

MARK 14:1-26

The anointing at Bethany

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The Last Supper

BACKGROUND

- Passover is the festival recalling God’s rescue of his people from slavery, and the final plague sent against their Egyptian captors:

Ex 6:5-7: Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. “Therefore, say to the Israelites: ‘I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will **free you from being slaves** to them, and **I will redeem you** with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that **I am the LORD your God**, who **brought you out** from under the yoke of the Egyptians.’”

Ex 12:2-8: “This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a **lamb** for his family, one for each household. If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. The animals you choose must be year-old

males **without defect**, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to **take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses** where they eat the lambs. That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast.

Ex 12:12-14: “On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and **I will bring judgment** on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. **The blood will be a sign** for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. **This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD—a lasting ordinance.**

- Mark 14:12-16 bears the marks of a “finding story” much like Samuel’s finding Saul in 1 Sam 10:1-8—demonstrating that the events are part of God’s plan.
- The hymn mentioned in v. 26 was most likely Ps 118 (or 113-118), traditionally sung after the final blessing at Passover. This Ps, the same Jesus quotes at the end of the “parable of the stupid tenants”, is the one about the stone rejected which becomes the chief cornerstone.
- While it was typical a prominent rabbi to be joined by his disciples for Passover, he would also typically have celebrated with his family.

QUESTIONS

1. Vv. 1-11 are a Mark sandwich: a theme or account (1-2), interrupted (3-9), and finished later (10-11). Why did Mark join the betrayal account to the anointing at Bethany?
2. Matthew’s version of the anointing story points out that the disciples are the ones who object to its extravagance. Imagine that you are one of the disciples, and try to put out of your mind what the Gospels tell us of Jesus’ reply.

- a. How would you have reacted to the woman's action?
 - b. Now imagine that your younger sister is the one who did this. (Say, since John identified her as Mary, that you are Lazarus.) Does this change your reaction? Why might it have been an unwise thing for her to do?
 - c. One commentator suggests that the disciples might have thought something sensible like "you've got to set limits" or "balance is the key to happiness." In contrast, he suggests that Mary is showing true faith and extravagant devotion, truly sold out for Christ. Do you think this captures the point of this passage?
 - d. Is the devotion/poor argument given by the disciples a good one? Based on Jesus' answer, is it an argument one could use now?
3. How does the anointing point to Jesus as the Messiah? *Because it shows he is the anointed one.*
 4. Does the women know Jesus is going to die? What do you think of her sacrifice? Is the dichotomy of poor/Christ a reasonable one here?
 5. Why did the Jewish leaders need Judas' help to arrest Jesus? *In order to signal a time when the crowds weren't around to get in the way.*
 6. Read the passages from Exodus listed above. What parallels do you see between the original Passover and the last supper? (I count at least eight parallels!) (1) *They were slaves with no way out;* (2) *both celebrate redemption from slavery;* (3) *you cannot pay your own tab—God must do it for you;* (4) *each person chooses whether or not to participate and identify themselves with God's redemption;* (5) *the death of an unblemished one prevents our deaths;* (6) *the whole land was under judgment;* (7) *each is an act of faith in God's word* (8) *each marks a covenant.*
 7. Why did God instruct Israel to regularly commemorate the Passover? Do you experience anything similar in communion? What experiences have you had where Jesus has entered a difficult time, joined you and brought you nourishment, and rescued you?
 8. *Extra credit:* Why do we celebrate communion more often than Israel celebrates Passover?



MARCI XIV.
 Ne te commoveat tacitum pia femina, murmur,
 Ballama quod vendi vult, inopia, dari.
 Vnge sacrum, quod non, quo te reclinet, habebat.
 Illo pauperius nam nequit esse, caput.
 Laß dich, o frommes Weib, das Marmeln nicht bewegen,
 daß man des Balsams Werth den Armen geben soll.
 Silli' hier! Der nichts vermag sein Häubt darauß zulegen,
 der hat ein armes Häubt. Kein ärmers muß' ich wohl.