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The Sabbath-School

INTERNATIONAL LESSON.

Second Quarter-Lesson VI.—May 12.
THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY.—
Mark 14: 1-9.

GOLDEN TEXT.—*She hath done what
she could.*—Mark 14: 8.

THE CONSPIRACY.—Vers. 1, 2.
*After two days was the feast of the
passover, and of unleavened bread.*
The Passover meal was the begin-
ning of the feast of unleavened
bread, which lasted for seven days.
Account of the Passover, see the
next Lesson. *And the chief priests:*
the heads of the 24 courses of priests
who served in the temple by turns.
And the scribes. Jews learned in
the law, and recognized as religious
leaders. *And sought how they might
take him.* Many things had aroused
the opposition of the leading Jews.
The teaching of Jesus was in direct
opposition to much of theirs. He
claimed to be king. He had work-
ed wonderful miracles which gave
him authority with the people.
Many were inclining to the belief
that he was the promised Messiah.
By craft. Rev. Ver., with subtilty.
That is, by some secret plan that
would secure possession of him with-
out the opposition of the people.
But they said, Not on the feast. The
feast lasted seven days, and they
proposed to keep him out of the way
so long as the feast lasted, and
after that to kill him. *lest there be
an uproar.* The rulers feared a
popular rising of the numerous
friends who had come from a dis-
tance with him.

THE SUPPER AT THE HOUSE OF
SIMON.—Ver. 3. We now turn to
an event which took place three
days before the meeting of the San-
hedrim just mentioned; for this
story explains the action of Judas.
And being in Bethany. A village
about two miles east of Jerusalem,
on the other side of the Mount of
Olives. *In the house of Simon the
leper.* He had formerly been a
leper, and was probably cured by
Jesus. Nothing is known of this
Simon, but "according to a tradi-
tion, he was the father of Lazarus;
according to others, he was the hus-
band of Martha, or Martha was his
widow. Very likely he was in
some way related to the family of
Lazarus."

JESUS ANOINTED WITH PRECIOUS
NARD.—Ver. 3. *As he sat at meat.*
Reclined at the supper table. They
had couches, not chairs, for the
guests. *There came a woman.*
Mary, the sister of Martha and
Lazarus, not the woman in Luke 7,
"who was a sinner." Martha ex-
pressed her gratitude and love by
active service. Mary expressed
hers in an entirely different way.
Each one showed her feeling in her
own natural way, and this was right
and good. *Having an alabaster
box: or flask.* These alabasters were
usually made of "the Oriental or
onyx alabaster, with long, narrow
necks, which let the oil escape drop
by drop, and could easily be broken.
This flask was, with its contents, a
tasteful and costly object, such as a
woman would delight in possessing.
Of ointment of spikenard. Spike-
nard was an aromatic herb of the
valerian family, and was imported
from Arabia, India, and the far
East. Both on account of the
amount, which was a pound, and on
account of the quality, for it was
the costliest anointing oil of anti-
quity. This flask of ointment was
worth \$45 or \$50. But as a Roman
denarius (penny 15 cents) was the
price of a day's labor in those days,
the amount would be equivalent to
\$300 or \$400 in our day. *And she
brake the box.* A thin flask of deli-
cate alabaster could be crushed by
the pressure of the hands. *And
poured it on his head.* Mary not
only anointed Jesus but she took
"woman's chief ornament," and de-
voted it to wiping the travel-stained
feet of her teacher. She devoted
the best she had to even the least
honorable service for him. The fra-
grance of the nard filled the house.
The service rendered to Christ did
not stop with him alone. Such
service never does; it becomes frag-
rant to all who are within the
reach of its influence.

Her Motive was to express to the
utmost her devotion and holy love.
He had probably cured Simon of his
leprosy, and he had raised her brother
Lazarus from the dead. Jesus had
done much more than this for her.
He was her Saviour; he had brought
the forgiveness of sins, he had open-
ed to her mind divine and glorious
truths.

Expressions of our Love to Jesus.
Love in the heart always desires to
express itself in action. It is not
the largeness or the smallness of the
gifts, but the self-sacrifice in giving
that measures love. Love is increas-
ed by expressing it. Scarcely any-
thing can awake into conscious ac-

tivity our love for Jesus so much as
making sacrifices for him. Each
must give in his own way, and what
he himself has. Often the contin-
uous giving of many little is more
costly and more acceptable than one
large gift.

FAULTFINDING WITH MARY'S AC-
TION.—Vers. 4, 5. *And there were
some that had indignation.* John
says it was Judas who was the
fountain and source of the complaint.
*Why was this waste of the ointment
made?* In Judas' eyes it was wast-
ed, for to his sordid vision only what
brought physical comfort was well
used, while he was blind to the
blessings of its spiritual use. So
many now think that what is given
away to help the poor, to Christian-
ize the heathen, to endow institu-
tions for education, what is spent in
books, culture, enlargement of the
mind,—that all these are waste.
But it is the Judas spirit, not the
Christ spirit, that says so. *And
they murmured against her.* Scold-
ed her. The murmuring was with-
out cause. It was the property of
Mary. She had a right to dispose
of it as she pleased.

JESUS' DEFENCE OF MARY.—Vers.
6-9. *And Jesus said, Let her alone:*
the language of sharp rebuke. *Why
trouble ye her?* This indicates that
Mary was herself abashed and down-
cast by the criticism of the twelve.
She hath wrought a good work on me.
A noble, an honorable work. *For
ye have the poor with you always.*
They would have plenty of oppor-
tunities to aid them; and the more
they did for their Master, the more
they would do for the poor. The
true friends of the poor, who give
most and do most for them, will al-
ways be found among those who do
most for Christ. It is the successors
of Mary of Bethany, and not of
Judas Iscariot, who really "care for
the poor." *But me ye have not al-
ways.* If the disciples would ex-
press their love to Jesus in person,
they must do it then or not at all.
The opportunity of that evening
never returned to them. *She hath
done what she could.* Blessed are
they of whom the Master will say,
"They have done what they could."
*She is come aforehand to anoint my
body to the burying.* It is worthy of
note that this was all the anointing
which our Lord's body received from
the hand of Mary or her female
friends, as he had risen before they
reached the sepulchre with their
spices. It was, therefore, an anoint-
ing beforehand. *Whosoever this
gospel shall be preached.* Our Lord
expected his Gospel to be diffused
throughout the world. *Throughout
the whole world.* This story has
been told in every known tongue,
and is now being related in more
than 250 different languages, to
every great nation on the earth.
*Shall be spoken of for a memorial of
her.* In the act of love done to him
she has erected to herself an eternal
monument. Had Mary sold the
ointment and distributed the money
among the poor, some would no
doubt have been directly benefited
at the time; but thousands upon
thousands, in all succeeding ages,
would have lost immeasurably more
than the objects of her charity
would have gained. A good work
wrought for Christ does not die.
It lives on in its influence on other
minds, and in every good thought
and feeling and desire which, direct-
ly or indirectly, it may be the means
of exciting. It lives on from gener-
ation to generation, with unspent
energy and with immortal life; and
the doer of it lives in it, acting still,
and like Abel, "being dead, yet
speaketh."

PRACTICAL HINTS.

What a happy company was
gathered here,—Christ, the Lord
and Teacher; Lazarus, raised from
the dead; Simon, cured of leprosy;
Mary, blessed for sitting at the feet
of Jesus; Martha, who worked for
him.

Affection desires to express itself
in sacrifices for the loved.

The motive, the love, gives value
to the deed.

The way to increase love is to ex-
press it in all natural ways.

Bad men conceal their worst acts
under plausible pretences.

Mark the unconscious influence of
our actions. Mary's act has inspir-
ed multitudes to gifts of love.

Expressions of affection are of
great value. The poor, the afflicted,
need more than gifts, they need love
and sympathy.

The Christian church is to give
special care to the poor, the sick,
the needy; in so doing they minister
to Christ himself.

Often the best results of our ac-
tions are those God brings to pass
outside of and beyond our own pur-
poses.

The best monuments we can raise
are those built unconsciously by
deeds of love and helpfulness.

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