

The Church At Bethany What It Will Take To Revive Today's Church..... —

By Dr. Owuor

House of the broken

Bethany was a little hill country town strategically located on the eastern slopes of the mount of Olives. In the ancient of days, it was a quiet small humble town that became mainly inhabited by a close-knit poor community that lived in great warmth and novel intimacy. Lowly Bethany was beautifully situated less than two miles from Jerusalem and sat at a critical edge of the wilderness of Judea and the barren hills that descended eastwards towards the Dead Sea. The primary Hebrew meaning of the name *Beth-any* is, house of the *broken*, house of the *humble*, house of *poverty*, house of *humility*, house of the *hurting* or house of *mourning*. It is this particular *brokenness* of the *poor* people in Bethany that especially makes her such a spiritual icon for the present-day church to imitate, in order that Jesus may find a home in her. It will have to take the recognition of this hidden treasure of *brokenness* for one to pick out the key feature that drew Jesus to this little community of Bethany. It is true that the church today has largely lost this initial *humble brokenness* that Jesus laid before her, thereby failing to attract the kindness of God's favour that Bethany enjoyed. It is noteworthy that for Jesus to call a place home, that place must have earned the complete blessing of the Lord God Almighty himself. Such was the *humbleness* at Bethany that brought the hearts of the people into a contrite faith in Jesus (Isaiah 66:1-3). Being largely a poor and broken community, Bethany desperately needed Jesus, as compared to flamboyant Jerusalem which did so well to extent that they did not seem to have room for Jesus. Tragically, while Jerusalem lost her favour with the Lord, Bethany on the other hand grasped the moment of her visitation and warmly welcomed the King into their homes. Today's church too, appears to have taken up the character of Jerusalem in which *humbleness* is something of the past and *pride* reigning high. Perhaps it is this *haughtiness* that has blocked today's church from enjoying a fully fledged favour with the Lord thereby giving way to desolation. The *humbleness* that prevailed in this poor little village town of Bethany became a humongous spiritual asset since it served as the primordial base for a massive revival that was later to consume this community (Luke 19:37). It is amazing that from this point on, Jesus always operated from Bethany, and returning there for evening rest on every subsequent day whenever he had the privilege to retract from the multitude (Mark 11:1-18). The church today needs to grasp the things that matter most to our Lord Jesus. We see here that *humility* and simple *receptiveness* by opening our hearts to the Lord Jesus, can go a long way in establishing for him an acceptable home in our lives. There are many things in this post-modern era that have barred the church from realizing this noble intimacy that Bethany enjoyed with Jesus.

Is today's church Built on the Rock

What is particularly much more spiritually intriguing about Bethany, is the rocky subterrain on which she is built. The area and its immediate vicinity is parched with a strong touch of rocky subterrain that acts as a reminder of the close proximity to the peeping Judean desert. This desert is of great spiritual treasure to the church of Christ because it is the place out of which Jesus built the church through *prayer* and *fasting*. For the people of Bethany, this Judean wilderness was synonymous with the voice crying out in the wilderness while saying; "*Prepare the way of the Lord and make straight his highway.*" Even much more interesting is the fact that when Solomon built the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, he obtained the *building blocks* from this very wilderness. What must immediately have come to mind in the hearts of the people in Bethany, is the swading *humbleness* of John the Baptist presentation as he announced the coming of he whom they had welcomed. Perhaps if John the Baptist had presented a more sophisticated image, the people of Bethany would have shied away and felt unqualified to receive the King. But, the simplicity of John the Baptist as a *forerunner* must have most definitely opened the hearts of the people in Bethany to the simple yet mighty King. Moreover, the hard rock that identifies this mountain slope testifies of the age-long *endurance* and seasoning that the mount of Olives has lived to see. Erosive forces had practically washed away any loose substratum on this mountain thereby leaving only an impervious rock that persisted on, year in year out. Because this mountain faces the closed Eastern Gate of Jerusalem, it is often referred to as a significant spiritual monument. That Jesus loved taking time out alone on the mount of Olives in order to pray to God the Father and get ministered to by the Holy Spirit, makes this mountain on which Bethany is located to be of great spiritual value and symbolism. To the church, there is a lot to learn from the disposition of Bethany at this location. This is because the spiritual testimonial that the Mount of Olives portrays, is the *Cornerstone of Zion* who is the *Rock of Ages* that Jerusalem rejected. The present-day church must remember that Jerusalem rejected Jesus, the *Cornerstone of Zion*, on the one and only exceptional day of their grand visitation (Matthew 23:37-38). If this is what the mount of Olives stood for spiritually, then it becomes vividly apparent that the little town of Bethany built herself on the *Rock of Ages*. With such a firm foundation, then one can now understand why a massive revival hit this town and remained unshakable. Bethany was not built on sand but on the *Rock* that is Jesus (Matthew 7:24-27). By Bethany hearing the Word of the Lord and putting it into practice, this little humble community must have been a *wise* people who built their houses on the *Rock*. That means the *fear* of the Lord reigned in Bethany compared to Jerusalem that had no *fear* whatsoever of the Lord. The church of Christ today has tragically repeated the same Jerusalem mistake by lacking the *fear* of

the Lord and hence taking him totally for granted. In today's church, there are lots of theologians that are propelling the different school of thought like did the learned Pharisees and Sadducees of Jerusalem. What makes matters worse is that some of these Sadducees did not believe in the Spirit of the Lord, an exact replica of what has resurfaced in the mega churches of today. In a nutshell, it is justified to say that the present-day church of Christ is still in Jerusalem and hence facing the great desolation. Only upon getting to her spiritual Bethany, will today's church see a massive revival. It must be remembered that Jerusalem built its house on sand and that is why the wind came and blew it away. That Bethany built her house on the Rock, is not only still admirable today, but also greatly anticipating the mighty return of the Lord through this town. Furthermore, the failure of other vegetation to adapt to this unique climatic experience in Bethany, resulted into the over-dominance by Olive trees. The Olive tree has for a long time been the source of the *sacred anointing oil* with which the priesthood was sanctified. However, its over-dominance on the mount of Olives, relays the spiritual message of long endurance with which those who are anointed of the Holy Spirit are expected to serve God. Just like it takes so long for the Olive tree to establish, and much longer for it to yield the fruit, while even much more delayed is the ripening of her fruit, so it is with the building of a Holy Spirit-led christian walk. It is the slow but otherwise very steady process of spiritual growth that finally matures the christian across the hardships presented by this dark world. Upon achieving a steady christian growth, the church can then attain spiritual maturity at which she will then begin to yield the fruit of the Spirit. When the Olive fruit matures, it even takes longer for it to ripen, and requires much patience during the tedious crushing process that very slowly begins to exude very little drops of the virgin olive oil. So it is with the church, that she may allow herself to patiently go through the spiritual ripening process, and permit her being crushed for the beautiful anointing of the Lord to exude throughout her life. Our Lord Jesus went through the long and tortuous process of bringing to Calvary maturity, the ministry that redeemed mankind. It is at Calvary that he allowed himself to be thoroughly crushed in order to exude the precious *sacred anointing oil* of worship that pleased the Lord God. The church too needs to emulate the *brokenness* that crushed Bethany to the extent that she acceptably and rightfully worshipped the Lord Jesus. Only the Holy Spirit can impart on today's church the Olive tree kind of spiritual *perseverance* with which she needs to establish her foundation on the *Rock* that is Jehovah God. Only this *Cornerstone of Zion* can offer stable enough foundation for today's church to stop wavering back and forth between the christian walk and the world. And when the present-day church of Christ will establish her foundation on the *Rock*, like Bethany, will she experience a mighty Revival.

The place Jesus called Home:

Major lesson for today's church .

Little Bethany was the home to a group of people that Jesus referred to as his special friends. These were Lazarus, Mary and Martha, the only ones who opened their home to Jesus (Luke 10:38-42). This kind of *humility* greatly instructs on the importance of opening ones home to the Lord as the main access into the unfailing favour of the Lord. The people of Bethany were reknown for being a very warm population who even opened their homes to lepers. By then, in the Hebrew society it was a taboo for anyone to gain contact, let alone living, with lepers. They were considered the most unclean in society hence no community welcomed them. But in Bethany, this rule had been *flouted* as lepers were both welcome and allowed to stay. In this way, Bethany was surely house of the *broken*. Such is the kind of this place that Jesus so loved and called home. Considering all this in retrospect, today's church has on the contrary lived an *affluent* life of *flamboyancy* and post-modernism to the extent that the '*lepers of today*' are not welcome. The spiritual '*lepers of today*' are the homeless street children seen on a daily basis in the garbage dumps, the homeless mothers who are carrying their babies while begging in the streets, the abandoned elderly people who hang around near hospitals for food, the poor widows in their little grass-thatched huts without even a little paraffin to light the evening lamp, the orphans whose parents have been wiped out by HIV/AIDS and remain seated at the entrance to their houses every evening praying for the miraculous arrival of any surprise good samaritan with half a loaf of bread and a quarter kilo of sugar; among others. These destitutes of society have no home in today's church that is busy prophesying a grand financial prosperity that they purport will come in the form of new cars, new beach homes, high paying jobs, private aero-planes and all the flam-boyant excesses of this world. They are not welcome in today's churches because most Pastors have claimed that these people are more of takers than givers. Very well remembering that most Pastors today preach the message of giving. In majority of cases, these spiritual '*leper of today*' would be considered as lowering the quality of the church where they are received. At times their pictures are taken by Pastors for soliciting financial support from philanthropists abroad, and it is at this time that these destitutes can be afforded a photo meal. It is indeed so heart-breaking to see that, that which the Lord Jesus embraced is exactly what today's church has rejected. The spiritual calamity though, is that, if Jesus came in the *rapture* today, most definitely he would not have found his Bethany in this church. He would not find a home in the hearts of today's modern christians. This is the greatest challenge that the present-day church must confront right away. Nevertheless, in spite of all the happenings in today's church, she can still open her heart to these broken spiritual '*lepers of today*' and equally provide a Bethany home unto the Lord. When the church does this, she will then be able to enjoy such favour from the Lord God Almighty himself, because she will have opened the door to his most beloved son, Jesus. Today's church, as at now, has not yet opened the door to the '*lepers of today*' (Matthew 25:31-46; Revelation

3:20). Among the people that Jesus sat with while eating dinner at Bethany, was Simon the *leper*.

Resurrection of Lazarus

Message on the Rapture

It does not come as a surprise to recognize that it is at this little village town of Bethany, that Jesus performed one of the most outstanding miracles ever. In that miracle, the Lord Jesus greatly prefigured the *rapture* of the church, when he raised Lazarus from the dead. At the onset of this spiritually enriching episode, as Lazarus began to fall very ill, his sisters sent an urgent message to the Lord Jesus. Jesus was at that time far away in the Jordan valley, and upon receiving that urgent message, his disciples expected him to rush back to Bethany in order to heal Lazarus. However, the message that the church today ought to grasp is the delayed response with which Jesus countered this urgent call. It is most stunning that Jesus seemingly appeared to refuse to hurriedly respond to the Bethany S.O.S., hence delaying his return until a clear four days had elapsed. During that time lapse, Lazarus died and was eventually buried in a stone tomb. This was a deliberate set up by the Lord so as to stir up and win the otherwise petrous hearts of the Jews, unto himself. Such a spiritual illustration was necessary at that time in order to remove any doubt from the hard hearts that the Jews bore towards him. Doubt would have to dissipate from the people's hearts when Jesus performs this resurrection miracle four days after the burial of Lazarus. In other words, he wanted them to first be pretty sure that Lazarus was dead, before he could resurrect him. At this point, Jesus knew that the opportunity had availed itself for him to really demonstrate to them that he is the Messiah, they were waiting for. In that dispensation, the Jews were eagerly awaiting the Messiah to come and restore the kingdom of Israel. As they did this, they were very well aware of the marks that the Messiah would wear, one of them being the mighty power he would possess over death. Among other special qualities the Messiah was expected to bear, was the enormous resurrection power of God that he would wield. In this way, resurrecting Lazarus from the dead would have a formidable impact onto their faith in Jesus. And sure enough, when Lazarus was resurrected, a huge revival hit the home town of Bethany and its precincts, because a lot of Jews received the Lord and a multitude of them began to follow the Jesus of Nazareth (John 11: 1-45). This marked the turning point in the lives of the people of Bethany and the surroundings of Jerusalem. The little town of Bethany then became a highly prominent focus for spiritual *healing* and *resurrection* in the entire region. It is this spiritual prominence that *transcends* right into today's church of Christ. Because of this mighty miracle of resurrecting Lazarus, the Jews began to receive Jesus in multitudes. For it is said, the gospel will be preached to the Jew first then to the Gentiles. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? (Romans 11:15).

Asleep in the dust

In resurrecting Lazarus, the Lord Jesus taught the most powerful lesson on the *rapture* of the church. Assurance of life had now suddenly become real especially when Jesus answered Martha saying; "I am the *resurrection* and the *life*..." (John 11:25). Jesus was talking in reference to the power of God over death during the *rapture* of the church. This *resurrection* that Jesus referred to, is the one that his glory brings on the day of *rapture* when the asleep in the dust of the earth will be awakened for the wedding of the Lamb. However, only the holy dead Christians who are asleep in their tombs, will be awakened, glorified in the immortal bodies and then *raptured* to meet the Lord in the sky. That is the reason why when Jesus had made this eternal statement, he commanded; "*Take away the stone*", despite the fear of bad odour among the congregants, the stone was rolled. At that moment Jesus retorted by saying, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God." The Lord then immediately said "*Lazarus, Come out!*" And the dead man walked out (John 11:38-44). This is the perfect spiritual simulation of the *rapture* of the dead in the dust of the earth. The command that Jesus gave at Bethany, to *take away the stone* from the tomb is symbolic of the mighty authority that the Son of Man has over death, a power that will exceedingly manifest on the day of *rapture* (John 5:24-28). It is such a power that comes with the glory of God because the authority of the Messiah will on that day purge-off any *bad odour* that has characterized the church this long. Jesus being aware of the power about his authority as the Messiah, had no fear whatsoever over the *bad odour* that many dreaded would be grossly repulsive. But the glory of the Lord purged it off to the extent that not even a single stench touched the air as the stone was *taken away*. It is this particular authority of Christ the Messiah, that will on the day of *rapture* split open the tombs and graves as it pulls out the asleep in the dust of the earth. However, when Jesus said, "*Lazarus, Come out!*" that greatly prefigured the mighty voice of the Son of Man that will appear on the day of *rapture*, a voice that only the Holy Spirit-filled, holy few, will hear. Only those Christians that had lived in *holiness* hence having their spiritual ears open will hear this mighty spiritual voice of God in their respective tombs (John 5:24-28). It is obvious that at that cemetery there must have been other Lazaruses who had been buried many years back. And in this way, he implied that only those whose spiritual ears will be opened, are the ones who will hear the voice of the archangel and the trumpet call of God, thereby being caught up in the glory of the Lord. But only Lazarus, the brother of Martha, heard the command that Jesus gave when he said; "*Lazarus, Come out!*". That implies that even on the day of *rapture* only the *holy* asleep in the dust of the earth, whose spiritual ears were opened by the Holy Spirit at

the time of death, will hear the spiritual voice of the Son of Man. It speaks about the extreme seriousness and gravity that the Lord tagged to the Holy Spirit as the ultimate helper of the church into the wedding of the Lamb. Clearly explained, is why it was said that on that material day two men will be working in the field, one will be taken and the other left; whilst two women will be grinding on a handmill with one being taken and the other left (Matthew 24:40-41). Moreover, this is the true meaning of the statement the Lord made when he said; "Behold I come like a thief and blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with himself that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." (Revelations 16:15). The *rapture* is like a thief, coming as a surprise when least expected! This phenomenon is biblically well documented and no one can claim not to have heard or known about it, since it is the voice of the Holy Spirit that urges the present-day church not to harden their hearts when they hear him (John 5:24-28). It is this same voice that is currently standing at the door of the heart of today's church, and knocking that if anyone of them hears and opens, he will come in and eat with that church (Hebrews 3:7; Revelation 3:20). This voice is in fact the Shepherd's voice that longs to lead today's church into greener pastures and quieter, clear cool waters in the *highway of holiness*. Such waters are different from the temporary cisterns of warm and non-sparkling dead waters, that the Pastors have perennially presented to the sheep. This clear and cool water that the Shepherd is longing to lead today's sheep to, is from the *fountain of living waters* in the throneroom of God in heaven. And because this water is fast-flowing, it provides sparkles and bubbles of life that eternally quench the thirst of the sheep (John 10:3; Psalm 23). Nevertheless, the tomb of Lazarus that remained open after his resurrection, has todate remained a spiritual monument and a major tourist attraction. It is still an open tomb. Lazarus walking out of that tomb, in essence simulated the open tombs that will litter the earth right after the *rapture* takes place.

Translating the living

The *life* that Jesus was referring to at this little town of Bethany when he resurrected Lazarus, is the translation of the living christians that takes place at *rapture* (John 11: 25-26). During the mighty *rapture*, only the holy living christians will be translated into their immortal glorious bodies, and lifted up by the glory of the Lord to meet Jesus in the sky. Likewise, only the holy dead christians will be awakened to the glory of the Lord on the day of *rapture* (Daniel 12:2-3; Isaiah 26:19-21; 1 Corinthians 15:50-56; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelations 19:6-9). Considering that dust returns to dust, then by all standards the flesh that the church wears today must die and return to the dust of the earth. And yet God Almighty created man in his very *image* and *likeness* (Genesis 1:26). It is important to comprehend here that the *image* and *likeness* of God surpasses death, thereby making the day of *rapture* the one and only most significant occasion on which the church will have surpassed death (1 Corinthians 15:50-56). It is so humbling to realize that Jesus could chose such a small broken town from which to teach an important lesson of this magnitude, to the church. The power that Jesus demonstrated at Bethany was so immense that it brings new meaning to restoration. In this way, the Lord also hinted at the fact that there would be a fall in the church of Christ, and however spiritually dead the church may be in desolation, he is able to resurrect her from the dark world back to his glory. Moreover, inside this lesson is the wedding supper of the Lamb of God at which the *raptured* saints will be rewarded differently. This was portrayed when Jesus was finally able to sit down and have dinner with resurrected Lazarus at Bethany. Following the mighty resurrection of Lazarus, word went round and came to the attention of the high priests and the Sanhedrins who were greatly riled because it dawned on them that the same Jesus of Nazareth whose influence they had tried to deliberately diminish, had now gained more ground (John 12:19). This Holy Ghost revival that was now taking shape in Bethany, ushered in the truth hence exposing the unholy practices of the then priesthood that people had been conditioned to. Bethany then quickly developed as the launching pad from which Jesus confronted the orthodox priesthood in the temple of the Lord. An encounter of this nature that Jesus went through with the orthodox religious priests, greatly hints to the present-day church. It discloses that when the truth of *holiness* revival will hit today's defiled church, the biggest resistance will have to come from the Pastors who are right now engaged in their ritualistic intractable preaching of prosperity. The Sanhedrins in Jerusalem were living a lucrative life out of the offerings of the Lord at the temple. This caused them to embrace *status quo*. Any spiritual change that was not modulated by them, within the sheep of the Lord's flock, was considered uprising and rebellion. Our current dispensation has too seen her share of the Sanhedrins of today who are totally resistant to change in the church. This resistance to *repentance* and the return to *holiness*, unfortunately comes within the backdrop of a very humiliating fall to sin in the church. The priests in Jerusalem too had been blinded to think that revival was throbbing when actually *darkness* had consumed worship. Today too, many Pastors are busy proclaiming revival when actually a great abomination of darkness reigns in the church. How then can revival be proclaimed without embracing *repentance*? This is the mighty lesson that Jesus taught from the little broken town of Bethany. In the present-day church also only the least of the broken desperately need Jesus to the point of opening their hearts to him, and welcoming his *repentance* revival of *holiness*. The post-modern day church of today, does not like *holiness* because their lives are so tailored to the world that they cannot survive in the wilderness. Interestingly, Jesus deliberately opted to operate from Bethany, and not Jerusalem, because the house of the Lord in Jerusalem had fallen out of God's order. The temple in Jerusalem was then mainly being run through human wisdom, philosophy, programs and worldly idolatry. One wonders then as to whether today's church has not just fallen into this Jerusalem path. The same human philosophy, wisdom, programs, and worldly idolatry appears to have resurfaced and pervaded the entire process of worshipping God. Surely, there is a need for today's church to find

bearing towards her spiritual Bethany. At that place today's church will be restored and revived for *rapture*.

Killing the messenger

Resisting Repentance

The disposition of love that Jesus had for *broken* Bethany, went way beyond the events of that dispensation. This is because besides the miracles and great teachings he conducted at Bethany, when the time came for Jesus to fulfil the greatest prophecy of his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he launched it from the little home town of Bethany (Zechariah 9:9; Mark 11:1-11). But it is exactly this triumphal entry into Jerusalem that foretells of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus when he will be accompanied by the *raptured* saints. That there was so much jubilation and felicitation as Jesus entered from Bethany into Jerusalem, implies that the Lord is impressing upon today's church to not miss the *rapture*. Only through the *rapture* can the church partake of the Jerusalem felicitation during the Second Coming. Bethany therefore became the Lord's home ground from which he launched his important missions, because his heart reciprocated the warmth of this lowly village town. It was the house of the hurting that Jesus chose. Perhaps because he was well too familiar with the kind of bitter *rejection* that the people of Bethany had lived through. Jesus lived most of his life on this earth in extreme *rejection*, culminating in the most bitter cruelty of the Cross at Calvary (Isaiah 53). On the contrary, the Lord Jesus rebuked Jerusalem over her idolatry and the subsequent failure to recognise her most critical hour of visitation. Bethany's reception of Jesus earned them a most treasured reputation as the house of *repentance* and *revival*, while Jerusalem's *rejection* of the Lord, caused that city to lie in desolation. This led Jesus to cry out aloud of Jerusalem, while saying; *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Matthew 23:37-38).*

Embedded in here is the irrefutable spiritual concept that *rejecting* Jesus implicitly signals the *rejection* of revival, while accepting the Lord literally births out a Holy Ghost *revival*. This is the outstanding message that the Lord sent out from Bethany to the present-day church of Christ. Many times in the life of Israel, she was prompted to self re-examine and review, especially when a clear sense of spiritual direction seemed to have been lost. Today's church leaders also need to consider a spiritual self re-examination against the truth that Jesus established at Bethany. If the notion that the church is not backslidden was true, then has the church embraced the messengers of *repentance*? And yet, has she opened her heart to the messengers of *holiness*? Is righteousness part and parcel of her daily livelihood? Sadly enough, the reality on the ground is that today's church of Christ has virtually *killed* the messengers of the Lord while also *stoning* those sent to her to rebuke her excessive worldliness. Then how different is today's post-modern church from Jerusalem of then that literally rejected Jesus, threw him out, falsely accused him, and subsequently killed him on the Cross? Because of the great desolation and the scattering of his sheep, the Lord Jesus is today longing to gather these chicks under the Eagle's wings in order to lift them off into the safety of *rapture*. He is desperately clamouring and howling out aloud to this current church of Christ to *prepare the way* of the Lord, that they too may be blessed to soar in the clouds on the Eagle's wings as the tribulation touches down. In other words, the Lord spoke mightily to the church about the *rapture* from Bethany. The church at Bethany provides a rare beacon of hope to the present day church of Christ. This is majorly because at Bethany the portal of heaven is open and revival reigns on. Such revival as is seen in Bethany, is a *holiness revival* arising from the brokenness of the people. Jesus left a mighty trail mark at Bethany, a pathway that today's church ought to strive to get onto in order to win the much needed favour of the Holy Spirit in this current dispensation.

Open heaven At Bethany

The Portal For Latter Glory

The present-day church of Christ can still learn a lot more from the spiritual events that took place in the little town of Bethany, right before the Lord accomplished his mission on the earth. The spiritual precepts that the present-day church of Christ ought to *clench* include; the portal that opened at Bethany directly into heaven, the *rapturing* of our Lord Jesus from the very spot, the promise of the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and the Second Coming of Christ. These most treasured spiritual principles when well *clasped* within the mainstream of today's church, would transform her to *feign* the glamour with which the church at Bethany animated. Right before leaving this world, Jesus assured the church that she would have a place with him in eternity. He gave her this most valued picture of hope that she could hold on to, in her impending grief before he left for the Cross. Immediately following these final mighty Bethany-based missions, the Precious Lord Jesus went straight to the

Cross and redeemed the church. And most importantly, after his suffering, crucifixion, death and resurrection, the Lord again retraced his path back to this historic little home town of Bethany. At Bethany, Jesus gave the promise of the advent of the anointing of the Holy Spirit that would help the church from on high. At this vicinity of Bethany, the Lord Jesus lifted up his hands and blessed them. While he was blessing them, heaven opened and a mighty *cloud* appeared that lifted him, through the *portal* that opened and he left them as he *raptured* into heaven. Then the disciples worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great hope of joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God Almighty. (Luke 24:50-53). This becomes the most significant landmark message that the Lord Jesus ever gave to the current church that is anticipating the *rapture*. Leaving from the *broken* town of Bethany and performing the *triumphal entry* into Jerusalem, and finally returning to be *raptured* at Bethany, surely the Lord Jesus left the *footprints* that church today should follow. Such an *invaluable* and *timeless* teaching that Jesus gave at Bethany should not have suffered the *diachrony* that has characterized church life in this modern era. The undesirable changes that have taken place in the church of today across the centuries should never have in any way ever touched this *endless testimony* that Jesus gave to the church at Bethany. It is true that today's church has finally entered into a place of greatest *anticipation* for the mightiest outpour in the history of the house of the Lord.

There are two relevant scenarios that the church needs to uphold from the Bethany experience in order to realize the latter promised glory. The first episode that today's christians must incorporate into their walk is the tremendous *prerequisite* that had to avail before a great revival hit Bethany. Given that all revival must be engineered by the Spirit of the Lord, then one quickly understands the importance of *humility* and *brokenness* in predisposing the church to the free uncensored will of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord found the church at Bethany available as an defiled vessel for use in delivering revival. This revival yielded forth the great works of the Holy Spirit when Lazarus was resurrected from the dead, thereby providing an *incontrovertible* testimony of the Lord Jesus. Coming out of that testimony, multitudes *repented* and received Jesus in their hearts, thereby *separating* from the defiled priests of the day. This greatly represented the *fruit* of the Spirit and the *latter* harvest into the barns, that would manifest in this endtime church, if she conforms to the most important *prerequisite* of *humble brokenness*. When the church opens her doors unto the Lord Jesus, it is this *humble brokenness* that Jesus brings into her life in order to pave way for the mighty Holy Spirit visitation. The church at Bethany had initially done this when they opened their homes to Jesus, earning them a historic revival. The failure of today's church therefore to *clutch a humble brokenness* before the Lord, becomes a spiritually very catastrophic undertaking in the lives of present-day christians. And, being totally devoid of this most treasured *humble brokenness*, the present-day church of Christ has instead gotten for herself *pride* to fill that critical vacuum in her heart. The church of Christ at Bethany did not only walk with the Lord Jesus, but also lived like the Lord Jesus. In this regard, they mirrored the *humble brokenness* that the Lord Jesus had gone through, and most importantly whose peak he was yet to experience on the Calvary Cross. In this way the people of Bethany became not only the hearers of the Word, but also doers of the Word. Has today's church heard and done the Word? Perhaps the most important reason as to why the Lord Jesus embraced the *humble and broken* people of Bethany, is due to the bitter *rejection* that his testimony against the sin of the world, brought him. Jesus was greatly *broken* on the Cross at Calvary. One then wonders, as to why today's church that so much craves for the latter glory, has not lived like Jesus. The happenings in the current house of the Lord do not in any way reflect the much desired *humble brokenness*. Instead, what the world sees from the church today, is a high level of *pride* that cannot permit the Holy Spirit to have his way. It is strongly believed that the highly self-esteeming Jewish communities that came to Jesus in multitudes at Bethany, did so after falling in love with the *humble brokenness* that the church at Bethany displayed in that otherwise *complex* and very *hierarchical* society. Today too, the world has become so *complex* and *hierarchical* that any additional complexity in presenting the *humble* testimony of Jesus will most definitely repulse the heathen from *humble broken* Jesus. However, the contrary is true, that in this complex world where many factors seem to be acting at the same time, the presentation of a *humble* solution-based, life-saving gospel of the Blood and the Cross at Calvary, will most definitely attract millions if not billions into the spiritual barns of salvation. This is the biggest lesson that the church at Bethany taught the present-day *complex* and *hierarchical* post-modern church. The current global complexity in the life of mankind arising from the energy crisis, the mortgage crisis, environmental crisis, global food crisis, global disease crisis, crisis of global wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran, global marital and divorce crisis, drug abuse crisis, Alcohol abuse crisis, abortion crisis, teen pregnancies, suicides, homosexuality crisis in the church, among others; have presented a complexity of unbearable proportions into the life of man. Such a complexity can never in any way, be countered with the complex gospel of private aeroplanes, of sow-a-seed and get a miracle here now, of spiritual formulae and gimmicks on successful living. The current *complexity* that has befallen man's life can only be solved by the *simplicity* of the gospel of the Blood and the Cross at Calvary. The *complexity* that has entered into man's life world over does not require a worldly solution, it requires a heavenly solution. When the people of Bethany were down trodden by the *complexity* of the problems in their poverty and *rejection*, they did not seek a worldly solution to attain redress. But, the moment they sought a heavenly solution unto their worldly problems, they attained an eternal restitution and the favour of God that brought peace, and comfort into their previously troubled lives. Why then has today's church perpetually presented a financial solution to the worldly problems that the people face on a daily basis? The energy crisis, global unemployment, food crisis, fear of terrorism, etc, cannot be addressed by a promise of the so-called financial wealth transfer that is today being heavily preached on global christian television. Only the salvation of our Lord Jesus, can solve the crisis that currently resonates

and violently jolting the hearts of men world over. Why then has today's church continued to prophesy a financial wealth transfer that they purport will come soon into the lives of the christians? Why is the priesthood seeking *earthly solutions* for *earthly problems*? How can they present *temporary solution* to these *earth ly problems*? In that way, they have presented a *perishable gospel*. Only the gospel of the eternal salvation of the Blood of Jesus can sought mankind out today. Where then is the wisdom of the Holy Spirit that was so much promised in this church? The church of Christ at Bethany has surely taught a lesson that today's church has not learnt. If the church had presented the simple humble salvation of the Blood of Jesus to this troubled generation, a heavenly and permanent solution would have arrived into their lives. The salvation of our Lord Jesus is the *heavenly solution* that animated the troubled hearts of the poor and rejected people of Bethany. And when this salvation entered their bloodstream then peace befell their lives as the favour of the Lord brought security, belonging, provision, health, and eternal joy unspeakable. If belonging to an important hireachy attains such high scores in the lives of today's christians, then how high is the score that Bethany achieved by sitting and dining with the King of all kings. And that is the secret of the fruit of *humbleness* that today's church has not discovered as she goes around trying to please politicians and rich people. Like it was in Bethany, so will it be with the church today, because the Lord God, He changes not. "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Act 1:9-12). This message from Bethany sounds a *veille* to the present-day church in order that she may awaken to the moment. The only way in which the church today can be restored, is by tracing her path back to the spiritual Bethany of this dispensation. At that spiritual Bethany she will obviously display a *humble brokenness* that makes her vulnerable to the *fealty* unto the Lord. Like it was in ancient Israel, when all roads; be it from the Dead Sea, Jericho, name it, always led to Bethany; so will it be *eidetic* in the spiritual. It implies that regardless of denominational differences or religion, all nations of the earth must worship Jesus and attain their spiritual bearing towards *spiritual Bethany* where the *portal* of heaven is open for the latter glory.

The Alabaster Jar

at Bethany

Dr. Owuor ..

When the Lord Jesus visited humble Bethany, it is as though every single course of event that he undertook in that poor little town, became a mighty spiritual *landmark* that was meant to *navigate* today's church. It was during one such visits that the Lord was confronted with the reality of the final *stretch* of his mission here on earth. Jesus had then become so fond of poor Bethany that he actually called it *home*, often returning there for evening rest. This was mainly due to the great and warm reception that the people of Bethany had extended to him by opening their homes. At that time in Bethany there lived many *lepers* who had been warmly accepted and welcomed there. It is then that one of the lepers known by the names *Simon the leper*, invited the Lord Jesus to a very special dinner in his house. In displaying the greatest disposition of *kindest humbleness* to the hurting and broken poor, Jesus accepted the invitation to have dinner with the leper. Considering that in the Jewish society then, lepers were classified as *outcasts*, who had been branded as totally *unclean*; Jesus as a Rabbi opting to be at this dinner surely became a historic event far and wide. It was during this historic dinner at Simon the *leper's* house that a woman suddenly and most unexpectedly showed up with a costly *alabaster jar* in her hands. In that jar, this woman carried a very pricey perfume made out of *pure nard*. It is the appearance of this woman into the *leper's* house with an *alabaster jar* that brings a totally new aspect in the preparation the church is supposed to undertake for *rapture*. In a bizarre act that puzzled many including his disciples, this woman *broke* the neck of that most expensive *alabaster* flask and poured the costly perfume of *pure nard* on the *Lords* head and feet. It left the whole room saturated with an expensive sweet smelling *fragrance* that caused some critics to purport wastage. As the woman poured this expensive *nard* on the precious Lord, she continually crushed it to exude out every little *fragrant* content there could have been, in this costly *vessel*.

At that time, castigated and rebuked for the act of anointing Jesus with this extremely expensive *fragrance*, this woman on the contrary becomes the greatest icon of what it takes to prepare for the *rapture* of the church. While it may have seemed an impossibility to imagine how this woman would have gained access into Simon the *leper's* house, with all the twelve disciples keeping guard around Jesus, this as a matter of fact, was a setup by the Holy Spirit. A setup because it was intended to and illustrious sermon that would teach the present-day church an invaluable lesson on how to prepare the way of the Lord for *rapture*.

The Beautiful feet

The ancient Near-Eastern Jewish practices were closely tied to the five books of Moses. Nothing in their lives was left to chance as they lived among communities that continued in defiled practices. The torah was used to address aspects of their lives then on a day-to-day basis. And because there were no vehicles at that time, it became common practice for people to walk long overstretched distances. Among those that walked long distances, were the king's messengers that became most esteemed and highly regarded in society. This was especially because long distance walking had become their life-long career thereby soliciting for tender care upon arrival. Courtesy had it that when a messenger of the king arrived from long distances, he would recline at dinner as his feet were

embrocated with Olive oil to heal the bruises of the *sandal buckles*. Part of this embrocation was also aimed at cleaning the *dust off* the feet of these noble messengers. Likewise, when God sent a messenger unto his people, his feet had to be embrocated as an act of courtesy. God's messengers were also referred to as the *messengers of peace* because they delivered a message of reconciliation between God and Israel. Such messages in most cases embodied *repentance* or the anointing of a leader that the prophet's assistants were routinely sent to accomplish. If today's church is surely the messenger and ambassador of Christ sent to this dark world, then are her feet really bruised by sandal buckles or they are just very healthy, clean unbruised feet? Remember the church was sent and if her feet are healthy, then it can only mean that she refused to go! Are her feet worth dusting off, washing and embrocating?

Having said so, for the blessed woman at Bethany to have chosen to anoint the feet of Jesus at dinner, she must have received revelation on the *cadre* of messenger he was. This woman must have surely noticed that the Lord's *sandalled dusty feet* were as a matter of fact, those of the Messenger of Peace. It takes launching ones *net* into the deep to be able to fish out from the river of life an enormous level of wisdom that would allow one to recognize then that the *dusty sandalled feet* of Jesus were actually the Beautiful feet that brought the Good News (Romans: 10:15; Isaiah 52:7). Such wisdom was by then and until now, remains largely hidden from the majority of the christian populace, thereby making this woman's act of anointing the Lord's feet, such a symbol of historic levels in the church. This woman at Bethany knew that the Lord Jesus had come a long way across the earth, bringing *The Message* of peace and reconciliation between man and God.

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

The *fear* with which this woman at Bethany treasured the Lord's *sandalled dusty feet*, stands out in *stark contrast* to the *pride* that today's church has approached Jesus. It is common knowledge world over that women treasure their hair as a critical asset of their being. In certain circles they have even sold their hair upon death in an act that is meant to attach boundless value to their hair. It is as though such women are saying that the value of their hair transcends the dispensation of their flesh. But for the woman at Bethany to have poured that costly perfume of *pure nard* on the Lord's *dusty sandalled feet*, and then use her hair to wipe the dust off the Lord's feet, she must most definitely have realized that she was right before the King. Out of all this, the message to the present-day church though, is that it will take the *brokenness* and *humbleness* of this blessed woman at Bethany for the christians to receive favour from God Almighty, the Father of Christ Jesus. This blessed woman broke down at the feet of the Lord, wiping them with her hair, the *pure nard* and tears. Moreover, she did all this in the public and against such a background of extreme hostility from both the disciples and others. Has the church of Christ ever broken down at the feet of Jesus, recognizing them as the *beautiful glorious feet* that brought the Good News? This becomes the lesson to learn from this otherwise castigated and despised woman at Bethany.

Fragrance of Pure Nard Separating Church From The World

The ancient Hebrew setting had a very dominant culture that occasionally swallowed up the practices of the neighbouring communities. In their culture is embedded a very strong message on how the church today ought to prepare for the glorious *rapture*. The tradition in the Near-East had it that a father and mother always rewarded good conduct in their sons and daughters. The daughters however were always taught from a tender age to begin accumulating their own reservoirs of costly perfume of *pure nard*. That implied that any gift that was advanced to the daughters, be it for good conduct or birthday celebration, or *Jewish barmitzvah*, was accumulated over time and eventually used to buy the precious perfume of *pure nard*. This accumulation of *pure nard* always took place in a beautiful tall-necked flask called the *alabaster jar*. And as the little daughter continued consistently to accumulate *pure nard*, she always did so as a preparation for the day of her wedding, a day whose year, month, date, and hour, no one knew. It is estimated that from the point when the little girl begins to accumulate her first drops of this precious *pure nard*, till the *alabaster jar* filled, it took anywhere between 6-20 years. Moreover, the *pure nard* could only be bought about once or at most twice a year, when the merchants from Lebanon and Assyria passed by, ringing their characteristic bells. *Pure nard* was hard to come by and most expensive, because it had to be produced from a virgin field of a wild *nard* plant that no person had ever touched. At approximately 18 years plus of age, it was estimated that the *alabaster jar* would be full of *pure nard* in preparation for the wedding. A full flask of *alabaster jar* containing *pure nard*, had to be sealed in order to preserve the pure and precious *nard* fragrance within the jar. On the day of her wedding, the bride would then surprise the bridegroom at some point during the occasion, by pulling out a complete sealed flask of *pure nard*. This, she would use to anoint him by breaking the tall beautiful neck of the *alabaster* flask, then releasing the pure expensive *nard* over him through the action of crushing the *alabaster*. What is most symbolic of this act is the fact that the costly content of this *alabaster* flask always represented the life-long savings of the little girl from when she was tender, till becoming a mature bride. It is like her entire life resided inside this *alabaster jar*. This in other words was the complete worth of her total life's treasure. And to break it and crush it on the day of her wedding it greatly

symbolized the fact that she had poured her entire life unto her groom, hence being left with nothing at all of her own. She literally gave in her entire life thereby seeking to be completely taken care of by the groom, from that day henceforth. Accordingly, she virtually had nothing else of her own in the world, left behind to back look to. It meant going completely forward with no looking back.

At the time when the blessed woman at Bethany broke the *alabaster jar* and poured the greatest savings of her life, little did people know that she gave the greatest illustrated sermon to the present-day church. This woman practically demonstrated the act of salvation in Christ Jesus. In this way, she clearly expressed what it means to give one's life to Jesus, without looking back at the sinful world from which the Lord has picked one. It also, in this sermon, entails shattering every earthly blessing that one may have ever run into, right at the feet of Jesus in such a way that one would be left with nothing else to turn to except moving forward with Jesus. This unfortunately, becomes the point of departure from which the present-day church missed it. Today's Christians appear to receive Jesus conditionally. They receive Jesus only on condition that there would be a *status quo* regarding worldly and earthly status. No one ever gives their lives totally anymore to Jesus, because being born again has today shifted from a total life-long commitment unto the Lord, into a mere fashionable club-like membership in which there is only a part commitment. The blessed woman at Bethany taught the true meaning of giving our lives to Jesus, even when the public opposition rages on. Only such salvation like she demonstrated, is capable of laying a solid foundation of total commitment to walking with Jesus through the *thick* and *thin* of this world. To prepare for the *rapture* of the church will require such eternal commitment to the Lord Jesus, from the Christians. If the blessed woman at Bethany's standard were anything to go by, then one would summarily say with absolute certainty, that only a handful can proclaim the salvation of the Lord in this current dispensation.

How about the life-long preparation that the little Hebrew girl puts in to cumulatively collect, drop by drop, the full flask of the *alabaster jar* of *pure nard*? What lesson does it teach the present-church on *rapture*? It is absolutely incredible that the little Hebrew girl, from the moment she begins to be of reasonable perception, she seems to right away begin to prepare for the day of her wedding. In every little effort, slowly but surely, she seems to envision that mighty day of her wedding. This becomes a serious wake-up call to today's church on the need to be fully pre-occupied and engaged in preparing for the day of *rapture*. The day of *rapture* is the most important day in the calendar of the church thereby warranting such a total commitment of effort. In such manner, truly the events that took place at Bethany left a life-long mark on what it takes for the church to be revived and refocused unto the Lord Jesus.

Crushing the Alabaster Jar What every christian must know/ By Dr. Owuor

The gesture of anointing the Lord Jesus with the *alabaster jar* at Bethany is a mighty act that today's church can greatly borrow from. Perceiving just how significant this event was, would most definitely require that the church understand the connate nature that underlies the *alabaster*. The *alabaster jar* was a long-necked, beautiful ancient Hebrew flask. This flask was highly regarded in the Jewish society owing to noble use during important ceremonial events. Many times in an ancient Hebrew home, the removal of this flask signalled a historic occasion in which a highly honourable guest was present. Beyond this, is the underlying spiritual treasure around the *alabaster jar* that was used to anoint the Lord Jesus at Bethany. When that blessed woman appeared at *Simon the leper's* house, with an *alabaster jar* to anoint Jesus, it is noteworthy that the first thing she did was break the long beautiful neck of the *alabaster jar*. In the design of the *alabaster jar*, the longer the neck, the more greatly treasured and costly the flask became. This, the designers greatly capitalized on, because the content of that noble jar was meant to come in little drops as they saturated the air. It is that very long neck that the woman at Bethany broke as she began to anoint the Lord Jesus. However, in the utility of the *alabaster jar* for purposes of anointing a noble guest, the final stages of the anointing process would normally require the total crushing of the jar in order to exhaust every little drop of precious nard. And that is exactly what this blessed woman did when anointing our Lord Jesus.

Without carefully examining the scriptural context of what that woman did at *Simon the leper's* house, it would be very easy to miss out on what the Holy Spirit *set out* to convey to the present-day church. The long neck that adorns the *alabaster jar*, among other things, symbolizes the beauty and *pride* of man. This kind of *pride* and boastfulness has for a long time been a characteristic feature of man's life on earth, and across the centuries. At times it has been referred to as stiff-neckedness or long-neckedness, implying one that walks away in *disobedience*, refusing to turn back even as he is being called. In the spiritual sense, this refers to an obstinate stance in which mankind refuses to *repent* and turn back to the Lord. Such a rebellion has surely become a main feature of Christian walk today. This makes the snapping of the long beautiful neck of the *alabaster jar* symbolic of the breaking of man's pride. It is absolutely obvious that not until the *pride* of mankind is broken, can *humbleness* take charge as *brokenness* becomes a predominant countenance. But, for *brokenness* to bring forth a genuine *repentance* in the life of the church, she first must get *crushed* in her heart. Only a *crushed* heart can yield true *repentance* since *humbleness* begins to overtake self. That is the lesson the blessed woman at Bethany was relaying to the church of today. Moreso, considering that not until she broke the long neck of the *alabaster jar*, no fragrance was able to come out of the flask. This implicitly points directly to where the problem lies in the current worship that pervades today's church. By this the Holy Spirit was telling the present day church that only until she

breaks the *pride* that presently adorns her, will true holy worship come from her life. It is true that most Christians today have not *broken* the worldly *pride* which they came to Christ with. It surely will take the purifying action of the Holy Spirit to break this current *pride* in today's church, because it, as a matter of fact, impedes worship. Stunningly, as the blessed woman at Bethany continues to anoint the Lord Jesus, she gradually transitioned into *crushing* the *alabaster jar* to completely exhaust the precious content that it carried. What became particularly most bewildering, is the fact that, the more this woman *crushed* the *alabaster jar*, the stronger the aroma of the sweet *fragrance* that was emitted. It was at that time that the entire room became heavily saturated of sweet *fragrance* of the *pure nard*. Being very well aware of how *pure nard* settles in the *alabaster jar*, it then becomes easier to understand why the *crushing* action strengthened the sweet aroma of the *fragrance* exuded at this dinner. The most powerful precipitates of *pure nard* normally settle at the bottom as very precious concentrates of the perfume. Only the *crushing* of the jar would be able to release them as they slowly flowed out of this noble *vessel*. Like it is with the *alabaster jar* at Bethany, so it is in the spiritual with the present-day church of Christ. The Holy Spirit is using this to tell today's church that much as breaking her current *pride* is a necessity, it is not sufficient to bring true worship to Jehovah God. In this way, the Lord is telling the church that it will take the total *crushing* of herself to release the sweetest aroma of the *fragrance* with which she was created for worship. Our Lord Jesus, already went ahead of the church and demonstrated this on the Cross at Calvary. Throughout his ministry and life on the earth, Jesus never had even the smallest bit of pride, but much as this was necessary in his mission to save mankind, it was not sufficient to accomplish the task. It had to take an extra dimension of the actual *crushing* of the flesh (self) on the cross for the mighty sweet aroma of the *fragrance* of worship to be exuded from his life directly into the throneroom of God in heaven. No wonder the Word has it that, much as he was *crushed* on the Cross for our iniquities, it was the Father's will that he be *crushed* (Isaiah 53:5; Isaiah 56:10). Jesus on the Cross was *crushed* beyond human recognition. Many became appalled at him because his appearance was disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness (Isaiah 52:13). Jesus was *crushed* on that Calvary Cross to the extent that he lost the self. Only in this way could his life emit forth such a mighty *fragrance* of worship that completely saturated the throneroom of God the Father in heaven. Upon receiving this powerful *fragrance* that saturated his throneroom, God the Father was then able to forgive the sins of all mankind. In this way, the sin of the world was atoned for.

That means that when the blessed woman at Bethany *crushed* the *alabaster jar* and let the complete saturation of the entire room with a sweet *fragrance*, it was a very prophetic act she performed. In this way, she foretold of how Jesus was about to go to the Cross, get totally *crushed* beyond human likeness, and hence emit forth such a mighty sweet *fragrance* of worship that would saturate the entire throneroom of God in heaven. Since Jesus, the teacher, came to earth to teach the church how to worship God the Father, then it is only fair to say that this is the worship he taught the church. In this worship, our Lord Jesus firmly asserted, with not even the slightest of ambiguity, that for the church to worship Jehovah God, she must pick up her Cross, break her *pride*, and consequently *crush* the flesh. The terms of reference for this lesson to the church comes straight from the conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus, the professor of law. In that dialogue Jesus had made it clear to Nicodemus that unless the church gets born again, she cannot see the Kingdom of God. The Lord further said, that like gives birth to like, thence that which is born of the flesh gives birth to the flesh, while that which is born of the spirit will always give birth to the spirit (John 3:1-7). The Lord Jesus at this point presented such a tremendous lesson to the church on worship by affirming that only through the *crushing* of the flesh of self, can the church emit the spiritual *fragrance* of worship acceptable to the Lord God. That is the reason why when the Lord's disfigured body was being lowered from the Cross to give way to Sabbath, Nicodemus appeared again, but this time with Joseph at that Cross. It became the culmination of the conversation Nicodemus had earlier on had with Jesus, because this time around he was privy to the *crushing* of the flesh and the birthing out of the spiritual (John 19:38-42). It is no coincidence at all, that at that moment Nicodemus brought with himself a mix of bitter myrrh and sweet smelling aloe that he wrapped on the crushed body of Christ the Messiah! The bitter myrrh is symbolic of the *purity* with which Jesus lived, a *purity* that brought great bitterness into his life until he was bitterly *crushed* on the Cross. While the sweet smelling aloe figuratively represented the mighty sweet aroma of worship *fragrance* that the *crushed* body of Jesus on the Cross, brought unto our God in heaven. Surely, the blessed woman at Bethany was very busy *crushing* the *alabaster jar* on that blessed day, while tremendously pleading with the church of Christ to allow herself to be *crushed* on this beautiful Cross. It is as though she was urging today's church not to despise this beautiful ancient Cross, because it leads into the kingdom of God. This Cross is the heart of the Gospel and the Blood shed on it is the mighty power of the Gospel. How then can today's church claim to forget this Cross when it actually is the only gateway ever given to sinful mankind, through which to reach the heart of God. How can they claim today that he is not present among them when the beautiful rugged Cross has actually been abandoned for the flamboyant excesses of this world in the very house of the Lord! How can they claim that he did not show them the way to reach him! Wasn't the way to Calvary pretty obvious to all men? Didn't the bible talk so beautifully about old Calvary? Wasn't the truth revealed unto all men? The church at Bethany knew exactly how to touch the heart of the Lord God. *Broken* and *crushed*, with lepers eating at the same table with Jesus, that church surely emulated the life of Christ. Today's church must therefore, get *broken* and crush the flesh that she so much adorns. That is the true gospel that our Lord Jesus brought to the earth.

The Alabaster Jar & Today's Pastors

Dr. Owuor..

The Pastors of this present dispensation can borrow a lot from the church at Bethany. The blessed woman who anointed Jesus at Bethany, demonstrated the greatest act of what it takes to Pastor the church of Christ. When God calls his servants, it is a serious undertaking that is denoted in heaven for the purposes of serving Christ Jesus the Messiah. It is for that reason that the Lord desires to have all his servants anointed of the Holy Spirit in order to do the good works of God. The good works of the Lord are holy thereby requiring enormous help from the Holy Spirit in order to achieve pastoring.

When the blessed woman at Bethany broke the tall neck of the *alabaster jar* in order to anoint Jesus, she demonstrated the first step in the calling of a Pastor. While it is true that all mankind live in the original *pride* with which Adam fell, that *pride* can stand in the way of hearing from God. It is the reason why such *pride* must be broken at the onset of a pastoral calling in order that the Pastor may be *humble* enough to tend the sheep of his flock. The breaking of the tall beautiful neck of the *alabaster jar* becomes very synonymous with that moment at which Moses, the Servant of God, was sent by the Lord God to go anoint Aaron to be a Pastor of his sheep. Among the fine spices that the Lord instructed Moses to use in formulating the precious *sacred anointing oil*, was one plant called *calamus* (Exodus 30:22-33). *Calamus* is a plant that normally grows in ponds, lakes or water bodies and does thrive well there more or less like an aquatic plant. What is particularly astonishing with this spicy plant is that while all the other plants in the lake tend to grow horizontally following the direction of the water current, this particular plant called *calamus* does on the contrary grow vertically straight upwards. *Calamus* does this in complete *defiance* to the forces of the water current both beneath and on the surface. Moses was instructed to take this particular plant called *calamus*, and process it in such a way that it would form the precious mix of the *sacred anointing oil*. However, to utilize *calamus*, one would have to break its tall neck (stem) and take away for use. It is this act of breaking the vertical column of *calamus*, that so much applies to the calling of the Pastors in the church of Christ. The water in the lake within which the *calamus* plant grows does as a matter of fact represent the Holy Spirit. That is the reason why the River of Life that flows from the throneroom of God in heaven, brings with himself a very strong current in whose direction all the christians are supposed to conform to (Ezekiel 47:1-6). A failure to conform to the direction charted by the Holy Spirit essentially implies being an *intractable* christian. Moreover, while all christian life is intended to flow in the direction of the current of the Holy Spirit, a failure to comply would actually mean exalting oneself over and above Christ Jesus. This is because the Holy Spirit comes as a River whose water currents are meant to direct all persons to worship and exalt Jesus. However, self exaltation that is synonymous with defiant *calamus*, is exactly what constitutes the mountains and hills that the Lord promised would have to be levelled in order *prepare the way* for Christ Jesus the Lamb of God (Isaiah 40:1-5). It makes the failure of *calamus* plant to comply and grow horizontally leafy in the direction of the water current of its habitat, an act of *disobedience* and *pride*. What is even most interesting to the Pastors of today's church of Christ, is the fact that in order to be of utility to Moses, this *calamus* plant had to first be *broken*. It is this breaking of the vertical stem of the *calamus* plant that symbolizes the most important first step in the calling of the Pastor. In this step, the anointing of the Holy Spirit will normally have to break down the vertical *pride* of the world with which the person who is being called to serve had lived. The *pride* of man was inherited from Adam hence must be broken down for Jesus to have his way in the hearts of man. Furthermore, it becomes very intriguing to realize that while all the other plants that grow in the direction of the current in the lake tend to be very leafy and succulent, and healthy by growing to great stretches, with many roots along their lengths; while *calamus* on the other hand tends to be a dry surviving and resistant plant in the water. *Calamus* is a very shrivelled and withered plant within the background of very leafy and healthy water plants. This greatly explains about the poor spiritual health that today's church has, because much as she lives in the lake of the Holy Spirit, she has refused to conform to the requirements of the Spirit of the Lord. The initial anointing of the Holy Spirit was already released at Pentecost thereby making all christians live in his environment. The only way the church can thrive in her spiritual life is when she taps on the waters of life and flows in the direction of the life-giving Spirit of the Lord, that comes from God's throneroom. The caveat however, is that breaking the vertical step of the *calamus* plant can already allow one to sense a sweet smell from this resistant plant. But to be of utility in the *sacred anointing oil*, the *calamus* plant had to be *crushed*. The more this plant is *crushed*, the more *fragrance* it emits, and hence becoming greater and greater in sweet aroma as it turns into a fine powder. And yet, only the powder form of this plant can dissolve within the mix of the *hin* of *olive oil*, *cinnamon* and *liquid myrrh* to form the *sacred anointing oil*. This becomes a very big lesson for the Pastors to borrow from. The Holy Spirit is saying that first and foremost the *pride* of the church leadership today must be *broken* for them to release even the slightest of a *fragrance* of worship unto the Lord. Furthermore, this breaking of *pride* though being a necessary step in Pastoring, is not sufficient enough for the Pastor to be of utility unto the Lord. But it is the complete *crushing* of the Pastor that will finally exude an enormous *fragrance* of worship unto our Lord, even as the Pastor now *humbles* himself to fit homogeneously with all the other servants in the house of the Lord. The other servants in the house include the apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers. The *crushing* portrayed here by Moses when he was sent to anoint Aaron to be a Pastor in the house of the Lord, represents the total *crucifixion of the flesh*. That is the reason the breaking of the *pride* alone is not sufficient, while the flesh still lives on. A continued sustenance of the *flesh* can only mean that the *pride* will resurface unabated. But the total *crushing* of the *flesh* on the Cross is what is capable of totally killing the self and renders the Pastor totally available to the will of the Holy Spirit. The *flesh* and the Spirit are always in a constant antagonism in which whichever of the two wins the

conflict, is the one that will dominate man (Galatians 5:16-18). The Lord Jesus already demonstrated what it takes to be a priest of the new covenant of the Lord, when he went to the Cross and completely *crushed* the *flesh*. This was done at the garden of Gethsemane when he said, "The flesh is weak but the Spirit is willing" and then finally allowing the Holy Spirit to lead him straight onto the Cross at Calvary, to *crucify* the *flesh* (Mark 14:38). By crying to the Father that the Father's Will may be done, Jesus demonstrated the greatest lesson on being a Pastor of the Lord's sheep. That implies that for one to be a Pastor they have to totally submit to Will of God the Father in the Holy Spirit. Such impeccable submission can only come about after the complete *crushing* of the *flesh* of the Pastors. This is why when the blessed woman at Bethany *crushed* the *alabaster jar*, to exude forth the most concentrated of *pure nard* precipitates, she literally taught the Pastors of the Lord's sheep. In this conversation, she clearly articulated that only by being *crushed*, can the anointing of the Holy Spirit flow through the Pastors as *vessels* of God. The more the *alabaster vessel* was *crushed* and re-*crushed*, the greater the sweet *fragrance* it exuded to saturate the room and it pleased to the Lord. Today's church however, does not seem to have been *crushed* by the Holy Spirit. This is because the *crushing* by the Holy Spirit would normally bring with it *humility* of heart and a very contrite Spirit, both of which are lacking in today's church. Moreover, a *crushed vessel* normally yields to the Will of the Holy Spirit by displaying an unmatched *submissiveness*. Considering that the blessed woman that anointed the Lord at Bethany literally wiped his *sandalled dusty feet* using her hair and tears, then it goes without saying that a Pastor of the Lord's sheep who has been *crushed* will receive enormous *wisdom* of this woman's magnitude. Such *wisdom* as coming from God inbuilds the rejection of self and the *fear* of the Lord into the life of the Pastor as he tends the Lord's sheep. This is exactly what is lacking in the present-day church, where *pride* and *arrogance* have become the marks of a Pastor, Bishop, so-called Apostles, and false prophets or anyone aspiring to these offices. The five *wise* virgins that the Lord gave in the parable of the *rapture* of the church, wielded wisdom in their christian walk, because they walked in the *fear* of the Lord (Job 28:28; Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 9:10). Only the *flesh* of man can deter the works of the Holy Spirit in the priesthood of the Lord. Such cases have been clearly elaborated in the written Word even as the Lord rebuked Eli with his sons, by asking them; "Why do you scorn my sacrifice and offering that I prescribed for my dwelling? Why do you honour your sons more than me by fattening yourselves on the choice parts of every offering made by my people Israel?" (1 Samuel 2:29). It is as though God was directly hinting on the fact that *fattening* had become *synonymous* with *Pastoring*. One wonders as to whether this phenomenon has successfully replicated itself in the lives of today's Pastors or what!! In the same tone, the God of Israel in his greatest anger over the flesh of man, severely rebuked *Jeshurun* by saying; Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; filled with food, he became heavy and sleek. He abandoned the God who made him and rejected the Rock his Saviour (Deut 32:15). It is very fearful to even envisage that after such bitter sentiments from Jehovah God, a Pastor would even dare to contemplate growing fat. At Eli's time God comes out clearly to display the eternal truth that a life of *obesity*, without *fasting*, literally caused the fall of the Eli's priesthood. It led to Eli failing in his vision, and to hear God, as he could not being recognize the voice of God when the Lord called Samuel. It took three calls for Eli to wake up to the fact that God had jumped him. It is this fattening that Eli got involved in that must have led to his lying in the same usual place, in the outer court. At that very time Samuel was right inside the inner court and next to the Holy Ark of the Covenant. As well put by the blessed woman at Bethany, surely, the flesh of man must be *crushed* before the Pastors of today can rightfully serve Jehovah God in absolute *holiness*. And then come Jeshurun, Jehovah God presents Jeshurun's condition as not only pathetic but also spiritually very depressing. That one may go over-board, fattening themselves, and becoming sleek and full of food at the expense of worshipping the Rock their Saviour, is a phenomenon that can only be found in today's church of Christ .

Alabaster Jar & Highway of Holiness

By Dr. Owuor

The gravity of the spiritual events that took place at Bethany when Jesus was anointed at dinner, leave no choice but to emphasize to the present-day church to *hie* as fast as she can to a spiritual location of humbleness called Bethany. The anointing of the Lord's *dusty sandalled feet* becomes a very critical aspect that the blessed woman at Bethany teaches the *piacular* Pastors of this present-day church of Christ. First and foremost she recognized that Jesus was the Messenger of Peace whose *dusty sandalled feet* had brought the good news. Secondly, she demonstrated the biggest commission that Jesus ever laid before the Pastors of today's church. The most important *hest* that Jesus ever gave in his instruction to the Pastors of his sheep, when he washed the feet of his disciples, is that in whatever they would do, they should build forth disciples and send them along the *highway of holiness* (Isaiah 35:8-10). Because it is only on this *highway of holiness* that those who have been discipled, can harvest the perishing souls of this dark world. In other words, Jesus was instructing the Pastors of today to build disciples and send them on this dusty road for the latter harvest across the ends of the earth. Moreover, the fruit of the harvest of the *fruitioned* holy disciples that are sent, would be easily readable from their *dusty sandalled feet*. But, the Lord further asserts to the Pastors of today that the greatest act of leadership would be service in the washing of the *dusty sandalled feet* of disciples. That is why, like did the most blessed woman at Bethany wash the Lord's *dusty sandalled feet*, so did the Lord wash the *dusty sandalled feet* of his disciples, in a mighty symbolic act of what it means to be a Pastor:

After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him (John 13:5).

Many Pastors today are quite *heretical* hence walking with *shiny well-polished* shoes, in a state of complete defiance and ignorance on the greatest treasure of being a shepherd. The *dusty sandalled feet* is a very crucial spiritual phenomenon that greatly speaks of the ability of the Pastor to walk the *beaten paths* of *holiness* in pursuit of the Lord's sheep. This makes the Pastor more of a gatherer, collecting them unto the Lord, while healing and binding up the wounded (Ezekiel 34:1-24). At that time in Bethany, it was common practice for messengers to walk long distances and hence their feet would hurt upon arrival. As *piddling* as her work may have seemed in the world, this blessed woman at Bethany was cognizant of the fact that the Lord Jesus had come a long way and that the mission was now coming to completion, therefore his feet required *embrocation* and *healing*. Then, oil was used as a healing ointment that would soothe the feet and the bruises of the buckles from the sandals. Here, Jesus was ministered to. This is the holy message that the blessed woman at Bethany was used for in order to bring forth such a mighty illustrated sermon unto the Pastors of today. The illustration here being that before one can pride themselves of being a Pastor, they should first learn the act of healing and comforting their disciples upon return. If these disciples being comforted can go forth and replicate the same act, then how much more mightier would the *humble* testimony of the Jesus of Nazareth be across the four corners of the earth today? Only in this way can today's church of Christ bring forth a bountiful harvest into the barns of the Lord. Moreover, there is such a notion as spiritual fatherhood, because Jesus is our Everlasting Father. In developing disciples, one is expected to wear the character of Christ Jesus in order that their disciples may emulate the Messiah himself. Unfortunately, today the church of Christ has seen spiritual fathers who have been caught up either in mega sexual sin scandals or scandals in the handling of church finances. It becomes quite baffling as one wonders how much more corrupt and *pietic* then will their disciples be. Part of discipling involves developing a strict standard of *holiness*, a standard that can only be achieved when one directs their disciples strictly into the *highway of holiness*. It is true that today there are so many dangers in the world especially relating to serving the Lord. But the only way that they can be sure that their disciples are safe is when they are led strictly and exclusively through this spiritual *highway of holiness*. In this *highway of holiness*, their testimonies become unshakable in the righteousness of the Lord thereby causing no devil to ever dare to challenge the testimony of their Word and the Blood. Where the world has reached today, there are so many fake *pietic* Pastors out there that it calls for a strict adherence to the *highway of holiness* if one is to inflict a huge impact and do massive exploits against the kingdom of darkness.

And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness. The unclean will not journey on it; it will be for those who walk in that Way; wicked fools will not go about on it. No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord will return. They will enter Zion with singing; everlasting joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away (Isaiah 35:8-10).

God is today seeking devoted and stanch Pastors who can remove the scattered sheep from the dry mountain slopes at which they have starved, and been heavily devoured. Jehovah is pleading with the Pastors of today to return the sheep back into the *highway of holiness* that Jesus pointed the church towards. Only in that highway will there be no ferocious beasts like HIV/AIDS, bitter divorces, hepatitis, broken-heartedness, drug addictions, abortions, prostitution, witchcraft, lies, homosexuality, lesbianism, etc. The Anglican Church too must return to this *highway of holiness*, in order to get a little breathing space from the ugly head that homosexuality has raised, literally threatening them with a historic *schism*. These are the spiritual beasts that prowl the world in which the church has been living till today. But the moment she will make up her mind and decide to rear back into this *highway of holiness*, no beast whatsoever will ever devour her again because only the Lion of the tribe of Judah walks that *highway* as he protects his own. Some Pastors have even disgracefully shut down their churches because they did not follow, with their sheep, this noble *highway of holiness*. At *rapture* the Lord will strictly take those Christians who spot *dusty sandalled feet* because only these are the mature ones that have not only *eaten the Word*, but gone ahead to live it, and also *evangelize* it, thereby winning souls for the Messiah. Those saints whose feet will be *dusty sandalled* are the ones that will receive the greatest prizes before the judgment seat of Christ because they will shine like stars forever and ever (Daniel 12:2-3). This is a wake-up call, not only to the Pastors but also to the sheep of Christ, because the Lord promises not only to judge the Pastors that have scattered the sheep of his flock, but also to judge the sheep who have over-eaten and trampled over the pastures (Ezekiel 34:1-24; Jeremiah 23:1-4; Isaiah 56:9-12).

All articles authored by Dr. Owuor in this newspaper are available in their original form in the *Repentance* and *Holiness Magazine* Volumes 2 and 3. Pastors are highly encouraged to access these manuscripts in their original forms in the ministry magazine. The original unedited form of all these messages are also available in audio tapes, CDs, MP3s, and also in DVD and VHS formats. All Pastors are encouraged to order for their free copies from their ministry offices. Messages will be availed strictly on first-call-first served basis.

If you want to receive the Lord today;

Lord Jesus, I repent of my sins, come into my heart and be my Lord and Saviour. Please write my name in the Lamb's Book of Life. And send me the Holy Spirit to teach me to walk in Holiness In the Mighty Name of Jesus Christ I pray, Amen.