

## The Conversation (written Nov. 24, 2007)

I had this idea after I finished reading *The Da Vinci Code*. The main premise of the book, that Mary Magdalene married Jesus and bore him a child named Sarah, struck me so strongly as being false that I knew my reaction was not just from the teachings I have received about my religion. There was something else, something deeper that made such a relationship impossible. It took me a good deal of thought, and the reading of a few texts that look at the facts behind *The Da Vinci Code*, to figure out what that something was. In my mind, this is the conversation that must have happened:

To the non-believer, the arguments, the wars, and the bloodshed over Israel have never made a great deal of sense. To such a person, Israel is just a place in a world full of places. More so, as far as places go, Israel is far from ideal. A small strip of land that rests between deserts and mountains, where trees are trees by name only, where sand and grit, dirt and heat are the common experience, Israel does not seem to have much to offer. Why then fight over it? Why even live there?

The answer comes unbidden: it is Holy. The rocks and streams resonate with the power that can only come from God having touched them, from God having walked among them. Even to those who believe but have not seen, the call to this place is beyond any reason or logic. The call comes from deep within. It tingles through the arms and legs. It resonates with the heart, with the soul. It is felt within every molecule. It brings to memory sounds of insects and plants that have never been seen, the touch of a wind never heard, and the surety of belief that defies all other beliefs.

### The Messiah.

He touched the stone wall and felt all the life that had touched the stone before. This is no special power. It resides in all of us, yet so few have the time or inclination to use it. Time. He smiled. Time was one thing that He did not have much of right now, but moments such as this were important none-the-less and deserved this so-precious commodity.

It had begun: the ministry. It was still gathering in power, like a far-off storm. Right now it was only a few observers, some uncomfortable religious men, and a handful of doubting followers who knew, but things like this can only grow. It would be all the more powerful due to its humble beginnings. This was the way of great things, and this was the Greatest.

A warm wind came to His rooftop and soothed Him as He took in the feel of the city. The stone was still warm from the sun beneath His hand. He opened His eyes and watched as the last remnants of the golden sphere hid beneath the curve of the globe. Soon would come the days when people would fill the streets well past the setting of the sun. Soon, moments like this would be lost to Him. Even this one would be gone soon, for she was already looking for Him. His hand felt the rough edge of the stone.

He had chosen the spot purposefully, and made certain that His disciples knew where He was. Public and private, only this place could hold the conversation He was about to have. Indeed, time passed all too quickly; she was climbing to see Him now.

## Magdalene.

She approached hesitantly, still in awe of his power even though she had seen him eat and drink. She had watched him for signs that he was human and had seen many, but still there was much more to him. He had cast demons out of her and brought her back to her own mind. There was the source of her awe. She had held no control over her life before, though the demons had insisted that she was free. Freedom was nothing to a leaf in the river. It was free from its tree and branch, but now was doomed to die, buffeted by waves and currents that are beyond its comprehending.

He had brought her back to the tree. Could any other man restore a leaf? Reconnect it to its source? Yet that was what he had done for her. And though she now followed him, she was freer than ever before. He had given her true freedom. That was a power no other man had.

The thought consumed her and she almost turned back from her purpose, but a subtle change came over his stance that indicated he knew she was there. She summoned her courage and stepped forward, near to him, but not touching.

“Mary,” he said her name in the voice that spoke of the sea and the desert, that spoke of trials and triumph, and that spoke in the plain tone of a man who has used his hands to build. It captivated her and haunted her, and – in this case – asked her to speak.

“I was told I could find you here,” her own words felt hollow to her. This wasn’t what she was here to say, but his presence was making her feel a little foolish. Still, that hadn’t stopped her before.

He had turned to face her and he gave her a gentle smile. She thought, for a moment, that she could see a hint of sadness to it, but the impression was only for an instant.

“You have something to ask Me,” he stated simply, not asked. She knew that he knew her question, and the thought almost made her stop. Something pressed her forward.

“You are not married,” she began, “and yet you are a rabbi. Why have you not taken a wife?”

His smile deepened, but the impression of sadness floated through her mind again. “I am married; my wife is the Church that I am building, the faith that I am founding.”

She floundered at his answer, not sure of how or whether to proceed. He looked deep within her soul. “But that is not your question.”

The simplicity of his statement rocked her. He did know and he was waiting for her to ask. The thought both quickened her breath and drew a shadow of suspicion across her mind. “You have saved me, more than once, and I have loved you since then and left everything I knew to follow you.” She took a breath. “I wanted to know if you loved me too.”

“I do love you,” was his response, but the tone carried a different meaning.

She shook her head to clear the shadow. “I don’t mean the love that you would give a brother or a sister, nor the love that I know you carry for the world, but the love that a man has for a woman. Do you love me, could you love me as . . . a wife?” The last words were almost a whisper, but held power just the same.

In response, he moved closer, warmth and light seeming to spread from him, though no outward change could be seen.

“My love is deeper than the love of which you speak. It is infinite, and when divided between many, still infinite. You are asking if I love you more than I love other people, and I tell you that such an idea is foreign to me. There are no bounds to the love that I have. There are no trials that I would not face for the least of you.”

She looked to the city, feeling slightly raw and burned. A single flame of anger danced in her heart. “You say you are human, and humans find love in one another. You have said that a man leaves his parents and becomes united with his wife as one flesh.”

“... and that I have married My Church,” he reminded her.

She faced him again. “But should you not have children as other humans do? As a king, do you not need heirs?”

“Through the Church, I will have children who will carry both My body and My blood, and they will inherit the kingdom of heaven.” He leaned against the low stone wall in a posture that showed he bore no malice at her or her questions. “You wish to have a direct line from me and you to last through the end of the world, a line of kings and queens to rule all of the lands and lead the people to heaven.

“But I cannot be so selfish as to only share Myself with a such small part of the world. My blood will be a part of all people who wish for it to run through their veins. My body will strengthen every body that accepts me.”

Mary felt that flicker of anger, and turned away so he could not see. “Have you then no desire?”

“My desire is greater than all of creation.”

She swallowed and said the words anyway, “Am I then not desirable to you?”

She heard him walk towards her and for the first time he touched her, turning her shoulder so she could face him.

“I spent many days in the desert. With my throat parched and breaking, I was tempted to create food and water. With the feeling of power growing within me, I was tempted to test those limits and fly. With the desire to help the entire world, I was tempted to force every nation to obey me. But this temptation, to love one person more than any others was your test alone to give me.

“My love for you and my desire to save you are greater than you will ever know. I will love you when your body betrays you. I will love you when the Earth has welcomed your bones. I will love you until the end of everything, and even beyond. But that love is not yours alone. Every human heart that has pulsed with life, I have felt and loved. Though they may curse my name and forsake me, my love will last with them forever. I see beyond any sickness or health, beauty or scar, weakness or strength, hatred or devotion, and I love completely.

“If you truly love me, as I know that you do, spread that love to everyone you see. Do not let a petty jealousy – that you must share my love with others – turn your heart.”

The silence filled the space between them, and after a time, Mary backed away from the roof's low wall. Whether with understanding or confusion, Mary left him on the roof, but still followed him all of her life.