

# JESUS ANOINTED BY MARY OF BETHANY

**TEXT: MARK 14:1-9**

**Introduction:**

1. Mark 14 is the longest chapter in the Gospel of Mark.
2. J. Vernon McGee outlines it very simply: Mary anoints Him, Judas betrays Him, Peter denies Him, and the Sanhedrin arrests Him. Then Dr. McGee gives a more detailed outline:
  1. Chief priests and scribes plot to kill Jesus (14:1, 2).
  2. Mary of Bethany pours ointment upon the head of Jesus (14:3-9).
  3. Judas plans to betray Jesus (14:10, 11).
  4. Jesus prepares for last Passover and the first Lord's Supper (14:12-25).
  5. Peter pledges his allegiance to Christ (14:26-31).
  6. Jesus prays in Garden of Gethsemane (14:32-42).
  7. Jesus placed under arrest (14:43-52).
  8. Jesus put on trial before the Sanhedrin (14:53-65).
  9. Peter protests that he does not know Jesus (14:66-72).
3. As the chapter begins, we are now getting very close to the cross (14:1, 2). Our Lord was crucified during the Passover. The Passover was the solemn, annual observance when Jews looked back to the time in Egypt when the death angel passed over the homes of the Israelites.
  4. They were to kill a lamb (without blemish), and take his blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of their houses.
  5. Exodus 12:13 says, "And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." The Jews celebrated the Passover every year on the fourteenth day of the first month (Abib or Nisan) of the Jewish religious year (March/April).
  6. The Passover observance was immediately followed by the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, which commemorated Israel's exit from Egypt.
  7. Exodus 23:15 says, "Thou shalt keep the feast of unleavened bread: (thou shalt eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded thee, in the time appointed of the month Abib; for in it thou camest out from Egypt: and none shall appear before me empty."

8. By the time of Christ these two feasts were merged and regarded as one big feast as Mark 14:1 and 2 indicate.
9. In His providence, God the Father gave His only begotten Son as the sacrifice for sin at the Passover. First Corinthians 5:7 says, “For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”
10. Tonight we will look at the story of Mary, the sister of Martha, who anointed our Lord with this very precious ointment (14:3-9).

### **I. THE DEVOTION OF MARY**

### **II. THE INDIGNATION OF THE DISCIPLES**

### **III. THE COMMENDATION OF OUR SAVIOUR**

#### **I. THE DEVOTION OF MARY (14:3).**

1. Matthew and Mark do not tell us the woman’s name, but John tells us it was Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha (John 12:1-11).
2. Matthew and Mark (14:3-9) give nearly identical accounts; John’s is slightly different. Luke does not mention it at all.
3. Matthew and Mark do not place their story in strict chronological order, but probably put it here to show the stark contrast between Mary’s devotion and Judas’ treachery (cf. Mark 14:10, 11).
4. W Graham Scroggie said, “Here is love in a frame of hate (14:1, 2, 3-9, 10, 11)” (*Mark*).
5. Matthew and Mark tell us that they were at “the house of Simon the leper” (Mark 14:3). We know nothing about this man Simon the leper.
6. The main character here is not Simon the leper, but the woman with the alabaster box of very precious ointment (14:3), i.e., Mary.
7. Some Bible teachers (e.g., HA Ironside) think Simon may have been the father of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, but this is speculative.
8. John says Mary poured the ointment on our Lord’s feet (John 12:3); whereas Matthew and Mark say she “poured it on His head” (Mark 14:3b).
9. In that day, it was customary to anoint both the feet and the head (cf. Luke 7:36-50, especially verses 38 and 46).
10. Matthew and Mark do not tell us the value of the ointment but say it was “very precious” (Mark 14:3).
11. John says it was “very costly” (John 12:3).
12. Mark says it was worth “more than three hundred pence” (Mark 14:5). A “pence” is the equivalent of a Roman *denarius*. A

denarius was a day's pay back then. So "three hundred pence" would be almost a year's wages for a workingman.

13. By breaking the box (14:3), Mary demonstrated her wholehearted devotion to our Lord. It was her intention to pour out the entire contents of the container.
14. To Mary there was nothing too precious for Jesus. She lavished her best upon Him. How many Christians do you know with that kind of devotion?
15. HA Ironside said, "Is Christ Himself so real and precious to us that we are ready to make any sacrifice in order to show our devotion to Him?"

## **II. THE INDIGNATION OF THE DISCIPLES (14:4, 5).**

1. Mark says the disciples "had indignation within themselves" (14:4), but John 12:4 tells us that Judas was the chief instigator.
2. Judas Iscariot was a true "liberal," claiming to be concerned for the poor but really only looking out for himself (like many religious racketeers today).
3. John 12:6 says this about Judas, "This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief..."
4. Judas Iscariot was never saved (cf. Matt. 26:24; John 6:70; 13:10, 11, 27; 17:12; Acts 1:25).
5. Interestingly, they complained and said, "Why was this waste of the ointment made?" (Mark 14:4). In John 17:12, our Lord referred to Judas as "the son of perdition," which literally means "son of waste."
6. A life without Christ is a wasted life. How sad to waste one's opportunities to serve God! How tragic to waste one's opportunities to get right with God, and then spend eternity in hell. That is a terrible waste!
7. There is another lesson here for us. According to John, Judas started the murmuring. Matthew and Mark tell us "they had indignation" (14:4), indicating that the other disciples were influenced by Judas, an unsaved man.
8. Oftentimes, unconverted church members lead Christians astray. Let us be careful and on guard, lest we allow some troublemakers to lead us to do wrong.
9. Referring to the common criticism worldly people make about missionaries "wasting" their lives in heathen lands, and applying it to Mark 14:4, Scroggie said, "Was it waste when Paton went to the

New Hebrides? When Morrison went to China, Martyn to India, Mary Slessor to Africa? Was it waste? Many think so, but Christ does not, and that's what matters."

### **III. THE COMMENDATION OF OUR SAVIOUR (14:6-9).**

1. There are several important statements here in the response of our Lord. First, He rebuked them (14:6).
2. Secondly, our Lord reminded them that the poor would always be with them, but He would soon be leaving (14:7).
3. Thirdly, our Lord pointed out that Mary had spiritual discernment, which they, His disciples, lacked (14:8). She anointed His body for His burial. If the Lord puts it upon your heart to do something for Him, do it. Do not wait around to see what others say because they might try and discourage you.
4. Incidentally, Scofield notes that "Mary of Bethany was not among the women who went to the sepulcher with intent to embalm the body of Jesus" (p. 1037). Apparently, Mary understood that our Lord would soon be crucified, buried, and raised from the dead. She was the only one who anointed Him for His burial.
5. Her act of worship and devotion was also an act of faith. Psalm 16:10 says, "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."
6. On the day of Pentecost, Peter pointed out that Psalm 16 was a Messianic Psalm (Acts 2:25-31).
7. Fourthly, our Lord said that Mary would be memorialized throughout "the whole world" wherever the Gospel is preached (14:9). No other person ever received such a promise from our Lord.

### **CONCLUSION:**

1. Mark 14:5 says the ointment was worth "more than three hundred pence."
2. The alabaster box was probably very expensive as well, and Mary broke it for Jesus (14:3).
3. It is hard to estimate the worth of this ointment, but HA Ironside said it was nearly a full year's wages for a working man!
4. Ironside said, "This seemed too much to lavish on Jesus, but true love knows no limit of what it delights to give and do for the Beloved" (*Mark*).

