

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
MMM. Christ's Top Priority Of Fellowship With God
(Luke 10:38-42)

I. Introduction

- A. From God's perspective, "to be occupied with Christ is more important than to be occupied for Christ." (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 303)
- B. This truth was taught by Jesus in His conversation with Martha in Luke 10:38-42.
- C. We view this event for our insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Christ's Top Priority Of Fellowship With God, Luke 10:38-42.

- A. The conversation between Martha and Jesus must be understood in its setting of the Feast of Tabernacles when it occurred (A. Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 1972, vol. II, p. 144) as follows:
 - 1. During this feast, the Mosaic Law directed Israel's people to live in outdoor booths for the seven-day feast to recall Israel's dwelling in booths during Israel's wilderness journeys in the Exodus, Leviticus 23:33-44.
 - 2. By the time of Christ, many directives had been added as to how these booths were to be built, of what kinds of boughs of live trees they were to be made, the right dimensions of the booths and that three sides and the top were to be covered enough to offer shade but not so much as to block out all sunlight (Alfred Edersheim, The Temple: Its Ministry and Services as They Were at The Time of Christ, 1975, p. 272-275).
 - 3. Once Israel's households had followed the detailed directions on building the booths, they were "to eat, sleep, pray, study – in short, entirely to live in them" throughout the seven-day feast, *Ibid.*, p. 274. Thus, Martha was burdened about all these arrangements besides the preparing of the food in the house that was to be brought out to the booth for the family and for their guests, especially for her special guest Jesus!
- B. Martha had invited Jesus to spend some time during the feast in her home with her sister Mary, and we assume that Jesus had sent His disciples ahead into Jerusalem to observe the feast there while He tarried a few days in the home of Martha and Mary (Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, op. cit., p. 145).
- C. Since Martha was apparently the older sister, she likely had assumed responsibility to host Jesus, while her sister Mary chose to sit at the feet of Jesus to listen to Him teach, Luke 10:38-39.
- D. Conversely, Martha "was being overburdened" (*periespato*, imperfect passive indicative of *perispao*, "over-busy" (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 254; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zond.), 1972, p. 319, 321) about much serving, so after she had worked herself up into a state of frustration, she came to Jesus and said, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" (Luke 10:40 NIV)
- E. The Lord replied to her, saying, "Martha, Martha, you are 'anxious, concerned' (*merimnao*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 506) and 'troubled' (*thorubazo*, *Ibid.*, p. 363) about many things" (Luke 10:41), an understatement in view of the setting and many arrangements she was addressing!
- F. Jesus then added, "But one (*henos*) is necessary," Luke 10:42a, and we explain this statement:
 - 1. Many Greek manuscript copyists understood *henos* to refer to what Martha was preparing for the meal, so they avoided the absoluteness implied by *henos* by replacing it with the word *oligon*, meaning "few," with a variety of clumsy renditions. (Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Com. on the Grk. N. T., 1971, p. 153-154)
 - 2. However, the conjunction *gar*, meaning "for" that introduces the next, explanatory sentence (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., loc. cit.) indicates that *henos* in its absolute sense is precisely what Jesus meant, that what Mary had chosen to do in sitting at the feet of her Lord to be disciplined in fellowship with Him took priority over all the many preparations of service Martha with good motives had been laboring to address! (Luke 10:42b)
- G. Hence, Mary had chosen fellowship with the Lord above getting preoccupied with serving the Lord, the better choice as to priority, so Jesus told Martha that such a part would not be taken away from Mary, Luke 10:42b!
- H. This statement by Christ aligns with God's initial reason for instituting the Feast of Tabernacles: that feast was meant to remind Israel that God had met her livelihood needs for forty years in her wilderness journeys of the Exodus (cf. Exodus 16:35 with Leviticus 23:41-43). That recollection was meant to cause Israel's people to **continue to rely on the Lord as their True Source of livelihood, not to depart from fellowship with Him!**

Lesson: *When Martha became so absorbed in preparing a meal for Jesus amid the extensive directives of Israel's leaders in preparing for the Feast of Tabernacles that she became frustrated, Jesus brought her back to the initial purpose of the feast, that of reminding Israel's people of their need to stay in fellowship with God their Sustainer!*

Application: *May we not make serving God our top priority but keep fellowship with Him as our main priority.*