

Gospel of Mark 25 - Chapter 14, verses 1 – 11: Treachery and Devotion:-

This week as we move into the last two chapters of this Gospel we come to what is usually known as the 'Passion Narrative' - the record of the betrayal, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. To the early Christians 'the Cross' - by which they meant the death of the Lord Jesus and the events connected with it - was the very centre of their faith (see for example 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 2; Romans chapter 3, verse 25; Philippians chapter 2, verse 8, etc.) . The Crucifixion had to be 'pictured'. The story of the Passion must be told in such a fashion that the stark reality of it be felt and the full redemptive meaning of it be realised.

Our reading this week provides both a link with the previous 'threat' in chapter 12, verse 12 and the betrayal by Judas here in chapter 14 verse 10.

Verses 1 – 2 – The threat from the authorities –

It is not easy to determine the motives of these leaders of the organised state religion. Fear of loss of influence is one of the most obvious. That they were resorting to underhand methods is made clear in verse 1. That the end result was going to be final is also made clear. They "*were seeking a way of seizing him by trickery and putting him to death*" is a translation direct from the Greek. That they felt a need to be very circumspect about their dealings is also made clear in verse 2. These details are important when considering the offer made by Judas Iscariot in verse 10.

Verses 3 – 9 – An act of unselfish devotion –

That this short account of the anointing of the Lord Jesus by the woman at Bethany was regarded as important, is seen by the fact that it is recorded in three of the four Gospels. The Gospel of Luke gives an account of the anointing of the Lord Jesus by a woman at an earlier point in his ministry – see Luke chapter 7, verses 36 – 50. This would appear to be a separate incident as there are a number of differences in the account. The place is described as "*the Pharisee's house*" and in the countryside around Nain and Capernaum in Luke – no mention of Bethany or Jerusalem as there is in Mark, Matthew and John. The woman is described in Luke chapter 7, verse 27 – 28 as having 'many sins forgiven' which would not appear to be applicable to Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (John chapter 12, verses 1 – 3). In the Gospel of Luke the 'washing and anointing of the feet of the Lord Jesus is regarded as an act of contrition and devotion (Luke chapter 7, verses 37 – 38 and verses 47 – 48). In the other three Gospels the action is linked to the preparation of the body of the Lord Jesus "*for burial*". Many commentaries see it as the same anointing but transposed into a different place and time by Luke. However in context it is reasonable to regard this account in Matthew, Mark and John as taking place immediately before the Passover and the death and burial of the Lord Jesus.

One of the reasons for regarding this anointing as an important part of the actions and reactions of various people, is the fact that in the Gospel of John the words of criticism in Mark chapter 14, verses 4 – 5 are spoken by Judas Iscariot. "*Why was this ointment thus wasted? It might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor*". There in John's Gospel he is accused of being a thief! In it for what he can get out of it. More on Judas in the next verses.

That this account is still "*told in memory of her*" emphasises its importance in the final days before the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses 10 – 11 – Betrayal!

Here we find that "*one of the Twelve*" is willing to betray the One he has followed, listened to and accepted authority from (Mark chapter 6, verses 7 – 13). Again there is the implication that Judas was interested in money!

A Question – Why did Judas Iscariot betray the Lord Jesus Christ?