

Mark 14:1-11 – Jesus anointed (“Outrageous devotion”)

The Jewish age was going to end, the temple would be destroyed, and a world-wide church would rise. Jesus told his disciples about this time of change. Before that time, though, it was time for him to suffer and die. The temple of his body must be destroyed and then he must rise again and build his spiritual temple, the church.

1. The time: the Passover festival

Each year Israel remembered how God saved them from slavery in Egypt. This was the Passover festival. God came to judge Egypt, but he “passed over” every house in Israel, where they had killed a lamb in every family and placed its blood on their door posts (Exodus 12). When the angel of death saw the blood, he did not enter to kill any of the family. During these days in Mark 14:1-11, the people of Israel were preparing their lambs for that festival of remembrance. Mark is telling us that Jesus was the true lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29-36). These verses tell us how the holy sacrifice of Jesus on the cross was being prepared. The gospel is the true “Exodus” for God's people out of sin and darkness and into life. Jesus is the true Lamb whose blood saves us from death. Now we are reading how he was betrayed.

2. The woman's devotion, the peoples' complaints

Jesus was in Bethany, about 2 miles from Jerusalem. He was having a meal. A woman came who had brought some very expensive perfume – worth about a year's wages (v5). She broke it and poured it out upon Jesus! What expense – what waste, the people said! So much good could have been done to the poor with such a large sum of money. They were so outraged that they rebuked her. It is true that waste is a serious sin. What do you think of what the woman did? Do you agree that it was really a terrible waste and she should be rebuked? Wait and see what Jesus said...

3. Jesus' reply

Jesus was not silent, but said, “leave her alone” (v6). He spoke for her, though she was a “nobody”. He sees all his people do for him and will remember it. In fact, she had done a great thing. There is nothing more important than giving love and service to Jesus. He is the centre and heart of all true religion. He deserves all honour and praise. He was about to die as the great sacrifice for sinners. Nothing could be better than to anoint his body before that time. Actually, nothing we can do for Jesus is enough – certainly not too much. What have you done to honour Jesus? Has anyone told you you are going too far? They are wrong: go further, and do not listen to them but wait for him to speak! Does your love to him have limits? That must be wrong!

4. Judas' response

Judas could not tolerate the “waste” he had seen. Actually John tells us his real love was for money – he used to steal from the group's money bag which he kept (John 12:6). He went out to betray Jesus for money. The woman was a “nobody” but gave all for Jesus; Judas was an apostle but sold Jesus for money. If we find followers of Judas in the church, it is not new. God was fulfilling his plan, for our salvation! Would you put a price on Jesus? What is too much for you? Beware lest you fall!