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Extracts from **Jesus and Women in the Gospel of John**

Karen Heidebrecht Thiessen

The Literary and Cultural Context

The story of John 11 is the longest narrative found in the Fourth Gospel apart from the Passion account. It is also the climactic sign of Jesus' ministry as it immediately precedes the account of his own death and resurrection. It is significant that John chooses to highlight a story which makes a woman the recipient of one of Jesus' most profound statements about Himself and in which a woman makes an accurate and appropriate response to his declaration. The dialogue between Jesus and Martha is "one of the most magnificent revelations of Himself which the Son of God ever made. Hers is one of the most unreserved confessions" (Ketter, 287).

John presents Martha as the ideal of discerning faith. Martha's confession is notably fuller and perhaps even more satisfactory than the Petrine confession in John 6:68-69. It is Martha rather than Peter who serves as the Johannine model of discerning and steadfast faith. Within a culture which placed little value on the word and witness of women, John portrays Martha as an exemplary model of what it means to confess the truth about Jesus. Jesus transcends the typecasting of his day and views Martha as a person capable of a perceptive and discerning faith. Witherington states:

The account illustrates the Fourth Evangelist's conviction that women have a right to be taught even the mysteries of the faith, and that they are capable of responding in faith with an accurate confession. In short, they are capable of being full-fledged disciples of Jesus (109).