

## Bi123 The Gospels 2

### *Lesson Bi123-1 Jesus Anointed*

How do you prepare for the approaching death of someone you love? Depending on the sickness they face, you find the best doctors available. If the problem is foolishness you can counsel the person. If the problem is fear, you might flee from the situation. In the end, we cannot prevent death, for we are only human. The thing we can do is express our love for the person and pray they experience God's love and peace.

In this second course on the Gospels, we follow the life of Jesus during his last week here on earth. The first two lessons deal with the preparation of Jesus for his death. Up to this point we have followed his life over a period of more than three years. Now the time of Jesus' death is approaching. The gospel writers devote nearly 40 per cent of their message to Christ's final week. As the most important part of the gospel story, it brings several themes to conclusion. The writers reveal fully who Jesus is and the meaning of his sacrificial death. In this lesson one woman found a special way to express her love and devotion for Jesus. Perhaps from past experience she had learned the importance of acting and not waiting until it was too late.

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, many went up from the country to Jerusalem for their ceremonial cleansing before the Passover. The Feast of Passover celebrated the deliverance of Israel from the death angel and from Egypt. During the Feast unblemished lambs were sacrificed to recall the putting of the blood on the Israelites' doorposts that night. Jesus was the true Lamb of God, who would give his life for the sins of the world.

On this Passover, the crowds kept looking for Jesus. As they stood in the temple courts they asked one another, "What do you think? Isn't he coming to the festival at all?" The chief priests and the Pharisees had given orders that anyone who found out where Jesus was should report it. They intended to arrest him (John 11:55-57).

To partake of the Passover feast, every Jew had to submit to a ceremonial cleansing. The cleansing of the body was to remind the person they needed a cleansed heart to experience God. The people were expecting Jesus to come teaching and demonstrating his power. The religious leaders hoped the people would report his location so they could arrest him. The contrast between the motives of two groups could not have been greater! They only shared one thing; they both wanted Jesus!

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived. Jesus had raised him from the dead. He and his sisters gave a dinner in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus reclined at the table with him and guests. Then Mary brought out a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume. She poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

*Ask yourself this question: How did Mary's actions towards Jesus demonstrate how she felt about him?*

The action of Mary might seem unusual, but she had already shown her devotion by sitting at his feet. She sacrificed the best she had. Nard oil was very expensive. She anointed his feet, while usually the head was anointed. She showed humility—it was a servant’s work to wash a guest’s feet. She wiped his feet with her hair, though a proper woman never unbound her hair in public. The result of her devotion was a beautiful fragrance everyone enjoyed.

Just then one of his disciples objected. It was Judas Iscariot, who would later betray him. “Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth 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.

Judas probably had made wrong choices earlier in his life. He ended up making his worst choice ever when he betrayed Jesus to the religious leaders a few days later. He had seen the miracles, heard the teachings, and seen many changed lives. In spite of all this, he turned his back on the truth and on his Messiah.

“Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me” (John 12:1-8).

Perfume was normally saved for celebrations, but it was also used in burials. Jesus knew his death was near, Mary did not. Jesus told Judas to leave her alone. She had done a good thing, because he would not be with them much longer. Here again Jesus spoke of his approaching death, but the disciples still did not understand his coming sacrifice as God’s perfect lamb.

Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there. They came, not only to see Jesus, but also to see Lazarus. Jesus had recently raised him from the dead after four days in the grave. Perhaps they wanted to hear what Paradise was like. The scriptures do not tell us what Lazarus told them. The scripture does tell us that Lazarus was also in danger. In the leaders’ eyes, Lazarus was helping to build the deception about Jesus. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well. Because of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him (John 12:9-11).

. This **story is important** because of the contrast between the actions of those who believed in Jesus and those who did not believe.

The **main truth** of this story is that Mary made a personal sacrifice to demonstrate her love for Jesus.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. What did the people expect Jesus to do during the Jewish Feast of Passover?  
A. [Pause.] If you answered that the people expected Jesus to come to Jerusalem to teach and demonstrate his power, you are correct.
2. Who objected to wasting the expensive perfume when Mary anointed Jesus?

A. [Pause.] If you answered that Judas objected to the wasting of the perfume, you are correct.

3. What did Jesus say to those who objected to Mary anointing him with the expensive oil?

A. [Pause.] If you answered that Jesus said, “Leave her alone. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me,” you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to learn the story so you can tell it from memory to someone who has never heard it. After telling the story ask the person these questions, “What does this story tell us about believers who, like Mary, boldly proclaim their love for Jesus? Who may oppose them? What good may result?”