

## MARY OF BETHANY MEETING THE MESSIAH

### Mark 14:3-9

#### I. WHERE WERE THEY?

##### A. **Matthew 26:6**

They were at the house of Simon the leper, whom we know nothing about.

##### 1. **Leviticus 13:45-46**

Lepers were required to announce their uncleanness and quarantine themselves from the healthy population. Thus, being at home and among guests, we can conclude this man had healed from his leprosy.

##### 2. **Luke 7:20-22**

Jesus was in the business of healing lepers.

##### 3. It is quite probable, though not certain, that this Simon was one whom Jesus healed. It would have been fitting for one so blessed by Jesus to host a feast in His honor.

##### B. **John 12:1; 11:43-44**

This house was in the town of Bethany, where a notable miracle had recently been performed by Jesus, and those touched by that miracles were present. The details point to a celebratory dinner of thanksgiving for what Jesus was doing; if that was not the declared purpose of the meal, then it was likely happening anyway as these beneficiaries of the Lord's goodness came together.

#### II. WHO WAS THIS MARY?

##### A. **Matthew 26:7; Mark 14:3**

Two accounts do not name her, but simply refer to as "a woman"

##### B. **John 12:1-3; 11:1-2**

John, though, identifies her as “Mary,” calling her by that name in a context referring to Lazarus and Martha, so that we can see she was their sister.

C. **Luke 7:36-50**

Luke did not record the same foot-washing as Matthew, Mark, and John. His account depicts a separate event with some overlapping details.

1. The similarities are that a woman used a very costly alabaster flask of fragrant oil to anoint His feet in the house of a man named Simon.
2. The variances are that this was the home of Simon the Pharisee, not Simon the leper, and that the woman’s defining characteristic was that she was a known sinner. That alone differentiates her from Mary, who had no such reputation. This was an occurrence of forgiveness, whereas Mary’s anointing of Jesus’ head and feet was a preparation for burial.
3. Do not mistake this woman of low reputation who received forgiveness for the Mary we are studying today.

III. **WHAT DID SHE DO?**

A. **Matthew 26:7; John 12:3**

Mary poured the spikenard on Jesus’ head and she anointed His feet with the fragrant oil and wiped them with her hair. **She loved and gave thoroughly very personally.**

B. **Mark 14:3**

She broke the flask the fragrance was in. Alabaster may not be precious or even semi-precious, but it has some value. Mary surrendered that worth to the Lord. Furthermore, the breakage means none of the perfume would return to the bottle. She was giving all. **She loved and gave completely and with commitment.**

C. **John 12:5**

According to Judas, this fragrant oil was worth three hundred denarii.

1. **Matthew 20:2, 9-12**

A day laborer could earn 1 denarius for 12 hours of work. Thus, 300 denarii amounts to pay for 300 days of work.

2. **Exodus 20:9**

Since the Israelites worked 6-day weeks, 300 days of pay is 50 weeks of work, or just about 1 year of pay.

3. Still, calculate some simple figures and arrive at a monetary value equivalent to today's money.

- a. 12 hours x 6 days = 72 hours
- b. Federal minimum wage: \$7.<sup>25</sup> per hour
- c. Overtime accrues after 40 hours per week.
- d. 40 hours x \$7.<sup>25</sup> = \$290
- e. 32 hours x 1½ (time and a half) = 48 hours of pay x \$7.<sup>25</sup> = \$348
- f. \$290 + \$348 = \$638 per week
- g. \$638 x 50 weeks = \$31,900

4. **She loved and gave generously and sacrificially.**

**IV. WHY DID SHE ANOINT HIM?**

A. **Matthew 26:8**

There are critics in every group, even among the Lord's disciples, and according to the critics, the reason Mary did this was waste! That word here translated "waste" is elsewhere rendered as "*damnation*," "*destruction*," and "*perdition*." They did not see goodness in her deed.

1. **John 12:4-5; 17:12**

Foremost among Mary's detractors was Judas Iscariot whom Jesus later called "*the son of perdition*." How very fitting that the damned one could only see damnation in a good deed.

2. **Isaiah 5:20**

As heinous as it is to approve and celebrate wickedness as though it was right and good, how much worse is it to denigrate righteous behavior and label it for ruin?!

3. **1<sup>st</sup> John 3:11-12**

Those who resent workers of righteousness are taking the side of Cain, the first murderer, or Judas, who betrayed Christ. It is not a safe camp to be in.

4. **Luke 17:3; 19:37-40**

Christians need to be willing to rebuke sin, and there are too few doing so, but to rebuke proper behavior is to act like a Pharisee and enemy of Christ.

5. **The Man in the Arena**, excerpt of a speech by **Theodore Roosevelt**

“Let the man of learning, the man of lettered leisure, beware of that queer and cheap temptation to pose to himself and to others as a cynic, as the man who has outgrown emotions and beliefs, the man to whom good and evil are as one. The poorest way to face life is to face it with a sneer. There are many men who feel a kind of twisted pride in cynicism; there are many who confine themselves to criticism of the way others do what they themselves dare not even attempt. There is no more unhealthy being, no man less worthy of respect, than he who either really holds, or feigns to hold, an attitude of sneering disbelief toward all that is great and lofty, whether in achievement or in that noble effort which, even if it fails, comes second to achievement. A cynical habit of thought and speech, a readiness to criticize work which the critic himself never tries to perform, an intellectual aloofness which will not accept contact with life’s realities—all these are marks, not as the possessor would fain to think, of superiority, but of weakness. They mark the men unfit to bear their part painfully in the stern strife of living, who seek, in the affectation of contempt for the achievement of

others, to hide from others and from themselves their own weakness.

The role is easy; there is none easier, save only the role of the man who sneers alike at both criticism and performance.

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat. Shame on the man of cultivated taste who permits refinement to develop into fastidiousness that unfits him for doing the rough work of a workaday world. Among the free peoples who govern themselves there is but a small field of usefulness open for the men of cloistered life who shrink from contact with their fellows. Still less room is there for those who deride or slight what is done by those who actually bear the brunt of the day; nor yet for those others who always profess that they would like to take action, if only the conditions of life were not exactly what they actually are. The man who does nothing cuts the same sordid figure in the pages of history, whether he be cynic, or fop, or voluptuary. There is little use for the being whose tepid soul knows nothing of the great and generous emotion, of the high pride, the stern belief, the lofty enthusiasm, of the men who quell the storm and ride the thunder. Well for these men if they succeed; well also, though not so well, if they fail, given only that they have nobly ventured, and have

put forth all their heart and strength. It is war-worn Hotspur, spent with hard fighting, he of the many errors and the valiant end, over whose memory we love to linger, not over the memory of the young lord who 'but for the vile guns would have been a valiant soldier."

**B. Mark 14:6<sub>a</sub>; Proverbs 6:16-19**

Christ told Judas and his ilk to "*let her alone.*" Their misdirected criticism is the sowing of discord, which is detestable to Jehovah.

**C. Matthew 26:10; 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3:16-17**

Shaming the naysayers, Jesus called Mary's deed "*a good work.*" Scripture was inspired precisely so that we could know and do good works!

**D. Mark 14:8; Matthew 25:14-30**

The Lord credited Mary with doing what she was able to do, which fits well His parable of the talents. I don't know if Mary was a two-talent woman or a five-talent woman, but she sure wasn't a one-talent woman. She didn't bury what she had, but used it to its fullest! Anyone who would criticize a talent-investing servant like Mary is a one-talent loser.

**E. Matthew 26:12; 25:31-40**

Jesus credited Mary's action as preparation for His burial, but it is unlikely she was aware of that application as she anointed Him. God receives our good deeds and spreads them much further than we may ever know this side of heaven.

**F. Mark 14:9**

We would be remiss to proclaim the gospel without commending our ancient sister Mary.