

# FOREWORD

This meditation is the result of an endeavour to apply some "lateral thinking" to a few well known sections of scripture, and it must be admitted that the writer found the conclusions noted to be of considerable interest.

The story seemed to spring to three dimensional life, complete with stereo sound and Technicolour - almost as if it had happened in our own suburb last week.

The experience produced a strong desire to pass it on - and thus this booklet.

It will become apparent to the reader that some assumptions have been made.

Rather than in each case prefacing them with the words "it is reasonable to assume" I have generally made the statement and carried on. I believe however, that any assumptions made are reasonable and logical.

It should be pointed out that some assumptions are implicit in the traditional view of the stories in question, and this should not be lost sight of when reading this work.

It is assumed that the reader is reasonably familiar with the various stories in the Bethany setting, as recorded in the Gospels, and a list of references is appended which may be worth re-reading.

The quotations given are generally from the Authorised Version of the Bible, but other versions are noted where the meaning has been illuminated better.

The Eight Translation New Testament was very helpful.

I am afraid that colloquial expressions may arise in this treatment, but this is the result of an effort to recapture some of the reality in the story which I feel has been lost with the passage of time.

May I express my thanks to members of the family for their help and advice in the presentation of this work.

I wish readers an interesting half hour.

Tom Bryce

# BETHANY STOPOVER

You are invited to recall if you will, impressions in your mind conjured up by the name "Bethany".

Yes, it was a village on a highway intersection about three kilometres from Jerusalem, quite near to the Mount of Olives and Bethphage. Traffic on the road between Bethany and the city would be quite heavy with travellers to such places as Gilgal and Jericho regularly passing.

It was of course, the home town village of Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus who had died and been raised to life again. The main concern of this story however, lies in the fact that it was the place where Mary broke open an alabaster (or marble) box of expensive ointment and anointed the feet of Jesus.

IT IS GENERALLY believed that the account of this incident recorded in John's Gospel refers to events in the home of Mary and Martha, but it must be pointed out at this stage that John does not actually say this.

It is also commonly accepted that they were a relatively well-to-do family, with a gracious life style, who appreciated the interest of Jesus.

It seems also that, along with Lazarus their brother, they entertained selected friends on a fairly expansive scale. The occupation of Lazarus is not mentioned.

The observation that Martha served (John 12: 2) is confirmation of the story in Luke's Gospel, (Chapter 10 : 38- 42), where Martha makes a modest complaint that Mary is not carrying out her share of the hospitality obligations. It is quite clear that Martha was an industrious woman and most concerned about the smooth running of the house, and the impression is given that Mary was quite untroubled with these mundane things. Mary was more of an intellectual, and obviously preferred intelligent conversation with visitors. She found the observations and truths which Jesus was offering, arresting, to say the least.

From John's account it is clear that the house in question was quite roomy, as a good number of disciples were present.

Then came the startling incident in which Mary opened the flask of oil of nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped them with her hair. We note that

the fragrance of the oil was powerful and filled the house. Everyone would know about it.

This event prompted an enraged outburst from Judas who was incensed at the apparent waste but, curiously, no comment is recorded from Martha who would presumably be closely involved in the financial repercussions of Mary's action.

It is apparent that Mary had an insight deeper than all the others into the destiny of Jesus and that she knew his death was imminent. She realised that it was now or never if she was to show her devotion and deep respect for Jesus.

The incident was obviously unprecedented and it made an indelible impression on all concerned. The first thing that sprang to their minds was the enormous value of the "sacrifice".

Judas contended that the ointment was worth 300 pence, or denarii.

It must be understood that one denarius was a day's wages for a worker of the time (Matthew 20:2) so the 300 pence was the reward for a year's work (300 working days, plus 52 sabbaths, plus 3 statutory holidays, plus 10 days annual leave - would you believe.)

That would be \$13,000 in 1984 terms (or approx \$30,000 today)

One has the impression even these days that no one would spend a year's wages on any bottle of perfume, no matter how exotic or rare it might be and the value appears unreal.

However, it is clearly pointed out by Jesus that the woman had brought it as an anointing for his burial and this puts it in perspective.

A pint of perfume would not have been excessive if used as an aromatic instead of the myrrh and aloes which Nicodemus and Joseph used to embalm and preserve the body (John 19:39).

There was not much that Mary could actually do for Jesus in His lifetime, but she could show that she knew the value of His death. And her belief in His resurrection was so strong that she proved to be His only follower who realised that His body would not be found for later attention. She was not the Mary Magdalene of Mark 16:1 and in fact, none of the gospel writers suggest that Mary of Bethany was at the sepulchre.

It is thus a reasonable outlay for her to have made for such a special purpose, even though her motive was not comprehended by the disciples in their state of shock.

THE NEXT THING to emerge after consideration of the stories by Matthew and Mark is that they are records of the same event as that noted by John.

The series of events and the comments by Jesus are substantially identical.

In fact they are nearly always identified by commentators as being the same occurrence.

It is noteworthy however, that Mary is not named by Matthew and Mark but is simply called "a woman". There is a slight discrepancy in that Matthew and Mark suggest that the oil was poured on Jesus' head. Most likely it was poured on both his head and his feet. There was after all, a pint of the oil, which is a considerable amount when used for anointing purposes.

However, by superimposing the three accounts, it becomes immediately apparent that the event did not occur in the house of Martha and Mary, but in the house of Simon the leper in Bethany. Matthew and Mark both refer to Simon and this puts an entirely different complexion on Mary's action and on the disciples' reaction to it. The disciples were indignant and they "rebuked her harshly" (New International version). In fact The Living Bible says "Why she could have sold that perfume for a fortune and given the money to the poor' they snarled". Picturesque language indeed, and certainly not the sort of comment one would expect guests to make about the gracious hostess of the house.

SO THE MEAL was not in Mary and Martha's possibly comfortable house, but in the spacious home of Simon the Leper. We now find that Martha was a waitress in Simon's house - hardly the type of work for a woman of substance. (John 12:2). It would appear that Simon's house was fairly close to Martha's, as Lazarus was also present - as a guest, and Mary was certainly there but it is not stated in what capacity. The implication is, however, that Simon and Martha and Mary and Lazarus were fairly closely acquainted., with Martha doing some household chores for the wealthy Simon.

Note that Simon is a leper, and one immediately asks, how can a leper be accepted in the community? The answer is that then, as now, money talks, and people will turn a blind eye to anything if a man has the wealth and influence such as would be attributed to a prominent Pharisee.

Refer to the story of Naaman in 2 Kings 5, and remember that, after all, Simon's house was in Bethany, outside the walls of the city of Jerusalem.

The strange thing is that Simon has made no move to have his leprosy healed by Jesus. This is most surprising as he has before him ample evidence of the power

of Jesus. Actually, one of the guests in Simon's house, Lazarus, is a man returned from the dead., and this is convincing proof, if any were needed, that Jesus has unlimited power.

It seems almost reasonable to suppose that it was beneath his dignity. to accept any benevolence from an itinerant and poor preacher who certainly had no accepted medical qualifications. After all, Simon was the one displaying hospitality and he did not wish the tables to be turned in any way.

A possibility which suggests itself, is that Simon's feast is the same one referred to in Luke 14. Jesus is approaching Jerusalem and the feast is prepared on the sabbath day. This may well be the same day six days before the Passover which is noted in John 12:1.

The note in Matthew 26:2 where Jesus observes that after two days is the feast of the Passover, is not inconsistent with John 12 where it is stated that the time is six days.

Reference to Exodus 12: 3 shows that the preparation for the Passover begins on the 10th day of the month with the feast itself occurring on the 14th day, a difference of four days.

Jesus may well have healed the man afflicted with dropsy right before Simon the Leper's eyes. If this is the case, Simon is unmoved although his need may in fact be greater.

ONE IS INTRIGUED with John's observation that Judas is the "Son of Simon". His name "Iscariot" is simply the point of distinction between him and the other disciple named "Judas" (John 14:22). However, in this story he has the additional identification and we can almost hear John saying confidentially "Judas spoke up - the son of Simon, you know, Simon the owner of the house - you know" just as anyone would in this day.

The name "Iscariot" means simply Ish-Kerioth, or from the town of Kerioth. One might therefore think that he was not associated with Simon the Leper who was clearly in Bethany.

This is not to be so understood though, as John 6:71 in most versions names him as Judas, son of Simon Iscariot.

It does not take much imagination to speculate that Simon the Leper of Kerioth had set up house in Bethany and that Judas of Kerioth was his son. Wherever

Kerioth may have been, Judas was certainly fully at home in Galilee, Samaria, Judaea, etc. being the treasurer for the band of Jesus' disciples.

Judas is mentioned by John as being the disciple who burst out with the protest at Mary's action while the other writers refer to the disciples in general. It is logical to suppose that Judas would be the only disciple to feel free to vent his feelings, being in his father's house, and that the others would then join in, in general protest.

Observe also that John, the close observer of human nature, notes that Judas has the valuation of the ointment (300 pence) pinpointed exactly. He mentions also that Judas is the treasurer, a man with a "feel for money" in more ways than one, and he would therefore have the real value accurately determined immediately.

Matthew the tax gatherer simply notes that the ointment could have been sold for much. Perhaps he was not willing to commit himself on the value, thinking perhaps that it was indeterminate, pre-tax value or post tax value not having been established.

Mark however, was staggered at the amount - "more than 300 pence". He was a young man to whom a year's wages was an unbelievably large sum. Whether it was 200 or 300 or 400 pence, it was altogether incomprehensibly large.

WE NOW FIND that John is the only writer to actually identify Mary. Matthew says "there came unto him a woman" Mark says simply "there came a woman", and it is strange that neither mentions Mary's name, as the event was an extremely important one in the life of Jesus. Incidentally, this is another nail in the coffin of the idea that the event occurred in Mary and Martha's home. Imagine a writer referring to the part owner and hostess in these terms - "there came unto him a woman".

The incident is given prime importance by Jesus when He observes that "Where-so-ever this gospel is preached throughout the whole world, this also that she has done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (Mark 14:9,14. Matthew 26:13) .

In spite of this, still no name is given by these two writers and one asks, who can the memorial be to ? Why the reluctance to identify Mary? It is an intriguing question indeed.

So the three evangelists, Matthew, Mark and John, have recounted the story to fulfil the obligation placed on them by Jesus. John makes no apology for identifying Mary, especially as he has spent quite some time outlining previous events concerning the Martha and Mary family and their close relationship with Jesus. Matthew and Mark make no mention of either Martha or Mary by name but they state the obligation to include the event in their "gospel" and they recount the story factually .

#### BUT WHAT ABOUT LUKE ?

Luke was the scholar who accepted the responsibility of recording the birth of the Christian church in the book of the Acts, and the world changing events which followed. He reported on Paul's momentous evangelisation crusade throughout the civilised world. He also has by far the most thoughtful and comprehensive account of the life of Christ, including in the Gospel details of the birth of John the Baptist, the birth and adolescence of Jesus, His baptism, His commissioning of the disciples to preach, many miracles, numerous parables, the story of the rich man and Lazarus and controversies with the religious hierarchy. His gospel ends with a detailed account of the crucifixion, the burial, including Joseph's part in it, and Christ's resurrection and ascension (from Bethany.)

Why should he then omit the story which Jesus avers shall be told wherever the Gospel is preached? Luke had no licence to assume that there would be others who would write a more complete gospel and who would include the parts that he, Luke, would choose to overlook. In fact, each of the gospel writers must have assumed that theirs would be the only authentic record. That is why they wrote so compulsively.

Well the answer to the question is clear.

Luke has indeed included the story. Luke 7:36-50 is the story of an incident identical with those recorded by Matthew, Mark and John.

The apparent difference between Luke's account and those of the other evangelists lies not in the event itself, which Luke has in greater detail, but in the setting and in the consequences. The possibility of there being two such singular incidents unrelated is extremely remote.

The notion that two women each spent a fortune on perfume and carry out the same sequence of actions without the two events being recorded by the same writer is very difficult to believe.

When identifying the family at the beginning of the story of the raising of Lazarus, John says it was "that Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair" (John 11:2). This shows clearly that in John's mind the happening was so remarkable and striking as to be unique. When one reflects for a moment, it becomes obvious that if two women had carried out the same action, Jesus would not have been able to say which woman merited the memorial. In His view the woman's homage was of outstanding importance.

Luke's account appears to be placed very early in the ministry of Jesus, soon after His baptism and very soon after His calling of the disciples. In fact John was apparently still teaching and baptising his own followers. However, the incident is curiously unrelated to anything either preceding or following and one is tempted to think that it was deliberately transposed by Luke so that he would not require to identify the woman. There are many instances where events are not recorded strictly chronologically and this is only to be expected. The Gospel of Luke reads quite smoothly if this particular story is transposed to another location. It is also most unlikely that Jesus would have crossed the path of many Pharisees so early in His ministry.

Remember that Luke was "the beloved physician" (Colossians 4:14) and as a doctor it may well have gone against the grain for him to have admitted to knowing someone who was clearly a woman of easy virtue. However, John, showing the love and forgiveness which, as it were, rubbed off on to him from Jesus, comes out in the open and calls her Mary, making no reference to her occupation. Matthew and Mark cannot bring themselves to name her and least of all is Luke willing to identify her. However, when Luke is recounting the story he is not prepared, as a doctor, to gloss over anything at all, but he comes right out with the truth and calls her "a woman of the streets - a prostitute" (Living Bible). It is interesting to speculate that by the time John wrote, Mary herself and all those who observed the happening would have passed on, and therefore no embarrassment would follow to them from the identification.

AT THIS POINT we may pause for a moment and consider the implications of the superimposition of the four stories under review.

One's first reaction may well be one of protest against the idea that the sinful woman of Luke 7 is said to be the same as the Mary of John 12. Various writers over the years have vehemently rejected this notion also and have refused to concede any such coincidence.

The following are examples of this widely held stand.



"The difficulty in this view, mostly held in the Latin church, is the earlier description 'sinner' for the saintly Mary of Bethany" (2nd Edition New Bible Dictionary).

And from Henry Halley (Abbreviated Bible Handbook)

"There is not the slightest basis for identifying this woman with Mary Magdalene or with Mary of Bethany. Even to suggest such a thing is a revoltingly sloppy and idiotically superficial method of handling scripture".

It can be seen that reaction is pronounced and colourful.

IT IS HOWEVER, somewhat difficult to establish on what basis Mary was distinctively more saintly than many others. Some points are worth noting. Only one sentence is recorded of what Mary said and it appears in the Lazarus story, "Lord if you had been here, my brother had not died" (John 11:32). This is word for word the same as Martha's observation in verse 21. It is a simple statement of fact, and of their justified belief in the Lord's ability to heal.

It is recorded of Mary that she was one who sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word (Luke 10:39). This is saintliness indeed but it was not a habit of the righteous people of the day.

We do however, find examples of publicans, sinners and common people who heard Him gladly (Mark 2:15 - 17, Mark 12:37, Luke 15:1). In fact those who were the greatest sinners felt the greatest need and they listened most eagerly to His words. Not the least of these folk was Mary.

The only other significant recorded action of Mary is the anointing of Jesus feet. No one will suggest that this was not a saintly action but the crucial point is that an identical action was performed by "the sinner" of Luke 7. There is no good reason why the sinner and Mary are not one and the same person.

RETURNING TO THE story, we find that Luke has the most meticulously detailed account of the occurrence. Matthew and Mark simply state that the woman poured the oil on Jesus' head. John goes further and says that she anointed his feet and wiped them with her hair. But Luke has the complete picture portrayed. The woman is standing behind Jesus, at his feet, and weeping. Jesus explains later that her tears have washed his feet, which rather naturally explains why both Luke and John point out with some amazement that she wiped his feet with her hair. When one thinks about it, she would not wipe the oil off with her hair but would certainly wish to cleanse the tears away before anointing. (Jesus was reclining, not sitting)

Luke also observes that the woman was kissing the Lord's feet, "repeatedly", Jesus says - before the anointing. This was no ordinary routine incident. It was an unheard of series of events, quite apart from the value of the ointment, and it built up to a highly charged emotional encounter which no one was likely to forget. There was a stunned silence as the disciples and the others saw this all happening, before Judas exploded in protest. Jesus immediately reprimanded Judas for his attack on Mary and not only justified her action but also publicly recognised her faith and forgave her many sins.

Luke is not remotely concerned with the value of the ointment, as doctors will generally not adopt a mercenary view of such things, being professionals and the value may not have seemed so large to a man of his means anyway.

But he is vitally concerned with the attitude of the host, clearly identified as Simon, and he records even Simon's thoughts within himself.

Simon obviously knew the woman and her doubtful reputation very well, but we must not overlook the fact that her appearance and dress in no way revealed this side of her character. Sinner she may have been but her demeanour was most likely that of a very sophisticated woman. At all events Simon expected Jesus to know her life style, not from her appearance, but solely because Jesus had the reputation of being a prophet or a seer. It is worth noting that such a reputation would have taken Jesus quite some time to have established.

It is clear however, that Jesus did know her well as he knew her sins to be many. She was therefore almost certainly not a total stranger. She was also not altogether unwelcome in the house as she was present for quite some time, at least from the time Jesus had arrived, and Simon had made no move to throw her out, whatever her reputation may have been.

It has been suggested that the occasion was an "open house" event, but do not overlook John's specific statement that "there they made him a supper", and also that the Pharisee "desired him that he would eat with him"

FOLLOWING THE silencing of Judas, Simon's protest in unvoiced thoughts (read by Jesus and recorded by Luke) prompted a reprimand from Jesus which ruthlessly exposed the ill manners of the host. It was strange indeed that Simon should ask Jesus to a feast and not offer Him the common courtesies, even though He was but a lowly preacher. If Simon did not care to offer these courtesies, why did he invite him and his disciples at all? He seems to have been a reluctant host. Notice that Jesus twice addresses His host familiarly as Simon, and that the name Simon is mentioned in all four accounts of the event. It almost

seems that there had been previous contact of some sort between Jesus and Simon.

LET US RECAP for a while and synchronise the four stories.

The picture appears to be that Martha and Mary lived in a fairly roomy house at the road intersection at Bethany (Mark 11:4), where, with some help, they ran a boarding house-inn for working men and travellers such as Jesus and His friends. Remember that on occasion both women needed to be serving. Martha, though, would generally do the cooking and organising and possibly extended her income by sundry meal contracting for the neighbours, including the wealthy Pharisee Simon the leper. She received minimal help from her sister Mary who would earn a very handsome living from her "other services" The story of Rahab (Joshua 2: 1) comes to mind.

Let us take a view of the cameo of Luke 10:38-42 somewhat different to that traditionally offered. Martha is practically run off her feet dishing out lamb stew and baked beans to her twelve or fifteen noisy lodgers. She is getting angrier by the minute as she sees her sister hanging around the table, where Jesus is sitting with His friends and others who have pushed in to hear what is going on, "Cumbered, with much serving" is putting it mildly. She is frustrated in the extreme having to do the waitressing as well as the cooking and it simply is not good enough. You can almost hear her muttering to herself as she bumps her way around the dining room. "that lazy useless sister of mine - who does she think she is anyway? Never really pulls her weight and now with the preacher here she thinks she can avoid the work altogether.

So what if he is a good teacher, the meals must go on, someone has to do the work. 'Come on Mary, give over and get on with it !'" No response !  
The situation is really getting up Martha's nose.

Mary was possibly quite beautiful, Martha fairly plain and somewhat envious of her sister's ability to buy expensive clothing, and other luxuries such as spikenard. In the pattern of some prostitutes, Mary may well have been vivacious, precocious, a bit selfish, extravagant, impetuous, and, most important of all totally dissatisfied with the emptiness and underlying hopelessness of her life.

This would be the reason she so avidly listened to what Jesus said, regardless of the work needing to be done.

She gradually realised as she drank in His message that He was the only person who could bring her peace of mind. He had the key to the true happiness which, until now had slipped further and further from her grasp.

No sacrifice would be too great for her to finally demonstrate her repentance and devotion to Him.

It would probably have been Mary's money which purchased the tomb for their brother Lazarus. Although only a cave, a tomb of any sort was an expensive thing in those days.

Note also that Martha went alone to see Jesus after the death of Lazarus, but that the Jews remained in the house with Mary, and they all followed Mary when she decided impulsively to go and see Him as well.

John 11:45 mentions that the Jews had come to Mary - not Martha. Mary was undoubtedly the more attractive sister of the two !

ANOTHER THOUGHT which arises at this point is that Lazarus could well be the same man who is mentioned by Luke in Chapter 16:20. One tends to view this story as somewhat apocryphal or unreal as it relates to the unseen world.

Luke being a doctor was keenly interested in death and the hereafter.

We are brought back to reality with a jolt when we realise that there was actually a real character named Lazarus who did die and who did return from the grave.

This account by Luke in Chapter 16 makes no claim to be a parable, nor even to have been related by Jesus. In fact no parable mentions anyone by name, and this is the story of an event, recorded in the middle of a completely unrelated doctrinal discourse. Perhaps even the original manuscripts were accidentally mixed up !

Remember that the occupation of the Lazarus of John 11 is not mentioned and he may well have been a professional beggar. He was possibly in poor physical shape and suffered an untimely death which his sisters believed would have been avoided if Jesus had been near. The Lazarus of Luke 16 was certainly in poor condition also, being full of sores. The friendly licking of dogs was good and is known to be beneficial for skin ailments, but it was not good enough to prevent his death. Penicillin had not been discovered and little else in the way of medical attention would be available for a beggar.

And the Lazarus of Luke 16 certainly went to "Abraham's bosom" or "Paradise" which is commonly taken to be that part of Hades reserved for the blessed dead till their release at Christ's resurrection (Ephesians 4:8-10).

The Lazarus of John 11 would certainly also have gone directly to "Abraham's bosom" and when one thinks about it, there is no good reason why the two men are not in fact the same person.

In Hades the rich man pleads to his "Father Abraham" that he would send Lazarus with water to cool his tongue. This request was denied for the reasons given. However, he then asks that Lazarus be sent back to his father's house to warn his five brothers concerning the place of torment. This request was not denied. All that was said was that "if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

I repeat, this request was not denied and we find a man called Lazarus sitting in a position of return from the dead at the table of a rich Pharisee, possibly a brother of the rich man who died. What was this man's reaction, and that of the other Pharisees? We are not told, but it is clear that although many Jews believed, the chief priests consulted how they might put Lazarus to death also - a verification of Father Abraham's prediction. It was a ludicrous suggestion as Jesus obviously had the power over death - they simply would not be persuaded.

RETURNING TO THE feast in Simon's house, if we accept that it is the same feast mentioned in Luke 14, the situation is clearly a contrived one. There was the whole sabbath day which could be filled in with cleverly designed and loaded questions. The lawyers were sufficiently callous to arrange for the presence of the sick man solely to trap Jesus into performing what was in their eyes an unlawful healing.

It is a possibility that some of the stories, parables and conversations noted in Matthew and Luke between Jesus and the Pharisees occurred during this day. Remember that the Pharisees saw Jesus as a major threat to their religious stronghold, Jerusalem. They were therefore determined to gain evidence on which to convict Him forthwith and before He could cause havoc in their domain. However, it is interesting that Jesus claimed three days of action in Jerusalem before His eventual death in the city. The timetable of events was to be under His control, not theirs (Luke 13: 31-33)

FOR A FINAL review, let us now reconstruct some of the events of that last sabbath before the Passover, AD33.

Jesus and His disciples have arrived at Jerusalem and have caused quite a stir among the population (Matthew 21:10). They return to Bethany in the evening

where He and the disciples stay at the inn of Mary and Martha (Matthew 21:17), except Judas who would stay with his father Simon.

Judas suggests to his father that since Jesus has arrived at Jerusalem with His followers it would be a good opportunity to meet Him and have Him spend the sabbath at Simon's house "You could get Martha and perhaps Mary in to help with the meals and you could meet Lazarus too. I know you Pharisees are against this man Jesus but you could at least get some first hand knowledge of him and his teaching."

"I must admit I am not too happy with some of his teachings myself, but anyway you can ask your brothers and as many of your friends as you feel like. I have the feeling that his coming to Jerusalem will create a considerable upheaval and the Pharisees may not come out of the encounter unscathed"

"Maybe he will see what I mean when I talk about money because I feel sure he has rarely, if ever, been in an upper class home."

To which Simon replies, "Well, son, as you say, it may be the last chance as the priests are bent on putting a stop to him this time. Bring him and his friends along but don't expect me to go out of my way to entertain him. My associates would never forgive me and they are my people, don't forget"

So the meal is prepared in the palatial suburban residence of Simon the leper, one of the chief Pharisees. (Luke 14:1). A good number of the upper class Pharisees and lawyers and sundry others are invited. Jesus and His disciples also arrive to a cool reception from Simon (Luke 7:44). Lazarus is a guest, Martha is waitress and Mary the harlot is also present.

Mary alone of Jesus' followers has the insight to know that His sacrificial death is imminent and, regardless of the consequences and before the startled onlookers, carries out her unprecedented action.

This produces the outburst from the livid Judas, and the sullen and deep seated frown from the disapproving Simon.

Jesus takes control of the situation immediately and reproves both Judas and his father very severely, at the same time giving Mary what she desires most of all - forgiveness of sins.

The day proceeds with a rather strained atmosphere and finally Jesus and the disciples, except Judas, take their departure. Judas now talks over the day's

events with his father. The combination of the chagrin of Judas, and the humiliation of Simon, is sufficient to enable Simon to persuade Judas to go straight out and connive with Simon's associates the priests to betray Jesus to them. (Mark 14:10, Matthew 26:14).

The consequences of that betrayal are well known to us all.

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## FOOTNOTE

THE READER MAY not agree with this reconstruction of events on that fateful day in Bethany but that is not altogether relevant. Everyone will see the facts in somewhat different lights and with different emphases.

What is important is that the truths inherent in the story are not lost sight of and that these are clearly identified in our minds as we ponder again this fascinating glimpse into the lives and actions of some of the Bible's most tantalising characters

References : -

Matthew 26 : 6-16  
Mark 14 : 3-11  
Luke 7 : 36-50  
10 : 38-42  
14 : 1-24  
16 : 19-31  
John 11 : 1-46  
12 : 1-11