

## **John, Part 34 — The Revelation of Jesus Christ — True Worship**

We are picking up where we left off in the previous study. Lazarus had been sick and ultimately died. When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Mary and Martha told Jesus Lazarus was dead and had been in the grave four days.

Now, Jesus is back in Bethany and everyone was excited that Lazarus had been brought back to life and health. Simon who had been a leper was sponsoring a banquet to celebrate.

**John 12:1–8 NKJV** <sup>1</sup>Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup>There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. <sup>3</sup>Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. <sup>4</sup>But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, <sup>5</sup>"Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" <sup>6</sup>This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. <sup>7</sup>But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. <sup>8</sup>For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always."

**We want to evaluate Mary's attitude and the heart of worship.**

**Earlier in our study of John, Jesus met the woman at the well in Samaria.**

**John 4:21 NET** Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem."

**John 4:23-24 NET** "But a time is coming—and now is here—when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such people to be his worshipers. God is spirit, and the people who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

**In John 11-12, everyone was excited about Lazarus being raised from the dead.**

Everything about the meeting was primed for worship. Remember that before Jesus went to Bethany He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." (John 11:4)

Everyone was meeting at Simon the leper's house. Simon, Lazarus, Mary and Martha were present. Jesus and His disciples had become friends with them.

**Jesus visited this family at least three times.**

**His first visit is found in Luke 10:38-42.**

Jesus was in Martha's house teaching. Martha was preparing a meal and serving the guests, but Mary sat at the Lord's feet listening. Martha was distracted with all of the preparations and she was troubled that Mary was not helping her. Jesus told her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things." (Luke 10:41) Jesus wanted Martha to sit at His feet and listen to His words.

Mary had dropped everything to sit at Jesus' feet and listen to every word. Worship requires undivided attention. Martha was concerned about what people thought and she wanted everything to be just right.

**Jesus said: Mary has chosen the "best part," (vs. 42). Mary had a heart for worship and attention to Jesus.**

We are granted rare opportunities to sit at Jesus' feet. Mary's attention was on Jesus. This was not just another social event, Martha had her Savior in her house. Martha believed and wanted to serve, but Mary had chosen the best part sitting at Jesus' feet. 'Mary chose

the better part.’ Some things are good, but some things are better. Jesus said it would not be taken away from her.

**The second record of Jesus visiting this family was a crisis of faith — Lazarus had died.**

It is noteworthy that both Mary and Martha had strong faith in Jesus as Savior and Healer. Both of them said, “Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” I believe they both had an amazing faith in and relationship with Jesus. After Jesus arrived at their home, the conversation turned toward the resurrection. Both of the sisters believed that Jesus was the resurrection and the life, and the Savior of the world. Although Mary and Martha were emotionally in shambles and filled with grief, they still had faith in Jesus.

**In the middle of crisis, it can be difficult to keep worshiping and trusting the Lord.**

Sometimes we don’t understand why bad things happen to good people. Although they did not understand why everything happened, they continued to trust in Jesus and believe.

Many times our timing is not God’s timing. God’s ways are not always our ways. Jesus knew what was going to happen to Lazarus before He arrived in Bethany.

When they arrived at the tomb, Jesus reminded the sisters that if they would believe they would see the glory of God. Jesus refused to allow the circumstances and trouble around them to deter Him from bringing glory to the Father.

**After praying, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!”**

Lazarus came out from the tomb bound hand and foot with grave clothes, (John 11:43,44). Nothing is too difficult for God. In the midst of our difficulties, we can lose sight of His power to save, heal, deliver, and keep.

**We are talking about giving glory and worship to God.**

**His third visit happened shortly after Lazarus' resurrection.**

Six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany. This occurred the Saturday evening before Jesus was crucified. This must have been a celebration meal with some of the people Jesus had dramatically touched, healed and did miracles on. The atmosphere must have been charged with praise, worship and glory to God.

Matthew 26 and Mark 14 tell us Jesus was sitting at the table in the house of Simon the leper. Simon had been healed earlier when Jesus, moved with compassion, touched and cleansed him of leprosy. Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were present. Some of the Jews who were present were still in an uproar about everything that Jesus was doing.

It must have been exciting sitting at the table with Jesus, Lazarus (the dead man) and Simon (the leper). I can imagine the table conversation. One is talking about coming out of the grave and another is talking about having his body healed, cleansed and restored.

Martha had prepared a feast for the honored guest and once again she was busy serving.

**John 12:3 NKJV** Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

Spikenard is an aromatic oil extracted from a plant called nard and used as perfume or ointment.

- Matthew and Mark says, “She broke the flask and poured it on His head.”
- John says, “She anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair.”

The house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

**This is the second time in the Gospels that a woman anointed the feet of Jesus.**

In Luke 7:36-50, “A certain immoral woman came and knelt behind Jesus at His feet, weeping.” She brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil. She washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Then she kissed His feet and anointed them with fragrant oil. Although she was a sinner, she fell at Jesus’ feet and worshipped. Jesus said, because she loved much, her many sins were forgiven.

In John 12, Mary was offering up a sacrifice of worship to the Lord. True worship always lifts up an aroma of praise. Worship always changes the atmosphere in the house.

**This action disturbed Judas Iscariot, Simon's son.**

He had walked with Jesus for three years and saw all His miracles, listened to His teaching, and received kindness from His hand. There he was in the house of Simon the leper with Lazarus the dead man, and he was upset at Mary’s worship.

**John 12:5 NKJV** “Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?”

**We are looking at the heart of worship. There are many things going on in the room.**

**This same kind of thing can happen today.**

Martha is mentioned first in this story. Martha served, while Lazarus and Simon sat at the table with Jesus. She was doing what she always had been doing, she had not changed. She believed that Jesus was the Christ and celebrated when He raised her brother from the dead. Martha was more concerned about everyone’s comfort.

**Mary had a heart to worship Jesus like no one else in the room.**

In many celebrations, some people have a heart for worship.

**There are four different reactions to Jesus’ presence that are displayed in this story.**

Look at the first three:

**The first reaction to Jesus’ presence is seen in what Lazarus and Simon did.**

We are only told they “sat at the table with Him.” I believe they were staying close to Jesus and were attentive to every word. That is a good thing. Fellowship can involve worship. There is nothing wrong with sitting at the table with Jesus. At the table, there was fellowship. At the table, we remember what He has done.

Fellowship with Jesus includes prayer, Bible study, and relationship with other believers. We are encouraged to fellowship with God and other believers. Fellowship enhances and deepens relationships.

**The second reaction to Jesus’ presence is seen in what Martha did.**

Martha served Jesus and the crowd. Serving one another is highly commendable. Giving a cup of cold water in the name of the Lord brings eternal rewards.

**Matthew 25:40 NKJV** And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’

Service can be a form of worship. When Jesus met with Mary and Martha earlier, He wanted them to take time away from the business and listen to Him.

**The third reaction to Jesus’ presence was seen in the crowd.**

The house was filled with evidence of Jesus’ power to save, heal, and deliver. They were in the home of Simon who had been a leper. Lazarus, who had been in the grave 4 days, was at the table. There were signs of notable miracles in the house.

**John 12:9-11 NLT** <sup>9</sup> When all the people heard of Jesus’ arrival, they flocked to see him and also to see Lazarus, the man Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then the leading priests

decided to kill Lazarus, too, <sup>11</sup> for it was because of him that many of the people had deserted them and believed in Jesus.

Some of the crowd was there just to get close to Lazarus and see what Jesus had done. People are interested in seeing miracles, signs, and wonders. People will come from everywhere to see the supernatural. They came from surrounding cities to see the man who had been dead for four days. Some were jealous and began plotting for an opportunity to kill Jesus and Lazarus. They had no desire to worship or give God glory. They were present to criticize and destroy what was done. Miracles, signs, and wonders are awesome to behold but observing miracles is not worship.

### **What is worship?**

#### **First, Mary came prepared to worship.**

She was not there just to fellowship, serve, or see a miracle. Her eyes were on Jesus. It took special effort to come to Simon's house prepared to do what she did.

#### **Second, Mary was willing to give her best regardless of the cost.**

The pound of spikenard was worth a year's wages. She disregarded the cost to offer her best worship. David refused to offer anything to God that cost him nothing.

#### **Third, Mary was dedicated to Jesus' mission.**

At Lazarus' tomb, Mary had a revelation of Jesus as the Savior and Redeemer.

**John 11:25 NKJV** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live."

#### **When Mary anointed the feet of Jesus:**

**John 12:7 NLT** Jesus replied, "Leave her alone. She did it in preparation for my burial."

Mary saw Jesus differently. Lazarus and Simon saw Jesus as a teacher and healer. The crowd saw Him as a miracle worker. The disciples saw their great leader. The Pharisees and Chief Priest saw Him as a threat.

#### **Mary came to worship Jesus as her King and Redeemer and to anoint Him for burial.**

#### **How did Mary worship?**

#### **Mary is seen at the feet of Jesus three times.**

- The first time, she sat at His feet and learned His Word.
- The second time, she fell at His feet completely broken and overcome with grief.
- The last time, she was at Jesus' feet as a worshipper.

No worship is the same. Worship is a matter of the heart. We don't have to copy Mary's physical position or words. Mary's heart was expressed by what she did at Jesus' feet. Her actions speak louder than words. Mary highly valued Jesus more than the pound of oil of spikenard. Mary highly valued Jesus. He was more important to her than anyone or anything.

After Mary anointed Jesus' feet, she wiped His feet with her hair. Mary was bowing down and worshipping her Lord. The fragrance of her worship covered the feet of the Lord, covered Mary, and filled the house. True worship does that. The aroma of her offering affected everyone in the house. Jesus said, "Wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her." (Matthew 26:13, Mark 14:9). No one could escape the fragrance of her worship. Mary's sacrificial worship would be remembered. Many of us have been influenced by true worshippers. Mary's act of worship still leaves an aroma.