

The Alabaster Jar Of Ointment.

Mark 14:1-9

Sunday morning, November 30, 2008.

I. The Setting Vs. 1-9.

A. Mark backs up here in the chronology of his account to the previous Saturday night, the day before the triumphal entry. Perhaps Mark did so to contrast Mary's love and devotion with the cold and cunning calculations of Judas and the Jewish leaders. See vs. 1,2 and 10,11 between which this account is given.

B. We must not confuse this event with a similar event which occurred much earlier and which is recorded only in Luke 7:37-50.

We do not know who the woman of Luke 7 was. There is no Biblical evidence for believing that she was Mary Magdalene as is sometimes suggested. This is Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who was perhaps Jesus' best listener.

Luke

10:38-41.

The host in Luke 7 was a Pharisee; here it is Simon the leper. The issue in Luke 7 was the sinfulness of the woman; here it is the wastefulness of the spending.

C. Did Mary understand from being a good listener to Jesus that the end of the Lord was nearby and that she would not have another chance to do what she did? See vs. 8.

D. Was this dinner put together to honor the Lord for raising Lazarus from the dead, and perhaps for healing Simon from his leprosy? Obviously Simon was no longer a leper, and had somehow been healed from this fatal disease.

E. The Alabaster jar was a container made of fine grained gypsum. It had a long skinny neck and no opening. One had to break the neck of the jar to get to the ointment. Doing so was reserved for special occasions.

F. The fragrant spikenard plant is native to the region of the Himalayas (India and Tibet). As such it was imported along the trade routes of the ancient world.

G. Mary used a pound sized container. The Roman pound was 12 ounces, or the size of a can of soda. Its value was a year's worth of wages for the average man.

H. The initial objection came from Judas, John 12:4, but all the disciples joined in, Matt. 26:8. The Lord rebukes His disciples and vindicates Mary's love, "She has done what she could; she has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial."

II. The significance.

A. What Mary parted with on this occasion was a treasure; it was a fortune.

B. Mary parted with her fortune willingly and freely; she did not have to do so.

C. The object of her love and devotion was her greater treasure. Her act was an expression of faith and love. She believed the Lord was worth it, and she acted on that faith in love.

D. The others present did not as yet share her perspective on the Lord. As such Mary was seen as an extremist; a fanatic; an enthusiast; as out of her mind, and she inherited a measure of persecution as a result.

E. In pouring the ointment on the head of the Lord, Mary poured her love on the Lord. She did so freely, for in order for love to be love, it must be given freely.

III. The Lord's alabaster jar.

- A. Mary was not the only one who had an "alabaster jar" with a treasure inside. The Lord Jesus had one too.
- B. Mary was not the only one who discovered a greater treasure than her precious ointment; the Lord Jesus did too. You are that treasure.
- C. A few days later He would speak these words: "This is My body which is broken for you; this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matt. 26:26-28.
- D. The Lord's alabaster jar was broken so that you from head to toe might be covered in the fragrant ointment of the benefits of redemption. What greater treasure can a man give than his life. This the Lord did as a

ransom

for many.

- E. The Lord's table is before us. Here is a real sense the benefits of redemption are sealed to us. "Take and eat; all of you, drink of it," is the Lord's invitation to you. Cover yourself again in the fragrant ointment of the benefits of redemption. "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:5,6.

IV. Your alabaster jar.

- A. Not only did Mary and the Lord have an alabaster jar; you have one too.
- B. Not only did Mary and the Lord discover greater treasure than what was in their alabaster box; you were also meant to discover this greater treasure too.
- C. Your alabaster jar is the treasury of your heart; where you keep your most treasured hopes and dreams for yourself, and your most treasured possessions.
- D. The greater treasure is the treasure the Lord has shown us by laying down His life for the body of His people.
- E. Mary and the Lord laid down their treasure freely; they did not have to do so; they did it because they wanted to; because they discovered a more excellent treasure. You don't have to either; if you do so, you should do so freely; you should do so with good reason; because you have discovered a more excellent treasure.
- F. Without breaking the alabaster jar there is no growth, no fruit, no glory and no joy in your life as a Christian. By breaking your alabaster jar together with Christ, you have fellowship with Him in His cross and resurrection.

"When I survey the wondrous cross, on which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride."

"Forbid it Lord that I should boast save in the death of Christ my God;
All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood."

"Were the whole realm of nature mine; it were a present far too small.
Love so amazing so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."