

Jesus Was Anointed by Mary of Bethany

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain what will happen to the righteous and the unrighteous at the time that Jesus comes back to rule on the earth. When Jesus finished explaining these things to His disciples, we see that He went on to tell the disciples what would happen just two days later because the religious leaders had rejected Him.

Matthew 26:1-5 says, “Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, *that* He said to His disciples, ‘You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.’ Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill *Him*. But they said, ‘Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.’” Jesus had finished explaining to His disciples what was going to happen at His coming to the earth to rule. Then, Jesus took this opportunity to remind the disciples about His coming death.

Jesus reminded the disciples that it was just two days until the Passover. The Passover was the feast that had been established to help the Jews teach their children about their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. Exodus 12:13 says, “‘Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you *are*. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy *you* when I strike the land of Egypt.’” Here, Jesus said that at the time of the Passover, the Son of Man would be delivered up to be crucified. The original Passover celebrated deliverance from bondage and slavery. In contrast, 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.” This verse makes it clear that Jesus was our Passover to deliver us from the bondage of sin. That bondage to sin is a much greater bondage than slavery because bondage to sin produces eternal consequences.

We see that about this same time the chief priests, the scribes and the elders gathered together at the palace of Caiaphas, the high priest. However, even though they were the religious leaders of the Jews, they were not talking about celebrating the Passover. Instead, we see that they had gathered together and were planning how they could catch Jesus by trickery and kill Him. However, they had one thing that they wanted to avoid as they plotted to put Jesus to death. They did not want to kill Jesus during the feast of the Passover. During the Passover, a half million or more Jews from other parts of the world would come to Jerusalem. The religious leaders feared what might happen if Jesus was killed during that time. In contrast, God had planned that very moment for Jesus to die before the creation of the world. God had publicly announced His plan through John the Baptist when He said, in John 1:29, “The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, ‘Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!’” As a result, Jesus would say, “It is finished!” at the very time of the evening sacrifice at the time of the

Passover.

However, there were other things that had to happen during those two days in order to fulfill the plan of God. Matthew 26:6-9 says, “And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured *it* on His head as He sat *at the table*. But when His disciples saw *it*, they were indignant, saying, ‘Why this waste? For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to *the poor*.’” Bethany was the village where Mary, Martha and Lazarus lived. Simon is called a leper, so this had to be one of the people who Jesus had cured of leprosy because lepers normally had to stay outside the towns and cry “Unclean” when anyone came near, unless a priest certified that they had been cleansed from leprosy.

While they were sitting at the table, a woman came to Jesus. She had very expensive oil in an alabaster flask. The woman came to the place where Jesus was seated and poured the oil on His head. Mark 14:4-5 says, “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.” These verses point out the fact that this fragrant oil was worth about one year’s wages. 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.” These verses show that Judas was the one who criticized the woman sharply because he carried the money box and wanted to steal the money. He had no concern for the poor.

Many people wonder why Jesus allowed Judas to carry the money box since Jesus knew that Judas was a thief. The concern of Jesus was that Judas knew his own evil heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” Even though Judas could deceive the other disciples, He could not deceive Jesus. Since Jesus could feed the five thousand with the lunch of a young boy, He could provide anything that was needed by the disciples. However, every time Judas took money from the money box, he was made aware again of his own evil heart. Instead of repenting of his sin of unbelief, we will see that Judas chose to betray Jesus in an effort to get some additional money.

Jesus knew what Judas had said. Matthew 26:10-13 says, “But when Jesus was aware of *it*, He said to them, ‘Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did *it* for My 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.’” We see that the woman who poured this fragrant oil on Jesus is identified in John 12:2-3. Those verses say, “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.” Here, we see that the one who anointed Jesus, at this time, was Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha.

This is a different anointing of Jesus than the anointing mentioned in Luke 7:36-39. Those verses say, “Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at the table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind *Him* weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped *them* with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed *them* with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw *this*, he spoke to himself, saying, ‘This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman *this is* who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.’” Notice several differences from the anointing here in Matthew. First, it was in the home of a Pharisee who had invited Jesus to dinner. Second, it was a woman of the city, while Bethany was a village. Third, this woman was known as a sinner. Fourth, she stood behind Jesus so that her tears began to fall on His feet. Fifth, she washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Sixth, she was condemned by the Pharisee who had invited Jesus to dinner. In the event in Luke, Jesus said, in Luke 7:47-48, “‘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.’”

In this case, we see that Jesus first rebuked Judas, although not for the fact that he wanted to steal the money. Instead, Jesus told Judas not to trouble Mary. Jesus then added that she had done a good work by anointing Jesus. Then, Jesus explained a key lesson which none of those there at that moment understood. However, when they looked back to this event later, they would have full understanding. Jesus said that they would always have the poor and could show mercy to them, but they would not always have Him. None of them realized, at that moment, that only two days later Jesus would be placed on the cross and die for their sins and for the sins of the whole world. It was certainly a good work that Mary had done, even though she did not understand fully what was going to happen in a very short time.

Then, Jesus went on to explain that Mary had anointed His body for His coming burial. Here, we see that Jesus was again telling His disciples that He would soon die. Mary probably did not fully understand that Jesus would soon die, but she wanted to show her love for Him. By saying that she did it for His burial, Jesus took this action, which was an act of love, and gave the full explanation of what her anointing meant. Jesus then went on to explain that wherever the Gospel was preached, throughout the entire world, this action of Mary would be remembered. Throughout the Old and New Testament, we see that God often explained the meaning of things that happened by their future results and not what was happening at that time. An illustration was when Jesus, in an Old Testament appearance, changed the name of Jacob to Israel. “Israel” means *God rules*. Then, over the next fifteen chapters, we gradually see the name Jacob used less and the name Israel used more. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to look at people from God’s viewpoint and see what God can help them become and not focus on what their lives have been like in the past. Jesus is able to change and transform the life of any person, as that person learns to yield to Him. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to see others as Christ sees them.