

# About the Story

Linen Wrappings (John 20:1-10)

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## First Day of the Week

The first day of the week refers to Sunday, the day after the Sabbath.

## Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene was one of several women who traveled with Jesus, provided for his needs, and witnessed his crucifixion and burial. Her name indicates that she was from Magdala on the southwestern coast of the Sea of Galilee. In the Gospel of Luke she is introduced as having seven demons which Jesus cast out, implying that he healed her of serious distress. Her introduction immediately follows the story about a sinful woman who washed Jesus feet, which led to the tradition that Mary Magdalene was a prostitute. The story as originally told and written does not support this tradition.

## Tomb

Tombs were small, man-made caves cut out of rock, located close to the city of Jerusalem. They were underground with small entrances sealed with heavy stones. Families would use a tomb over the course of several generations. Only wealthy families could afford tombs for burying their dead. Most people buried their dead in individual pit or trench graves dug into the ground as we do today. Very poor people and executed criminals were thrown into pits, though “crucifixion victims often were left unburied.”<sup>1</sup> Jesus would not have been buried in a rock-hewn tomb had it not been for Joseph of Arimathea (see John 19:38-42).

## Linen Wrappings

In Jewish custom, the dead body was washed, cleansed or “anointed” with a combination of oil and spices, and wrapped in a linen sheet, sometimes called a “shroud.” While the Egyptians wrapped bodies bands of cloth—“bandages”—and mummified them, the Israelites did not. According to Jewish custom and the Gospels, Jesus’ body was wrapped in cloth(s) the size of a sheet with a separate, smaller cloth around his head.<sup>2</sup>

## The other disciple whom Jesus loved

John never names this disciple. Some biblical scholars suggest he may symbolize the Christian community or the ideal disciple.

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<sup>1</sup> Jodi Magness, *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 168.

<sup>2</sup> For discussion of preparing the body for burial see Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John, XIII-XXI* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company), 940-942 and 985-986.