

Matthew 26:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.

Analysis

There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment—John 12:3 identifies her as Mary of Bethany. The alabastron (ἀλάβαστρον) was a flask carved from translucent alabaster stone, sealed to preserve aromatic oil. The ointment was nardos pistikos (νάρδος πιστικός), pure nard imported from the Himalayas—Mark 14:5 values it at 300 denarii (a year's wages for a laborer).

And poured it on his head, as he sat at meat—This prophetic act anointed Jesus as Messiah ('Christ' means 'Anointed One'). Kings were anointed on the head (1 Samuel 10:1, 16:13). Mary grasps what the disciples miss: Jesus is about to die. Her extravagant worship prefigures His burial anointing.

Historical Context

Nard (spikenard) came from the Nardostachys jatamansi plant in India/Nepal, making it extraordinarily expensive. To break the sealed alabaster flask meant pouring out everything—the ointment couldn't be preserved for another use. This was total, unreserved devotion.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does Mary's 'waste' of precious ointment challenge our utilitarian calculations in worship and our concept of what God is worth?
2. What spiritual insight enabled Mary to understand Jesus's approaching death when the disciples remained blind to it?

Interlinear Text

προσῆλθεν	αὐτοῦ	γυνή	ἀλάβαστρον	μύρου	ἔχουσα	
There came	his	a woman	an alabaster box	ointment	having	
G4334	G846	G1135	G211	G3464	G2192	
βαρυτίμου	καὶ	κατέχευεν	ἐπὶ	τῇν	κεφαλὴν	αὐτοῦ
of very precious	and	poured it	on	G3588	head	his
G927	G2532	G2708	G1909		G2776	G846
ἀνακειμένου						
as he sat						
G345						

Additional Cross-References

Luke 7:46 (Parallel theme): My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

Isaiah 57:9 (Parallel theme): And thou wentest to the king with ointment, and didst increase thy perfumes, and didst send thy messengers far off, and didst debase thyself even unto hell.

Psalms 133:2 (Parallel theme): It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

Ecclesiastes 9:8 (Parallel theme): Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment.

Song of Solomon 1:3: Because of the savour of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee.

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