

Eternal Life Through Believing in Jesus

31) The Fragrance Of Worship

'Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. 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'

(John 12:1-3)

- ✓ **Mary completely disregarded the rules of propriety**
- ✓ **Spices were generally imported and used as an investment. 300 denarii would have kept one man and his family on a subsistence level for one year. This was probably her life savings**
- ✓ **It was custom to pour a few drops of perfume on a guest when he arrived at a house or when he sat to eat. She broke the flask and poured the entire contents upon Him. The perfume filled the air. It seemed wasteful. But she didn't care what others thought of the act, or about her reputation. Neither was she concerned about the cost. This was extravagant worship**

'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. But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always"'

(John 12:4-8)

Judas' argument was, if Mary has had this ointment why didn't she sell it before and give the proceeds to the poor?

Jesus' answer: 'It was to anoint Me for My burial that she kept it until this day'

The next day He would ride into Jerusalem and be hailed as their King...but then He would be crucified

She knew this, and her anointing Him was in anticipation of His burial

- ✓ **Jesus was in anguish as He contemplated the cross. Only Mary was spiritually attuned to the significance of the moment**
- ✓ **She knew much of this because she had sat at His feet. She was His best listener**
- ✓ **She showed that pure worship is a response to what Jesus did at the cross for us**
- ✓ **There is a reckless extravagance about true love, which refuses to count the cost. Extravagant love is never wasted. Love is not love if it has to calculate the cost. It gives all it can and only regrets that it has no more to give**
- ✓ **The whole house was filled with the fragrance**

- ✓ **Judas had already worked out the cost and protested the extravagance as being an irresponsible waste**
- ✓ **If he really cared for the poor, why did he take money from the treasury for himself when it could have been given to the poor?**
- ✓ **He pretended to care for the poor on the day that he wanted to rob them**
- ✓ **He probably also followed Jesus out of ambition, thinking that He would set up an establishment where Judas himself would have a top position**
- ✓ **The others joined in the protest**

- ✓ **Mary and Judas were complete opposites:**
- ✓ **She was a worshipper; he a thief. She had a box of costly ointment which she poured out upon Him; he had a bag of money from which he 'took'**
- ✓ **Her open, public worship contrasted with his secret theft and betrayal**
- ✓ **She freely gave 300 denarii; he sold Christ for 30 pieces of silver**
- ✓ **He prized money; but she valued Jesus**
- ✓ **Mary drew the attention of all to Jesus; Judas would turn away the thoughts of all from Christ to the poor. Care for the poor is good, but they would still be there after Jesus was gone**

- ✓ **Judas went out *the next day* and made his bargain with the religious leaders to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. Seeing one source of personal enrichment lost, he hastened to create another**
- ✓ **Jesus came to her defense. He would soon announce that the gospel was to be preached throughout the whole world. Before He did so He said that wherever it is preached what Mary did would also be mentioned**
- ✓ **The gospel and Mary's response to it must never be separated. We must never forget that the greatest thing is what Jesus did for us on the cross. It must always be our greatest focus**

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'Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus'

(John 12:9-11)

***The resurrection of Lazarus resulted in many more believers, and consequentially a greater determination by the leaders to kill Him**

***They even wanted to kill Lazarus, the living 'sign'**

***The chief priests were Sadducees who didn't believe in the resurrection and who feared the Romans squashing any appearance of a revolt. They had the most to lose if that happened**

'The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!" Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt"'
(John 12:12-15)

***There are two groups here: 1) Those who were with Jesus already and had witnessed the raising of Lazarus (v.17); 2) The pilgrims who were in Jerusalem for the feast who heard of Jesus (see vs.17-18)**

***Jesus was now at the height of His popularity. He was an outlaw and a wanted man. Yet He publicly rode into Jerusalem, demonstrating that no one took His life from Him; He laid it down Himself**

***Up until now He withdrew Himself as much as possible from public notice. But now He openly rides into Jerusalem with all the attention of the city. See also Luke 19:40**

Why?

He chose the time. It was Passover

Lambs would be driven to Jerusalem throughout the entire day

Josephus says that one year a census was taken of lambs which were slain for Passover - 256,500 were counted

When Jesus entered the city, He would have been surrounded by lambs

*** And He chose the way – fulfilling prophecy as the Messiah:**

*** He did not ride into the city on a stallion of a military conqueror, but on a donkey as a messenger of peace from the Father. He came as the Prince of Peace. This was a fulfillment of Zech.9:9**

*** *'Hosanna'* = save now**

*** *'The daughter of Zion'* is a phrase that appears frequently in the OT as a reference to the city and people of Jerusalem**

*** They waved palm branches, a symbol of victory**

'His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him. Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!"'

(John 12:16-19)

As with many events and teachings of Jesus, the disciples did not understand what was really happening at the time. The Holy Spirit would later reveal these things to them.

'Therefore, when He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this to them; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Jesus had said' (John 2:22)

'But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you' (John 14:26)

We will only understand the truths about Jesus as our eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit