

The DAILY JESUS NEWS #241

Jesus' Final Journey to Jerusalem

Mary Anoints Jesus In Advance for His Burial

JN 12.2-8; MK 14.3-9 (Parallel Text: MT 16.6-13)

^M14.3 While ^{MT}Jesus ^Mwas in Bethany ^Ja dinner was given in his honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those ^Mreclining at the table ^Jwith him ^Min the home of Simon the Leper.

^JMary ^Mcame with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made ^Jof about a pint ^Mof pure nard. She shattered the jar and poured the perfume on his head, ^Jthen anointed Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

4 Some ^{MT}of the disciples who were present ^Mwere saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume?"

5 ^JOne of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him griped, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and given to the poor? It was worth ^Mmore ^Jthan a year's wages!"

He did not say this because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. ^MAnd they rebuked her harshly.

6 ^{MT}Aware of this, Jesus said to them, ^M*"I command you to let her be. Why are you causing trouble for her? She has done a beautiful, good thing to me. 7 You will always have with the poor with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me.*

8 *"She did what she could. ^JIt was intended that she would save this perfume for the day of my burial. ^MShe poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare it.*

9 *Truly I tell you, wherever ^{MT}this ^Mgospel is proclaimed throughout the world, what she has done will also be spoken of, as a memorial to her."*

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NOTE: We use superscript identification of the source gospel in "blended texts" as follows: Matthew = ^{MT}, Mark = ^M, Luke = ^L, John = ^J, Acts = ^A. This "superscript ID" is inserted at the beginning of the quoted text, identifying that Bible book until a different superscript appears. In addition, *red italics identify the words of Jesus*. Old Testament quotations are CAPITALIZED.

CONTEXT DIGEST	
Location	Bethany, just outside Jerusalem
Timeline	Early April (Month 39)
Jesus' Life Context	Stage VII: Jesus' Ministry in Perea
	C. Jesus' Final Journey to Jerusalem
Title	19. Mary (Lazarus' Younger Sister) Anoints Jesus in Advance for Burial

COMMENT:

This is one of the most poignant, profound worship scenes in the Bible. It is not a surprise then that it is also deep with meaning on many different levels. We can only scratch the surface in these comments.

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Matthew And Mark placed the story in the middle of Passion Week. John tells us that it occurred six days before the Passover, just before Passion Week. I believe that John was accurate in the actual chronology. Matthew and Mark wanted to link the anointing's meaning directly to the death of Jesus. The significance of the story was important for them, not it's specific timing. So they placed their narrative of the incident just before Jesus' death in Passion Week.

John accomplished the same purpose in a different way with his chronological approach. It was Friday night--the beginning of the Sabbath day of worship when Mary offered her sweet sacrifice of love to the her Lord. Assuming that John was accurate in this dating of this event, this became the last scene in the life of of Jesus before Passion Week. He selected it for that very reason.

Mary demonstrated the worshipful attitude with which we should approach the death and resurrection of the Son of God. These are the most important events in the history of the universe as far as the Trinity is concerned, and it should be the same for us.

This scene prepares our hearts to read the story of why and how our Lord was crucified through the crack of a shattered vial, the sweet aroma of perfume flooding a room, and the sight of a woman drying her Master's feet with her hair. Let it do that for you.

Not only does this event prepare us to approach Passion Week, it also reminds us in advance of God's purpose for the death of His Son. This is what Jesus memorialized by saying that what Mary did that night will always be included in the proclamation of the gospel. What does this really mean?

The good news of how Jesus died and rose again is intended by God to produce the response that Mary demonstrated prior to Passion Week. She loved her Lord with all of her soul, mind, strength, and treasure when she anointed his body in Bethany. She did that in advance of seeing him actually die. We who read the the story of Passion Week in the gospel ought to love him the same way, as a result.

It is impossible to see the love of God in the way the Lord of Glory died, and withhold ourselves from reverently loving him back. Mary demonstrated the response to the gospel that God desires to see in every one of us. Therefore Jesus made sure that her example will always be associated with the proclamation of it. The words to the Hymn, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" describe the response to Jesus' death that Mary modeled so beautifully, and we should emulate.

*"When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of glory died;
My richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.
Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small;
love so amazing, so divine--demands my life, my soul, my all."*

APPLICATION:

We noted long ago how John pointed out that Jesus' ministry began with a glorious week of disciple-making (JN 1.19--2.11). His earthly life ended with the most important week in history. Each day of Passion Week had unique content. The gospel writers marked them off so that we could live through them one by one, and experience the agony and the ecstasy of every word and deed. It will take over 100 days for us to re-live Passion Week with Jesus in the DAILY JESUS NEWS.

Are you ready to focus on Passion Week like never before in your life?

Does reverence and worship describe your attitude? That means that love will motivate your obedience in new ways.

How can you express your obedience to God more fully today?

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Pray that you can do so with joy and thanksgiving, just because you believe in the goodness and perfection of his will for you.