

Revisiting The Story Of Martha

Martha Linda Marion Montgomery

Linda Marion Montgomery earned a Master of Theological Studies degree from Candler School of Theology (Emory University) and has been involved in the field of education (both Christian and secular).

Of all the things I know about Martha, the most thrilling to me is the fact that she and Peter had almost identical Christological confessions (John 11:27, Matt. 16:16).

Martha: *Su ei ho Christos ho huios tou Theou.*

Peter: *Su ei ho Christos ho huios tou Theou tou zontos.*

Martha: *You are the Christ, the Son of God.*

Peter: *You are the Christ, the Son of the God the living.*

Martha knew who Jesus was. He was her friend; but he was also the Christ, the Son of God.

Traditionally, Martha is known for her hospitality. She lived in the first-century village of Bethany with her sister, Mary, and her brother, Lazarus. In commentaries, she is most often depicted as a bossy, yet efficient, housewife and cook. But by remembering these two facts about Martha—her knowledge of Christ, and her efficient hospitality—we can come to her story with a greater understanding of this fascinating, multi-faceted woman, so that we see more than some one-sided picture of Martha as only a busy homemaker who failed to choose the “better part.”

Martha and Jesus were friends. Her home in Bethany was only two miles from Jerusalem and thus a convenient retreat for Jesus and his disciples, a place where they could be away from the following crowds. This home was probably made of stone, rectangular in shape and with an open court in front. There was a room for domestic animals, sleeping quarters for the family, and a central room with a hearth for cooking. Steps led to the roof, and possibly a guest room. Although in a house this size there would almost certainly have been servants, Mary and Martha probably did much of the housework and cooking themselves.

Planning and preparing food for Jesus and his disciples would have been a huge task: thirteen guests, and possibly more if “disciples” included members of his larger entourage. In addition to fresh-baked bread, the menus might have included baked or fried cakes coated with honey and sprinkled with seeds and nuts. Figs, grapes, beans and lentils could have been served as well, and then—in honor of the special guest—there might have been roast meat.

The Luke 10:38-42 account tells us that Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made for

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