

# GOD'S CALLING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

## Lesson Ten

### IN THE GOSPELS: Mary (Martha's Sister)

#### Burden to Impart:

*Those who respond to God's call to receive the Lord Jesus and His salvation, should out of love and gratitude pour out everything they have and are upon Him.*

**Memory Verse:** "...Wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, that also which this woman has done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (Matthew 26:13).

#### Facts to Teach:

1. When the Lord Jesus came down to Jerusalem He would not stay in Jerusalem over night, He stayed at Bethany (Matt. 21:17). Although Jerusalem used to be called the "city of God," they had no room in their hearts for Jesus, for they rejected Him from being their Lord. But in a poor village nearby, Bethany, Jesus had some dear disciples who not only received Him, they loved Him very much.
2. It was in Bethany that the Lord Jesus performed the greatest miracle of His ministry. He had raised Martha and Mary's brother, Lazarus, from the dead. Lazarus had not been dead for only an hour or two. He had been dead for four days and had begun to rot and stink. This, however, was no problem to the Lord Jesus. He resurrected him. (This will be looked at in detail next year, in the next series.)
3. With Lazarus we see the greatness of the Lord Jesus' power. With Martha we learn how the Lord's disciples should serve Him. And with Mary we see how the Lord's disciples should love and treasure him above everything else.
4. Before the Lord went to the cross He told His disciples at least three times that He would be killed in Jerusalem. For some reason none of the disciples comprehended what He was telling them, except Mary. It seems that only Mary, the disciple who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to His word, understood the Lord's heart. She somehow realized that she would see her Lord no more, that He was going to die in Jerusalem that week. So she grasped the only opportunity she would ever have to honor the Lord before His death: she poured out her life-time treasure, a flask of exceedingly expensive and precious ointment, upon the Lord Jesus. Though others criticized her for being foolish and "wasteful," the Lord approved Her (Luke 14:3-10).
5. So precious was her offering to the Lord that He said that wherever men spoke of His great sacrifice for them, they would also speak of Mary's love and sacrifice to Him (Matt. 26:13; Mark 14:9). The Lord was telling us that all who believe in Him and receive His salvation should respond like Mary, and pour out their all to Him.

**SUBJECT: GOD’S CALLING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: In the Gospels—Mary of Bethany (Martha’s sister)**

**SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8

**AIM:** To see that as God’s called ones we must seize the opportunity to love the Lord and to express our love toward Him by pouring out our very best upon Him.

**MEMORY VERSES:** 1 John 3:18; 4:19; Matt. 26:13

**FACTS TO TEACH:** Spikenard is one of the most precious spices mentioned in the Bible. It comes from the nard plant, a small plant which bears pink blossoms. It has many woolly spike-like stems growing out of one root. Its roots and young spike-stems are dried and a perfumed oil is then extracted. The Hebrews and Romans used the fragrant ointment, among other uses, in the burial of their dead. Sometimes the oil was mixed with other fragrant oils and resins thus making it more common and affordable. Genuine nard, however, was pure and unmixed and very expensive. It was imported from the far-off Himalaya mountains in India (where it grew), making it even more expensive. The best spikenard ointment was commonly imported in sealed “boxes” of alabaster. An alabaster box was actually a thin-necked vial—a container with a kind of cylinder shape at the top, somewhat like a closed rosebud. The alabaster used for these containers was a reddish marble, soft enough to carve and polish. Once shaped and polished, they were very beautiful looking; they themselves were very costly.

**BACKGROUND:** When the Lord Jesus came down to Jerusalem, He would not stay in Jerusalem overnight. He stayed at Bethany (Matt. 21:17). Although Jerusalem used to be called the “city of God,” the people had no room in their hearts for the Lord Jesus, for they rejected Him from being their Lord. But in a village nearby, Bethany, the Lord Jesus had some dear disciples who not only received Him, they loved Him very much. It was in Bethany that the Lord Jesus performed the greatest miracle of His ministry. He had raised Lazarus, Martha and Mary’s brother, from the dead. Lazarus had not been dead for only an hour or two. He had been dead for four days and his body had begun to smell. This, however, was no problem to the Lord Jesus. He resurrected him.

**CONTENT:** The Lord Jesus was once again in Bethany. On this evening, six days before His death, they made Him a supper in the house of Simon the leper. Martha was serving and Lazarus was reclining at the table with the Lord. Then Mary came with an alabaster flask containing a pound of pure spikenard (a Roman pound equivalent to twelve ounces). She broke the seal of the alabaster box and poured the precious spikenard on the Lord’s head and also anointed His feet. She then wiped His feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment.

When the disciples saw what Mary did they became indignant and commented among themselves, “Why has this waste of the ointment been made? For this ointment could have been sold for over three hundred denarii and given to the poor”. (One denarius was considered good pay for a day’s labor.) They were infuriated with her and spoke very angrily at her (Mark 14:5, Darby).

But the Lord Jesus said, “Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a noble deed on Me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you do not always have Me. She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. And truly I say to you, Wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be told as a memorial of her” (Mark. 14:6-9).

**APPLICATION:**

1. Before the Lord went to the cross, He told His disciples at least three times that He would be killed in Jerusalem. For some reason none of the disciples comprehended what He was telling them, except Mary. It seems that only Mary, the disciple who sat at the Lord's feet and listened intently to His word, understood the Lord's heart. She somehow realized that she would see her Lord no more, that He was going to die in Jerusalem that week. So, she grasped, or seized, the opportunity to honor the Lord before His death. We need to be the listeners, like Mary. Only as we listen to the Lord's word can we understand what is on the Lord's heart.
2. Mary poured out her lifetime treasure upon the Lord Jesus. Her offering was extremely costly. It was the very best she had and must have been very dear to her. What are the things we treasure the most and that are most dear to us? It could be some money we have saved, a favorite toy, a favorite TV show or computer game, or a pastime such as reading. If the Lord asks us to, would we offer part of that money, or even all of it to Him? Are we willing to let others play with our favorite toys because we know it would please the Lord? When we are watching our favorite program and our mommy calls us, would we please the Lord by obeying? Would we sacrifice some of our reading to read a chapter in the Bible each day? Sometimes our love for the Lord may cost us our pride, our face, or even our friends—we may be misunderstood by them, maybe even made fun of. Will we pay the price?
3. Mary gave the Lord the very best. She also gave it all. First she broke the very precious alabaster flask. Then, she did not trickle a few drops of the precious ointment on the Lord—she poured it all out on Him. She gave what she could to the fullest extent. We, like Mary, should also give the Lord our very best and our very all.
4. Though others criticized Mary for being foolish and wasteful, the Lord approved of her. He treasured the pouring out of her love, the pouring out of her very best upon Him. When the Lord Jesus knows that we have done something out of love for Him, He is pleased. He will say that we have done a good work, a noble deed. Our love for the Lord is never a waste.

For teachers: *The disciples considered Mary's love offering to the Lord a waste. Throughout the past twenty centuries thousands of precious lives, heart treasures, high positions, and golden futures have been "wasted" upon the Lord Jesus. To those who love Him in such a way He is altogether lovely and worthy of their offering. What they have poured upon Him is not a waste but a fragrant testimony of His sweetness. Matthew 26:8 and note 1 (RV).*

References:

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