



The Gospel of Mark

A Living Word Independent Bible Study



The Gospel of Mark Part 35

Mark 14:1-11

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Mark 14:1-11

(NIV)

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of Mark 14, things move very quickly toward Jesus' crucifixion.

Mark 14 is a long chapter, containing scenes that are all very familiar to most Christians:

The Anointing of Jesus

The Lord's Supper

The Prediction of Peter's Denial

The Garden of Gethsemane

The Arrest of Jesus

Jesus' Jewish Trial

Peter's Denial

We will be looking at the anointing of Jesus in this lesson.

Mark 14:1-11

(NIV)

INTRODUCTION

We should first note that there are two other passages, in Luke and in John, in which women anoint Jesus.

Matthew's version is almost identical to Mark's.

In Luke 7:36-50:

The story takes place in Galilee – not Bethany in Judea as here in Mark.

The woman is identified as having lived a sinful life – there is not such indication in Mark.

Jesus' FEET are anointed – not his head, as in Mark.

The woman wipes Jesus' feet with her hair – this does not happen in Mark.

A Pharisee is present, not the disciples – in Mark, it is among the disciples.

The ONLY similarity to Mark is a woman with a jar of alabaster perfume.

This episode in Luke is almost certainly a DIFFERENT event from the one we read about in Mark and Matthew.

Anointing with oil was a fairly common practice to honor someone.

Mark 14:1-11

(NIV)

INTRODUCTION

In John 12:1-8:

As in Mark:

Passover.

The story takes place in Bethany, prior to the

used.

Pure nard is specifically identified as the oil

There is no indication she is a “sinful woman”.

The objection raised is based on its value for the

poor.

But UNLIKE in Mark:

Mary is explicitly named as the woman.

Judas is explicitly named as the objector.

Feet are anointed, not the head (making this story similar to Luke).

Feet are wiped with hair (again, making this similar to Luke).

This is POSSIBLY the same event as Mark relates, with details conflated from the Luke story.

Mark 14:1 (NIV)

Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him.

“Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread”

These refer to the great celebration remembering and celebrating rescue from slavery in Egypt, recounted in Exodus 12.

Passover was one day, while the Feast lasted the entire following week, beginning on Passover night.

It was very worrisome for Romans. They believed the remembrance of another escape from oppression could inspire thoughts of rebellion against Rome.

“two days away”

Time markers become prominent from here on. It is now the Tuesday of our “Holy Week”.

Mark 14:1 (NIV)

Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him.

“chief priests and teachers of the law”

We must note that the primary actors in Jesus’ arrest and condemnation are, specifically, the Jewish LEADERS.

The Pharisees, who we often single out as Jesus’ adversaries, did not play a huge role in this.

The aggressors are the chief priests and teachers of the law (scribes).

We see them in two passion predictions, plotting after the temple cleansing, and again here – thus, this statement does not come as a surprise.

The Jewish masses, at this point are largely favorably inclined toward Jesus, as seen in 11:18:

Mark 11:18 – “The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.”

We will also see Judas, of course, in a primary role.

Mark 14:2 (NIV)

“But not during the Feast,” they said, “or the people may riot.”

“or the people may riot”

There was a long history of Passover disturbances – this is NOT a needless worry!

They want to arrest Jesus, but only if a serious uprising can be avoided.

Hence, a “sly way” – they must use stealth.

These verses set the tone for everything to come – EVERY passage is read in light of these murderous intentions.

We must not see Jesus, though, as a helpless victim in all this.

Remember – he had full knowledge ahead of time of all that would happen.

He allowed these evil plans to develop.

He had GREATER confidence that God the Father would raise him from the dead.

The evil intentions of Jesus’ enemies would be used by God to bring about a greater good – an awareness shared by Joseph in the book of Genesis:

Genesis 50:19-20 – “But Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.’”

God’s ultimate plans are ALWAYS life-affirming.

Mark 14:3 (NIV)

While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

“Bethany”

Where Jesus had taken up residence the week before Passover (see 11:1).

This is about two miles east of Jerusalem



<https://catholicconvert.com/blog/2019/05/30/did-jesus-ascend-into-heaven-from-mountain-of-olives-acts-112-or-from-bethany-luke-2450/>

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“Simon the Leper”

Bethany is known to have had quarters accommodating lepers.

Simon, however, would NOT have BEEN leprous, but cleansed. The law would not have allowed this gathering otherwise.

“reclining at the table”

That is, eating dinner, and easily approached from behind.

“alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard”

Only the very best perfumes were kept in alabaster. Nard is among the most costly ointments.

“broke the jar”

This implies snapping off the neck of the jar, making it easier to pour out the entire contents.

It also underscores the extravagance of the action.

Mark 14:3 (NIV)

While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

“poured the perfume on his head”

This is reminiscent of the anointing of Jehu as king over Israel, in 2 Kings:

2 Kings 9:6 – “Jehu got up and went into the house. Then the prophet poured the oil on Jehu’s head and declared, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: “I anoint you king over the LORD’s people Israel.””

We similar episodes with the anointing of Saul as king of Israel and anointing Aaron as priest for Israel:

1 Samuel 10:1 – “Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul’s head and kissed him, saying, ‘Has not the LORD anointed you leader over his inheritance?’”

Exodus 29:7 – “Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and wash them with water. Take the garments and dress Aaron with the tunic, the robe of the ephod, the ephod itself and the breastpiece. Fasten the ephod on him by its skillfully woven waistband. Put the turban on his head and attach the sacred diadem to the turban. Take the anointing oil and anoint him by pouring it on his head.”

Anointing with oil was ritually symbolic during installation of both kings and priests.

Given that the woman, as a disciple, and the other disciples are present, it was most likely perceived as acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah.

Mark 14:4 (NIV)

Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume?”

“Some of those present were saying indignantly”

The words indicate extreme anger again, as we saw in the language of “indignance” in both 10:13-14 (when people brought children to Jesus and Jesus became “indignant”) and 10:41 (when James and John asked for the greatest honor in the kingdom, and the disciples became “indignant”).

Mark 10:13-14 – “People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant.”

Mark 10:41 – “When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John.”

Matthew says it was “the disciples” as a group, not just “some of those present”.

“Why this waste”

The disciples still exhibit a lack of insight – not recognizing or valuing the woman’s great sacrifice.

Mark 14:5 (NIV)

“It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.

“more than a year’s wages”

The Greek is literally “300 denarii”.

“given to the poor”

There was traditionally an offering for the poor on the evening of the Passover.

“rebuked her harshly”

This is along the lines of “Stop wasting money! We need it for the Passover offering!”

Mark 14:6-7 (NIV)

“Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me.”

“Leave her alone”

Jesus quickly rushes to the woman’s defense.

“She has done a beautiful thing”

She has expressed her faith and her love for Jesus in an extravagant manner.

“The poor you will always have with you”

See the command from Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 15:11 – “There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.”

Jesus’ comment does NOT imply that the needs of the poor are unimportant!

The disciples would know that Jesus’ statement, from Scripture, is followed by the command to be openhanded toward them.

“you will not always have me”

The opportunity to serve the poor will be ongoing, but the opportunity to serve Jesus personally will soon be gone.

Mark 14:8 (NIV)

“She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.”

“She did what she could”

She has done everything within her power to honor Jesus.

“to prepare for my burial”

Jesus, but probably not the woman herself, identifies the action as more reinforcement of the truth of the passion prediction.

Someone who had recently been anointed with oil, as a sign of honor, prior to a death would **STILL** be anointed with oil again after death in preparation for burial.

Mark 14:9 (NIV)

“I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

“what she has done will also be told”

The memorialization of great and heroic acts through oral history was a primary way to honor the action.

Note, at this time, that the woman’s actions stand in stark contrast to what Judas is about to do in the next two verses.

But not only Judas’s, but also the others present, including the other disciples:

They are concerned with their responsibilities and the pressing needs of ministry.

She is concerned only with Jesus.

What they saw as waste, Jesus saw as a priceless act of devotion.

Mark 14:10 (NIV)

Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them.

“Judas Iscariot”

Judas provides the “sly way” to accomplish the chief priests’ wishes.

Note well that Judas was one of the Twelve, to whom Kingdom authority had been given.

His betrayal was appalling to the early church, and is appalling to us today.

Luke and John somewhat mitigate the embarrassment by saying “Satan entered into Judas:.”

Mark simply says, very briefly, that Judas took this appalling step.

Probably, Judas became disillusioned and wanted to distance himself from this man who criticized the temple establishment and predicted its destruction.

Perhaps, when the talk of martyrdom began, he became demoralized, because he hoped Jesus would establish a new geopolitical kingdom, and when he realized it would not happen, he decided to cut his losses.

Mark 14:10 (NIV)

Then Judas Iscariot,
one of the Twelve, went
to the chief priests to
betray Jesus to them.

“one of the Twelve”

This emphasizes that this was not just a random disciple.

“to betray Jesus to them”

What exactly did Judas offer?

The opportunity for stealth was primary to the chief priests.

But he was probably also able to better fill them in on Jesus’ message and self-understanding.

The questions against Jesus in 14:55-61 suggest this – Judas is most likely the source of these accusations.

Mark 14:11 (NIV)

They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

“delighted to hear this”

Probably, they were equally RELIEVED!
A quiet arrest was essential to avoid a riot.

“promised to give him money”

This is to be done on completion of the task, quietly.
According to Mark’s Gospel, this is done at THEIR initiative.

According to Matthew, JUDAS asks, “what will you give me?”

Matthew 26:15 – “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?’ So they counted out for him thirty silver coins.”

Luke’s Gospel is worded similar to Mark’s but says they “agreed” to give him money – suggesting the possibility that it implies “agreed to Judas’ demand for money”.

In John’s Gospel, Judas is portrayed as stealing from the money box, and as the one bothered by the waste of the woman’s anointing with oil.

John 12:6 – “He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.”

Mark says none of this – the betrayal is unexpected, and no motive is clear (as Matthew and John suggest it is motivated by simple greed.)

Mark 14:1-11

(NIV)

SUMMARY

The rapid movement of the narrative toward the crucifixion of Jesus begins with the short reminder of the leadership's search for a "sly way" to kill Jesus.

Jesus' anointing demonstrates the counterpoint to this response to Jesus – a woman follows the historic example of anointing kings and priests with oil when they assume their office. The anointing of Jesus is the woman's acknowledgment of Jesus' Messiahship.

The narrative then immediately bounces back to the negative response to Jesus, with Judas' providing the leadership with exactly the opportunity they seek to arrest Jesus.

Traitors in all cultures are absolutely despised, but in the ancient world, it was the highest shame imaginable.

For Mark, Judas exemplifies human weakness.

Mark's reminder of Judas' role as one of the Twelve who had been given Kingdom authority is a warning that the kind of discouragement and temptation that overtook Judas could overtake anyone.

We should all be on guard against it!



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