



Week 2

**Preparation
for Jesus'
death and
burial**

PERSONAL STUDY

Read Mark 14:1-11

OPENING REMARKS:

Just days before, as we read in Mark 11, Jesus rode into Jerusalem like a king. Now, in Mark 14, two days before the Passover and the Festival of the Unleavened Bread, the chief priests and teachers of the law are scheming to arrest Jesus and secretly kill him.

These religious leaders did not fear God, but they feared the people. They were not afraid to murder the Son of God; they just believed they had to do it in a politically smart way, so the people would not turn on them.

The anointing with oil was traditionally associating with choosing and legitimizing Israel's kings. However, in this instance, Maria used a very expensive perfume, nard. Perfume was traditionally used to lavishly pour over a body in preparation for burial. Jesus was thus in the same instance both anointed as King and prepared for his burial.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read Mark 14:1-2. Why were the religious leaders set on killing Jesus? (Refer to Mark 3:4-6 and John 7:48-49) Why did they want to do it secretly?

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Read Mark 14: 3. What happened while Jesus was at the house of Simon? Who was this woman – according to John 12:3?

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Read John 12:3-5. Describe the perfume Mary used. What do you think prompted Mary to do this?

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Read Mark 14:4-5 How do the disciples react to Mary when she empties her bottle of perfume upon Jesus? What suggestions were given for other possible uses of the perfume?

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Read Mark 14:6-7 How does Jesus react to Mary's action?

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Why does Jesus say it was good for Mary to do what she did?

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Read Mark 14:8. Jesus then, with a view to His impending crucifixion, gives a further reason she did what she did. What is this reason?

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Read Mark 14:9. Jesus makes a statement about what Mary did. What was this statement, and did it come true?

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Read Mark 14:10-11. These events triggered a response from Judas Iscariot. What did he do?

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What was the reaction of the chief priests to this turn of events regarding one of Jesus' disciples?

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How did Judas occupy his time from this point forward?

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Closing remarks:

The time of these events are significant, because during the Passover there was not only a great expectation of the Messiah, but Jerusalem was also crowded with these Messiah-expecting multitudes. Since Passover remembered the time when God raised up a great deliverer and freed Israel from foreign oppression, it was a time of great patriotic and messianic anticipation. The Romans were on guard and ready for any hint of revolt.

The religious leaders did not want to kill Jesus during the Passover feast, but they ended up doing it during that time anyway. This clearly shows that Jesus was in command and though the leaders acted according to the evil inclination of their hearts, their actions fulfilled prophecy and the plan of Jesus.

This is not the same event as when a sinful woman brought the alabaster box with ointment, broke it and anointed Jesus' feet. That occasion was precious, but it was different in that the woman was overwhelmed with her own sense of sinfulness and adoration to her pardoning Lord. Mary seems focused on Jesus alone, not even on her own forgiven sin. It is a wonderful thing to love Jesus for all He has done for us; it can be greater still to love Him simply for who He is in all His wonder and majesty.

Having an alabaster flask of very costly perfume was an extravagant display of devotion to Jesus. Often spices and ointments were used as investments because they were small, portable, and could be easily sold. However, Mark's wording indicates that Mary poured the entire contents of the bottle on the head of Jesus.

Mary listened to and believed the teaching of Jesus in a way that the other disciples simply didn't. When He said that He would be delivered into the hands of wicked men and mocked and scourged and crucified, she believed it. It seems that the disciples did not want to think about the death of Jesus. When Peter heard of it, he tried to talk Jesus out of it. Mary had a different devotion, and instead of debating or denying His death, she turned it into an occasion of deep devotion.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Mark 14:1-11, John 12:1-7

Discussion questions

Using both the account given in Mark (see Mark 14:3) as well as that in John (see John 12:3), describe what Mary did to Jesus.

Was Mary obligated to pour out her perfume upon Jesus?
Why did she do it?

How do the disciples react to Mary when she empties her bottle of perfume upon Jesus?

How does Jesus react?

Have you ever given a special gift to Jesus? Will you give a special gift to Jesus, even if it could be misunderstood? Discuss in the group.

Jesus instructs Judas and His other disciples to leave Mary alone. Is it ever possible for us to be too extravagant in our love for the Lord Jesus, considering what He has done for us? (Refer to Philippians 2:6-8.)

Close in prayer