

WESTERN WISDOM BIBLE STUDY

• • •

The Supper at Bethany



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 Mary took 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 would 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.

—John 12:1-8.

There is much spiritually significant information to be gleaned from a careful study of the above passage in the light of occult wisdom, along with related passages in the seventh and fourteenth chapters of St. Luke's and St. Mark's Gospels, respectively. Variations in the three Gospels concerning some of the details may be ascribed to the fact that each portrays a different path of initiation, that of St. John's being the highest.

It is said that "Bethany" means "a house of figs or dates," and these fruits are often used in mystical language to symbolize generation. Lazarus had received the first of the Great Initiations, which is attained only by complete transmutation of the divine generative power within man. We note, too, that "Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him." It is thus evident

that it was a very high stage of consciousness in which Christ Jesus met this group of His followers.

Mary was the sister of Lazarus, and was also quite spiritually advanced. Mark and Luke both mention an "alabaster box" which contained the ointment used to anoint the feet of Jesus, and in this we may see a symbol of the radiant purity of the "golden wedding garment," or soul body, which was Mary's. The two higher ethers which form the soul body are attracted only by love and service to others, and we see both these qualities being manifested on this occasion. The hair is a product of the vital body, and its use is an evident allusion to the ethers of the soul body. A highly spiritual person's soul body actually emits a delicate fragrance, and when it is stated that "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment," we have further indication of Mary's high spiritual attainment.

Judas Iscariot, symbol of the lower self, as would be expected, endeavors to prevent the dedication of the higher self to the pathway of the Christ. As the "thief," he ever strives to "steal" the treasure which the aspirant lays up in heaven.

Jesus points out Mary's superior wisdom in living the life which brought her to such a high spiritual stage, admonishing her tempter to "let her alone," and indicates that her understanding was even great enough to foresee His coming death. He also points out that there are many who are not yet ready for such a high spiritual life—"the poor ye have always with you," and then adds, "but me ye have not always"—that is, in a physical body, living on earth as a man among men.