

Matthew Chapter 26

Verses 1-2: (see also Mark 14:1-2; Luke 22:1-2). Jesus makes a final prediction of His death two days before Passover, which was eaten on the evening of Nisan 14. Thus the prediction was made on the twelfth of the month (April). The “feast of the Passover” was the first feast on the Jewish yearly calendar and was kept in commemoration of the national deliverance from Egypt in the Exodus under Moses.

Passover takes its name from the Hebrew term related to the death angel passing over those who had applied the blood to their homes (Exodus 12). Passover time was a great high day among the Jews and thousands of pilgrims flocked to Jerusalem each year to observe it.

Verses 2-5: Jesus also predicts His betrayal. “Son of man” is His favorite designation of Himself. “Betrayed” (Greek paradidomi) is better translated here as “delivered up” or “handed over.” The assemblage of the Sanhedrin takes place at the “palace” (Greek aule, “the courtyard of his residence”), just before Christ’s earthly ministry began.

Matthew 26:1-2 "And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, "Ye know that after two days is [the feast of] the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."

“Passover”: This was God’s chosen time for Christ to die. He was the antitype to which the Passover Lamb had always referred. Christ had always avoided His enemies’ plots to kill Him (Luke 4:29-30; John 5:18; 10:39), but now it was His time. The true Lamb of God would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

The authorities coming to get Jesus and crucifying Him would be no surprise to Him. He was fully aware that He, Himself was the Passover Lamb for all believers. He had finished teaching the public. After His crucifixion and after He had risen from the grave, He would continue to teach His disciples.

The feast of the Passover was done in remembrance of a night long ago when the death angel came through the streets in Egypt to kill the firstborn in every family. The only ones who were spared were the Hebrews who killed a male lamb and put the blood over their door. Everyone in the house was spared when the blood was over their door.

This Passover had been celebrated on the fourteenth of Nisan, in remembrance that God had spared their lives so many years ago. Just as the lamb spared the Hebrew, Jesus, our Passover Lamb, will save all believers from death.

Jesus knew He was to be betrayed and even knew who it was that would betray Him. Jesus came into the world for this very purpose. He would not run. He would willingly go through all this for His own.

Matthew 26:3 "Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,"

“Caiaphas”: Caiaphas served as High-Priest from A.D. 18 – 36, an unusually long tenure for anyone in that role. His longevity suggests he had a close relationship with both Rome and the Herodian dynasty. He was son-in-law to his predecessor, Annas (John 18:13).

He controlled the temple and no doubt personally profited from the corrupt merchandising that was taking place there. His enmity against Jesus seems intensely personal and especially malevolent; every time he appears in Scripture, he is seeking Jesus’ destruction.

Caiaphas was the officially appointed high priest from about 18 A.D. to 36 A.D. (during Christ’s ministry and the early years of the church). A problem arises in that Matthew 26:3 names Caiaphas as high priest, Acts 4:6 names Annas, and Luke 3:2 names both as high priest.

John seems to explain the historical situation best. John 18:13 records that Jesus, after His arrest, was led “to Annas first; for he was father-in-law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.”

Yet the verses that follow immediately refer to Annas also as high priest (verses 15, 19, 22). Later, Jesus is led to Caiaphas, the official high priest. Annas had served as high priest until he was deposed by Rome in 15 A.D. Yet his influence and power continued over the high priestly office, with five of his sons occupying that position.

Hence, Annas could also be properly identified high priest responsible for Christ’s death and the severe persecution of the early church (Acts 5:17; 9:1).

Matthew 26:4 "And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill [him]."

The very time that Jesus was telling the disciples about His coming crucifixion, the chief priests, scribes and elders were plotting trying to capture Jesus and kill Him. These chief priests were of the Sanhedrin. This high priest, whose home they met in, was Caiaphas.

He was really a "go between" for the Romans who had given him this job. They planned to get Jesus as quietly as possible and do away with Him the same way, so they would not start a fight with His followers.

Matthew 26:5 "But they said, Not on the feast [day], lest there be an uproar among the people."

“Not on the feast” means “not during the feast.” Since many of Jesus’ supporters from Galilee would be in Jerusalem during this time, the leaders did not want to upset the crowd, whose emotions were already high.

The Jewish leaders, who had been eager to kill Him for so long, decided to postpone their plot until a more politically opportune time. But they could not; God's chosen time had come. Jesus ultimately foiled their plan and died at the very hour of the slaying of the Passover lambs.

The Passover celebration actually lasted eight days, and many Galileans would be there. The Jewish leaders were trying not to have a confrontation with Jesus' people.

Verses 6-16: The anointing at Bethany (Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8) is related by John as taking place six days before Passover, indicating the one version is topical and the other chronological, since neither Matthew nor Mark dates the event. "Simon the leper" is mentioned only here and in the parallel at Mark 14:3. By comparison with John 12:1-8, a reasonable deduction is that he was the father of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary.

"She did it for my burial:" The point seems to be that the action was appropriate in view of His burial which was soon to take place, and that it might be regarded as symbolic or prophetic of the burial.

"This gospel," the Good News of the Lord's death and resurrection (see also Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:3-6)

"Judas Iscariot" (see Mark 3:19) ... and they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver:" Actually, they counted out the amount to him, representing about a month's wages or the price of a common slave.

These words are substantially from the Greek Septuagint version of Zechariah 11:12. "Betray him," that is, hand Him over: The same verb is translated "deliver" in verse 15. The Last Supper is also related in Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-13; and John 13:1-29).

Matthew 26:6 "Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,"

"Simon the leper": Simon was almost certainly someone whom Jesus had healed of leprosy, for lepers were deemed unclean and therefore not permitted to socialize or even live in cities.

Bethany was the home of Jesus' friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. This time Jesus was in Simon the leper's home. Probably, he had been one of the leper's that Jesus healed. This is not known for sure. Simon could have been a relative or close friend of Mary and Martha. It seems they were here in Simon's house.

Matthew 26:7 "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]."

"An alabaster box of very precious ointment": Mark set the value at "over three hundred denarii nearly a year's wages - very costly indeed. Even the expensive flask was broken (Mark 14:3),

making the act that much more costly. "Alabaster" was a fine variety of marble, quarried in Egypt, which could be carved into delicate containers for storing costly perfumes.

John tells us this woman was Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus (John 12:3); thus Martha and Mary were evidently serving the meal for Simon the leper. Matthew and Mark mention that she anointed his head

John adds that she anointed His feet and wiped them with her hair. A similar act of worship is related in Luke 7:36-38, but the differences in timing, location and other details make it clear that the two occasions were different.

John identified her as this Mary. Why her name was omitted here we do not know. This "alabaster box" was used for expensive perfume or ointment. This "Ointment" which Mary poured on His head was like anointing.

Mary loved Jesus, and this was no sacrifice to her. Mary, on several occasions, called Him Master.

Matthew 26:8 "But when his disciples saw [it], they had indignation, saying, To what purpose [is] this waste?"

"His disciples saw it, they had indignation": John says Judas was the spokesman who voiced the complaint, and that he did it for hypocritical reasons (John 12:4-6). Evidently the other disciples, being undiscerning, were quick to voice sympathy with Judas' protest.

Matthew 26:9 "For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor."

In another book, it was mentioned that Judas complained. Of course, Judas was the one that carried the purse. This perfume was worth about 300 days' wages. Mary was a very wealthy woman and could well afford this. It was hers, and no one else really should have a say in what she was to do with it.

This was her Lord; nothing was too good for Him. You hear so much today, even from the ones who usually give very little to God, that there is too much spent on beauty in the church and should be used to feed the poor. I wonder how God feels about that.

The tabernacle in the wilderness and the temple in Jerusalem were very expensive places of worship by Almighty God's directions. It is easy to take your place of worship too lightly. We truly must help the poor, but we must give into God's house, as well.

Sometimes, I think the magnificence of a particular church makes you feel the greatness of God. We must not take God too lightly.

Matthew 26:10 "When Jesus understood [it], he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me."

The pouring ointment upon the head of Christ was a token of the highest respect. Where there is true love in the heart to Jesus Christ, nothing will be thought too good to bestow upon him. The more Christ's servants complain, the more he manifests his acceptance.

This act of faith and love was so remarkable, that it would be reported, as a memorial of Mary's faith and love, to all future ages, and in all places where the gospel should be preached. This prophecy is fulfilled.

Matthew 26:11 "For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always."

“For ye have the poor always with you”: Jesus certainly was not disparaging ministry to the poor, especially so soon after the lesson of the sheep and goats judgment (25:35-36). However, He revealed here that there is a higher priority than any other earthly ministry, and that is worship rendered to Him.

This would be an utter blasphemy for anyone less than God, so yet again He was implicitly affirming His deity (8:27; 12:6, 8; 21:16; 22:42, 45).

Matthew 26:12 "For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did [it] for my burial."

“She did it for my burial”: This does not necessarily mean that Mary was consciously aware of the significance of her act. It is doubtful that she knew of His approaching death, or at least how close it was. But this was an act of pure worship, her heart having been moved by God to perform a sacrificial and symbolic act.

It seems as though the disciples still did not understand what was about to take place, even though Jesus had told them several times. Jesus took up for Mary and told the disciples to leave her alone.

He told them one more time that He would not be with them very long in body form. Mary showed her reverence for Jesus' body. She had realized what Jesus had been telling them, and the disciples did not.

Matthew 26:13 "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, [there] shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

“For a memorial of her”: This promise was guaranteed by the inclusion of this story in the New Testament.

Jesus was appreciative of this unselfish act of Mary's, and He told them that this pouring of this ointment on His head for burial would never be forgotten. It shall be remembered, and shall also be remembered who did this.

Matthew 26:14 "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,"

“Judas Iscariot” was the apostle infamous for his betrayal of Christ. The gospel writers do not permit the reader to forget this fact, repeating it in about half of the total references to Judas. Though the significance of the name “Iscariot” is uncertain, many believe it means “man of Kerioth”, a town in southern Palestine.

This would make Judas the only non-Galilean among the Twelve. Judas’s reasons for betraying Jesus are not explicitly stated, but two are probable. First, greed played some part. When Mary anointed Jesus’ feet with very expensive spikenard, Judas objected, saying it should have been given to the poor. John comments on this, stating: “This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare (took) what was put therein” (John 12:6).

Second, and more likely, Judas was disillusioned over the way Christ’s kingdom was headed. He had been seeking personal gain, perhaps through political power, and his disappointment turned to spite and revenge.

Though Matthew (27:3-7) and Luke (Acts 1:18) describe the events of his death differently, they can be harmonized several ways. One simple explanation may be found in the principle that, whereas Luke records all events as acts of Judas, Matthew distinguishes between what Judas did and what the priests did.

Just as Judas bought the field only in that he paid for it, so he fell only in that he was thrown down upon the rocks after he had hanged himself. It does not state that he jumped. Judas hanged himself and later was cut down and thrown into a rocky ravine.

Matthew 26:15 "And said [unto them], What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver."

“Thirty pieces of silver”: This was the price of a slave (Exodus 21:32).

Matthew 26:16 "And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him."

There were but twelve called apostles, and one of them was like a devil; surely we must never expect any society to be pure on this side of heaven. The greater profession men make of religion, the greater opportunity they have of doing mischief, if their hearts be not right with God.

Observe, that Christ's own disciple, who knew so well his doctrine and manner of his life, and was false to him, could not charge him with anything criminal, though it would have served to justify his treachery. What did Judas want? Was not he welcome wherever his Master was? Did he not fare as Christ fared?

It is not the lack, but the love of money, that is the root of all evil. After he had made that wicked bargain, Judas had time to repent, and to revoke it; but when lesser acts of dishonesty have hardened the conscience men do without hesitation that which is more shameful.

Here, we are told that Judas, one of the original twelve chosen by Jesus, would be the one who would betray Him. Probably, the reason Judas name was given, was so he would not be confused with another Judas who joined in with the disciples later and helped them.

Whether Judas was angry about the expensive perfume, and that prompted him to do this terrible thing, we are not told. Whatever the reason, he did it. I believe that Judas' greed for money prompted this act. Greed is a terrible thing when it goes unchecked.

Matthew Chapter 26 Questions

1. How many days was it to Passover when Jesus finished talking to the people and came to the disciples?
2. What two things did Jesus tell them would happen to Him?
3. Who is the Passover Lamb for the believers?
4. What was Passover in remembrance of?
5. When was it celebrated?
6. Who assembled together to plot a way to kill Jesus?
7. Who were these chief priests?
8. Why did they not want to do this on feast day?
9. How long did Passover celebration last?
10. Whose house was Jesus in at Bethany?
11. Who was the woman who poured ointment on Jesus?
12. What did the disciples say about this?
13. Were they really interested in the poor?
14. Who was the disciple who carried the purse?
15. About how much was the ointment worth?
16. What did Jesus say about Mary?
17. Why did Jesus say she poured the ointment on His head.
18. What did Jesus say about Mary?

19. Which disciple went to see the chief priests?
20. How much did the priests agree to pay Judas for Jesus?
21. Explain the spiritual meaning of the price.
22. Why did they give Judas' full name?