

FOUNDATION MINISTRIES (UK)

Apostolic Ministry to the Body of Christ

EXPOSITORY & INSPIRATIONAL TEACHING & SERMON NOTES

Subject: - The Wisdom of God

Study: - 824. Anointed for Burial

Bible Reading: - Mark 14:1-9

Text "*She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.*"

As we approach the week prior to Easter, I want to reflect upon the two incidents where Jesus is anointed within the last week of His life, prior to His crucifixion, with Spikenard ointment for His burial. Yet we find within the scriptures reference to three incidents recorded where Jesus is anointed with precious spikenard ointment, all three being individual acts of worship in which the devotees out of their sincere love, gratitude and adoration to their Saviour, the LORD Jesus Christ, bestow upon Him the most costly and precious gift in their possession.

The three acts recorded in the scriptures in which Jesus is anointed with Spikenard anointment;

❶ The first act is recorded in **Luke 7:36-50**, this toward the end of the second year of Jesus earthly ministry and here we are told that when Jesus had entered the house of Simon the Pharisee at his invitation, and was sat down at the meal with him, that a woman who is described as a sinner enters Simon's house and stands at Jesus feet weeping. We are then told that she began to wash His feet with her tears and wipe them with her hair, before anointing them with precious ointment from an alabaster box.

❷ The second incident is recorded in **John 12:1-8**, which happened six days prior to the celebration of the feast of the Passover and on the eve of the Sabbath day at Bethany in the house of Lazarus where his sister Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with a pound of Spikenard ointment and wiped his feet with her hair.

❸ The third incident is recorded in both **Matthew 26:1-13 & Mark 14:1-9**, and happened two days prior to the feast of the Passover at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, where the identity of the woman is not revealed, who broke open the alabaster box of spikenard ointment and poured it over the head of Jesus.

The significance of the Spikenard Ointment and Alabaster Box

Historically this precious ointment was given to a daughter by her Jewish parents for her dowry and often when her relatives visited the home they would bring a small amount of Spikenard ointment as a gift for the daughter so she could add to the dowry contained within an alabaster box. The Greek word alabastron, is translated in the AV as alabaster box, and could well be translated as perfume vase, flask, jar or vial. The Bride on her wedding night would pour the Spikenard ointment from her small perfume flask upon her husband's head and feet at the time of the marriage consummation and this act is the demonstration of her love for her husband.

The three accounts recorded for us in the scriptures reveal the women giving of their very own dowries in an act of worship and adoration, demonstrating their love, devotion and complete obedience to Jesus Christ as their LORD and Saviour, and it is important that we understand the reasons as to why they should surrender something that was so precious to them.

Alabaster is a hard stone resembling white marble and commonly found in Palestine and the alabaster box used to hold the perfumed oil was made of this white marble-like substance. Ointment, oils and perfumes were put in small flasks, jars or vases made of alabaster as it kept the contents pure and unspoiled, and these were often sealed with wax to prevent the perfume from escaping. When the seal on alabaster box was broken open the house would be filled with the fragrance of the perfume it contained. It is estimated that the sum of monies for such a small amount of Spikenard ointment would be the equivalent to the wages earned by a labouring man for a whole year and its costliness is inferred from the indignation of some of the witnesses of this act, **Mark 14:4-5** "*And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her.*"

Spikenard from which the ointment was made was an aromatic herb and the word for Spikenard means genuine and pure and Jesus the pure and spotless Lamb was anointed with this pure and fragrant ointment just days before His death and burial.

Jewish Marriage

In Jesus day's marriage was established by a legal contract and the young man would come to the chosen girl's house with a covenant giving the terms by which he would propose their marriage. This would have been the case with Mary the mother of Jesus, for she was espoused (betrothed) to Joseph, not completely married, but an agreement of marriage had been established and a promise of it made, **Matthew 1:18-20** *"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."* A man being betrothed and had not taken her, was not allowed to go to battle until he had fulfilled the agreement, **Deuteronomy 20:7** *"And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her."* Once the proposed marriage was arranged the prospective bride and groom would drink a cup of wine together to seal the agreement, **Matthew 26:27-29** *"And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."* This cup was most significant for it was a witness of the bridegroom's willingness to pay the price and marry his bride, **Luke 22:39-44** *"And he came out, and went, as he was wont, to the mount of Olives; and his disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said unto them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."*

The Bridegroom would go and prepare a place for his Bride

Then the groom back at his father's house would build her a bridal chamber, small mansion in which they would have their future honeymoon. This was a separate building on his father's property and it had to be very beautiful yet simple since it would only be used for seven days and the father of the groom would decide when it was finished. If anyone asked the bridegroom when the wedding was, he would answer, only my father knows. **John 14:1-3** *"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."* & **Matthew 24:36** *"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."*

The Bride would prepare and wait and to receive her Bridegroom

The bride was obliged to do a lot of waiting and she had to be ready to go and therefore had an oil lamp ready in case the groom came late at night for her, which would be at a moment's notice. During this long period of waiting she was referred to as "consecrated," or "set apart," and had been brought with a price. When the groom's father decided the bridal chamber was ready the groom and his friends would start off to claim his bride. All Jewish brides were stolen and it was thrilling for her to be abducted and carried off into the night, by one who loved her so much and having paid a high price for her. **Matthew 25:1-13** *"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him"*

to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

The Bridegroom cometh be prepared

It was appropriate that the bride had to receive at least a brief warning, so one of the groom's friends would give a shout as they neared the house, **1 Thessalonica 4:16-17** "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." The bride only had time to light her lamp, grab her honeymoon clothing and go. When they reached the house of the groom's father the couple would go into the bridal chamber which the groom had prepared and shut the door. The Bride on her wedding night would pour the Spikenard ointment from her small perfume flask upon her husband's head and feet at the time of the marriage consummation.

The Marriage Supper

On hearing the news the wedding guests would assemble in the father's house to celebrate the marriage and the wedding was actually going to take seven days or until the appearance of the bride and groom from the bridal chamber. Celebrating could not start until the marriage had been consummated and the groom's "best man" would stand outside the door and when the groom told him (through the door) the marriage had been consummated, **Revelation 19:7-9** "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." After the marriage supper, the bride and groom would leave the house of the groom's father and go to their own home.

The Jewish wedding customs of Jesus day, to which He would often use to illustrate His teachings, which we find have altered little since. For they reveal much to us how God sees His relationship with His Church, and His conjugal union with the Church, His Bride. When the Apostle Paul writes his Epistle to the Ephesian Christian's, he writes concerning the Church, Christ's Body, and speaks of the marriage between a Christian Husband and Wife as illustrating the union between Christ and His Church, showing the depth of Christ's love for His Church in that He freely at great price gave Himself for it, **Ephesians 5:25** "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;" and Paul speaks of this union as a great mystery, **Ephesians 5:32** "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."

Spikenard Ointment spoken of in the Song of Solomon

We find that Spikenard ointment is spoken of in the Songs of Solomon and having discussed Jewish marriage we can begin to understand this divinely inspired sacred poem which expresses much of the mysterious wisdom of God in His relationship with His Church, the Bride of Christ. For throughout the Song we find the tender love of the bridegroom to the bride with his hearts desire embrace his beloved and visa versa the bride expressing the reciprocation of her love toward the bridegroom, being a love which is both pure in its language and expression, free of the adulterations and perverseness demonstrated in this world. God's love for His Bride is expressed through the prophet Zephaniah, where the LORD God speaks of restoring His people showing His unfettered love toward them that knows no bounds, as He rejoices with pure joy and song, when He with them in union dwells in their midst, **Zephaniah 3:17** "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."

The Bridal Chamber

The Song of Solomon considered the most eminent and distinct of the one thousand and five songs which Solomon composed, **1Kings 4:32** "And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five". Firstly the Bride of Christ (the Church), expresses the desire to be embraced by her Bridegroom, **Song of Solomon 1:2-3** "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine. Because of the

savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee." The expression Virgins, as stated here in this text is speaking symbolically of the purity of heart of the Bride (the Church) and is therefore expressed in the plural, and Jesus said, **Matthew 5:8** "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." His name being savoured like the pure fragrance of the Spikenard ointment sent forth filling the room, and as the bridegroom steals away his bride and takes her into his wedding chamber which he has prepared within His Fathers house, **Song of Solomon 1:4** "Draw me, we will run after thee: the king hath brought me into his chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in thee, we will remember thy love more than wine: the upright love thee." The bride will then in bridal chamber break open her small Alabaster flask of Spikenard ointment and pour its contents upon her husband's head and feet at the time of the marriage consummation and its perfume would fill the room, **Song of Solomon 1:12-14** "While the king sitteth at his table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof. A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts. My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi." The translation of this text in both the AV as given here, and the NIV Bible, are very clumsy, for the words translated **sitteth at his table**, actually in the Hebrew give the sense of lying or reclining, and therefore it should read, **lies or reclines on his couch/divan**, this is illustrated in the picture on the opening page of these notes, yet the RSV translates this verse correctly as, "While the king was on his couch, my nard gave forth its fragrance".

Marriage Supper

The wedding guests have assembled in the Banqueting House ready to celebrate the Marriage Supper and wait patiently to hear the news from the Bridegroom the marriage has been consummated and when the Bridegroom is ready he brings forth his Bride in to the Banqueting House and the celebrations beginning, **Song of Solomon 2:4** "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love."

❶ The Washing and Anointing of Jesus Feet in the House of Simon the Pharisee

This event occurred in the region of Galilee, approximately a year prior to Jesus death. Few days prior to Simon the Pharisee's invitation to Jesus, to come to his house and dine, Jesus had ministered in and around the region of Galilee. When entering Capernaum Jesus was met by the Roman centurion who pleaded with Him to heal his gravely ill servant and further He healed Peter's mother-in-law, as well as raising the widow of Nain's dead son to life. As Jesus sits down at the meal a woman who is described as a sinner enters Simon's house with an alabaster box of precious ointment and standing at Jesus feet weeping washes His feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair, before anointing them with the ointment, **Luke 7:36-50** "And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." The woman here described as a sinner, simply exhibited her love and gratitude to Jesus through this act of anointing Him, with the pure spikenard ointment from her alabaster vase, which was her dowry, and having been spoiled by the world, and becoming effectively an outcast, there was none that would take her as their bride. Many suggest that this woman was Mary Madeline, for afterward we are told that Jesus went throughout

every city and village preaching accompanied by the twelve and certain women including Mary Madeline, all of who ministered unto him of their substance, **Luke 8:1-3** *"And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him, And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, And Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance."*

- The woman that anointed Jesus is described as a woman in the city, which is a sinner; it would therefore appear she had been a particular unsavoury character and not one with whom you would want to be associated. Yet in her humility and contrite heart she enters Simon's house and washing Jesus feet with her tears and anointing Him from her Alabaster box of anointment, as a bride would her bridegroom.
- The incident causes Simon to question within himself Jesus credentials, surely if He were a prophet and spiritually discerning He would have known that this woman that touches Him is a sinner and a thoroughly despicable person. Simon did not audibly proclaim his thoughts for Jesus to hear, yet Jesus can discern the thoughts and intent of our hearts and knew they in the room were thinking he should have pushed her away and not allowed himself to be touched by her. Yet Jesus in the near future would be touched by the vilest sins of all humanity as he would bear them on the cross at Calvary for the whole world.
- Jesus challenges Simon's thoughts through a parable making him pronounce a judgement upon the case concerning two debtors with the criminality of the one being ten times that of the other, but both being equally insolvent and both are forgiven. Simon is made to acknowledge that the greatest debtor received the greater mercy and Jesus says that she, who has been forgiven much, has the greater love.
- It was to Jesus who has loved her much and forgiven her sins, she brings her dowry, her alabaster vase of pure spikenard ointment. For having been spoilt, soiled and rejected by this world and now classed as a sinner, she will not now have a husband of her youth over whom she may pour the contents of her alabaster vase on the consummation of her marriage. She therefore pours its contents upon He who has loved her much, **Luke 7:44-47** *"And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: With the forgiveness of her sins she will be called as the Bride into His banqueting house unto the marriage super of her Bridegroom, the LORD Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, Revelation 19:7-9* *"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God."*

② Jesus was anointed by Mary in the House of her brother Lazarus, Bethany six days before Passover

Mary's act of anointing Jesus happened six days before the commencement of the celebration of the feast of Passover which is followed directly by the feast of Unleavened Bread, was a few days prior to Jesus entering Jerusalem through the Sheep Gate riding upon the colt of an Ass, as the Lamb of God, **John 12:1-8** *"Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always."* Both Martha and Mary had a good understanding of the purpose of Jesus ministry and His eventual death and resurrection, for Martha says to Jesus prior to her brother Lazarus being raised from the dead, **John 11:27-28** *"She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. And when*

she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

The Temple Shepherds would beforehand have inspected each lamb to make sure they were spotless and without blemish before they lead them from the hillside pastures into Jerusalem through the Sheep gate and to the Sheep market where the Pool of Bethesda lay. It was these same shepherds, that on following the greeting from the Angel of the Lord at the birth of Jesus Christ, went down to the manger in Bethlehem and inspected God's Lamb, and returned glorifying and praising God for His perfect gift, **Luke 2:15** "And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us". & **20** "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." Jesus on entering Jerusalem is greeted by the crowds at the Sheep gate, **John 12:12-13** "On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." The people acknowledged Jesus with their praise and thereby receiving Him as God's Passover Lamb, **John 1:29** "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

At the Sheep Market each Jewish household would purchase their Passover Lamb and wash it in the pool of Bethesda to ensure it was without spot and blemish and over the next four days, these being the days of preparation, which lead up to the Passover they would inspect it ensuring it remained perfect and unspoilt. Jesus was visible and present amongst the people in Jerusalem for the next four days, when He cleanses the Temple and heals the sick etc. Just as each household visibly inspected washing, anointing and preparing their lamb, prior to it offering as their Passover lamb when it faces death, when its blood is shed.

- Just as Jesus body was pierced and afflicted for the sins of the world, **Zechariah 12:10** "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn," symbolically Mary brakes open her alabaster vase of precious ointment and anoints and wipes Jesus feet with her hair, thus preparing God's Lamb to be inspected by the crowds at Jerusalem, over those four days prior to His death as God's Passover Lamb, **1 Corinthians 5:7-8** "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." The crowds cried out and blessed the King of Israel who comes in the name of the LORD, and the children on witnessing many mighty miracles in the Temple praised Him, for out of the mouths of babes and sucklings God has ordained praise and Pilate could find not fault in Him, **Luke 23:4** "Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man." The fragrance of Jesus presence amongst the people at Jerusalem was as that of the Spikenard ointment, for they witnessed His mighty works and rendered praise unto Him, **Ecclesiastes 7:1** "A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth."
- Judas Iscariot who was present in the room at the house at Bethany who criticised Mary for wasting such a precious and costly ointment, which he says should have been sold and given to the poor, not that he cared for the poor, but for the fact he wanted more money for himself, "Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."
- Jesus rebukes Judas and tells him for against the day of my burying or as touching my death, **against the day** i.e. towards making a difference has she saved her dowry of precious spikenard ointment. Shortly Jesus would experience the wrath and anger of the authorities and to be rejected by His own people in preference to Barabbas a thief and Robber, **John 18:40** "Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber." Mary has bestowed upon me and demonstrated the greatest act of love a human can, in the denial of herself, sacrificing those affections and emotions which a bridegroom would

afford her, Mary yields the full sum of her love to the heavenly bridegroom, Jesus Christ, "*Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day, of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you: but me ye have not always.*" What comfort Mary's selfless act brought to the Saviour, knowing that His suffering here on earth had borne fruit in the life of Mary, who through her act of worship demonstrates her love.

Jewish Burial Practice when John wrote his Gospel

John within the narrative of his gospel records the burial practices and the mourning customs of the Jews of his day, specifically those events surrounding the deaths of both Lazarus and Jesus.

- When a Jewish person died the body was prepared for burial and placed within a sepulchre soon after death, within 24 hours. Wherefore we find Joseph of Arimathaea, who was one of Jesus disciples, going to Pilate and demanding the release of Jesus body from the Cross, to ensure Jesus was buried within 24 hours, **Mark 15:42-47** "*And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph beheld where he was laid.*"
- We know that Jesus died at the 9th Hour, which is three o'clock in the afternoon, **Mark 15:33** "*And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" That evening being before six o'clock Joseph of Arimathaea along with Nicodemus were given Jesus body which they wrap in fine linen with a mixture of myrrh and aloes, **John 19:39-42** "*And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.*"
- The burial practice was to wash the body and anoint it with aromatic herbs and spices and then bind the hands and feet, as well as the jaw, in order to prevent the extremities from flying all over the place when rigor mortis set in. We see this illustrated concerning Lazarus, for after the stone was removed Jesus cried with a loud voice Lazarus come forth, and we are told he came forth bound hand and foot and his face bound with a napkin, **John 11:43-44** "*And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.*"
- It was a custom to visit the tomb and inspect the dead for three days for signs of life, therefore the sepulchre was not sealed, but a great stone was rolled against the door of the sepulchre, **Matthew 27:59-66** "*And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre. Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.* This is why the Chief Priest's and the Pharisees come to Pilate and command the sepulchre where Jesus body lay was made secure, so Pilate commands them to go their way and seal the stone and set a watch.
- We find Jesus did deliberately not rush to the aid of his dying friend Lazarus, because He wanted to show His disciples and the world that He was Lord of Life and had power over death. Jesus came to Bethany on the fourth day after Lazarus died and as He approached the village Martha went out to meet Jesus, whilst her

sister Mary was sitting in the house with friends and neighbours who had come to sit in their house and mourn and receive the condolences for one week, **John 11:17-20** "Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother. Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house." Jesus comes to the scene when all hope of life had gone for Lazarus for he had been dead four days, after three days the body decay would be quite rapid given the climate and using the aromatic herbs etc. the smell associated with decay could be covered for a short time, **John 11:38-39** "Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days."

- The sepulchre was a cave with a stone placed against it and it was a typical Jewish burial practice to have a sepulchre hewn out of bedrock and Lazarus sepulchre was outside the village of Bethany and as Jesus approaches it and commands the people to take away the stone and Jesus is about to demonstrate what He told the people in Jerusalem two years prior, **John 5:25-29** "Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."
- The body lay in a sepulchre on a shelf to begin the year long wait until the bones could be re-interred in a grave. Joseph bones were carried out of Egypt and were finally buried in Shechem (Sychem), **Genesis 50:25** "And Joseph took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence". & **Joshua 24:32** "And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph." plus **Acts 7:16** "And were carried over into Sychem, and laid in the sepulchre that Abraham bought for a sum of money of the sons of Emmor the father of Sychem."

③ The Anointing of Jesus in Bethany in the House of Simon the Leper two days before Passover,

Text Mark 14:8 "She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying."

At this point there are but a few hours left before Jesus is to suffer and die for the sin of the world, for already behind the scenes assembled together in the palace of the Caiaphas the high priest, were the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people consulting how that they might take Jesus by subtilty and kill him, and it was this act of Jesus being anointed by the woman, that would cause Judas Iscariot's anger to rise to the point of no return and him to finally go to the chief priests and arrange to betray Jesus, **Matthew 26:1-5** "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, Ye know that after two days is the feast of the Passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified. Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people. Whilst Jesus is in the house of Simon the leper, a woman brings her alabaster box; she is not identified by either Matthew or Mark in their gospel, yet is one of Jesus close followers for she discerned the times and the forthcoming events from His ministry of what would happen at Jerusalem, **Matthew 26:5-13** "Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, 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."

- This woman did not come on the spur of the moment into the house of Simon the leper, she had come prepared with the most precious gift she had in her procession, her dowry, being an Alabaster box of ointment. Jesus said that she had come beforehand or before His death had happened, to anoint His body for burial. Through her act this woman foretold to all those present in the house of the imminent suffering death of Jesus Christ.
- As a bride would break open her Alabaster box of Spikenard ointment over the head of her bridegroom on her wedding night, so she breaks open her ointment over the head of Jesus, in preparation for His death and

burial, but her ointment will not be wasted for her bridegroom will rise from the dead and one day He will be united with his bride.

- This act cause great indignation amongst Jesus disciples and they criticise the women for wasting the precious ointment, which they say could have been sold for three hundred pence and the money given to the poor. Jesus tells them not to trouble the women for she has wrought a good work on me, we are often criticised for the amount of time and effort we can devote to the work of the gospel, yet in so doing we are bringing about a good work for Jesus sake, **Mark 14:4-9** And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. **She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.** Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. Jesus says that this woman in the giving of her dowry, the Alabaster box of Spikenard, has brought about a beautiful, valuable and virtuous work on me; she had in other word magnified and glorified the work of Jesus Christ, that though His suffering and death on the Cross, He will for mankind win a great victory over sin, death and the grave.
- This very selfless act by the woman, Jesus said, will be spoken of for a memorial of her; for it will be preached or told in memory of her.

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