

Mark 14:1-31
June 9, 2024

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: How strong do you think our loyalty is to Jesus? If we were to be tested, do you think our loyalty would hold up? [Let people engage]

Transition: Today's text in Mark's "passion story." We see religious leaders plotting to kill Jesus, and Jesus is fully aware of it. As he has the Last Supper with his disciples, he announces that one of the 12 will betray him. This catches the disciples' attention, and they respond with "Surely not I?" Then we have Peter who boldly states that he will never "fall away after the Shepherd is struck and the sheep scatter!" Jesus tells him, "Yes you will. When the rooster crows a second time, you will have denied me **three times!** Peter **emphatically rejects that notion!**

Aren't we like Peter? Before trials and tribulations come our way, we all want to believe that our loyalty to Jesus – even unto death – will remain intact. Let's read the text as Jesus is foretells what's getting ready to happen.

BOOK:

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

14 Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. ² "But not during the Feast," they said, "or the people may riot."

³ While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of a man known as Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

⁴ Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, "Why this waste of perfume? ⁵ It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor." And they rebuked her harshly.

⁶ "Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷ The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. ⁹ I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. ¹¹ They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

The Lord's Supper

¹² On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

¹³ So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. ¹⁴ Say to the owner of the house he enters, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ ¹⁵ He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.”

¹⁶ The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

¹⁷ When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. ¹⁸ While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me.”

¹⁹ They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, “Surely not I?”

²⁰ “It is one of the Twelve,” he replied, “one who dips bread into the bowl with me. ²¹ The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”

²² While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.”

²³ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.

²⁴ “This is my blood of the (new) covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them.

²⁵ “I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.”

²⁶ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus Predicts Peter’s Denial

²⁷ “You will all fall away,” Jesus told them, “for it is written:

“ ‘I will strike the shepherd,
and the sheep will be scattered.’ (Zech 13:7)

²⁸ But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.”

²⁹ Peter declared, “Even if all fall away, I will not.”

³⁰ “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times.”

³¹ But Peter insisted emphatically, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the others said the same.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

“Surely not me” all the disciples proclaim, wanting to believe that they would never betray Jesus. “Surely not me” we say, wanting to believe WE would never betray or deny Him. We like to think the best of ourselves. This passage gives us a reality check. Even the one who protested the most that he would die for Jesus if he had to, denied knowing Jesus. Let’s ask the Lord to give us the strength to stay loyal to Him, no matter the circumstances.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today’s Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 158-161). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

While thousands of Passover pilgrims were preparing for the joys of the feast, Jesus was preparing for the ordeal of His trial and crucifixion. Just as He had steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51), so He steadfastly set His heart to do the Father’s will. The Servant was “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8).

Follow His footsteps during the days and hours of the last week, and you will be amazed to see the responses of various people to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Bethany—Adored (Mark 14:1–11)

This event took place six days before Passover, which would put it on the Friday before the Triumphal Entry (John 12:1). By placing this story between the accounts of the plot to arrest Jesus, Mark contrasted the treachery of Judas and the leaders with the love and loyalty of Mary. The ugliness of their sins makes the beauty of her sacrifice even more meaningful.

Neither Mark nor Matthew names the woman, but John tells us that it was Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (John 11:1–2). Mary is found three times in the Gospel story; and each time, she is at the feet of Jesus (Luke 10:38–42; John 11:31–32; 12:1–8). Mary had a close fellowship with the Lord as she sat at His feet and listened to His Word. She is a good model for all of us to follow.

Mary’s anointing of the Lord must not be confused with a similar event recorded in Luke 7:36–50. The unnamed woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee was a converted harlot who expressed her love to Christ because of His gracious forgiveness of her many sins. In the house of Simon the (healed) leper, Mary expressed her love to Christ because He was going to the cross to die for her. She prepared His body for burial as she anointed His head (Mark 14:3) and His feet (John 12:3). She showed her love for Jesus while He was still alive.

It was an expensive offering that she gave to the Lord. Spikenard was imported from India, and a whole jar would have cost the equivalent of a common worker's annual income. Mary gave lavishly and lovingly. She was not ashamed to show her love for Christ openly.

There were three consequences to her act of worship. First, the house was filled with the beautiful fragrance of the ointment (John 12:3; also note 2 Cor. 2:15–16). There is always a “spiritual fragrance” in that home where Jesus Christ is loved and worshiped.

Second, the disciples, led by Judas, criticized Mary for wasting her money! It sounded so pious for Judas to talk about the poor, when in reality he wanted the money for himself! (John 12:4–6) Even in the Upper Room, six days later, the disciples still thought Judas was concerned about helping the poor (John 13:21–30). It is interesting that the word translated “waste” in Mark 14:4 is translated “perdition” in John 17:12 *and applied to Judas!* Judas criticized Mary for “wasting money,” but he wasted his entire life!

Third, Jesus commended Mary and accepted her gracious gift. He knew the heart of Judas and understood why the other disciples followed his bad example. He also knew Mary's heart and quickly defended her (Rom. 8:33–39). No matter what others may say about our worship and service, the most important thing is that we please the Lord. The fact that others misunderstand and criticize us should not keep us from showing our love to Christ. Our concern should be His approval alone.

When Mary gave her best at the feet of Jesus, she started a “wave of blessing” that has been going on ever since. She was a blessing to Jesus as she shared her love, and she was a blessing to her home as the fragrance spread. Were it not for Mary, her village, Bethany, would probably have been forgotten. The account of her deed was a blessing to the early church that heard about it and, because of the records in three of the Gospels, Mary has been a blessing to the whole world—and still is! The Lord's prediction has certainly been fulfilled.

Mary gave her best in faith and love; Judas gave his worst in unbelief and hatred. He solved the problem of how the Jewish leaders could arrest Jesus without causing a riot during the feast. He sold his Master for the price of a slave (see Ex. 21:32), the basest act of treachery in history.

In the Upper Room—Betrayed (Mark 14:12–26)

The Passover lamb was selected on the tenth day of the month Nisan (our March–April), examined for blemishes, and then slain on the fourteenth day of the month (Ex. 12:3–6). The lamb had to be slain in the temple precincts and the supper eaten within the Jerusalem city limits. For the Jews, the Passover feast was the memorial of a past victory, but Jesus would institute a new supper that would be the memorial of His death.

Peter and John saw to it that the supper was prepared (Luke 22:8). It would not be difficult to locate the man carrying the jar of water because the women usually performed this task. Was this man John Mark's father? Did Jesus eat the Passover in an upper room in John Mark's home? These are fascinating speculations, but we have no evidence that can confirm them. However, we do know that John Mark's home was a center for Christian fellowship in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12).

The original Passover feast consisted of the roasted lamb, the unleavened bread, and the dish of bitter herbs (Ex. 12:8–20). The lamb reminded the Jews of the blood that was applied to the doorposts in Egypt to keep the angel of death from slaying their firstborn. The bread reminded them of their haste in leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:39), and the bitter herbs spoke of their suffering as Pharaoh's slaves. At sometime in the centuries that followed, the Jews had added to the ceremony the drinking of four cups of wine diluted with water.

Since for the Jews the new day began with sundown, it would be Friday when Jesus and His disciples met in the Upper Room. This was His last Passover, and on that day, He would fulfill the Passover by dying on the cross as the spotless Lamb of God (John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Peter 2:21–24).

Between Mark 14:17 and 18 are details of the washing of the disciples' feet and the lesson on humility (John 13:1–20). Following that lesson, Jesus became deeply troubled and announced that one of the disciples was a traitor. This announcement stunned all the disciples except Judas, who knew that Jesus was speaking about him. Until the very end, Jesus hid from the other disciples the identity of His betrayer, for He wanted to give Judas every opportunity to turn from sin. He even washed Judas' feet! Had Peter known the truth about Judas, he might have been tempted to kill him.

Some people try to defend Judas by arguing that he betrayed Jesus in order to force Him into revealing His power and setting up the Jewish kingdom. Others say that he was nothing but a servant who obediently fulfilled God's Word. Judas was neither a martyr nor a robot. He was a responsible human being who made his own decisions but, in so doing, fulfilled the Word of God. He must not be made into either a hero ("After all, somebody had to betray Jesus!") or a helpless victim of merciless predestination. Judas was lost for the same reason millions are lost today: he did not repent of his sins and believe on Jesus Christ (John 6:64–71; 13:10–11). If you have never been born again, one day you will wish you had not been born at all.

None of the other disciples really thought himself to be the traitor, for their questions imply a negative answer: "It is not I, is it?" The men had often debated over which of them was the greatest, but now they were discussing which of them was the vilest. To make matters worse, Jesus said that His betrayer had even eaten bread with Him at the table! In the East, to break bread with someone means to enter into a pact of friendship and mutual trust. It would be an act of the basest treachery to break bread and then betray your host. However, even this was the fulfillment of the Word of God (Ps. 41:9).

Judas was sitting in the place of honor at our Lord's left, while John was reclining to His right (John 13:23). When Jesus gave Judas the bread dipped in the herbs, it was the gracious act of a host to a special guest. Even this did not break Judas' heart, for after Judas took the morsel, Satan possessed him. Judas left the Upper Room to go to make the final arrangements to arrest the Lord Jesus. But even then the disciples did not know the truth about Judas (John 13:27–30); and they would not find out the truth until they met him later in the Garden of Gethsemane.

After Judas left the scene, Jesus instituted what Christians commonly call "the Lord's Supper" or "the Eucharist." (The word *Eucharist* comes from a Greek word which means "to give thanks.") Before the cup, Jesus took one of the unleavened loaves, blessed it, broke it, and told the men, "This is My body." He then took the Passover cup, blessed it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My blood" (see 1 Cor. 11:23–26).

Bread and wine were two common items that were used at practically every meal, but Jesus gave them a wonderful new meaning. When Jesus said, "This is My body," and, "This is My blood," He did not transform either the bread or the wine into anything different. When the disciples ate the bread, it was still bread; when they drank the wine, it was still wine. However, the Lord gave a new meaning to the bread and the wine, so that, from that hour, they would serve as memorials of His death.

What, then, did Jesus accomplish by His death? On the cross, Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant and established a New Covenant (Heb. 9–10). The Old Covenant was ratified with the blood of animal sacrifices, but the New Covenant was ratified by the blood of God's Son. The

New Covenant in His blood would do what the Old Covenant sacrifices could not do—take away sin and cleanse the heart and conscience of the believer. We are not saved from our sins by participating in a religious ceremony, but by trusting Jesus Christ as our Savior.

Our Lord's command was, "This do in remembrance of Me" (1 Cor. 11:24–25). The word translated "remembrance" means much more than "in memory of," for you can do something in memory of a dead person—yet Jesus is alive! The word carries the idea of a present participation in a past event. Because Jesus is alive, as we celebrate the Lord's Supper, by faith we have communion with Him (1 Cor. 10:16–17). This is not some "magical" experience produced by the bread and cup. It is a spiritual experience that comes through our discerning of Christ and the meaning of the Supper (1 Cor. 11:27–34).

The last thing Jesus and His disciples did in the Upper Room was to sing the traditional Passover hymn based on Psalms 115–118. Imagine our Lord *singing* when the cross was only a few hours away!

Grassmick, J. D. (1985). *Mark*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 173-179) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

1. THE PLOT TO KILL JESUS AND HIS ANOINTING IN BETHANY (14:1–11)

Like other passages in Mark the first cycle of events in this division also has a "sandwich" structure (cf. 3:20–35; 5:21–43; 6:7–31; 11:12–26; 14:27–52). The account of the conspiracy by the religious leaders and Judas (vv. 1–2, 10–11) is divided by the account of Jesus' anointing in Bethany (vv. 3–9). In this way Mark emphasized the striking contrast between the hostility of those who plotted His death and the loving devotion of one who recognized Him as the suffering Messiah.

a. The leaders' plot to arrest and kill Jesus (14:1–2) (Matt. 26:1–5; Luke 22:1–2).

14:1a. Mark's Passion narrative begins with a new chronological starting point (cf. introduction to 11:1–11), the first of several time notations that link the following events. The chronology of the Passion Week events is complicated partly because two systems of reckoning time were in use, the Roman (modern) system in which a new day starts at midnight and the Jewish system in which a new day begins at sunset (cf. 13:35).

The Passover, observed in Jerusalem (cf. Deut. 16:5–6), was an annual Jewish festival (cf. Ex. 12:1–14) celebrated on Nisan (March/April) 14–15 (which most say was Thursday–Friday of Jesus' Passion Week). Preparations for the Passover meal (cf. Mark 14:12–16)—the highlight of the festival—included the slaughter of the Passover lamb which took place near the close of Nisan 14 by Jewish reckoning, Thursday afternoon. The Passover meal was eaten at the beginning of Nisan 15, that is, between sunset and midnight Thursday evening. This was followed immediately by the festival of **Unleavened Bread** celebrated from Nisan 15–21 inclusive, to commemorate the Jews' exodus from Egypt (cf. Ex. 12:15–20).

These two Jewish festivals were closely related and in popular usage were often designated as the "Jewish Passover Feast" (an eight-day festival, Nisan 14–21 inclusive; cf. Mark 14:2; John 2:13, 23; 6:4; 11:55). So Nisan 14, the day of preparation, was commonly called "the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread" (cf. Mark 14:12; Josephus *The Antiquities of the Jews* 2. 15. 1). The words **only two days away** are literally, "after two days." To the Jews, with their inclusive

way of counting, “after two days” would mean “on the day after tomorrow.” Reckoning from Nisan 15 (Friday) two days prior would be Nisan 13 (Wednesday), and “after two days” means “after Wednesday and Thursday.”

14:1b–2. The Jewish religious leaders, Sanhedrin members (cf. 8:31; 11:27; Matt. 26:3), had already decided that **Jesus** must be put to death (cf. John 11:47–53). But their fear of a popular uprising kept them from seizing Him openly. So they kept seeking (cf. Mark 11:18; 12:12) **for some sly way** (lit., “how to seize Him by deceit”), by a cunning covert strategy, to do it. However, because of the large Passover crowds it was still unwise to risk a **riot** by many potential supporters of Jesus, especially impetuous Galileans. So the leaders determined **not** to seize Him **during the Feast**, the full eight-day festival, Nisan 14–21 inclusive (cf. 14:1a). Apparently, they planned to arrest Him after the crowds had gone, but Judas’ unexpected offer (cf. vv. 10–11) expedited matters. Thus God’s timetable was followed.

b. Jesus’ anointing in Bethany (14:3–9) (Matt. 26:6–13; John 12:1–8)

This anointing episode is not to be equated with an earlier anointing in Galilee (Luke 7:36–50). However, it is the same episode recorded in John 12:1–8 though there are some significant differences. One difference concerns when the event occurred. John stated that it happened “six days before the Passover,” that is, the beginning of the Passover festival, Nisan 14 (Thursday). This means it occurred the previous Friday. Mark’s placement seems to suggest that the episode occurred on Wednesday of Passion Week (cf. Mark 14:1a). In light of this it seems reasonable to follow John’s chronology and to conclude that Mark used the incident thematically (cf. introduction to 2:1–12; 11:1–11) to contrast the responses of this woman and Judas. Consequently, the time reference in 14:1 governs the leaders’ concern to arrest Jesus, not *this* event.

14:3. **While ... in Bethany** (cf. comments in 11:1a) Jesus was being honored with a festive meal **in the home of ... Simon the Leper**, a man apparently cured by Jesus previously (cf. 1:40) and well known to the early disciples. The unnamed **woman** was Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus (cf. John 12:3). She **came with an alabaster jar**, a small stone flask with a long slender neck, containing about a pint of costly **perfume** (lit., “ointment”) **made of pure nard**, an aromatic oil from a rare plant root native to India.

Mary **broke** the slender neck of **the** stone flask **and poured the perfume** over Jesus’ **head**. John wrote that she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped them with her hair (cf. John 12:3). Both are possible since Jesus was reclining on a dining couch at the table (cf. Mark 14:18). Anointing a guest’s head was a common custom at festive Jewish meals (cf. Ps. 23:5; Luke 7:46) but Mary’s act had a greater meaning (cf. Mark 14:8–9).

14:4–5. **Some** of the disciples, led by Judas (cf. John 12:4), voiced angry (cf. Mark 10:14) criticism of this apparent wasteful extravagance. In their view the act was uncalled for because the **perfume ... could have been sold for more than a year’s wages** (lit., “more than 300 denarii,” roughly a year’s wages; cf. comments on 6:37) **and the money given to the poor**. This was a legitimate concern (cf. John 13:29), but here it concealed the disciples’ insensitivity and Judas’ greed (cf. John 12:6). So they were scolding (same verb in Mark 1:43) **her**, a comment unique to Mark.

14:6–8. **Jesus** rebuked Mary’s critics and defended **her** action, calling it **a beautiful thing** (lit., “a good [*kalon*, ‘noble, beautiful, good’] work”). Unlike them, He saw it as an expression of love and devotion to Him in light of His approaching death as well as a messianic acclamation.

The contrast in verse 7 is not between Jesus and **the poor** but between the words **always** and **not always**. Opportunities to **help** the poor will always be present and the disciples should take advantage of them. But Jesus would not be in their midst much longer and opportunities to show Him love were diminishing rapidly. In a sense **she** had anointed His **body beforehand** in preparation for its **burial**.

14:9. Prefaced by a solemn introductory saying (**I tell you the truth**; cf. 3:28) Jesus promised Mary that **wherever the gospel** (cf. 1:1) **is preached throughout the world** (cf. 13:10) her deed of love would **also be told** along with the gospel **in memory of her**. This unique promise looked beyond His death, burial, and resurrection to the present period of time when the gospel is being preached.

c. Judas' agreement to betray Jesus (14:10–11) (Matt. 26:14–16; Luke 22:3–6).

14:10–11. These verses complement verses 1–2 and heighten the contrast with verses 3–9. **Judas Iscariot** (cf. 3:19), **one of the Twelve** (cf. 3:14), **went to the influential chief priests** (cf. 14:1) and offered **to betray** (*paradoi*; cf. v. 11; 9:31) **Jesus to them**. He suggested doing it “when no crowd was present” (Luke 22:6). This would avoid a public disturbance, which was the priests’ primary concern (cf. Mark 14:2). **They** welcomed this unexpected offer, one they would have never dared solicit. They **promised to give him money** (30 pieces of silver, in response to his demand; cf. Matt. 26:15). **So** Judas was seeking (*ezētei*; cf. Mark 14:1) the right **opportunity**, without the presence of a crowd, **to hand Him over** (*paradoi*; cf. v. 10; 9:31) into their custody.

Why did Judas offer to betray Jesus? Various suggestions have been made, each of which may contain an element of truth: (1) Judas, the only non-Galilean member of the Twelve, may have responded to the official notice (John 11:57). (2) He was disillusioned by Jesus’ failure to establish a political kingdom and his hopes for material gain seemed doomed. (3) His love for money moved him to salvage something for himself. Ultimately he came under satanic control (cf. Luke 22:3; John 13:2, 27).

In Judas’ life one finds an intriguing combination of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. According to God’s plan Jesus must suffer and die (Rev. 13:8); yet Judas, though not compelled to be the traitor, was held responsible for submitting to Satan’s directives (cf. Mark 14:21; John 13:27).

2. THE PASSOVER MEAL AS THE LAST SUPPER (14:12–26)

The second cycle of events in this chapter also has three parts (vv. 12–16, 17–21, 22–26).

a. The preparation of the Passover meal (14:12–16) (Matt. 26:17–19; Luke 22:7–13).

14:12. The time designation, **on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread**, would be Nisan 15 (Friday), strictly speaking. However, the qualifying clause (a common feature in Mark’s time notations; cf. 1:32, 35; 4:35; 13:24; 14:30; 15:42; 16:2) referring to the day **Passover** lambs were slaughtered indicates that Nisan 14 (Thursday) was meant (cf. comments on 14:1a).

Since the Passover meal had to be eaten within Jerusalem’s walls, the **disciples asked** Jesus **where** He wanted them **to go and make preparations** (cf. v. 16) **for** the meal. They assumed they would eat this “family feast” with Him (cf. v. 15).

14:13–15. This episode is structurally parallel to 11:1b–7. It may reflect another instance of Jesus’ supernatural knowledge. However, the need for security (cf. 14:10–11), the disciples’ question (v. 12), and Jesus’ subsequent directives seem to indicate that He had carefully reserved a place in advance where they could eat the Passover meal together undisturbed.

Jesus and **His disciples** were probably in Bethany (cf. 11:1a, 11). Thursday morning **He sent two of** them—Peter and John (cf. Luke 22:8)—into Jerusalem with instructions for locating the reserved room. For security reasons (cf. Mark 14:11; John 11:57) the participants remained anonymous, and the location was kept secret.

A man carrying a jar of water would **meet** the two disciples, presumably near the eastern gate. This unusual, eye-catching sight suggests that it was a prearranged signal because normally only women carried water jars (men carried wineskins). They were to **follow** this man, apparently a servant, who would lead them to the right **house**. They were to tell the **owner ... The Teacher** (cf. Mark 4:38) **asks: Where is My guest room ...?** The single self-designation “Teacher” implies Jesus was well known to the owner and the possessive pronoun “My” implies His prior arrangement to use the room.

He (*autos*, the owner “himself”) would **show** them **a large Upper Room**, built on the flat ceiling, **furnished** (with a dining table and reclining couches), and set up for a banquet meal. The owner also may have secured the necessary food including the Passover lamb. The two disciples were to prepare the meal for Jesus and the other disciples (cf. 14:12) **there**. Tradition claims this was Mark’s home (cf. comments on vv. 41–52; also Acts 1:13; 12:12) and the owner was Mark’s father.

14:16. Presumably preparing **the Passover** meal involved roasting the lamb, setting out the unleavened bread and wine, and preparing bitter herbs along with a sauce made of dried fruit moistened with vinegar and wine and combined with spices.

These Passover preparations on Nisan 14 (Thursday) imply that Jesus’ last meal with His disciples was the regular Passover meal held that evening (Nisan 15 after sunset) and that He was crucified on Nisan 15 (Friday). This is the consistent witness of the Synoptic Gospels (cf. Matt. 26:2, 17–19; Mark 14:1, 12–14; Luke 22:1, 7–8, 11–15). The Gospel of John, however, indicates that Jesus was crucified on “the day of preparation” (John 19:14). This was the Passover proper and also the preparation for the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was sometimes called the Passover Week (cf. Luke 22:1, 7; Acts 12:3–4; see comments on Luke 22:7–38).

b. Jesus’ announcement of His betrayal (14:17–21) (Matt. 26:20–25; Luke 22:21–23; John 13:21–30).

14:17. That (Thursday) **evening**, the beginning of Nisan 15 (cf. v. 1a), **Jesus and the Twelve** arrived in Jerusalem to eat the Passover meal which began after sunset and had to be finished by midnight. Mark abbreviated the events of the meal (cf. Luke 22:14–16, 24–30; John 13:1–20) in order to focus attention on two incidents: (a) Jesus’ announcement of His betrayal as they dipped bread and bitter herbs into a bowl of fruit sauce together (Mark 14:18–21), and (b) His new interpretation of the bread and wine just after the meal (vv. 22–25).

14:18–20. It was customary to recline on dining couches during a festive meal (cf. 14:3; John 13:23–25); in fact, it was a first-century requirement for the Passover meal, even for the poorest people (cf. Mishnah *Pesachim* 10. 1). **While they were ... eating**, dipping bread into the bowl (cf. Mark 14:20) before the meal itself, Jesus, with solemn introductory words (**I tell you the truth**; cf. 3:28), announced that **one of** the Twelve would **betray** Him (cf. 14:10–11).

The added words, **one who is eating with Me**, unique to Mark, allude to Psalm 41:9 where David laments that his trusted friend Ahithophel (cf. 2 Sam. 16:15–17:23; 1 Chron. 27:33), who shared **table** fellowship with him, had turned against him. To eat with a person and then betray him was the height of treachery.

This thought is reinforced in Mark 14:19–20. The disciples were deeply grieved. **One by one** (even Judas; cf. Matt. 26:25) **they** sought to clear themselves. The form of their question in Greek (lit., “It is **not I**, is it?”) expects a reassuring negative answer from Jesus. But He declined to name the offender to the group. (The identification in Matt. 26:25 was doubtless made only to Judas.)

Jesus repeated His disclosure that His betrayer was **one of the Twelve ... one who** was dipping **bread into the same bowl with Him**. His announcement emphasized the treachery of the betrayal and also gave the betrayer an opportunity to repent.

14:21. On the one hand (Gr., *men*) **the Son of Man** (cf. 8:31) **will go**, that is, He must die, in fulfillment of Scripture (e.g., Ps. 22; Isa. 53). His death was according to God’s plan not simply because of the betrayer’s action. **But** on the other hand (Gr., *de*) **woe**, a lament denoting heartfelt pity, **to that man**, literally, “through whom **the Son of Man** is being betrayed.” The betrayer was acting as Satan’s agent (cf. Luke 22:3; John 13:2, 27). So awful a destiny awaited him that **it would have been better for him if he** (lit., “that man”) **had not been born**. Though he acted within God’s plan, the betrayer remained morally responsible (cf. Mark 14:10–11). This woe contrasts sharply with Jesus’ promise in verse 9.

c. The institution of the Lord’s Supper (14:22–26) (Matt. 26:26–30; Luke 22:19–20)

This is the second key incident Mark selected from the events of the Passover meal (cf. comments on Mark 14:17). Before this meal was eaten in Jewish homes the head of the house explained its meaning regarding Israel’s deliverance from slavery in Egypt. As host, Jesus probably did so to prepare His disciples for a new understanding of the bread and wine.

14:22. **While they were eating** (cf. v. 18), apparently before the main part of the meal but after Judas had left (John 13:30), **Jesus took bread** (*arton*, an unleavened flat cake), **gave thanks** (*eulogēsas*; cf. Mark 6:41), **broke it** to distribute it, **and gave it to** them with the words, **Take it** (and “eat” implied); **this is My body**.

Jesus spoke of literal things—the bread, wine, His physical body (*sōma*), and blood—but the relationship between them was expressed figuratively (cf. John 7:35; 8:12; 10:7, 9). The verb “is” means “represents.” Jesus was physically present as He spoke these words, so the disciples did not literally eat His body or drink His blood, something abhorrent to Jews anyway (cf. Lev. 3:17; 7:26–27; 17:10–14). This shows the impropriety of the Roman Catholic view of the eucharist (transubstantiation), that the bread and wine are changed into Christ’s body and blood.

14:23. Similarly, after the meal (cf. 1 Cor. 11:25), Jesus **took the cup** containing red wine mixed with water, **gave thanks** (*eucharistēsas*; cf. Mark 8:6–7; hence the word “eucharist”), **and offered** (lit., “gave”) **it to them, and they all drank from it**. Assuming Jesus followed the established Passover ritual this was the third of four prescribed cups of wine (“the cup of thanksgiving”; cf. 1 Cor. 10:16) which concluded the main portion of the meal. Presumably He did not drink the fourth cup, the cup of consummation. Its significance still lies in the future when Jesus and His followers will be together again in His kingdom (Luke 22:29–30; see comments on Mark 14:25).

14:24. Jesus explained the meaning of the cup: **This** (the wine) **is** (represents) **My blood of** (i.e., which inaugurates) **the covenant, which** (blood) **is poured out for** (*hyper*, “in behalf of,

instead of”) **many**, a reference to His vicarious, sacrificial death for mankind (cf. 10:45). Just as sacrificial blood ratified the Old (Mosaic) Covenant at Sinai (cf. Ex. 24:6–8), so Jesus’ blood shed at Golgotha inaugurated the New Covenant (Jer. 31:31–34). This promises forgiveness of sins and fellowship with God through the indwelling Spirit to those who come to God by faith in Jesus.

The word *diathēkē* (“covenant”) refers not to an agreement between two equals (denoted by *synthēkē*) but rather to an arrangement established by one party, in this case God. The other party—man—cannot alter it; he can only accept or reject it. The New Covenant is God’s new arrangement in dealing with people, based on Christ’s death (cf. Heb. 8:6–13). The spiritual blessings Israel expected God to grant in the last days are *now* mediated through Christ’s death to all who believe. The *physical* blessings promised to Israel, however, are not being fulfilled now. They will be fulfilled when Christ returns and establishes His millennial reign with Israel in her land.

14:25. Jesus seldom spoke about His death without looking beyond it. Using solemn introductory words (**I tell you the truth**; cf. 3:28) He vowed that He would **not** (*ouketi ou mē*, “certainly not any more”; cf. 13:2) **drink again of the fruit of the vine**, in this festive way **until that day** (cf. 13:24–27, 32) in the future **when** He will **drink it anew**. He will enjoy renewed table fellowship with His followers in a qualitatively new (*kainon*) existence (cf. Isa. 2:1–4; 4:2–6; 11:1–9; 65:17–25) **in the kingdom of God** (cf. comments on Mark 1:15), the Millennium established on earth when Jesus Christ returns (cf. Rev. 20:4–6).

14:26. The Hallel (praise) Psalms were **sung** or chanted antiphonally in connection with the Passover—the first two (Pss. 113–114) before the meal, the remaining four (Pss. 115–118) after it to conclude the evening observance. Such verses as Psalm 118:6–7, 17–18, 22–24 gain added significance on Jesus’ lips just before His suffering and death.

Since their conversation after the meal included Jesus’ discourse and prayer (John 13:31–17:26), it was probably near midnight when He and the Eleven (minus Judas) finally left the Upper Room and the city. **They** crossed the Kidron Valley (cf. John 18:1) **to the** western slopes of the **Mount of Olives** (cf. Mark 11:1a) where Gethsemane was located (14:32).

3. JESUS’ PRAYER BEFORE HIS ARREST AND THE DISCIPLES’ DESERTION (14:27–52)

The third cycle of events in this division has a “sandwich” structure like many other passages in Mark (cf. 3:20–35). The account of Jesus’ prediction of His disciples’ desertion (14:27–31) and its fulfillment at His arrest (vv. 43–52) is interrupted by the account of Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane (vv. 32–42). In this way Mark emphasized that Jesus faced His final hour of testing alone with His Father, without human sympathy or support.

a. *Jesus’ prediction of the disciples’ desertion and Peter’s denial (14:27–31) (Matt. 26:31–35; Luke 22:31–34; John 13:36–38)*

Whether this episode took place in the Upper Room (as Luke and John indicate) or on the way to Gethsemane (as Matt. and Mark imply) is difficult to determine. Mark apparently used it thematically without an explicit chronological connection in anticipation of the subsequent events he wished to highlight (e.g., Mark 14:50–52, 66–72). Matthew, however, included a temporal connection (Matt. 26:31, *tote*, “then”). Perhaps Jesus gave this prediction in the Upper Room relating it only to Peter (as in Luke and John), and repeated it on the way to Gethsemane (as in Matt.) telling it to the Eleven and especially to Peter.

14:27. The verb translated **fall away** (*skandalisthēsesthe*) means to take offense at someone or something and thereby turn away and fall into sin (cf. 4:17; 6:3; 9:42–47). **Jesus** predicted that **all** 11 disciples would take offense at His sufferings and death. To avoid the same treatment they would “fall away,” denying association with Him (cf. 14:30) and desert Him (cf. v. 50). Their loyalty would temporarily collapse.

Jesus applied Zechariah 13:7 to this situation: **I** (God the Father) **will strike** (put to death) **the Shepherd** (Jesus), **and the sheep** (the disciples) **will be scattered** in all directions. The interpretive change from the command “Strike” (Zech. 13:7) to the assertion “I will strike” suggests that Jesus viewed Himself as God’s suffering Servant (cf. Isa. 53: esp. Isa. 53:4–6).

14:28. Jesus immediately countered His desertion prediction with the promise of a post-Resurrection reunion (cf. 16:7; Matt. 28:16–17). As the **risen Shepherd** He would precede His flock **into Galilee**, where they had lived and worked and were called and commissioned by Jesus (Mark 1:16–20; 3:13–15; 6:7, 12–13). They were to “follow” the risen Lord who would continue to lead His people in their future tasks (cf. 13:10; 14:9).

14:29–31. As before (cf. 8:32) **Peter** focused on the first part of Jesus’ prediction (14:27), ignoring the second part (v. 28). He insisted that he was an exception—**all** the rest might **fall away** as Jesus predicted (v. 27) but he would **not** (lit., “but not I,” the word “I” is emphatic by position). Peter claimed greater allegiance to Jesus than all the others (cf. “more than these”; John 21:15).

Prefaced by solemn introductory words (**I tell you the truth**; cf. Mark 3:28) **Jesus** emphatically told Peter that his failure would be greater than the others despite his good intentions. That same night **before the rooster crows twice**, before dawn, Peter would not only desert Jesus but actually **disown** (*aparnēsē*, “deny”; cf. 8:34) Him **three times**. The “cockcrow” was a proverbial expression for early morning before sunrise (cf. 13:35). Only Mark mentioned the rooster crowing twice, a detail probably due to Peter’s clear recollection of the incident. (The major Greek manuscript evidence is split over including the word “twice” but the more strongly attested words “the second time” in 14:72 provide confirmation that Mark wrote “twice” here.)

Jesus’ pointed reply caused **Peter** to protest even more **emphatically** (an adverb used only here in the NT) that he would **never** (*ou mē*, emphatic negation) **disown** Jesus **even if** he must (*deē*; cf. 8:31) **die with** Jesus. **The others** echoed Peter’s affirmation of loyalty. They implied Jesus’ prediction was wrong, but a few hours later they showed He was right (14:50, 72).

Church, C.L. (1998). *Mark In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (pp. 441-442). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.*

APPROACHING DEATH (14:1–11)

Mark’s final section concerns events surrounding the human judgment against Jesus (14:1–15:47) and God’s judgment *for* Jesus (16:1–8). The plotting of the Jewish leadership to secure Jesus’ death sets the somber tone. A woman was again a model of discipleship. Anointing Jesus with expensive perfume was a “beautiful” act demonstrating freedom from wealth (see 10:21–25) and acceptance of Jesus’ suffering and death (see 8:31–33). Ironically, Mark preserved the names of those who sought seats of honor for themselves (10:37) and not this woman, who sought only to pour love on Jesus. The section concludes by telling the readers that Judas agreed to betray Jesus to the chief priests for money.

THE LORD'S SUPPER (14:12–31)

Mark's account of the Lord's Supper repeatedly emphasizes its Passover setting. As "Son of Man" Jesus would go to His death in accordance with Scripture just as the Passover lambs were sacrificed. As in the account of the entry into Jerusalem (11:1–11), the instructions regarding preparations underscore the significance of the event. What Jesus meant by giving His body is clarified by His comments on the cup. His blood would establish a new covenant (see Jer. 31:31) by being "poured out for many." The Lord's Supper also looked beyond the cross. Jesus would experience the blessedness of God's kingdom and would be reunited with His disciples in Galilee after the resurrection.

Jesus' acceptance of His God-ordained fate is contrasted with the disciples' denial of theirs. Distressed at the thought of a traitor in their midst, first one then another dismissed the possibility of his own betrayal. Later Peter spoke for the group: "Even if all fall away, I will not." The prediction of his denial points to the difference in the lives of faithful witnesses under pressure after Easter (see 13:9–13).

Leavell, L.P. (1972). Mark. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (p. 630). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

Preparing for the Cross (Mark 14:1–52)

The passage—The first nine verses of chapter 14 relate the beautiful story of Mary's extravagance. This incident becomes the more meaningful when we realize that Jesus was in the last days of his ministry. The first two verses relate the plan of the scribes and chief priests to kill Jesus, but not to kill him during a feast time for fear of the people. Their plan ultimately had to be changed, for Jesus was killed during the time of a feast.

The parallel story to this in John 12 states that Lazarus, recently raised from the dead, was present at this meal with his sisters, Mary and Martha. It was a custom of the times to pour a few drops of perfume upon an arriving guest and rinse the dust from his feet. Mary emptied the entire box on the feet and head of her Master.

This box and its contents were valued at 300 denarii. The magnitude of this extravagance is revealed in the knowledge that a denarius was the average working man's wage for one day's work. This perfumed ointment from India was regarded as a gift fit for a king.

There was immediate criticism for this generous act. This is the natural reaction of a materialist to anyone who gives something away. The greedy, unregenerate person, like Judas, cannot understand an act of generosity.

In a brief but significant section, 14:10–11, we read of Judas' traitorous bargain. Sin was the ultimate cause of Judas' downfall. He was an ambitious, money-loving young businessman. He had an overriding ambition. He wanted to get to the top as quickly as possible. He had done nothing in violation of the law. He was not a sinister, evil sort of person. He was rather an unsaved man who had been in close association with Christians. He is like the unsaved church members of our day, who when the chips are down, reject Jesus and accept the world offers.

The conspirators changed their minds about killing Jesus at feast time. Judas' betrayal made it possible for them to proceed immediately with their plans.

Mark next records the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper (14:12–26). It was the last Passover for these men, for Judas killed himself, Jesus was crucified, and the other eleven apostles thereafter observed the Lord's Supper. This was the Christian fulfilment of the Passover

Feast. The sacrificial system of the Old Testament, represented by the Feast of the Passover, is now fulfilled in the Lord's Supper of the New Testament. This is Christ's new covenant sealed with the blood of the sinlessly perfect Son of God.

The tragic denials of Peter are disclosed in 14:27–31. Comfort should have been derived from verse 28, but the truths of verse 27 caused them either not to hear or not to understand his resurrection.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). Mark 14:1-31. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

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