

49. Jesus Was Anointed by Mary

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain what Jesus taught to four of His disciples about what is going to happen when He returns to this earth to rule at the end of the tribulation. In this topic, we are going to see that Mary anointed Jesus in preparation for His coming death.

The time for the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was almost there. Mark 14:1-2 tells us what the Jewish religious leaders were planning during that time. Those verses say, “After two days it was the Passover and *the Feast of Unleavened Bread*. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put *Him* to death. But they said, ‘Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people.’” Here, we see that the start of Passover was just two days away. That meant it was already Wednesday and the next day would be Thursday. The Jews counted a day from sunset to sunset. That meant the Passover meal would be eaten after sunset Thursday night, and the crucifixion would happen on Friday. Christ told the disciples, in Matthew 26:2, “You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

However, the chief priests and scribes were not really thinking about Passover. Instead, they were thinking about ways to destroy Jesus. They were thinking how they could capture Jesus by trickery, so they could put Him to death. This showed the condition of their hearts. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” The chief priests were the men who were supposed to lead the nation in worship to God as they remembered how the Lord had given them deliverance out of the land of Egypt. Instead, they were plotting the death of the Son of God. 1 Corinthians 5:7 says, “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.” The religious leaders certainly did not realize that Jesus was going to be the Passover that would make it possible for the Father to pass over and blot out the sins of all who would believe and receive Jesus as their Passover.

Caiaphas was the high priest that year. He had said a few weeks earlier, right after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, in John 11:49-50, “You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.” Here, we see that Caiaphas was so eager to maintain his control over the people, that he led in the planning of the destruction of Jesus. The condition of the hearts of the chief priests and scribes was so evil, their only concern was how to avoid an uproar among the people when they put Jesus to death. For that reason, they did not actually want to kill Jesus during the feast. However, at the same time, they did not want Jesus to escape and leave the area of Jerusalem before they could kill Him. As a result, they wanted to arrest Jesus when no one was around to see them do it.

Mark 14:3-5 says, “And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured *it* on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said,

‘Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.’ And they criticized her sharply.” Bethany was a village a very short distance from Jerusalem. This was the village where Lazarus (whom Jesus had raised from the dead a few weeks earlier) and his sisters Mary and Martha lived. Jesus was having dinner at the home of Simon the leper. This was probably a man who had formerly been a leper and had been healed by Jesus, since Leviticus 13:45 says, “Now the leper on whom the sore *is*, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, ‘Unclean! Unclean!’”

We see that a woman also came to the home of Simon the leper. John 12:2-3 says, “There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.” In these verses, we see that John tells us that the one who anointed Jesus was Mary, the sister of Lazarus. Alabaster was a very expensive form of marble that came from Egypt and could be carved into fancy containers used to store expensive perfumes, because that material was considered the best way to preserve expensive perfumes.

We see that some who were there were indignant, or very upset, that this expensive perfume had been wasted. John 12:4-6 says, “But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s *son*, who would betray Him, said, ‘Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’ This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.” John tells us that it was Judas who was very upset and why he was so upset. We see that he criticized Mary very sharply. However, Judas did not have a concern for the poor. Judas had no concern for anyone except Judas, and he wanted that money for himself. A denarius was a day’s wages, so three hundred denarii meant that this was about three hundred day’s wages, or the income from a year of work. That cost made this perfume a very expensive gift. Judas called it a waste of money, but it really showed a total lack of love for Jesus.

In contrast, Mary showed her great love for Jesus by this act of love. She showed that love by pouring this very expensive ointment on the head of Jesus. We go on to read what Jesus said about this act of love and worship which Mary had shown by her actions. Mark 14:6-9 says, “But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.’” Jesus made it clear that He recognized the love that Mary had shown by her actions.

Jesus said, “Let her alone.” The word translated “let alone” means *to leave, to let alone, to send away or to forgive*. Jesus used this word, in John 16:28, to say that He was leaving the world to return to the Father. That verse says, “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.” Nearly a third of the times, the word is translated “forgive”. 1 John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins

and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Jesus used this word three times as He talked to a different Mary. He used this word to describe His forgiveness of the sins of Mary Magdalene, in Luke 7:47-49, after she anointed His feet. Those verses say, “Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little.’ Then He said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, ‘Who is this who even forgives sins?’” As a result, Jesus was telling Judas to stop questioning what Mary had done.

Jesus also told those present not to trouble Mary. Jesus explained that Mary had done a good work by anointing Him. Then, Jesus explained that they could help the poor whenever they desired. Like Judas, there are many people who claim to have a concern for the poor when they are really seeking personal benefit. That is why 1 Timothy 6:9-10 warns. “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” In contrast to the attitude of Judas, in Galatians 2:10, the leaders of the church in Jerusalem told Paul, “*They desired* only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.” Paul gave similar advice to the elders in Ephesus when he said, in Acts 20:35, “I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

Jesus went on to explain the meaning of what Mary had done by anointing Him with the expensive perfume. He said that Mary had done this beforehand to prepare His body for burial. This was an act of worship, by Mary, to show her love for Jesus. She knew that there were many in Jerusalem who wanted to kill Jesus. The chief priests had immediately gathered a council, as soon as they heard Jesus had raised her brother, Lazarus, from the dead. John 11:53-54 says, “Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death. Therefore Jesus no longer walked openly among the Jews, but went from there into the country near the wilderness, to a city called Ephraim, and there remained with His disciples.” Mary wanted to show her love for Jesus, whatever happened.

Jesus also gave a promise about the actions of Mary that day. Jesus said, “Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.” Jesus chose to make the actions of Mary something that would be a public witness of her love for Jesus throughout the future. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that true worship is showing our love for Jesus by the things we do, not just by the words we speak or the songs we sing. We show our children, by our actions, the love we have for Jesus. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children that true worship results in actions that come from the heart.