

Mark Chapter 14

Mark 14:1 "After two days was [the feast of] the Passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put [him] to death."

“The Passover”: Friday of Passover which would have begun on Thursday at sunset. The Passover commemorated the “passing over” of the homes of the Israelites by the angel of death, who killed the firstborn of Egypt (Exodus 12:1 – 13:16).

The Passover began on the 14th day of Nisan (the first month of the Jewish calendar) with the slaying of the Passover lamb, and continued into the early hours of the 15th (see notes on Exodus 12:6; Matt. 26:2).

The "Feast of Unleavened Bread" This feast commemorated the departure of the Israelites from Egypt (Exodus 23:15). It began immediately after the Passover and lasted from the 15th of Nisan to the 21st of Nisan.

In fact, even the evening of the Passover was included in Feast of Unleavened Bread. Officially, Unleavened Bread began on the 15th of Nisan, but Unleavened Bread was also part of the Passover meal.

Passover was celebrated for the sparing of the firstborn of the Israelites when the firstborn of Egypt were killed by the tenth plague. The Hebrews sacrificed a lamb and put the blood over the door. Anyone in the house where the blood was over the door was spared. Where the blood of the lamb was not over the door, the firstborn died.

The Hebrews were told to remember and celebrate Passover every year. Jesus fulfilled Passover by being Himself the Passover Lamb.

Jesus was not only the Passover Lamb, but was the Unleavened Bread as well. He was without sin (unleavened), and He called Himself the "Bread of life". Even the fact that He was born in Bethlehem verifies this. "Bethlehem" means house of bread.

“After two days”: In the context of Matt. 26:2, Jesus predicted His crucifixion was to take place in “two days,” which would be Friday since when He was speaking it was Wednesday evening. Mark’s time line here is the same as Matthew’s (see note on Matt. 26:2).

“Chief priests” (see note on 8:31). “Scribes” (see note on Matt. 2:4).

These chief priests and scribes were the religious people of that day. I personally believe their jealousy caused them to want to destroy Jesus. They knew the people would follow Him, unless they destroyed Him.

Mark 14:2 "But they said, Not on the feast [day], lest there be an uproar of the people."

“Not on the feast day”: Because the Passover had to be celebrated in Jerusalem, the city would have been overflowing, perhaps as many as two million people were there. Since many would have been from Galilee, an area where Jesus had many followers. And the religious leaders did not want to start a riot, they determined to wait until after the Passover season when the crowds would be diminished (see note on Matt. 26:5).

At feast time the city would be teeming with pilgrims; such crowds were easily incited to riot.

Jesus was very popular with the people. Many of them had been there when He performed a miracle. They were afraid these people would rise up and fight them to protect Jesus.

Verses 3-9: The incident recorded here had occurred the previous Saturday (John 12:1). It is Mark’s account of the anointing of Jesus by Mary in preparation for His crucifixion (Matt. 26:6-13; John 12:2-8).

Mark 14:3 "And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured [it] on his head."

“Bethany” (see note on 11:1).

“Simon the leper”: This man is mentioned in the New Testament only in connection with this narrative. Since a leper was an outcast in Jewish society, he was probably miraculously cleansed of his leprosy by Jesus and may have planned this meal for Jesus in gratitude (see notes on Lev. 13; Matt. 26:6).

“A woman”: (John 12:3), identifies her as Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who were also present at this meal. Jesus was eating a meal with Simon. Nothing was too expensive for Mary to give to her Master.

The anointing of Jesus' head was in addition to washing His feet with her tears and wiping them with the hairs of her head. Martha and Mary loved Jesus very much. This was very expensive perfume, possibly, the most expensive in the land. Nothing they would do would ever repay Him for raising their brother, Lazarus, from the grave.

“Alabaster”: This long-necked bottle was made out of a special variety of marble, a material which proved to be the best container for preserving expensive perfumes and oils (see note on Matt. 26:7).

“Spikenard”: This oil was derived from the nard plant, which was native to India. That it was pure meant it was genuine and unadulterated, which is what made it so costly.

“Brake”: She may have simply broken the neck of the bottle so that she could pour out the contents more quickly, an expression of her sincere and total devotion to the Lord.

Mark 14:4 "And there were some that had indignation within themselves, and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made?"

“Some that had indignation ... said”: John 12:4-5 says that Judas was the instigator and (Matt. 26:8), indicates that all the disciples, following Judas’ lead, were angry with Mary’s waste of a very valuable commodity.

John 12:4-5 "Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's [son], which should betray him," "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?"

Three hundred pence was nearly a year's wages for a man. We know that Judas really wanted that money put in the purse which he carried. He really wasn't interested in the poor. His greed for money later caused him to betray Jesus.

It seems that more than one of the disciples thought this perfume being poured on Jesus' head was a waste. The main complaint came from Judas though.

Mark 14:5 "For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her."

Three hundred “pence” is equivalent to a year’s income for a rural worker.

“Given to the poor”: While 11 of the disciples would have agreed to this use of the money, the fact is the poor may never have seen it. Since Judas was in reality a thief masquerading as the treasurer of the 12, he could have embezzled all of it (John 12:6).

This really was no one's business but hers, what she did with what belonged to her. Her unselfishness possibly, showed their greed even more than usual.

Mark 14:6-7 "And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me." "For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always."

The world, then and now, is always full of the poor. Opportunity to help the poor is always there, but Jesus would be in their presence for only a limited time. This was not a time for meeting the needs of the poor and the sick, it was a time for sacrificial worship of the One who would soon suffer and be crucified (see note on Matt. 26:11; compare 2:19).

Jesus' first remark was to protect her when he said, "Let her alone". She had humbled herself more than all of these disciples. He told them again that He would not be with them long. She, possibly, understood more of what Jesus had been telling them.

Mark 14:8 "She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying."

“Anoint my body ... to the burying”: Mary did so probably without ever realizing what she was doing. Her anointing of Jesus became a symbol that anticipated His death and burial (see note on Matt. 26:12).

This statement shows that Jesus foresaw a criminal’s death, for only in the case of a criminal’s burial was the body not anointed before being laid to rest.

Please be assured that this was not embalming fluid as some of the Bible dictionaries indicate. Jesus was not embalmed. Embalming was an Egyptian practice. Hebrews were not embalmed; this was anointing perfume.

Mark 14:9 "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, [this] also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

“Verily I say unto you” (see note on 3:28). “Gospel” (see note on 1:1).

This was a prophetic statement by Jesus. Mary would be immortalized for anointing Jesus before His burial. The other gospels mentioned a woman and John said Mary.

Mark 14:10 "And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them."

“Judas Iscariot”: Standing in sharp contrast to the love and devotion of Mary was the hatred and treachery of Judas. This disciple, who is understandably referred to last in the lists of the 12, was the son of Simon, who was also called “Iscariot.” The name “Iscariot” means “man of Kerioth,” which was a small town in Judea about 23 miles south of Jerusalem (3:19).

Thus, Judas was not a Galilean like the other disciples. It is clear that Judas never had any spiritual interest in Jesus, he was attracted to Him because he expected Jesus to become a powerful religious and political leader. He saw great potential for power, wealth, and prestige through his association with Him.

But Jesus knew what Judas was like from the start, and that this why He chose him as one of the 12. He was the one who would betray Him so that the Scripture and God’s plan of salvation would be fulfilled (Psalms 41:9; 55:12-15, 20-21; Zechariah 11:12-13; John 6:64, 70-71; 13:18; 17:12).

“The twelve” (see note on 3:14). “Chief priests” (see note on 8:31).

We see here, that one of the elect twelve would be the one to betray Jesus. The chief priests had decided, you remember, to wait until after Passover, but they would not overlook this opportunity. It seems this happened soon after Mary anointed Jesus. Judas' greed was overwhelming. He would not overlook an opportunity for profit.

Mark 14:11 "And when they heard [it], they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him."

“Money”: Matthew says the amount Judas agreed to as blood money was 30 pieces of silver (see note on Matt. 26:15).

“Sought how he might ... betray him”: “Seeking” is better translated “began to seek.” Judas was looking for a suitable occasion to carry out his evil plan, which would be when Jesus was away from the crowds (Luke 22:6).

We will see God redeeming the world in the most unlikely way, by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God (Jesus Christ), on the cross. Judas' greed was greater than his love for Jesus. Judas plotted to betray Jesus.

Mark 14:12 "And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?"

“Unleavened bread: Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were so closely associated that both terms were used interchangeably to refer to the 8-day celebration that began with the Passover. Although Unleavened Bread is used here, Mark’s clear intention is the preparation for Passover (see notes on verse 1; Matt. 26:17).

“When they killed the Passover”: The lambs were killed on 14 Nisan at twilight (Exodus 12:6), a Hebrew term meaning, “between the two evenings,” or between 3:00 and 5:00 p.m.

After the lamb was slaughtered and some of its blood sprinkled on the altar, the lamb was taken home, roasted whole and eaten in the evening meal with unleavened bread, bitter herbs, charoseth (a paste made of crushed apples, dates, pomegranates, and nuts, into which they dipped bread), and wine.

It is now Thursday.

Actually, unleavened bread was eaten all week. This was actually on the 14th of Nisan. This place they were speaking of had to be somewhere in Jerusalem.

Mark 14:13 "And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him."

“Two of his disciples”: Peter and John (Luke 22:8). Only two people were allowed to accompany a lamb to the sacrifice.

“Man bearing a pitcher of water”: This is the only way that Jesus identified the man. But he stood out because it was uncommon for a man to carry a pitch of water, women usually preformed that chore (see note on Matt. 26:18).

A man might commonly carry a wineskin, but generally only women carries water jars. He would be easily spotted in a crowd and no words would have to be exchanged, there was already a warrant out for Jesus' arrest (John 11:57).

In (Luke 22:8), the Scripture tells us that the two disciples sent were Peter and John. The Lord was telling them how to recognize the man they must follow.

Mark 14:14 "And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?"

“Guest chamber”: The word is translated “inn” (in Luke 2:7). It typically referred to a place where a traveler could spend the night, a place of lodging or a guest room in someone's home, as was the case here (Matt. 26:18).

This was, perhaps, someone that Jesus already knew, but whether he knew Jesus before or not is unimportant. God had the man to be in this particular place. He would be receptive. This guest chamber Jesus told them of was a second story room, in fact, a very large room.

Mark 14:15 "And he will shew you a large upper room furnished [and] prepared: there make ready for us."

“Large upper room”: This indicates the room was located upstairs, and may have been a roof chamber built on top of the house.

“Prepared”: Peter and John were to prepare the Passover meal for Jesus and the other disciples.

God had this man prepare this upper room for the feast. How this man knew to have this guest chamber ready, we are not told, but we know that possibly, the Holy Spirit had caused the man to have these preparations made.

Mark 14:16 "And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover."

The Passover meal was to be eaten at night after sunset, but had to be completed before midnight (Exodus 12:8-14).

“Peter and John may have rejoined Jesus and the other disciples and led them to the upper room. This may also be a general reference to the 12, meaning that Jesus came with the other 10 disciples to meet Peter and John.

They had gotten the lamb, and had taken it to the temple to be sacrificed by the priest. This meat would be cooked at the house of the upper room. This would consist of the bitter herbs, wine, and unleavened bread, and be eaten and drunk by Jesus and the disciples.

Mark Chapter 14 Questions

1. What two ceremonial feasts overlapped?
2. What time of the year were these feasts?
3. In verse 1, we find that the intentions of the chief priests and scribes were to do what to Jesus?
4. What was Passover celebrating?
5. Who is the Passover lamb symbolic of?
6. Who is the unleavened bread symbolic of?
7. For how many years were the Jews to celebrate Passover?
8. Why were the priests planning to wait till after the feast day to capture Jesus?
9. Where did Jesus go, and was sitting at meat, when the ointment was poured on His head?
10. Who was the woman?
11. Why do you think she had done this?
12. How expensive was it?
13. How did the disciples feel about this?
14. In John, which disciple was mentioned specifically complaining?
15. Why do you suppose he felt this way?
16. Who did Judas go to and make a deal with?
17. How much money did they offer Judas?
18. What does the amount of money mean symbolically?
19. On the first day of Unleavened Bread, what did the disciples ask Jesus?
20. What city would the Passover be celebrated in?
21. Who went to make the arrangements?
22. What question were they to ask the man?

23. What name did they call Jesus by to the man?

24. Describe the room where they would feast.

25. What did the disciples do to prepare?