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Jesus Anointed at Bethany

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

Thursday the fourteenth of Nisan after sundown

Jesus anointed at Bethany DIG: Who was Simon? Why would he want to host a dinner to honor Jesus? Why did Mary anoint Messiah? What did she use? What was so unique about it? Why did the talmidim become indignant? Why would Judas especially object? 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? 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 (to see link click [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 **Martha** 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](#)).

Jesus Himself had gone to the relative safety of Ephraim right after the raising of Lazarus, but Pesach brought **Him** back to the Holy City. **Mary** (and probably **Martha** as well) seemed to grasp more clearly that anyone how 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. **She** wasn't 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 her 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 publicly 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