

### The Plot to Get Rid of Jesus; Mary of Bethany Anoints Jesus

#### Matthew 26:1-16

Matthew 26:1-16 - *"Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, that He said to His disciples, <sup>2</sup> 'You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.'*

*<sup>3</sup> Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people assembled at the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, <sup>4</sup> and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him. <sup>5</sup> But they said, 'Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.'*

*<sup>6</sup> And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, <sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, 'Why this waste? <sup>9</sup> For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor.'*

*<sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. <sup>12</sup> For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial. <sup>13</sup> 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. Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests <sup>15</sup> and said, 'What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?' And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. <sup>16</sup> So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.'*

#### Background Notes

The exact details of the chronology of the week before our Lord's crucifixion are a little complicated. One reason is that the four Gospel writers didn't always put their material in chronological order - especially if they wanted to make a theological point!

For example, the anointing of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 26:6-16 probably took place chronologically **before** verses 1-5. How do we know this? Because in John 12:1, the apostle John said that this anointing took place **six** days before the Passover. Yet in verse 2, Matthew said that the Passover was only **two** days away. Is this a contradiction in the Bible? No, this is not a contradiction in the Bible! Matthew did not say that the event of the anointing took place after the events of verses 1-5. Notice how Matthew puts it in verse 6: *"And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper..."* Matthew didn't say "after these things," or "on the next day," or "and then." No, he just said, *"And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper..."* So we believe that the anointing of Jesus in Matthew 26:6-16 occurred chronologically before verse 1-5, based on the account in the Gospel of John.

Now comes the question: why did Matthew choose to put the anointing of Jesus at this point in Matthew 26? Why didn't he place the event chronologically when he wrote his Gospel? Matthew probably chose to put the account of the

anointing of Jesus at this spot because he wanted to contrast the love and compassion of Mary of Bethany with the hatred of the chief priests and Jewish elders, and hard-hearted betrayal of Judas Iscariot.

The Lord's prediction of His coming crucifixion in verse is the fourth time the Lord announced His coming death in Matthew's Gospel. The chief priests and elders were plotting together how they could get Jesus killed (v3-5). They wanted to wait until after the Passover, when all the Passover crowds would be gone from Jerusalem, because then there would be less risk of a riot. Little did they know that they and their wicked plotting were all part of the sovereign plan of God to bring about the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus – the **true Passover Lamb**!

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Worship is never a waste.

From the parallel account in John's Gospel, we know that the woman who anointed the Lord Jesus was Mary of Bethany. Her name is not given in Matthew, but it is definitely given in John's Gospel. Remember the sisters Mary and Martha, and their brother was Lazarus whom the Lord had raised back to life from the dead? The family lived in Bethany, and we read here in verse 6 that Jesus was in Bethany, at the house of Simon the leper.

Who was "Simon the leper"? This is the only time in the New Testament that this man is mentioned. Most likely he was a leper whom Jesus had healed - and he may have been the father of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. That's a possibility, and if so, then the home where Mary anointed the Lord was her own home.

Mary anointed the Lord with oil (v7). This is not the same Greek word that's used for olive oil. A better translation of the word used here would be "ointment" or "perfume," as in many translations. The Gospel of Mark says that it was worth three hundred denarii-- about a year's salary for the average worker!

When his disciples saw how Mary had poured out this very expensive perfume on the Lord's head, they were indignant, saying, *"Why this waste, for this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor?"* (v8-9). From John's Gospel we learn that Judas was the one who led in this complaint.

Now notice the Lord's answer. He didn't say, "Don't give to the poor." No, the Lord certainly didn't say that! In fact, both here and in the parallel account in Mark 14:7, the Lord said, *"For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always."* His implication was that we should always be willing to give help to the poor. Are you willing to help the poor?

The Lord affirmed Mary's act of worship. He said that Mary had done the right thing: she worshiped the Lord. Worship of the Lord is never a waste! Mary understood what the Lord was teaching here about His coming death - even more than

His disciples did. Mary had such an understanding of the Lord's teaching that the Lord said she had anointed His body beforehand for burial! *"For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial" (v12).*

Even though the Lord had indicated that His death was only a few days away, the disciples saw Mary's act of worship as a waste! The same is true for many people today. The secular world would say that Christians are just wasting their time and money, building churches and spending time in prayer, praise and worship. However, the Lord would say, "No, worship is never a waste!"

We should be concerned and involved in caring for people who have various kinds of needs. But time spent in praise and worship is not wasted! Some Christians indicate by their attitudes and actions that they think time spent in various ministries is more important than time spent in corporate praise and worship. The Lord would say that worship and ministry are **both** important.

Can we really serve the Lord if we think praise and worship is a waste of time? True service is an extension of the worship from the heart! Worship is never a waste.

## 2. Worship has eternal value.

*"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" (v13).* Has our Lord's prophecy come true? Is Mary of Bethany and her alabaster vial of costly perfume remembered wherever the gospel has spread around the world? Yes! Because it's included in Scripture, and the Bible has been translated into different languages worldwide, our Lord's prophecy certainly has come true. Mary's act of worship will be remembered forever! And your acts of worship be remembered forever, too - because worship has eternal value.

Malachi 3:16 says: *"Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who meditate on His name."* Notice that this "book of remembrance" mentioned in Malachi is not the same as "the Lamb's book of life," which refers to salvation. No, this is a book of **remembrance**, a book in which a record is kept of believers who show reverence to the Lord, who esteem His name, and who praise and worship and remember Him (see Luke 22:19).

The Lord remembers our times of worship; in fact, He will remember our worship forever! So if you ever feel discouraged about the size of your church, be encouraged. It's not a church's size or numbers of people that matter. It's our worship of our Lord that has eternal value!

## **Practical Application**

### **What is your value of the Lord?**

*“Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?” And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him” (v14-16).*

Did you know that the Lord’s betrayal for thirty pieces of silver was prophesied in the Old Testament? The prophet Zechariah was acting out, in “role play,” the role of the coming Messiah, and in Zechariah 11:12 we read, *“So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver.”*

In Matthew 26 we see that prophecy fulfilled. Judas betrayed the Lord for thirty pieces of silver. That was the value of the Lord Jesus to Judas. For thirty pieces of silver, Judas was not only willing to point Jesus out to the arresting officers, but to testify against Him. Judas had thought that Jesus was going to set up a political kingdom that would overthrow Rome, and when he realized that this was not to be, he betrayed the Lord - for the price of a slave! What is your value of the Lord? For Judas, it was thirty pieces of silver. What is **your** value of the Lord?

I trust that everyone listening or reading this transcript is a true believer. It is my sincere hope that your value of the Lord is infinite, because He is **priceless**! But the question, “What is your value of the Lord?” could be used for witnessing to unbelievers. You could start by saying, “Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. What is **your** value of Jesus?” It could be a good way to start a conversation, because even considering the lack of biblical knowledge today, most people know about Judas. You may get an unbeliever to start thinking, by asking this question: “Jesus Christ was worth only thirty pieces of silver to Judas. What is your value of Jesus?”