

Lesson I.

JESUS ANOINTED AT BETHANY

January 6, 1901

Matt. 26: 6-16. Commit to memory vs. 11-13. Read

Matt. 26: 1-6. Compare Mark 14: 1-11; John 12: 1-11.

6 Now when Jesus was in Beth'any, in the house of Simon the leper,

7 There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

8 But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?

9 For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.

10 When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.

11 For ye have the poor always with you: but me ye have not always.

Revised Version—1 Cruse of exceeding precious ointment; 2 But Jesus perceiving it said: 3 To prepare me for burial; 4 That also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of; 5 Are ye willing to give me? 6 And they weighed with him; 7 Deliver him unto them.

EXPLANATION

Connection—We now begin the study of the last week of the life of our Lord on earth, which, with His death and burial, will occupy us for the whole of the present Quarter. What more appropriate theme for the first weeks of the new Century; for is it not His death that has brought life to men in the world and light to all the centuries?

Shortly after speaking the parable of the pounds (See Lesson 12, last Quarter) Jesus left Jericho for Bethany, near Jerusalem. He arrived there about a week before His death (John 12: 1), perhaps on Friday; and at a banquet given in His honor, Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, anointed Him, as to-day's lesson tells.

6. Bethany; a quiet little village two miles east of Jerusalem (John 11: 18)—on the Mount of Olives. Jesus used to stay there quite often when visiting the city. It was the home of Lazarus and his sisters. (John 11.) The word means "House of Dates," or "Home of Comfort." The house of Simon the leper. He was entertained there by His friends at a banquet, probably to show their gratitude for His having raised Lazarus. (John 12: 2.) Simon had, no doubt, been cured of his leprosy, but was still called "Simon the leper," to distinguish him from other Simons. It was a very common name. According to tradition he was the father of Lazarus or the husband of Martha.

7. A Woman; Mary, the sister of Martha (John 12: 3; compare 11: 2), but not the same as the woman of Luke 7: 37. The time, place and circumstances are altogether different. **An alabaster box.** A flask with a long, narrow neck, made of alabaster, a precious variety of gypsum. But flasks of different materials were sometimes called "alabasters." **Very precious ointment.** A costly perfume made from "spikenard" (John 12: 3), a fragrant East India plant. **Poured it on his head.** John (12: 13) says, His feet; probably both. **As he sat at meat**; reclined at table on a couch, resting on the left arm, feet extending outwards. Mary cannot forget who had raised Lazarus from the dead, and—

"One deep love doth supersede

All other, when her ardent gaze

Roves from the living brother's face,

And rests upon the Life indeed."

12 For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.

13 Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, ^{there} shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.

14 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,

15 And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.

16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.

8. His disciples. Judas Iscariot was the chief objector. (John 12: 4, 5.) He probably misled some of the others. **This waste.** Judas was the treasurer of the little company (John 12: 6), and he wanted to keep the money for himself. He talks of "waste," but in his miserliness he was wasting what gold could never buy—his character.

9. Sold for much. Mark (11: 5) says 300 pence. The Roman penny or *denarius* was about 17 cents, a day's wage. (Matt. 20: 2.) The whole amount would be about \$50.00; six or eight times as much now. Pure attar of roses sells for \$100 an ounce; \$1,200 for as much as Mary's pound of spikenard. **Given to the poor.** He cared nothing for the poor. (John 12: 6.) It was the loss of the coins that angered him.

10. But Jesus perceiving it (Rev. Ver.). Jesus took in the situation at a glance. **Why trouble ye the woman?** In Mark (14: 6) His rebuke is very sharp. **A good work**; and not "wasteful" as Judas said. The loving act has enriched the world by teaching others to give their best to Jesus.

11, 12. The poor always with you; and can help them at any time. **But me . . . not always**; and, therefore Mary's act was timely. **For my burial**; it was a common practice in reference to dead bodies. (2 Chron. 16: 11; Mark 16: 1.) It would seem as though by the fine insight of faith and love Mary had caught the secret of His death, when it was hidden to all the world beside.

13, 14. This gospel; the Gospel of Christ's kingdom which had, no doubt, been the subject of conversation at the table. **There shall also this . . . be told.** That one loving act made her immortal. **One of the twelve.** The words express Matthew's amazement at Judas' treachery. **Went unto the chief priests.** He was angry at Christ for rebuking him, and would also save himself from what seemed a failing cause (v. 12) by going over promptly to the enemy.

15, 16. They weighed unto him. Money was weighed, not counted. **Thirty pieces** (shekels) of silver. About \$20.00, the price of a slave. (Exod. 21: 32.) A shekel was worth four "pence." **Sought opportunity**; his guilty purpose now fully fixed.