

The Gospel of *Mark*

The Servant Leadership of Jesus

The Servant's Ministry in Jerusalem (continued) (11 – 16)

Private Teaching and Ministry: *Jesus Anointed at Bethany* (14:1-11)

14:1-2 The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread were starting in two days. The chief priests and scribes were determined to kill Jesus, but they did not want to upset the people during the festivals.

Passover is the celebration of the angel of death “passing over” the Israelite homes, while killing the firstborn of Egypt ^{Exodus 12:1-13:6}. The Feast of Unleavened Bread is a seven-day commemoration (starting the day after Passover) of the Israelites departing Egypt ^{Exodus 23:15}.

In the first century, Jerusalem had about fifty thousand citizens, but the population increased at Passover to several hundred thousand to as much as a million. The Jewish leaders were eager to kill Jesus ^{Mark 3:6, 11:18}, but they were afraid of the people's reaction ^{Mark 11:32, 12:12}.

3-5 Jesus relaxed at the home of Simon the Leper in Bethany ^{Mark 11:11, John 11:1-44} when a woman came and anointed Him with a bottle of very expensive perfume. Some of the people complained, saying the perfume could have been sold for a huge sum of money and used for the poor.

Some speculate Jesus cured Simon of leprosy, and the dinner was to show Simon's gratitude.

There are several differences between the accounts by Matthew ^{Matthew 26:1-13}/Mark ^{Mark 14:1-9} and John ^{John 12:1-8}. In John's account, the event described occurred on Saturday ^{John 12:1} at the home of Mary, Martha & Lazarus ^{John 12:3}, and Mary anointed Jesus' “feet” with perfume ^{John 12:3}.

In the Matthew/Mark account, the event took place on Wednesday ^{Mark 14:1} at the house of “Simon the Leper” ^{Mark 14:3}, and an unnamed woman anointed the “head” of Jesus ^{Mark 14:3}.

There was an earlier time when another woman anointed Jesus' feet with perfume. ^{Luke 7:36-50}

The Gospels mention Mary 3 times; each time she is at the feet of Jesus ^{Luke 10:39, John 11:32, 12:3}.

The woman's alabaster jar was a long-necked bottle made out of expensive marble from Egypt.

The perfume she brought was “pure nard” from the nard plant, which was native to India.

Mark gave the literal translation of the perfume's worth as more than three hundred denarii ^{v.5}.

Mark stated that "some" were indignant ^{v.4}, but John named Judas Iscariot ^{John 12:4} and Matthew seemed to indicate all of the "disciples" followed the lead of Judas ^{Matthew 26:8}.

John also pointed out Judas became incensed, not because of the poor, but his greed ^{John 12:6}.

In addition to their plot against Jesus, the chief priests also planned to kill Lazarus ^{John 12:9-11}.

6-9 Jesus reprimanded those who rebuked the woman, stating that her act was a "beautiful thing".

He told them there would always be plenty of poor to help ^{Deuteronomy 15:11}, but He was going to be with them only for a limited amount of time. The woman did what she could do ^{Romans 12:1} to worship Him in preparation for His upcoming death ^{John 19:40}. Jesus assured them her act would be honored by believers throughout time, wherever the "gospel is preached" ^{Matthew 24:14, Mark 16:15}.

Jesus made a subtle, but vital point for every believer to apply: "She did what she could." ^{v.8}.

10-11 In stark contrast to Mary's love, the apostle Judas Iscariot then went to the chief priests who offered him money so he would provide for them an opportune place and time to arrest Jesus ^{v.10-11}.

Iscariot means "man of Kerioth", which was a small town south of Jerusalem, so he was not a Galilean like all the other apostles. Judas' interest in Jesus seemed to be earthly greed/power.

The Gospel of Luke adds the fact that Judas became possessed by Satan at this time ^{Luke 22:3}.

The amount of money Judas accepted is specified in the OT ^{Zechariah 11:12-13} and NT ^{Matthew 26:15} as 30 pieces of silver, which was the price of a slave, as defined in the Mosaic Law ^{Exodus 21:32}.

Private Teaching and Ministry: *The Last Supper* (14:12-31)

12-16 During the day (Thursday), the disciples asked Jesus where He would like to celebrate Passover.

He told two of His disciples to follow a man carrying water to a house with an upper room ^{Acts 1:13} that was ready for the preparations. The disciples did what Jesus said and "prepared the Passover".

Luke specified the apostles who were to find the place where they would celebrate Passover as Peter and John ^{Luke 22:8}. Finding the man carrying the water was easy, because it would be a rare occurrence, since women almost always carried out this chore. It is obvious Jesus made the arrangements at an earlier time – perhaps at John Mark's home (?) ^{see notes on Mark 10:20-22}.

According to the Law of Moses, the Passover Lamb was to be chosen on 10 Nisan^{Exodus 12:3} and slaughtered at twilight (literally: between the evenings) on 14 Nisan^{Exodus 12:6}, and then Passover was to be celebrated that evening (14 Nisan^{Leviticus 23:5}). Note: So, Jesus presented Himself to the people as the *Mashiach Nagid*: Messiah the King (the “Lamb of God,”^{John 1:29}) as He entered Jerusalem the same time the Passover lambs were being presented at the temple.

17-21 That evening, Jesus and His apostles went to the upper room, where He washed the feet of His apostles^{John 13:3-17}. As they ate the Seder meal, Jesus said that one of them would betray Him, which greatly saddened the apostles. Jesus continued by explaining the betrayer’s fate would be horrible.

Judas did betray Jesus, but the act came as no surprise to God, because He had planned it from the beginning of time^{Isaiah 46:10, Acts 2:23} and prophesied it all in the OT^{Psalms 22, Isaiah 53} as part of His plan to provide salvation^{1 John 4:9-10}. The Jewish leaders planned to do it after the Passover^{v.1-2}, but Jesus set the schedule, because He/God was in control^{Psalms 115:3}.

Jesus made a very strong statement about the human responsibility for repenting of sins and believing in the Savior, as well as the terror awaiting all unsaved people in hell^{Revelation 14:9-12}.

22-26 During the meal, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to His apostle, telling them it was His “body”; Jesus then took the cup, blessed it and gave it to them, saying it was His “blood”. Jesus then proclaimed He would not drink wine again until He was in the “kingdom of God”. Then they all joined in the singing of a hymn^{Hallel Psalms: 115-118} and went out to the Mount of Olives^{v.26}.

This story describes the transformation of the Passover of the Old Covenant into the Lord’s Supper of the New Covenant. The OC was confirmed^{Exodus 24:1-8} by the sacrificial shedding of blood, and Jesus sealed the NC with His blood^{Hebrews 9:11-14}. The bread and wine were first introduced by Melchizedek^{Genesis 14:18-20} (in a prophetic foreshadowing of Communion).

As the Seder meal was ending, Jesus, the leader (patriarch) of the celebration, broke and then passed out pieces of the ‘buried’ (hidden) loaf of unleavened bread (*afikomin*) to eat with the third cup of wine (the cup of redemption/thanksgiving/blessing^{1 Corinthians 10:16}).

Jesus referred to the buried loaf at the meal's end as His body and offered to His apostles; however, before they ate the bread, Jesus blessed it with the traditional Jewish Seder blessing: *"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth."*

Then Jesus proclaimed the third cup of wine to be His blood of the new covenant and offered it to His apostles, but before they drank, Jesus also blessed it with the traditional Seder blessing: *"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine."*

Note that Jesus and the apostles skipped the fourth cup of wine (the cup of praise/Elijah's cup). This cup it was a ceremonial way of expecting Elijah to show up, just ahead of the Messiah, but the Messiah had already arrived, so they sang a Hallel hymn ^{Psalm 118?}, concluding the Seder.

John made it clear Judas left the room before Jesus presented the bread and wine. ^{John 13:23-30}

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial (14:27-31)

27-28 Jesus shocked His apostles by telling them they would all "fall away", and supported this by quoting an OT prophecy ^{Zechariah 13:7}, but He also said He would see them after He had risen ^{Mark 16:7}.

The falling away refers to the disciples' temporary turning away from their loyalty to Jesus. These actions are expressions of the human frailty of the apostles, even though Jesus had prepared them for both the shock of His horrible death and the hope of His resurrection – earlier ^{Matthew 17:22-23, Luke 9:22, 18:31-33}, as well as here, just before His sacrificial death ^{v.28}.

29-31 Peter insisted he would not fall, even if everyone else did; however, Jesus told Peter he would "disown" Him 3 times before morning. Peter "insisted emphatically" he would never disown Jesus, even in the face of death. Then all of the other remaining apostles added their assurance of loyalty.

In this issue, as well as every other Biblically documented exchange between Peter and Jesus, Peter always had an overly self-confident attitude ^{Matthew 14:28, 19:27, Mark 8:32, Luke 9:20, 33, John 13:6-9}.

However, it took his denials, early the morning of Jesus' death, to finally humble Peter ^{John 14:72}.