



SESSION 48 | JOHN 12:1-11

JOHN 12:1-8 | RETURNING TO THE HOME OF LAZARUS

- Verse 1 - With less than a week to live, Jesus returns to Bethany, paying a visit to Lazarus, who had now been raised from the dead anywhere from several weeks to two months.
- Verse 2 –
 - Luke tells about Martha being preoccupied with the activities of hosting (Lk. 10:38-39). To view Martha in a negative light is probably more than the text actually says.
 - This supper is presumably in the house of Lazarus and his sisters, Mary and Martha.
 - There are three suppers in the last week of Jesus' life. This one is the first. The second is at the home of Simon the leper, also in Bethany (Mark 14:1-9), which was also accompanied by an anointing. The final supper is the "last supper" of John 13:1-20. For more information on the three suppers, see *The Companion Bible*, appendix 157.
- Verse 3 –
 - That fact that Mary had a **pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly** tells us that this was a wealthy family. The oil came from the root of a plant that was the chief source of perfume in the Roman empire.
 - This is the second time that Jesus' feet have been **anointed** (see Lk. 7:36-50). The meaning of it is unknown to us, but clearly did not have any implications but deep respect in Roman days.
- Verses 4-6 –
 - The fourth Gospel has mentioned **Judas Iscariot** on a previous occasion (Jn. 6:71), where the author also says that he is the one that would **betray him**.
 - Judas uses the typical "moral equivalence" argument when he says that the ointment should have been sold and **given to the poor** (v. 5). This argument is often used when a person has a different agenda than the one at hand. The logic rejects one action because another action is "better." (Or defends one action because another action is worse.) Several varieties of this fallacy should be avoided:
 - The Judas use: *This shouldn't have been done because that should have been done.*
 - The "Goodwin" use: *Hitler began his work by stirring patriotism, so patriotism is dangerous.*
 - The social use: *Because person X (or organization X) has done so much good, we shouldn't talk about what they have done wrong.*
 - The "if we can" use: *If we can afford to go out to eat, then we can afford to buy this outfit.*
 - A believer should take care to argue based upon good logic and honest principles. Judas would have been better to leave the comparison with the poor out of this. The bottom line: *he didn't believe Jesus was worth such extravagance.*

- We know definitively that Judas did not care for the poor (verse 6). From the author's commentary, we also know **he was a thief**. We can only speculate how the author knew that Judas was a thief, or why Jesus (or the other apostles) did not do something about it.
- Verse 7 –
 - For at least several months Jesus had made statements that clearly display His knowledge of His coming death. Anyone who had been around Jesus should not have been surprised at the events of the coming days.
 - Though we are not told, one wonders what the response of Mary was to this statement.
- Verse 8 –
 - To conclude that one doesn't need a compassion and care for the poor would be incorrect. To conclude that a care for the poor should be our first priority would be equally incorrect.

JOHN 12:9-11 | THE LAZARUS PROBLEM

- Verse 9 –
 - With the “commotion” of the dinner and the expensive ointment, and the arrival of the nation's most notorious “Messianic possibility,” along with one of Bethany's most well-known and beloved citizens, the people came to see both Jesus and the one risen from the dead.
- Verses 10-11 –
 - This is most interesting information, and most often ignored or overlooked in our studies.
 - The Jewish leadership had already determined to put Jesus to death (Jn. 11:57), and now we see that they wanted to **put Lazarus also to death** (v. 10).
 - Their real reason was that, because he was alive, many **believed on Jesus** (v. 11), but they would certainly make up whatever pretense was necessary when and if they captured Lazarus.
 - Why is this information included? Is it just for interest sake? How did they know that there was a desire to put Lazarus to death?
 - Since the Jewish leaders truly wanted Lazarus dead, and since this information appears to have been public knowledge, one wonders if Lazarus was the young man mentioned in Mark 14:51-52.
 - The authorities attempted to arrest this young man, while they did not attempt to arrest the others, even Peter who cut off a soldier's ear.
 - The standard interpretation of the Mark passage is that it refers to John Mark, but there is nothing more than tradition to support this argument.
 - There are many things that point to Lazarus as a *possible* candidate for the “naked man in the garden.” Only tradition points to John Mark.