

The Plot, the Betrayer and Love's Extravagance.

SCRIPTURE READING

The Bible reading comes from chapter 26 of the Gospel according to Matthew. The reading commences at verse 1 and continues to verse 16.

When Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said to His disciples, 'You know that after two days the Passover comes, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified'.

Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, named Caiaphas, and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by guile and kill Him. But they said, 'Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people'.

Now when Jesus was at Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him, having an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at table.

And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, 'To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor'.

But Jesus, knowing it, said to them, 'Why do you trouble the woman? For she has wrought a good work upon me. For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told for a memorial of her'.

Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me, and I will deliver Him to you?'

And they weighed to him thirty pieces of silver.

And from that time he sought an opportunity to betray Him.

INTRODUCTION

I want to focus in particular upon **two features** of that passage which, on the face of it, are rather curious; the one strange feature is fairly obvious and the other less so.

Strange feature number 1

The first curious feature (the more obvious of the two) concerns the Lord's betrayal by Judas.

In passing, I observe that Judas is one of only two ordinary men mentioned in the Gospels whose works are foretold in the Old Testament.¹ John the Baptist is the other.² John announced Christ's *coming* and Judas contrived His *departure*.

But, to return to the first curious feature in our reading, we learn from the lips of our Lord Himself, as recorded in **verses 1 and 2** of the passage, concerning the (to Him) known certainty of His betrayal: 'the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified'.

We then learn from the comments of Matthew, recorded in **verses 3 to 5**, concerning the lead-up to the betrayal and, in particular, at the human level, to the need for it.

We are then given details of the 'done deal' in **verses 14 to 16**, where we are reminded

(i) *who* Judas was ('one of the twelve,³ named Judas Iscariot'),

and where we are told plainly:

(ii) *to whom* he went ('the chief priests' of verse 3),

(iii) *when* he went ('then'), and

(iv) for what he went (to betray the Lord Jesus to them in exchange for some monetary payment).

And not only so, but we are also informed:

(v) of the precise sum which he was to receive in payment from the chief priests ('thirty pieces of silver') and

(vi) of the way in which he immediately set his mind to keeping his part of the bargain (by seeking 'an opportunity to betray' Jesus).

And yet, although we are provided with these six details, we are offered no suggestion as to:

(a) why Judas stooped so low as to undertake the infamous deed at all (apart, of course, from the obvious fact that it earned him a relatively paltry sum of money), nor

(b) why Judas chose to perform his dastardly deed then.

We shall return to the subject of Judas's likely motivation later.

Strange feature number 2

The second (less obvious) curious feature of our passage concerns its decidedly odd structure.

Let me explain.

Our passage divides neatly into three main sections:

(i) **Section 1:** verses 1-5. This section covers both

(a) the prediction which Jesus made of His betrayal⁴ and

(b) the problem which faced the Jewish supreme Council;⁵ a problem which paved the way for the betrayal.

(ii) **Section 2:** verses 6-13. This section records the anointing of our Lord by 'Mary' of Bethany, whose name we discover in the parallel account in the Gospel according to John:

'Jesus ... came to Bethany ... Mary therefore took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very precious'.⁶

(iii) **Section 3:** verses 14 to 16. This section details the treachery of Judas.

It should be obvious that verses 6-13 do not fit at all well into the flow of the passage in that they split apart two sections which focus on our Lord's betrayal; namely, verses 1-5 and verses 14-16.

And then comes the bombshell. Further reading reveals that, *in terms of its content*, the section from verse 6 to verse 13 does not fit comfortably where it is, for the simple reason that, *chronologically*, it does not fit there!

THE ORDER OF EVENTS

This is clear because, in his Gospel, John has dated the incident of our Lord's anointing *very* precisely. The anointing, he tells us, took place 'six days before the Passover'.⁷ But verse 2 of our chapter dates the events of verses 1-5 to just 'two days' before the Passover.⁸ That is, the Jewish leaders' plot to kill Jesus was hatched four days after the anointing!

Let the implications of this sink in. John's time-note, 'six days before the Passover', means that the 'anointing' episode recorded in verses 6-13 took place, not following the incident at the beginning of chapter 26 but (wait for it) before the incident at the beginning of chapter 21!⁹

Yes, our Lord's anointing by Mary took place:

(i) *before* the Triumphal Entry on Palm Sunday and the subsequent cleansing of the temple at the beginning of chapter 21,

(ii) *before* the controversies with the Jews about tribute money, resurrection and the greatest commandment in chapter 22,

(iii) *before* His scathing denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees in chapter 23, and

(iv) *before* the prophetic discourses given on the Mount of Olives in chapters 24 and 25!

TWO QUESTIONS

(i) Why, then, we may well ask, does Matthew (and Mark, for that matter) displace the account of the anointing and record it so far from its proper chronological place? And

(ii) What has this to do with Judas' reasons for betraying the Lord Jesus?

Before I attempt to answer these questions, I want to pause for a few moments to consider verses 1-5.¹⁰

TO BE BETRAYED

In verses 1-2, we read our Lord's fourth major prediction of His suffering and death.¹¹ Although this was *not* the first time that He had spoken plainly of the *mode* of His death (namely death by crucifixion),¹² it *was* the first time that He had mentioned its *timing*.

That is, He now informed the disciples, not only *that* He was to be killed, and *how* He was to be killed, but also *when* He was to be killed; namely, at the Passover feast, then only two days away.

And it is clear from His earlier predictions¹³ that the Lord Jesus felt very keenly the fact that He was to be '*betrayed*' by one of His own disciples. The apostle John tells us that a short time after, Jesus 'was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, *one of you* will *betray* me".¹⁴ Oh yes, make no mistake, that thrust cut deeply.

THE PLOT – AND ITS PLANNED TIMING

It was on the same day Jesus made His announcement to His disciples concerning His approaching death that the chief priests and elders met together to plot that very thing.¹⁵ But *their* views about the timing, and, quite likely, the mode of His death, were very different to *His*.

To their minds, for them to make a move against Jesus 'during the feast' was simply not an option.¹⁶ And no one saw this more clearly than the man in whose palace they gathered; namely, 'the high priest, named Caiaphas', the man of whom the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, spoke more fully as 'Joseph Caiaphas'.¹⁷

Throughout Old Testament days, the office of high priest had, as God had intended, been both hereditary and for life. But, under the Romans, high priests came and went in rapid succession as the Romans appointed and deposed them to suit their own purposes. Indeed, in the hundred or so years between 37 BC and AD 67 (when the last high priest was appointed prior to the destruction of the temple) there were no fewer than twenty-eight high priests!¹⁸

And yet Joseph Caiaphas, having been appointed by Pilate's predecessor (Valerius Gratus) in AD 18, had already managed to hold on to the office for well over 12 years, and would continue to do so until his death some six years later.¹⁹

This was an amazingly long time for a high priest to last under the Romans and indicates that Caiaphas had mastered the art of co-operating with the ruling power. Clearly, he was highly skilled at diplomacy and maintaining good working relations with the Romans.²⁰

Sometime before, following the raising of Lazarus, the chief priests and the Pharisees had made clear to the Sanhedrin that, unless they took some decisive action to restrain Jesus, 'the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation'.²¹ Caiaphas had responded with the prophetic words, 'it is expedient ('better') for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish'.²² 'From that day on', we read, the Council had schemed 'to put Him to death'.²³

For some time, they had been foiled, because our Lord had left Jerusalem and had spent a period in a country town called Ephraim.²⁴ But, as the Jewish authorities knew only too well,²⁵ Jesus was now back in Jerusalem!

Yet, from his many dealings with the Roman authorities, Caiaphas was well aware that the one thing which the Romans would not tolerate was civil disorder and that, if there should be any riot or disturbance, he (along with the other members of the Council, of course) was in real danger of losing his prized position and power.²⁶

And, certainly, at Passover time, the atmosphere in Jerusalem was extremely tense. According to Josephus, a census conducted several years later suggested that at Passover time there were around two and three quarter million people crammed into the city.²⁷ We have no way of knowing whether such a number was present at this particular Passover, but we do know that 'many' were.²⁸

And, to the notoriously volatile pilgrims from Galilee, Jesus was, at the least, a 'prophet'.²⁹ Caiaphas and his colleagues knew, therefore, that it was essential that He be captured secretly and quietly; 'by guile'.³⁰

For this reason, Caiaphas, who had *earlier* determined that Jesus should die lest the Romans step in and remove him and his colleagues, *now* determined that His death would need to be postponed until after the eight days of the Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread for the very same reason!³¹

GOD IN CONTROL

But then Caiaphas knew nothing of our Lord's specific prediction that '*after two days* the Passover comes, and the Son of man is betrayed to be *crucified*'.³² Again, Caiaphas didn't know that God's **predetermined** time for 'Christ our Passover'³³ to be slain was in 'two days' time, during 'the Passover'.

But you and I know that the timing of the Saviour's death could no more be delayed than it could be hastened and advanced. *Previously*, men had planned to kill our Lord *too early*, when 'His hour had not yet come'.³⁴ *Now*, they planned to do it *too late*. Truly, 'many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand'.³⁵

Indeed, little did Satan realise, when he twice entered into Judas³⁶ and put it into his heart to betray Jesus,³⁷ that he was not only fulfilling God's purpose of providing full salvation for men but that he was ensuring that it went ahead right on schedule!

THE ANOINTING AND JUDAS

I suggest that, prompted by the Holy Spirit, Matthew and Mark inserted the account of our Lord's anointing where they did because what took place at the anointing in no small way explains why Judas decided to betray Him.

As I see it, first of all, what happened at Bethany brought to a head Judas's increasing sense of disillusionment and disappointment with Jesus.

For not only has

- (i) Jesus now spoken yet again about His forthcoming death,
- (ii) Jesus spelled out for the second time the manner of His death, namely by crucifixion, and
- (iii) Jesus made it clear that His death was only a matter of days away,³⁸

but also, at the time of His anointing, He had underlined the certainty of His impending death by His explicit reference to His 'burial'.³⁹

THE ANOINTING – EXTRAVAGANT LOVE

Separately, Mary has left us an outstanding example of sacrifice, devotion and extravagant love by her action. Make no mistake: it was no small gift which Mary lavished upon the Lord Jesus. It was, the Gospels tell us, a pound weight⁴⁰ of 'very expensive ointment' which she poured upon both His head⁴¹ and His feet.⁴²

The mention of His 'head' and His 'feet' reminds me of the poetic description given by the Shulamite of her beloved in the Song of Songs, where she speaks of both his head and his feet in terms of 'fine gold'.⁴³ Clearly, the 'head' and 'feet' of Mary's 'beloved' were no less precious to her!⁴⁴

The 'very expensive ointment'⁴⁵ was 'ointment of pure nard',⁴⁶ of genuine, unadulterated nard, that is – not mixed with any other aromatic substances, as were less expensive kinds.⁴⁷ This ointment was the very best.

And I note that Matthew uses the exact words to describe what Mary expended on Jesus ('an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment') as the Greek historian, Herodotus, had used some 550 years before to describe a gift presented by Cambyses (the King of Persia and son of Cyrus the Great) to the King of the Ethiopians.⁴⁸

It is often said, with good reason, that Matthew's Gospel is 'the Gospel of the King'. In the light of the statement of Herodotus, we can say that it was not only (i) the 'treasures' 'offered' to our Lord by the 'wise men from the east' who 'came' to the house *following* His *birth*,⁴⁹ but also (ii) the 'ointment' 'poured out' on our Lord by Mary of Bethany who 'came' to the table *prior to* His *death*,⁵⁰ which was 'a gift fit for a King'!

THE DISCIPLES' INDIGNATION

We now turn our attention to the storm of criticism which broke on Mary following her loving and worshipful action. Indeed, I note that on each occasion that Mary was found at Jesus' feet, her actions were misunderstood; first, by her sister,⁵¹ second, by the Jews,⁵² and, third, by Judas and others of the disciples.⁵³

Matthew reports, in general terms, that 'the disciples' spoke out.⁵⁴ Mark, more specifically, tells us that 'there were some' who spoke with indignation both *about* her and *to* her.⁵⁵

JUDAS IN THE DRIVING SEAT

It is John (who, doubtless, was present at the time) who identifies the disciple who first voiced the objection; it was, John says, 'Judas Iscariot'.⁵⁶

It was, then, the apostles' treasurer⁵⁷ who quickly estimated the value of the ointment which Mary bestowed on Jesus. And its commercial value, Judas calculated, was nothing short of 'three hundred denarii',⁵⁸ a sum which approximated a whole year's wage for a labouring man,⁵⁹ and which likely was sufficient to treat a crowd of 5,000 men, together with their families, to a satisfying meal each.⁶⁰

Some time later, the other disciples thought that Judas might have left the Upper Room to give money 'to the poor',⁶¹ for whom he now professed such 'care'.⁶² But, were truth told, Judas had not then gone to give money but to earn⁶³ and then collect money⁶⁴ ... 30 shekels of silver!

But, if the heart of Judas was filled with love for money, the heart of Mary was filled with love for her Master!

'Having an alabaster box of very precious ointment', she 'poured it on His head'⁶⁵ ... very much a case of 'love's extravagance'!

'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' Judas queried,⁶⁶ a question soon echoed by many others.⁶⁷ And, in many ways, the mention of 'the poor' was entirely natural, because they each knew that, in His law, God Himself had taught:

'the poor will never cease out of the land'; therefore I command you, you shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor'.⁶⁸

MARY DEFENDED AND JUDAS REBUKED

Indeed, the Lord appears to have been alluding to that very verse in His response to the criticisms which the disciples aimed at Mary:

'Why do you trouble the woman? For she has wrought a good work upon me. For *you always have the poor with you*, but you will not always have me'.⁶⁹

It was not, of course, that the Saviour was criticising the disciples for their concern for the poor. As we know well, from both His miracles and His teaching, no one was more concerned for the poor than He was.

Interestingly, the same woman who had earlier 'chosen' the *'good part'* when sitting at our Lord's feet,⁷⁰ now 'wrought a *good work*' when anointing and wiping our Lord's feet.⁷¹ And I note that some translations render the expression 'wrought a good work upon me' of the King James Version as 'done a beautiful thing to (or, 'for') me'.⁷² That is, what Judas and the other disciples labelled 'waste', the Saviour Himself called 'a beautiful thing'.

But, in that it had been Judas who had first voiced disapproval of Mary's action, it had clearly been Judas who had borne the main brunt of our Lord's rebuke when He sprang to Mary's defence.⁷³

THE BETRAYAL BY JUDAS - MOTIVATING FACTORS

And I believe that, by locating the account of the anointing and its sequel where they do, Matthew and Mark are indicting that, four days later, the Lord's reproof (which must have put Judas's nose seriously out of joint at the time), still rankled in his mind and heart.⁷⁴

But there was, of course, more to Judas' betrayal than that.

For, according to all three gospel accounts of the anointing, our Lord had spoken plainly of His forthcoming 'burial'.⁷⁵

I understand Him to be saying, then, that Mary (whom, we recall, had previously sat long as a willing listener at His feet⁷⁶) had grasped what the disciples were unwilling to accept; namely, that the Lord Jesus was shortly going to die ... and, possibly, that, if His death were to be by crucifixion, as He had said, then there would likely be no opportunity, following His death, to anoint His body in any decent or thorough way.⁷⁷

And we can hardly miss that Mary did accompany the other women to the tomb on the first day of the week to anoint His body.⁷⁸ She didn't need to! She had already done just that.

And it was as well that she had, for, when two other Marys brought 'sweet spices' to His tomb, that they might 'anoint Him', they were too late! The Lord had already risen and His body then needed no anointing!

Indeed, I note that, when that Mary Magdalene looked down into the tomb, she saw two angels 'sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the *head* and the other at the *feet*',⁷⁹ sitting, that is, by those parts of the Lord's body which, over a week before, Mary of Bethany had taken the opportunity to anoint for His burial.⁸⁰

But the point for Judas was simple.

A conquering Messiah, poised to trounce the Romans and establish a glorious kingdom (which, I think we can assume, Judas, as the other disciples, had all along expected Jesus to be⁸¹) would not have spoken in terms of His forthcoming burial. And, so, when our Lord did speak of it, any hopes and dreams of earthly splendour which Judas had once entertained were well and truly crushed.

In brief, Judas now realised that there was no imminent manifested kingdom and that he, the apostles' treasurer,⁸² was not, therefore, to be 'over the treasures'⁸³ of the Messianic kingdom after all!

And I believe that, as Judas now saw it, all that was left for him was to salvage what little profit he could for himself.⁸⁴

But, clearly, the episode of the anointing at Bethany did more than rebuke Judas for his criticism and finally dash any hopes he had of earthly glory. His reaction to Mary's extravagance prompted the apostle John to expose Judas' *real* motive for wanting the ointment to be sold ... unmasking him for us as the hypocrite and thief that he was, ready to steal money even from the needy folk for whom he professed great concern.⁸⁵

For, although Judas masqueraded as a disciple of Jesus, he was in reality a servant of mammon, who (when push came to shove) was willing to sell his Master for no more than the ancient compensation price a man in Israel would have paid to his neighbour if his own ox had gored his neighbour's slave to death.⁸⁶

Some time before, Judas had heard that very Master pose to him and the other disciples the solemn question, 'What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'⁸⁷ Yet, now, Judas was ready to sell 'his own soul' – not for 'the whole world' – but for the price of a common slave!

Drawing these three strands together, I suggest that the treachery of Judas was prompted by a combination of

- (i) disillusionment and disappointment, fuelled by our Lord's reference to His imminent 'burial',
- (ii) resentment at our Lord's sharp and public rebuke, and
- (iii) the love of money.

And, in my view, it is on account of these three influencing factors that both Matthew and Mark insert the 'anointing' incident between two short sections which report events which took place four days later.⁸⁸

MY VALUATION

It hardly needs to be said that the two incidents of (i) our Lord's anointing by Mary and (ii) our Lord's betrayal by Judas confront us with contrasting valuations placed on the person of the Lord Jesus.⁸⁹

With an eye to these two incidents, it has been well said, 'Great is the cost of devotion, but cheap is the price of betrayal'.⁹⁰

And these two incidents raise a serious question which each of us must answer today:

'How much does the Lord Jesus mean to me?'

Notes

¹ For Judas, see John 13. 18 and Acts 1. 16.

² See Matt. 11. 10.

³ Cf. Mark 14. 10, 20; 14. 43; Luke 22. 3, 47; John 6. 71.

⁴ Matt. 26. 1-2.

⁵ Matt. 26. 3-5.

⁶ John 12. 3.

⁷ John 12. 1.

⁸ Matt. 26. 2; cf. Mark 14. 1.

⁹ Contrast the sequence of events as recorded (i) in the Gospel of John and (ii) in the Gospel of Matthew:

(i) **John.**

Then, *six days before the Passover*, Jesus came to **Bethany** ... Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard', John 12. 1-3;

'*The next day* a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was **coming to Jerusalem**, took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: 'Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel!' John 12. 12-13;

(ii) **Matthew.**

'Now when they **drew near Jerusalem** ... Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to me', Matt. 21. 1-2; and

'Now when Jesus was at **Bethany**, in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him, having an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment', Matt. 26. 6.

¹⁰ The expression, 'When Jesus had finished all these sayings', Matt. 26. 1, signals the last of the five major divisions in Matthew's gospel.

As with the earlier four similar expressions (Matt. 7. 28; 11. 1; 13. 53; 19. 1), the expression comes at the close of a major address by our Lord, in this case introducing the final and longest continuous narrative section. This last narrative section extends to cover our Lord's passion and resurrection, and reaches its climax with another (albeit shorter) address by our Lord, Matt. 28. 18-20.

¹¹ Cf. Matt. 16. 21; 17. 22-23; 20. 18-19.

¹² Compare Matt. 20. 19.

¹³ Matt. 17. 22; 20. 18.

¹⁴ John 13. 21.

¹⁵ Compare, (i) 'When Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said to His disciples, 'You know that *after two days the Passover* is coming, and the Son of man is delivered up to be crucified', Matt. 26. 1, with, (ii) '*After two days* it was *the Passover* and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by guile and put Him to death', Mark 14. 1.

¹⁶ Matt. 26. 3-5.

¹⁷ Valerius Gratus (the Roman governor) 'ordained Eleazar, the son of Ananus, who had been high priest before, to be high priest; which office, when he had held for a year, Gratus deprived him of it, and gave the high priesthood to Simon, the son of Camithus; and when he had possessed that dignity no longer than a year, Joseph Caiaphas was made his successor', Flavius Josephus, '*Antiquities of the Jews*', Book 18, Chapter 2, Section 2.

For information about the discovery of the possible ossuary of Caiaphas, see ...

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caiaphas_ossuary.

¹⁸ See ... https://www.bible-history.com/highpriests/nthighpriestslist_of_jewish_high_priests.htm. Three of the twenty-eight high priests were appointed twice.

- ¹⁹ See ... <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/caiaphas-joseph>.
- ²⁰ See C. A. Scott, 'Caiaphas', *Hastings' Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, page 251.
- ²¹ John 11. 47-48.
- ²² John 11. 49-52.
- ²³ John 11. 53.
- ²⁴ More recently, the Council had issued 'a command that if anyone knew where He was, he should report it, that they might seize Him', John 11. 57.
- ²⁵ Matt. 21. 10-15.
- ²⁶ John 11. 48.
- ²⁷ 'That this city could contain so many people in it, is manifest by that number of them which was taken under Cestius ... Upon the coming of that feast which is called the Passover, they ... found the number of sacrifices was 256,500; which ... amounts to 2,700,200 persons', Flavius Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, Book 6, Chapter 9, Section 3.
- ²⁸ 'The Passover of the Jews was near, and many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover', John 11. 55; cf. John 12. 12.
- ²⁹ Matt. 21. 46; Luke 7. 16; 24. 19; John 6. 14.
- ³⁰ Matt. 26. 4.
- ³¹ John 11. 47-50 with Matt. 26. 3. 'At a Passover, less than 30 years before, the people, partly to avenge the death of two Rabbis, rose against Archelaus, and were cruelly repressed with a slaughter of 3000 men (Josephus, 'Antiquities of the Jews', Book XVII, Chapter 9, Section 3); see also Chapter 10, Section 3, where a similar rising against Sabinus, during the feast of Pentecost, is described', A. Carr, *The Cambridge Greek New Testament: The Gospel according to St Matthew*, page 285.
- ³² Matt. 26. 2.
- ³³ 1 Cor. 5. 8.
- ³⁴ John 7. 30; 8. 20.
- ³⁵ Prov. 19. 21; cf. Isa. 46. 10.
- ³⁶ Luke 22. 3; John 13. 26-27.
- ³⁷ John 13. 2.
- ³⁸ Matt. 26. 1-2.
- ³⁹ Matt. 26. 12; Mark 14. 8; John 12. 7.
- ⁴⁰ John 12. 3. 'A *litra*, a measurement of weight apparently equivalent to the Latin *libra*, approximately eleven ounces (i.e. a little less than three-quarters of a pound avoirdupois)', D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, page 428.
- ⁴¹ Matt. 26. 6; Mark 14. 3.
- ⁴² John 12. 3.
- ⁴³ Song of Songs 5. 11, 15.
- ⁴⁴ Mary wiped Jesus' feet (not with a towel, as He would the feet of His disciples, John 13. 5, but) with her hair, John 12. 3, with that which is spoken of by the apostle Paul as the woman's 'glory', 1 Cor. 11. 15.
- ⁴⁵ Matt. 26. 7.
- ⁴⁶ Mark 14. 3.

- ⁴⁷ 'The adjective is common enough in the older Greek and appears in the papyri also in the sense of genuine, unadulterated', A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, on Mark 14. 3.
- ⁴⁸ 'Then as soon as the Ichthyophagoi ('Fish-eaters') came to Cambyses from Elephantine, he sent them to the Ethiopians, enjoining them what they should say and giving them gifts to bear with them, that is to say a purple garment, and a collar of twisted gold with bracelets, and *an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment* ('ἀλάβαστρον μύρου βαρυτίμου', the words in Matthew 26. 7), and a cask of palm-wine', Herodotus, *Histories*. Book 3, Paragraph 20. (Accessed at <http://www.bostonleadershipbuilders.com/herodotus/book03.htm>.)
- ⁴⁹ Matt. 2. 11. 'Such offerings to kings were quite in accordance with Eastern usage', A. Carr, *op. cit.*, page 91.
- ⁵⁰ Mark 14. 3.
- ⁵¹ Luke 10. 39-40.
- ⁵² John 11. 31.
- ⁵³ John 12. 4-5; Matt. 26. 8-9.
- ⁵⁴ Matt. 26. 8.
- ⁵⁵ Mark 14. 4-5.
- ⁵⁶ John 12. 4.
- ⁵⁷ Judas 'had the bag', John 12. 6; 13. 29.
- ⁵⁸ In the days of Caesar Augustus, the pay of an ordinary soldier in the Roman army was, at most, only one denarii for a day's military service; source: Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals*, Book 1, Chapter 17.
- ⁵⁹ Matt. 20. 2.
- ⁶⁰ John 6. 7.
- ⁶¹ John 13. 29.
- ⁶² John 12. 5-6.
- ⁶³ Matt. 26. 47-49.
- ⁶⁴ Matt. 27. 3 assumes that Judas had earlier received the 30 shekels of silver.
- ⁶⁵ Matt. 26. 7.
- ⁶⁶ John 12. 5. In prayer, our Lord later described Judas as 'the son of *perdition*', John 17. 12. Interestingly, the Saviour used the same word there ('ἀπώλεια') as that translated 'waste' in the question inspired by Judas, 'To what purpose is this *waste*?' We might perhaps say, therefore, that 'Why this waste?' was an ironic question for 'the son of waste' to ask!
- ⁶⁷ Matt. 26. 8-9.
- ⁶⁸ Deut. 15. 11; cf. Psa. 41. 1; 82. 3-4; 112. 9; Prov. 14. 31; 19. 17; 22. 9; 28. 27; 29. 7.
- ⁶⁹ Matt. 26. 10-11.
- ⁷⁰ Luke 10. 39, 42.
- ⁷¹ Matt. 26. 10 with John 12. 3.
- ⁷² For example, the Contemporary English Version, English Standard Version, Good News Bible, God's Word, International Standard Version, and New International Version.
- ⁷³ 'Let her alone. Why do you trouble her?' Mark 14. 6, taken with John 12. 4.
- ⁷⁴ We might perhaps say, therefore, in the language of the apostle Paul, that, to Judas, the fragrance of Mary's expensive ointment proved to be 'a fragrance of death unto death', 2 Cor. 2. 16.

⁷⁵ Matt. 26. 12; Mark 14. 8; John 12. 7.

⁷⁶ Luke 10. 39.

⁷⁷ Not that our Lord's words necessarily mean that Mary had understood the full significance of what she was doing.

⁷⁸ Mark 16. 1.

⁷⁹ John 20. 12.

⁸⁰ Matt. 26. 12; Mark 14. 8; John 12. 7. There is no suggestion that Mary washed the feet of Jesus with 'tears', as did the woman from the city of Luke 7. 38.

⁸¹ Luke 24. 21; cf. Acts 1. 6.

⁸² John 13. 29.

⁸³ Cf. 1 Chron. 26. 20.

⁸⁴ Matt. 26. 15.

⁸⁵ 'He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it', John 12. 6 ESV.

⁸⁶ Exod. 21. 32. To think ... that He, who had taken on Himself the form of a bondservant *to God* (Phil. 2. 7), was sold for the value placed on a bondservant *to man*.

⁸⁷ Matt. 16. 26; Mark 8. 36; Luke 9. 25.

⁸⁸ I suggest that the word 'Then' (Matt. 26. 14) points to the logical connection with what was recorded immediately before.

⁸⁹ In Luke 7. 36-50, we read of another woman who anointed our Lord. Interestingly, she also performed her act in the house of a Simon, not that of 'Simon the leper' but that of 'Simon the Pharisee'.

We might say that the woman of Luke 7 was (in our Lord's words at the time), a 'five hundred denarii debtor, whereas the woman of Matthew 26 was a 'three hundred denarii' worshipper! Our Lord said of the woman of Luke 7 that she 'loved much'. I cannot believe that He would have said any less of Mary of Bethany.

⁹⁰ Quoted from the 'FaithGateway' Daily Devotional for 29 March 2021.