

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:2-8

Thursday the fourteenth of Nisan after sundown

DIG: Who was Simon? Why would he want to host a dinner to honor Jesus? Why did Mary anoint Messiah? Why now? What did she use? What was so unique about it? Why did the talmidim become indignant? Why would Judas especially object? Where did he go? What motivated him? What did Judas think was going to happen? Why was it so difficult for the others to see the value in what Mary did for Yeshua?

REFLECT: Based on this passage, how should you respond to those who criticize your love of God? What are you willing to sacrifice to worship ADONAI? What beautiful thing could you do this week for Jesus? What could you do for one of the least of these (Matthew 25:40)? Mary worshiped the Deliverer by pouring a very expensive jar perfume made of pure nard on His head. In what practical ways have you worshiped the Lord this week?

Three important events took place late Wednesday afternoon the thirteenth of Nisan before sundown, and on Thursday the fourteenth of Nisan after sundown.

First, late Wednesday afternoon before sundown, the most important members of the Great Sanhedrin met at the palace of the high priest, Joseph Caiaphas, to plot against the life of Christ (see Ka - The Plot Against Jesus).

Secondly, on Thursday evening after sundown Jesus was invited to the home of Simon, the leper, for dinner. There, Mary, the sister of Lazarus, anointed Him with expensive perfume for burial. It was then that Christ rebuked Judas for wanting to sell the expensive perfume made of pure nard so the money given to the poor. The Lord spent the night at Bethany at the home of Mary and Martha.

And thirdly, on Thursday evening after being rebuked by Jesus at the home of Simon the leper during dinner Judas then left Bethany, walked to the palace of the Caiaphas high priest in Jerusalem and agreed to betray the Meshiach.

In stark contrast to the hateful rejection of the religious leaders of Isra'el, here we see Mary's loving worship.

On Thursday, the fourteenth of Nisan while Jesus was in Bethany a dinner was given in His honor in the home of Simon, the former leper (Matthew 26:6; Mark 14:3a; John 12:2a). Jesus had healed him, which, once again, pointed to the fact that He was indeed the Messiah. The healing of a Jewish leper was one of the three messianic miracles (see my commentary on [Isaiah 61 - The Three Messianic Miracles](#)). So, being grateful, it seems that he welcomed Yeshua to stay at his home in the day before Passover.

Simon must have been a well-to-do man. With all the talmidim present, this was a sizeable dinner party. He may also have been an unmarried man, because Marta seems to have been acting as the hostess at this gathering. She was probably a close friend of the family and volunteered to serve. Mary's sister Martha served, while her brother Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with Him (John 12:2b).

Then Miryam came to the Lord with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume made of pure nard (Mark 14:3a; John 12:3a). In the ancient Middle East, it was considered a natural part of hospitality to welcome guests by offering them anointing oil or perfume. They didn't take bath's that often and traveled on many hot, dusty roads. So in and of itself, would not have been out of the ordinary. She broke the neck of the jar and slowly poured about a pint of the perfume on His head as He was reclining at the table (Matthew 26:7; Mark 14:3b). But her actions went well beyond the accepted custom because pure nard was the most expensive perfume one could buy.

She also poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume (John 12:3b). Mary understood what Judas, and even the other apostles, did not. Because the stone would be placed before Messiah's tomb with a Roman guard in front of it, the normal placing of myrrh and aloes in the folds of the grave clothes would never take place. The only anointing Yeshua would receive in preparation for His burial was this anticipatory one by Mary.

Pure nard was used for two purposes. First, it was used for kings. But secondly, it was used for women on their wedding night. For the average woman, she had one chance in her entire lifetime to use it. Here, instead of using it for herself, Miryam did it to prepare Jesus for His burial. She must have strongly suspected that her brother's resurrection would drive Messiah's enemies into a rage, and they would be determined to put Him to death (see [Ib - The Plot to Kill Jesus: The Rejection of the first Sign](#)).

Jesus Himself had gone to the relative safety of Ephraim right after the raising of Lazarus, but Peach brought Him back to the Holy City. Mary (and probably Martha as well)

seemed to grasp more clearly that anyone who imminent the threat to **Christ** was. That surely intensified **their** sense of debt and gratitude toward **Him**, as reflected in **Mary's** act of worship. So **she** was not anointing **Him** for ministry . . . **she** was anointing **Him** for burial.

But more than that, **she** understands what the apostles did not. **The Truth** would be raised from the dead. **Her** gesture of anointing **Yeshua** in preparation for **His** burial the following day showed a remarkably mature understanding. This was the very thing that put **Miryam** in sharp contrast with **Martha**, who tended to act first and think later. It is interesting that **Mary** did not go to the tomb on Sunday morning like the other women. They were not expecting **His** resurrection, but she was. **Miryam** was paying attention as **she** sat at the feet of **Jesus** while **He** taught.

But one of **His** talmidim, **Judas Iscariot**, who was later to betray **Him** with a kiss on the Mount of Olives, was indignant. **He** said: **Why the waste of perfume? It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor (Mattityahu 26:8-9; Mark 14:4-5a; John 12:4-5).** **Miryam's** generous expression of gratitude to her **Savior** had finally pushed the **false apostle** over the edge.

With **Judas** leading the discontent, the other apostles also rebuked her harshly (**Mark 14:5b**). the treasurer did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the moneybag, he used to help himself to what was put into it (**John 12:6**). The verb is in the imperfect tense, meaning that they continued to rebuke her. But **Jesus** did not. Even though **Yeshua** had taught many times on the need to help the poor, **He** did not stop or say anything negative toward her.

Aware of this, **Jesus** said to them: **Why are you bothering this woman? Leave her alone. She has done a beautiful thing to me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have Me. When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. Truly I tell you, wherever this Gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her (Matthew 26:10-13; Mark 14:6-9; John 12:7-8).** Fragrant spices were used for anointing a dead body after it had been washed. This process was to be distinguished from the process of embalming, which consisted of laying myrrh and aloes in the folds of the grave clothes. **Mark** relates that the women came to anoint the body of **Jesus** on Sunday morning after Shabbat, but the resurrection made their efforts moot. Again, the only anointing that our **Lord** received was at the hands of **Mary**.¹³⁵⁸

After dinner, when all the apostles went their separate ways, **Judas** left boldly for the place in Jerusalem where the most influential members of the Sanhedrin were meeting at

the home of the high priest Joseph Caiaphas. **The betrayer** had had enough. It had been five days since **Jesus** rode into Yerushalayim on a colt. But **He** had yet to announce publically that **He** was the long awaited **Messiah**; nor had **He** done anything to lead an uprising against Rome. But **Yeshua** had enraged the members of the Sanhedrin, which put **Judas** in danger.

The false apostle didn't sign on to be hated or executed. If **Jesus** would only proclaim that **He** was the **Anointed One**, then **He** would triumph over the Romans. Surely the religious authorities would then be eager to follow **Him**. This cat-and-mouse game had to end.

He was going to force **Yeshua's** hand.

The night air smelled of wood smoke from the many campfires. Pesach would start on the night of the first full moon after the spring equinox, which will be Friday evening.

Judas picked **his** way carefully down the uneven dirt road. **He** knows this could backfire. **He** was a known **apostle** and that fact alone could very well lead to **his** arrest. After all, **he** was going to the palace of the most powerful man in the Jewish world. **He** didn't even know if Caiaphas would meet with **him**. But if **the traitor** could get in to see **him**, **he** would make the high priest an offer **he** couldn't refuse.

Making **his** way from the Kidron Valley and through Yerushalayim's gates, **Judas** navigated south through the still crowded streets of the Lower City to expensive neighborhoods of Essene Quarter. **He** found the home of Caiaphas, told the guard **his** business and waited.¹³⁵⁹