

Women of the Bible

Lesson Eight: Mary & Martha

Jesus had the occasion to encounter many interesting people in His time upon this earth. Great lessons of faith and how to establish priorities are taught from some of these encounters. Among such lessons taught are the great examples illustrated in the lives of two sisters named Mary and Martha.



Introduction. Mary and Martha lived in the city of Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem (John 11:1, 18). Their brother was a man named Lazarus. Jesus preformed great signs and taught great truths to these two sisters and their brother.

I. Martha & Mary's Response to Jesus (Luke 10:38-42).

- A. Mary sat at Jesus' feet and listened to Him (Luke 10:39).
- B. Martha was "distracted with much serving" (Luke 10:40). There was nothing wrong with Martha serving the meal. Yet, at a time when she could have been feeding spiritually upon Jesus' teachings, she was focusing only on material things.
 - 1. "Worried and troubles about many things. But one thing is needed..." (Luke 10:41-42a). Just as Jesus had taught in the Sermon on the Mount worry and anxiety reflects a lack of faith. The "one thing" that is need is seeking the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:25-34).
 - 2. "That good part" (Luke 10:42b). Mary recognized that spiritual things are more important that the daily cares of life. While it is necessary to meet the daily needs of life, spiritual things must take the priority.

II. Death of Lazarus (John 11:1-36).

- A. They sent to Jesus (John 11:3). They were confident enough in Jesus that they realized He could offer them a solution to their problem..
 - 1. Jesus loved them (John 11:5). Jesus loves everyone, but there was a special relationship that existed between the Lord and these women.
- B. Conversation with Martha..
 - 1. "Even now..." (John 11:21-22). Martha had enough faith in the Lord that she believed that he could help Lazarus after he had been dead four days.
 - 2. "You are the Christ" (John 11:23-27). Martha acknowledges Jesus as the Messiah.

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C. Conversation with Mary.

1. Martha told Mary that Jesus was there (John 11:28-29).
2. "If you had been here" (John 11:31-32). The Holy Spirit records more details for us about Martha's conversation with Jesus than that of Mary. However, it is interesting to note that Martha, the woman who did not take the time to listen to Jesus as He taught, in this text is the one who voices confidence in Jesus' power to help Lazarus after he died.

III. Anointing at Bethany by Mary (John 11:2).

- A. After the raising of Lazarus, Martha serves Jesus and Lazarus (John 12:1-2).
- B. Mary anoints Jesus with costly oil (John 12:2-8; cf. Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; [Luke 7:36-47]).
 1. "She has done what she could" (Mark 14:9). What a wonderful statement! There are often limitations in what we are able to do. Mary could not stop Jesus from going to the cross, but she could honor Him before His death. We must strive to do what we can in the face of our own limitations.
 2. "A woman in the city who was a sinner" (Luke 7:37). Although Luke's account does not clearly identify this as the same event, it takes place at the home of a Pharisee named Simon (cf. "Simon the Leper" Matthew 26:6; Mark 14:3). If it is the same account, then Mary is the woman known in the city as a "sinner."
 3. "The one whom he forgave more" (Luke 7:40-47). If this is talking about the same event, it indicates to us that Mary humbly recognized her sinfulness and her need to receive forgiveness from the Lord.

Conclusion. Mary and Martha, like all of us, struggled with the sorrows of life, the importance of setting their priorities where they should be and the need to set their minds on spiritual things while laboring in a material world. Their willingness to follow the Lord and the special relationship that Jesus had with their family teaches us many lessons about how we should strive to serve Him as well.

