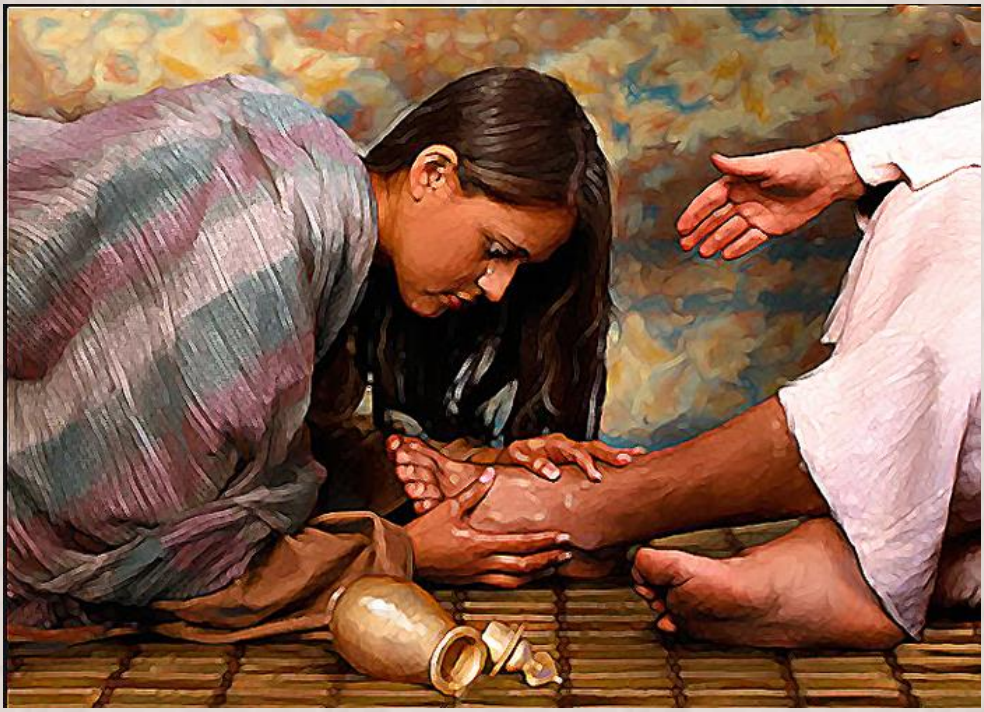
THE PARABLES OF JESUS, #006
A chronological Study

"For the Love of the Savior"
Matthew 26:6-13
Mark 14:3-9
Luke 7:36-49
John 12:1-8



"To Him who opened His mouth in parables and uttered things hidden since the creations of the world."
Psalm 78:2

THE INTRODUCTION
The parables are the direct words of Jesus! Now, open your ears, sharpen your understanding, and hear what He has to say!

COMMENTARY on the setting and
The Cast of Characters Involved

Jesus, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, the Pharisee, the disciples
Jesus is our main character and main speaker. I put this parabolic story here in our list of studies because of its importance to the rest of the parables, and that's way out of chronological order. This event comes the night before Jesus' triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem. According to Matthew this event follows the four parables of Matthew Chapter 11 that end with Jesus giving some judgment comments concerning the "knowing" or not knowing Jesus for who He is. In Chapter 12, before he is summoned to this dinner event, He says, ""You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be handed over for Crucifixion." And then Matthew explains that, concerning the chief priests, the elders, and Caiaphas the High Priest, "and they plotted together to arrest Jesus covertly and kill Him." Mark adds, "Not during the festival, otherwise there will be a riot of the people."

Our second main character is Mary of Magdala. She's commonly called Mary Magdalene in the Gospels. Magdala was her home town and has moved to Bethany with her sister Martha, and brother Lazarus. One of the things we need to get straightened out about this Mary is that there is nowhere in the scriptures that gives any hint of her being a prostitute. I'll here give a short rant about certain Christian sects that believe that documents written by High Church personnel have more authority than the scriptures themselves. Some of these have declared Mary to be not just a sinner like the rest of us, but a loose woman who prostitutes herself with men – even Jesus. Such nonsense must be totally ignored. The Bible is the very Word of God. It has the highest authority for Christian Faith and practice. I hope you will see her in the light that Jesus paints for her in this parable. We'll touch on Simon the leper Pharisee and the disciples as we travel through this study.

Luke's telling begins in chapter 7 with Jesus healing the Centurion's Slave, Jesus says of the gentile Centurion's trust, "No faith like this is to be found in Israel." That's followed by the [Luke 7:11] resurrecting of a woman's son on the way to the cemetery; then Jesus speaks [Luke 7:18] with some disciples of John the Baptist, and then leave assured that Jesus is the Messiah.

John's telling gives us the resurrection of Lazarus and Jesus' statement to Lazarus' sister, Martha, [John 11:25] Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes in Me will live, even if he dies, [John 11:26] and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" [John 11:27] She *said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have come to believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, and He who comes into the world."

These are important contextual ingredients to understanding that night's events. We have the report from the Gospel writers that Jesus, Mary of Magdala (now living in Bethany), her sister Martha, and her brother, Lazarus (very recently resurrected to life by Jesus), a Pharisee who is also a leper (admittedly an odd combination) who may or may not be related to Mary, Martha, and Lazarus - at least they are all in his home. We also have some disciples, perhaps Peter, James, Judas, and John (or even the twelve). What seems to be a small affair from Luke turns out to be a houseful of guests.

Here's a couple of "perhaps" that crossed my mind in preparing this lesson - This is not scripture, just some thoughts. It came to mind that, just perhaps, if the Pharisee is family, this gathering - called by the Pharisee - could be to discover what has happened to Mary, Martha, and especially Lazarus. They were ordinary Jews, even perhaps his or another family member's children. Nothing special about them - except, all of a sudden, they were followers of Jesus and they were changed. Suddenly they were acting in a more righteous manner, they were more caring, more concerned about this Pharisee.

I can reach back into my own life changing event with Jesus. I was about 24. A pretty normal secular guy with no religious affections. I

had left the "church" when I was about thirteen when a pastor explained heaven as "a place (in their minds) where people think about dead people." That was it, I was done. I was a nice guy, but all wrapped up in selfish, self-satisfying sin. I did not know of a savior, and certainly not a personal one. Then it happened. Through my work I visited Tennessee Temple Christian College. I was invited by a couple students to lunch, then dinner, then long talks. At a Saturday night service... I got saved. The Jesus I did not know, or care about, became my Savior. I bring this up because about six months later I led both of my parents to faith in Jesus. When I asked them, "Why now?" They said they came to Jesus because of the changes in my life since getting saved. I wasn't even aware that I had changed, but they and others saw the savior's mark on my life. So, I wonder... Was this Pharisee gathering his children, the "prophet," and his followers, to see what brought such radical changes in Mary, Martha, and Lazarus - after all he, most likely, got to hug his son once-again-alive!

Or was he just an angry and jealous relative who wanted to reveal Jesus as an imposter - after all, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were "taken" with Jesus and Jesus stood for everything a good rabbinical Jew was against. How crass was the Pharisee's comment, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner!" (Remembering that he was just calling her a sinner and nothing more). Perhaps Mary didn't agree with this Pharisee's position on the Word of God. Perhaps something in his own life made friendly women all sinners. It doesn't say.

The disciples were there and now near the end of Jesus' three-year ministry with them, they are only thinking of money and themselves. When Mary breaks the container of valuable perfume (Nard - a pound of it. Most likely a box full and not a vial) the disciples are outraged (probably led by Judas in their outrage). "We could have turned that into money." We know that Judas was seeking to steal from their "treasury." It's also interesting how many times the gospel writers mention that the disciples "didn't get it," and how often Jesus just keeps forgiving them - "you who have ears... keep listening!"

As a way of commenting on this event, I have pieced together the Scriptures of the event, taking the words from all four accounts and creating a single version of this lesson.

"For The Love of the Savior"
The Prelude to the story

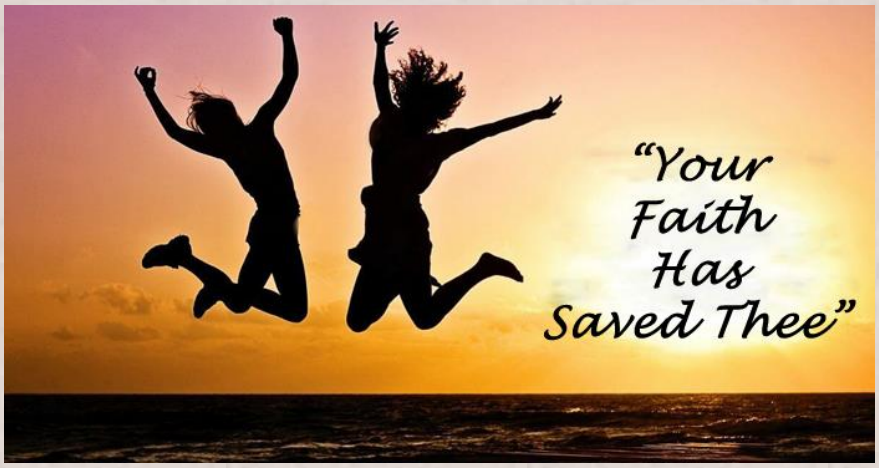
About twenty times in the Gospels Jesus foretells the details of His death and resurrection. Jesus intentionally came to die for our sins and offer His forgiveness and salvation. Jesus gave His disciples predictions about His death and the events that followed [John 14:29] "so that when it does take place you may believe."

"As Jesus was concluding His ministry and making his way from Galilee to Jerusalem (the road to the Cross) He spoke a number of important comments and parables to His disciples and those who were following along with Him. [Matthew 11:16] "But to what shall I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces, who call out to the other children, and say, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a song of mourning, and you did not mourn.'" Jesus' comment, made during a discussion about John the Baptist, is important to our story, *"For the Love of the Savior,"* for it is all about having Jesus (Savior, Anointed one, Messiah, Christ, Savior) at a dinner party and only one person acknowledges who He is and what He means to her.

[Matthew 24:33] Brings us to *"The Parable of the Budding Fig Tree,"* where Jesus comments that they should be watching and alert for the Messiah for, "He is near, right at the door." He then tells *"The Parable of the Faithful VS the wicked servant,"* and reminds them that those who do not expect HIM, will find themselves, "in that place where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Jesus continues on His journey and again Matthew tells us of *"The Ten Virgins,"* five who were ready for Him, and five who were not… five blessed for eternity, five condemned for eternity. And just before we get to our story, we hear Jesus speaking to His disciples [Matthew 25:45], "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it

for one of the least of these, you did not do it for me." Keep all these things in your mind and consider them as we begin.



The Story

[John 12:1] Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany – where Mary (of Magdala), and her sister and brother, Martha and Lazarus (who had died and Jesus had recently raised out of the dead) now lived.

[Comment:]

Jesus travels in Galilee to the city of Bethany. It is here that one of at least two of His best friends live, Mary and her brother Lazarus. In the narrative it has only been a short time since Jesus had raised him from death to life.

[Special Comment:]

The scriptures don't say to whose home He is traveling but we would at least expect He would stop at their home to visit. It's not a big leap to guess that, perhaps, it will be where this "dinner party" will take place. It certainly doesn't have to be there, it's just a conjecture. If it is their home, we might also jump to the conclusion that Simon the leper (the Pharisee) might also be an unbelieving

family member. It's also possible that he's not related to them at all and the dinner party is at his home.

There are a number of "I don't know, but…" commentaries out there. One even believes that Judas Iscariot (a descriptive not a name, Judas was probably from the city of Kerioth) is the son of Simon Peter – yes, the disciple Peter, or perhaps Simon the leper - the host of the dinner. We could also build the case that Judas put this dinner party together to please his Pharisee father (Simon) in another effort to trap Jesus.

Now I say all this so that you will know about all this "JUNK" information. Don't get hung up on all the possible connections and unknowns, just remember that these are just things to ponder, but… it just doesn't say. So, now let's leave it behind, and get back to the biblical story.

[Luke 7:36] a certain one of the Pharisees, a leper, was asking Jesus if He might eat with him.

[Comment:]

This is a curious combination. One wonders if this Pharisee has, as we would call it, early onset leprosy. He's still in his home and not yet cast away by society. It is interesting that both Matthew and Luke mention the fact that he is a leper. It's also interesting that if Simon the Pharisee asked Jesus to visit… was he hoping for a cure? There's no mention of a cure for him in the texts.

[John 12:2] Mary and Martha made a supper there, and Martha was serving and Lazarus was a guest reclining at the table with Jesus, the Pharisee, and Jesus' disciples.

[Comment:]

John tells us that the woman is Mary, Lazarus's sister, and what kind of perfumed ointment is used.

[Mark 14:3] Mary, is from the city of Bethany and thought of by the Pharisee as "a sinner," and having a one-pound alabaster box of perfumed ointment, spikenard (very precious), broke it open and

did first pour some on Jesus' head as He was reclining at dinner. [Luke 7:38] And having stood behind Jesus, moving down to beside His feet, was weeping and began to wet His feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair, anointing them also with the ointment. [John 12:3] And the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.

Comment:

This, of course, is the highlight of the story. We have this woman, a sinner (like the rest of us) who, it would seem, has been with Jesus, seen His miracles, considered His fulfillment of many prophecies, been forgiven her sins, and, most importantly has heard and believed His statements about His soon removal from His ministry, going to be arrested, falsely charged, beaten, crucified-dead, and buried. She's not clear on the resurrection – as she shows up on Sunday morning waiting to finish the embalming process… But she's come to this dinner party prepared to begin that process.

Once in that setting, she has broken down in her love for her Messiah, began anointing His head and has settled at His feet in fallen perfumed ointment and tears. She uses what she can to cleans His feet, her hair and tears – for no one else has. No one else has anointed Him, no one else has spoken aloud concerning whom He is. No one else there understands who He is or what He is about to do for them all… or cares, but Mary of Magdala. In fact, [Luke 7:39] The Pharisee having seen what Mary had done said to himself, "This Jesus, if He were a prophet, would have known who and of what kind is this woman who doth touch him, that she is a sinner."

Right here we need to interrupt the telling of this story and deal with a parable that Jesus interjects, the parable of "The Two Debtors."

Like all cultures, there are certain "rules" when someone comes to your house. In Jesus' day, three rituals were common: a kiss of greeting, washing of feet, and anointing with oil.

Jesus' subject matter will be about Simon the Leper's thoughts, for "he said to himself." It's quite often that in the middle of a conversation we close our mouths and "murmur to ourselves,"

especially when we don't want anyone to know what we're thinking. That's what Simon did. But Jesus knew Simon's mind on this woman, Mary. Luke's telling of Jesus' words will tell it all. Here's Luke's telling of this little parable:

[Luke 7:40] Jesus answered the Pharisee, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said.

"Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon,

"Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my (head and) feet.

Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

[Luke 7:48] Then Jesus (still looking at her) said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

[Comment:] Who else is there? We only know that Jesus, Simon, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and some of Jesus disciples are there, but there may be servants and others there as well – we just aren't

told. We are told that based upon the evidence of Mary's love, she is forgiven. Then Jesus commends her in front of everyone…

[Luke 7:50] Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

[Comment:] The pharisee, in his rejection of Jesus as the Messiah has missed out on the forgiveness that could have been his. He is taken aback, and we have no more comments from him. However, the disciples, and others, are asking themselves,

[Luke 7:49] "Who is this who even forgives sins?

[Comment:] They still have no clue as to the true nature of Jesus. Peter and others have agreed that Jesus is the promised Messiah – but they are biblically unaware of who that would be or what that would mean. So, they go on being concerned about the money they could have had from selling Mary's perfumed ointment.

[John 12:4] Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot (son of a man named Simon of Iscariot) spoke up and asked, "Why wasn't this ointment sold for three hundred denarii (an average year's wage), and given to the poor," but he said this, not because he was caring for the poor, but because he was a thief – he even had with him the bag he kept such things in. And the other disciples murmured at Mary.

[Comment:]

Instead of realizing what Mary is doing in this moment, anointing the Savior, loving Him for what He is about to do… they make accusations about her because Judas want's the money for himself, and the other disciples are clueless – but criticize her, "the woman," with scorn and shameful murmuring remarks. Judas and the disciples all consider the anointing of Jesus as money "wasted" on Jesus.

[Matthew 12:10] Jesus, knowing their thoughts, asked, "Why do you give trouble to this woman? [Mark 14:6] Jesus exclaimed, "Let her alone; why are you giving her trouble? She has done a good thing on me." [Matthew 26:11] "For the poor you always have with you. Mark 14:7-8

Whenever you wish to you can do good to the poor, but me… you don't have always. She did what she could, she anticipated anointing my body for my burial. [Matthew 26:13]. "Truly I say to you, wherever this Gospel may be proclaimed in the world, this woman, Mary, and what she did shall be spoken of… for a memorial to her."

The Postlude to the Story

But it doesn't end here. Matthew tells us that at the end of this dinner event [Matthew 26:14] "Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests" and sold-out Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. This is a reference to Zechariah 11, which refers to Exodus 21:32 which is the stated replacement cost of a slave killed by a raging bull. And the bull is to be put to death. I'll let you work out the analogy here. Luke then tells us of the support of the women for Jesus, the important parable of the Sower, His seed, and the soils it falls on, then comes the "Upper Room" meal with Jesus, the sleepy disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane. John tells about the Triumphal Entry of Jesus the King into Jerusalem. The Parable of the grains of wheat that must die to bear fruit. Mark tells us of Jesus' betrayal and arrest. And all four Gospels teach us about Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and His ascension to Heaven.

What a remarkable story, and what an interesting way to break up the story. Broken up in parable-like fashion across four Gospels. The whole story isn't known until you search for, collect, and compare all four accounts – one in each gospel.

Matthew Gives us Jesus, Simon the leper, the displeased disciples, and "a woman." Mark brings out that the house belongs to Simon the leper, and that the disciples considered the expensive perfumed ointment to be money wasted on Jesus. Luke tells us that Simon, this leper, is a Pharisee and that it is he who asked Jesus to come to his dinner. He also tells that this "woman" brought the perfumed ointment to the dinner, and that she was weeping and kissing Jesus' feet as she wiped them with her hair, and that the Pharisee was busy thinking that Jesus was no prophet because He, apparently, did not recognize that the "woman," was a sinner.

But, surprisingly, the most important information comes at the reading of the fourth gospel, the Gospel of John. It is here that we learn that the "woman" is Mary of Magdala (a Magdalene, they called her). We see that Martha, Mary's sister is there, and remarkably… Lazarus has come as well. It's was only a couple days earlier that Jesus raised him from the dead – and no mention of that, especially from the Pharisee, who thought Jesus couldn't be a prophet. We find that it is Mary and Martha, who have brought and served the meal, and Lazarus is a guest. We find that the amount of the package of perfumed ointment is about 1 US pound. And it is in John's telling, that we find that it is the traitor and thief Judas who leads the displeasing remarks concerning the use of the perfumed ointment.

There are two closing points we must consider about this story. First, is that no scripture is of its own private interpretation. Every interpretation of any piece of scripture rests upon "what does the whole bible have to say about this?" There are so many incorrect interpretations out there concerning just this little story – Why, because people just take one instance of the story and write what they think about it. No, you need to do the homework and pull from the entire Word of God in order to understand each little individual part.

The second important closing point is that we must not miss the importance of the parable as a whole. Here, about a week before Jesus is to be taken and crucified… everyone at this dinner event, except Jesus and Mary Magdalene were totally ignorant of what Jesus had been saying and prophesying concerning His death. It is here, at this event, that Mary demonstrates that she understands that her sins (that all the others condemn her for) are forgiven. She recognizes His status as "The Holy One of God who has come to take away the sins of the world." She recognizes and believes that His knowledge of the future is true, and that He will soon be captured, tortured, wrongly convicted, and put to death. She has come to symbolically begin the embalming process. She has come to express her belief and her love in and for her Savior. And as the only one to do these things… she will be remembered in the Scriptures for this love and belief. May we all remember what she

has done for Him. Oh, that we could anoint, kiss, and fall at His feet. Perhaps one day we will.

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS WITHOUT ANSWERS

1. **Why is it important to include all 4 accounts of this story in your study?**

2. **Who is named in the cast of characters?**

3. **What is the attitude of the Pharisee?**

4. **What is the attitude of the Disciples"**

5. **What is the attitude of Mary?**

6. **What do you take away from this story?**

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. Why is it important to include all 4 accounts of this story in your study?

2 Peter 1:20-21 "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture becomes a matter of someone's own interpretation" Always check a teaching or new doctrine as to whether the full scriptures support this teaching. So many get caught-up in cultic expressions, teaching, and doctrines, based on a single verse from the Bible. The Scriptures are the Word of God and what we gather from it must agree with the whole Word of God.

2. Who is named in the cast of characters?

Jesus, Mary of Magdala, her sister Martha, her brother Lazarus, a leper Pharisee, and an unknown number of Jesus' disciples.

3. What is the attitude of the Pharisee?

Unbelief of who Jesus is. He is ready to write him off because he is "touching a sinner."

4. What is the attitude of the Disciples"

Lack of belief and understanding of who Jesus is. They believe that Mary's anointing of Jesus is a waste of money.

5. What is the attitude of Mary?

Believing, sad, heart-broken, faithful, a true disciple, sacrificial, worshipfull, honoring, obedient, and knowing her Savior.

6. What do you take away from this story?

There are so many things to take away from this story. Perhaps the greatest moment in the story is that of recognizing that this one woman knew and understood her Savior and worshipped Him for who He is. Everyone else at this dinner thought only about themselves. So, I look at my own life and seek to worship Jesus to the best of my abilities, and ignoring the doubts and disbelief of all those around me, anointing His head, falling at his feet, and

cleaning them with my tears. He has done so much for me. It is your faith that saves you.

References

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** *The New American Standard Bible*, Zondervan, 1995

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Jeremiah 18:15
"Don't stumble from the Ancient Path"

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