleWhomJesusLoved.com has a study on this, but in short the excuse used is that since the one who “Jesus loved” wrote our fourth gospel, ‘she elected to identify herself as a man because the society of that day would not have accepted her gospel if it had been discovered the author was a woman’. In other words, ‘she had to do it’ is used to sell the idea that the ends-justifies-the-means in this case, which in their mind allows them to turn-a-blind-eye to this problem.

What *Da Vinci Code* fans and other advocates of the idea that Mary Magdalene was the beloved disciple refuse to recognize is that buying into this idea paints them into a corner regarding the Bible. The very scriptures that tell us that there even was a disciple that “Jesus loved” and that this beloved disciple “leaned on Jesus” at the last supper are in the same book that they will say was written by an author who lied about being a man. But if this author was willing to intentionally deceive readers about being a man, how would it not be the case that the author would be just as willing to also deceive on other matters?

It is hard to see how the fourth gospel could be rightly called the inspired word of God, if the author of this gospel was a deceiver who would lie to readers ‘for their own good’. Attributing an intentional deception to the author of the fourth gospel is to argue against the Bible being the inspired word of God – trustworthy, accurate and reliable, i.e. true! **Honesty** or *supposed ‘necessary’ deception*; what you see in this gospel is up to you.

The Nothing Problem

Is there anything that is said in the Bible about the "other disciple, whom Jesus loved" that would give anyone a reason to believe that this was Mary Magdalene? No; nothing.

The fact that there is not a single verse anywhere in scripture that would justify teaching the idea that Mary Magdalene was the beloved disciple is, arguably, the biggest problem with this whole notion. For those who say they believe that the Bible is the word of God, how come when this idea is suggested by advocates of this idea, or even by a book like *The Da Vinci Code*, it isn't simply rejected on the basis that the Bible doesn't say this?

If **nothing** in the Bible can be cited to justify teaching a given idea, then those who trust the Bible ought to be wary to say the least! "Every word of God [is] pure" so it's wisest to look first and foremost to the Bible. If an idea is Biblical, then defending that idea won't require one to turn to a source outside of the Bible as the primary support for that idea.

The idea that Mary Magdalene was the beloved disciple that "leaned on Jesus" and wrote the fourth gospel is not an idea that originates with scripture. One must first look outside of the Bible to a source that suggests this idea and then find a way to *impose this idea on what is actually written in the Bible*. However, the giveaway is that non-Bible sources have to be used to justify the idea in the first place. If the idea was Biblically true, then it would be possible to cite scripture to justify presenting the idea as such and no hearsay or other non-Bible sources would have to be used to shore up the defense for said idea.

The fact that nothing that is expressed in the word of God would give rise to the idea that Mary Magdalene was the beloved disciple is sufficient reason to reject this idea.

The Last Word

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it"
(Du. 4:2)

"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with [*their*] lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching [*for*] doctrines the commandments of men." (Mt. 15:8-9)

"laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men... Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition... Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition" (Mk. 7:8-13)

Do any of the foregoing admonitions apply to those of us living today? If so, then we'd do well to resist those who might encourage us to "hold to the tradition of men" instead of holding to the word of God, lest we too err in "making the word of God of none effect through" *our* tradition. If an idea is derived from some source outside of the word of God, then one must caution against making the mistake of reading that idea into the Bible.

The warning to neither “add unto the word” nor “diminish from it” indicates that we need to take heed to abide by the word of God **as it is written**. A turn to the right or to the left causes one to veer off of the sure foundation that it provides. Those who have been taught to believe that the Bible says something that it does not say have fallen into the trap of trusting something other than the word of God.

The best defense against false teaching is to have a love of the truth and let the Bible be the last word on what is Biblical and what is not.

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*The foregoing study can be found online at TheDiscipleWhomJesusLoved.com and there you will also find a study on *The Da Vinci Code* and how most *Da Vinci Code* critics err by not using the Bible to refute the key claim of *The Da Vinci Code* movie and book.*

In addition to the biblical evidence that Mary Magdalene was not the beloved disciple who wrote the fourth gospel, most Christians are surprised to learn that the Bible also has sufficient evidence to show that the tradition that this was John is also erroneous. A free printable Bible study on this is available at www.TheDiscipleWhomJesusLoved.com.

*Note: This brief study was not intended to be an exhaustive presentation of the evidence that refutes the idea that the beloved disciple was Mary Magdalene. There may well be other, even better, Biblical arguments against this unbiblical teaching. Readers of Dan Brown’s book, *The Da Vinci Code*, and those who plan to see the *Da Vinci Code* movie that is based on this book, are encouraged to search the scriptures to discover what the Bible actually does say about the unnamed disciple who wrote the fourth gospel or go online and visit TheDiscipleWhomJesusLoved.com to see what the Bible says about the beloved disciple & author of our fourth gospel that tradition calls *The Gospel of John*.*