

Alêtheia Christian Fellowship

March 7, 2021

“Preparing Passover, part 1”

Sunday school at 8:30, Service at 9:15, Service at 10:45 with King’s Kids.

NEWS

Wednesday Night Activities at 6:30 PM

330 N. Somers Rd. (Mail: PO Box 10626) Kalispell, MT 59904~ (406) 755-1776

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MATTHEW 26:1&2 ~

This subsection is verses 1-19. V1 = _____. V2 & V17-19 = _____.
V3-5 & 14-16 = _____. V6-13 = _____.

Jesus specifically said that His death would be on the Passover, in just two days’ time. When did His enemies plan to kill Him?

Passover (Exodus 11&12) was instituted by God to commemorate Death passing over those under the blood of the lamb (Exodus 12:14). Since it would be their final night in Egyptian captivity, they were to eat unleavened bread along with the lamb.

Jesus knew that He was to be the Passover Lamb that year.

Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.

God Bless You!

MATTHEW 26:3-5 ~

If Rome saw Jesus as exerting greater influence over the people than the present leaders... Or, if Rome saw Jesus as a threat... Either way, it was a big problem for the present Jewish leaders. They wanted Jesus dead, but couldn't risk disorder.

MATTHEW 26:6-13 ~ (Mark 14:3-9 & John 12:1-11, *Luke 7:36-50, 10:38-42, John 11*)

Jesus had recently raised Lazarus from the dead and the dinner was given in Jesus' honor and in celebration of Lazarus' return.

At some point Mary retrieved an alabaster jar of concentrated perfume worth "300 denarii," which was about a years' wages.

Can you imagine? Disrupting the meal, destroying the bottle, and using up its contents, the cost, the smell, her hair, the ridicule?

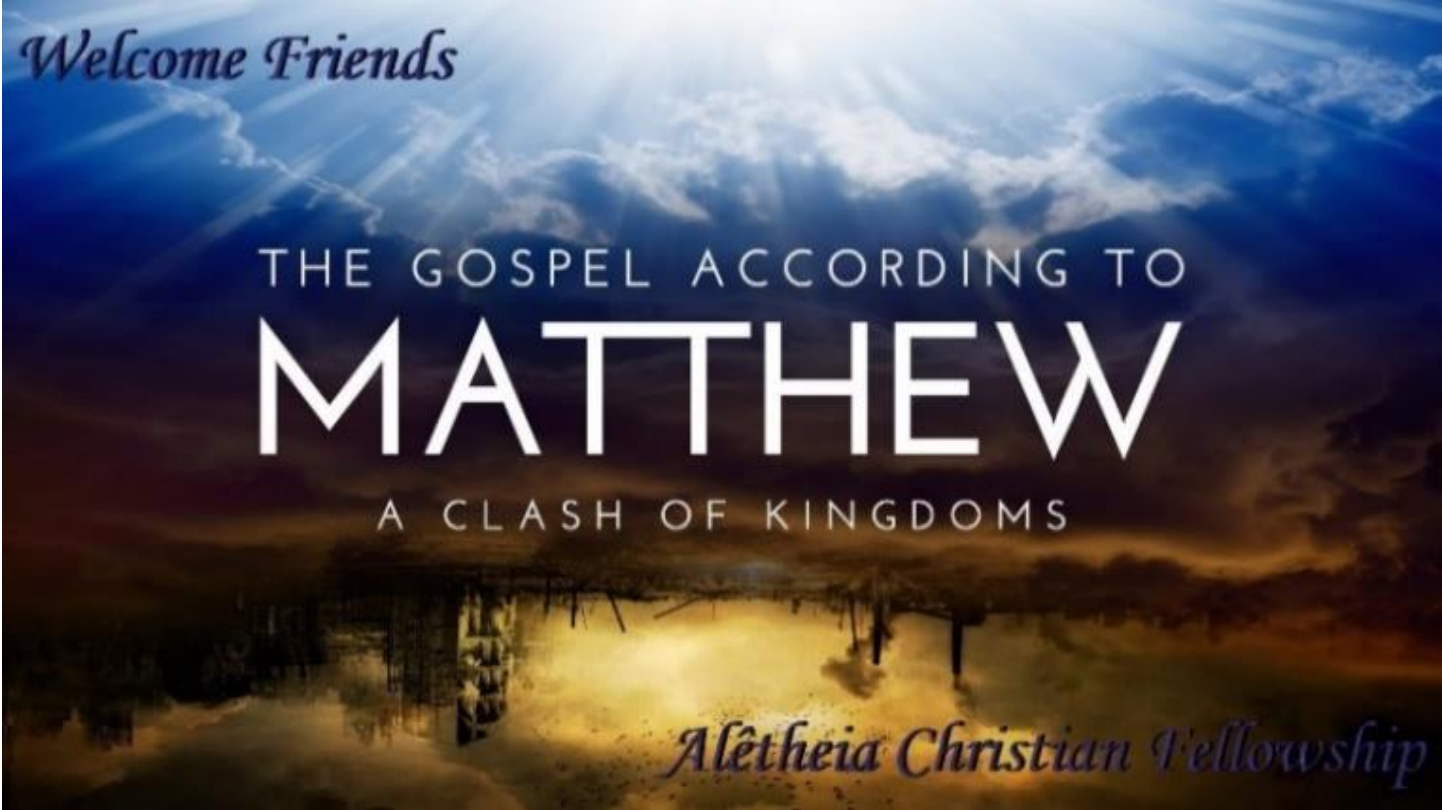
The guys began to grumble. Jesus rebuked them. Judas Iscariot was the primary voice of opposition, and so, felt the brunt of the chastisement (John 12:4). It was the last straw for him.

Many people don't like Jesus' words about the poor. If you care more about the poor than Jesus, you don't get it. When you do get it, then you'll be in a position to help the poor without being condescending, self-righteous and arrogant.

Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

Name _____ Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____



Matthew 26:1&2, 1When Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, 2“You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be handed over for crucifixion.”

The opening “When Jesus had finished all these words,” signals a new section and a new topic, but not a new audience... “He said to His disciples.” So, He’s still with His guys on the western slope of the Mount of Olives. Therefore, it is also not a completely new context. That’s important because, while we’re moving on from Jesus’ teaching on the “End of the Age,” there will still be connections with that lengthy discourse we finished last week.

1When Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, 2“You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be handed over for crucifixion.” 3Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas; 4and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him. 5But they were saying, “Not during the festival, otherwise a riot might occur among the people.” 6Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, 7a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at the table. 8But the disciples were indignant when they saw this, and said, “Why this waste? 9“For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor.” 10But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me. 11“For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have Me. 12“For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. 13“Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.” 14Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15and said, “What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?” And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. 16From then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus. 17Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?” 18And He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, “My time is near; I am to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.’ ” ” 19The disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

This next section goes for a couple of chapters and has nicely organized subsections. The first of those subsections goes from verse 1 through verse 19. I point this kind of thing out once in a while to remind you that while the Bible may seem haphazardly arranged, it isn't. Many times, the careful orderliness is not as obvious in English as it is in the original languages, but for those paying attention it's there.

The ability of scholars to discern the ancient rhetorical patterns, devices and figures of speech allows for more accurate translation, exegesis, interpretation, and so, application.

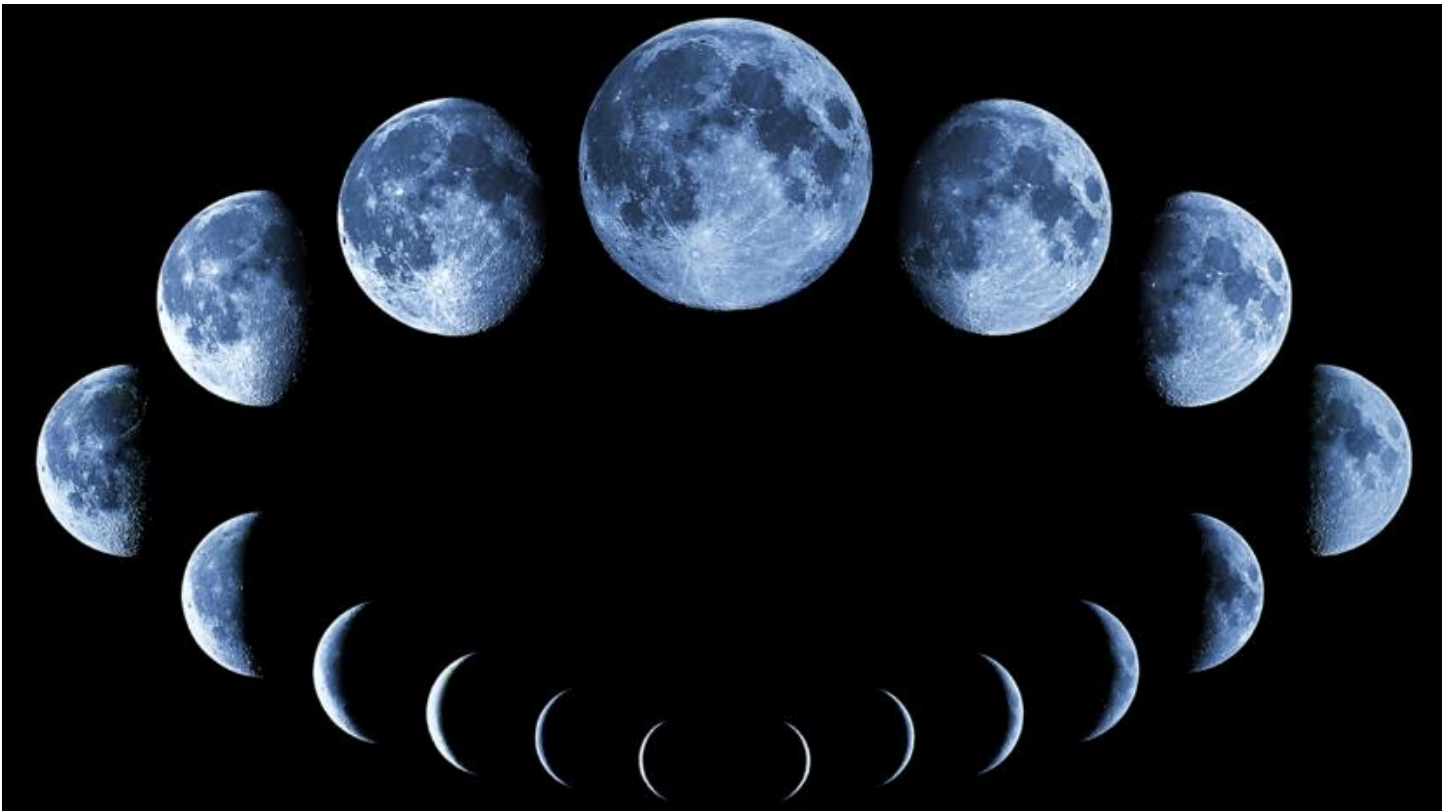
There is the introductory transition in verse 1. The pivot point of the passage is the story told in the middle. I have it in blue. The green parts bracketing above and below have to do with the actions of those plotting against Jesus. The bookend pieces on either side of those brackets that I have in the salmon color have to do with the preparation of Jesus and His Disciples for the Passover. That particular Passover was selected by God to be the ultimate, and therefore the final sacrifice to save people from relationship-ending death.

In verse 2, Jesus boldly, bluntly, stated, once again, not just that He was going to be betrayed by someone close (the “Handed over” part), not just that he was going to be executed by the Roman government (only they had the authority to crucify), but that it was going to happen on the Passover, in just two days’ time. That is quite specific.



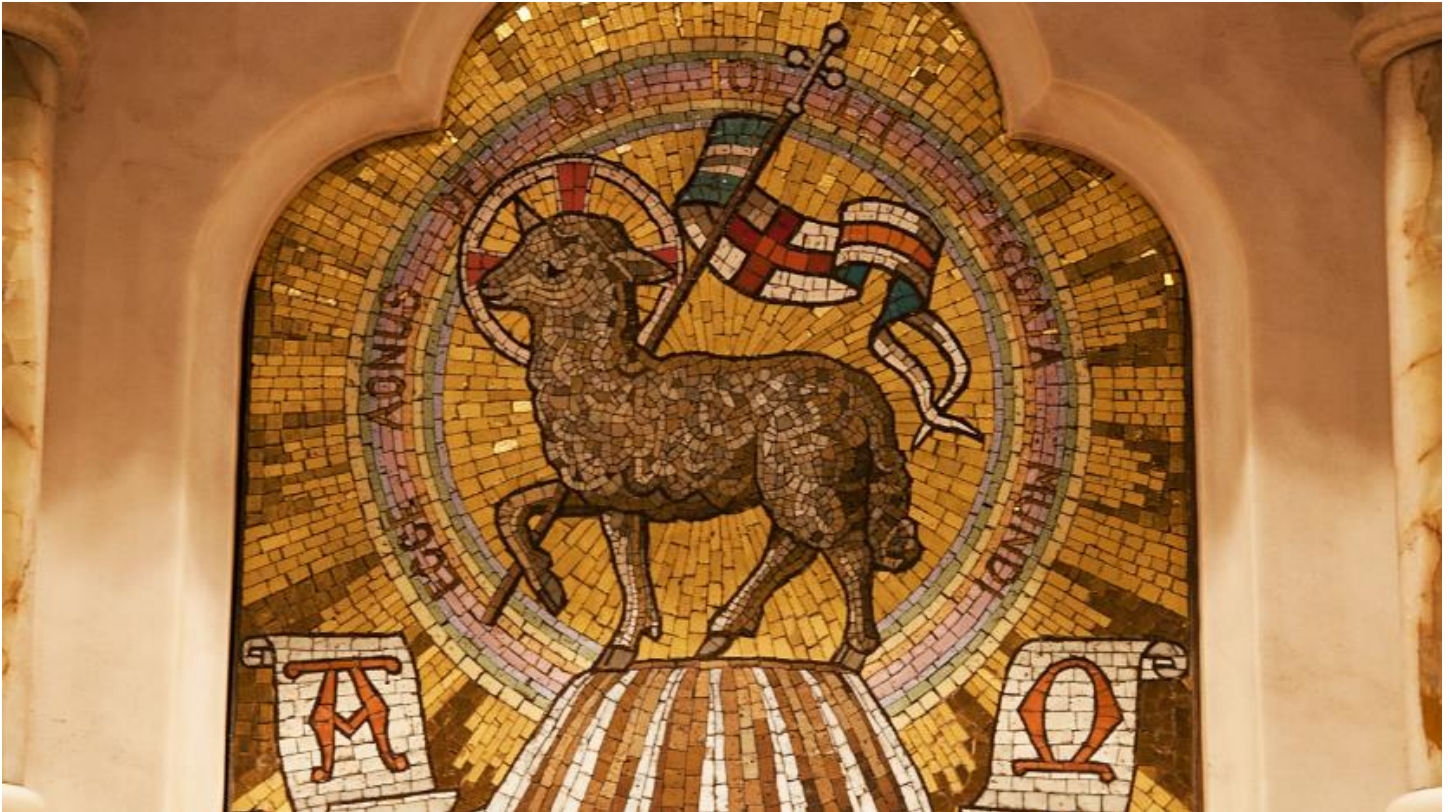
Just a quick reminder about Passover. You can read all about it in Exodus chapters 11&12, and go from there. Essentially, God sent Death to Egypt as the final Plague to get Pharaoh to free the Jewish slaves. That night, if anyone killed a lamb and painted around the door of their home with its blood, Death would pass over - hence the name. The lamb was a substitutionary sacrifice as an act of obedience, demonstrating trust in God. In addition, as that was going to be their last night in Egypt, the Jews were told to quickly make unleavened bread as there wasn't time to let it rise. They were to eat a meal that night that consisted of the sacrificed lamb, the unleavened bread, and of course wine.

God told them in Exodus 12:14. “Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance.” The celebration lasts for a week beginning on 14 Nisan when all the leaven must be removed. that evening the commemorative meal, now known as a Seder, is eaten. In the Jewish reckoning of days, that begin in the evening, rather than at midnight like we figure, the evening of the 14th transitions into the beginning of the 15th.



The timing is based off of a lunar calendar and gets a bit complicated to calculate. It was more difficult 2,000 years ago, because different people used different calendars... Even among the Jews. We know with certainty that the Jewish Essenes used a different calendar than their Sadducee and Pharisee contemporaries used. While they all agreed that the Passover meal was to begin at the end of 14 Nisan, they did not agree on when 14 Nisan occurred each year.

As a sidenote, Easter is based off of Passover, and while few agreed on the calculation, again based on differing calendars, the biggest concern for early Christians was whether to keep Easter as a date falling on any day of the week, or to make it fall on the closest Sunday. That controversy was one of the main reasons for the great East-West Schism in Christianity resulting in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox division a thousand years ago.



We'll talk a lot more about Passover and Easter as we get further along. For now, recognize that Jesus knew full well that He was to be the Passover Lamb that year. As John the Baptist said, the "Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Sin, the cause of death, was about to be destroyed. Love would defeat fear and right relationship would defeat self-centeredness.

From here we could jump to verse 17 and pick up where we left off. That's the other half of this bookend. First though, we will see what the conspirators are doing.



Matthew 26:3-5, 3Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas; 4and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth and kill Him. 5But they were saying, “Not during the festival, otherwise a riot might occur among the people.”

It's interesting to me that Jesus ended up at the Right Hand of the Father and Caiaphas ended up in this box. Jesus had completely exasperated the Jewish leadership. He had challenged them, had made them look like fools, and had pronounced woes upon them. He had openly talked about the destruction of the Temple, the great city of Jerusalem, the nation of

Israel, and most upsettingly, the leadership's inevitable loss of position, power, wealth, prestige, and control.

Beyond that, Jesus' popularity with the people was deeply disconcerting. If His popularity grew, Rome would take notice. If the Governor saw Jesus as exerting greater influence over the people than the present leaders - he wouldn't hesitate to make a change... Fire Caiaphas and hire Jesus. On the other hand, if the Governor saw Jesus as a threat to the peace - he wouldn't hesitate to crack down on everyone and undoubtedly would blame the leaders for the problem. Pilate was in favor with the Emperor as long as his province produced for Rome without causing any problems for Rome. Caiaphas was in favor with Pilate as long as there was order among the people.



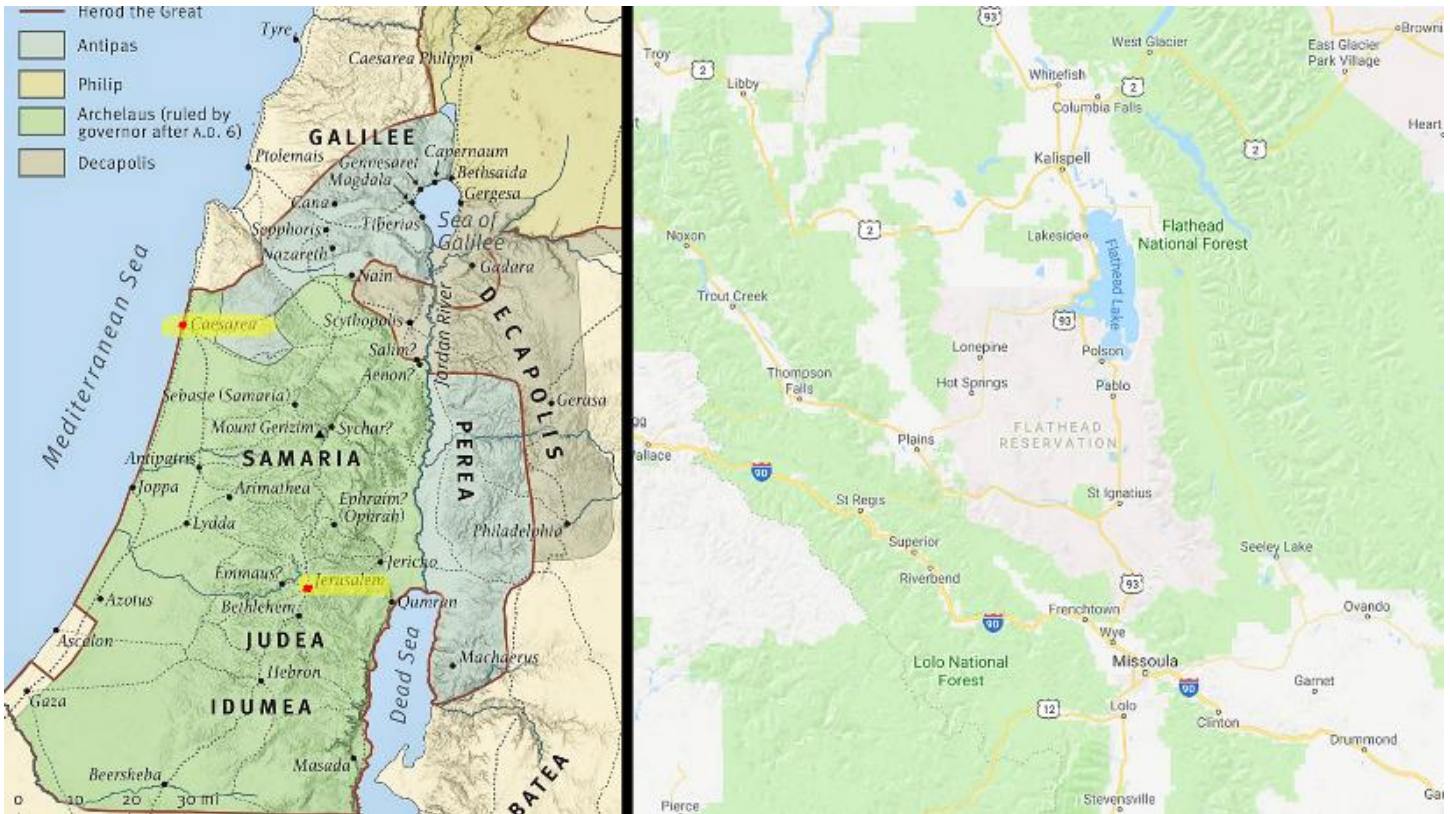
For the High Priest and his cronies, Jesus had to go. I already alluded to it, but please understand that back then, Rome was spread very thin. That's easily seen by the fact that it took the Roman Empire 7 plus years to crush the Jews. Rome ruled the outlying areas of their empire through fear of force, not really through actual force. It took time to mobilize their forces to a hotspot and as soon as they did, other provinces were more rebellious. It's like a person committing a crime while every cop in the valley is rushing to the scene of a major incident on the other side of town.

Therefore, the most important thing to Rome was peace and stability. A peaceful stable area produced

and paid taxes on that productivity. Local leaders were in place to keep the peace and if they failed, it would be a loss of power, status, and wealth as a minimum. It could be brutal death for you and your family as a maximum.

Caiaphas and the boys want Jesus dead, but they don't want any unrest getting that accomplished, especially during the Passover because the Roman Governor Pilate, usually a few days journey away in Caesarea, was in town.





Perhaps when he and his military guard of Roman soldiers along with all the thousands upon thousands of visitors went home, they could secretly grab Jesus and do away with Him. As another sidenote, a later High Priest (Ananus), took advantage of the changeover gap of Roman Governors (Festus to Albinus) to kill James the brother of Jesus in 62 A.D.

Isn't it interesting that Jesus knew when He was going to be murdered better than those plotting His murder? Jesus was ready - God would need to get the conspirators ready. We could jump from here to verse 14 and continue the action, seeing that God did, in fact, get them ready, but then we'd miss how He did it. For

now, we get to the thing that both the Passover preparation and the murder conspiracy bracket. The main bit of this subsection.



Matthew 26:6-13, 6Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, 7a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at the table. 8But the disciples were indignant when they saw this, and said, “Why this waste? 9“For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor.” 10But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me. 11“For you always have the poor with you;

but you do not always have Me. 12“For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. 13“Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her.”

We left Jesus talking to His Disciples on the western slope of the Mount of Olives, in all likelihood near the Garden of Gethsemane. From there it was up over the ridge and down the eastern slope to the town of Bethany. A total walking distance of a bit more than a mile and a half from the Temple Mount. John 11:18 tells us it was “About 15 stadia away.” A στάδιον, (stă-dē-ŏn), from which we get our word stadium, is 604.5 feet. Fifteen stadia is 1.7 miles... There you go. We know that in His last several days as a man, Jesus was staying in Bethany and making the relatively short roundtrip to Jerusalem each day.



“Simon the Leper” is an interesting bit of information. It’s probable that he was an influential Pharisee and

was most likely the father of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. There is a lot of details that can be gleaned from other accounts, like the similar incident in Luke chapter 7, and the identical incident told in John chapter 12 and in Mark chapter 14. Among other passages that shed light. For those interested, we could discuss it further at a more appropriate time.

For now, all we need to know is that Jesus and His guys were invited to a dinner at this dude's home. The reason? Jesus had recently raised Lazarus from the dead and the dinner was given in Jesus' honor and in celebration of Lazarus' return.

John's account tells us that many people became followers of Jesus because of Lazarus and that the Jewish leaders were so upset that they planned to kill both Jesus and Lazarus (John 12:9-11).

Likely, Lazarus and Jesus held the positions of honor next to Simon at the dinner table. A large number of other men, including the Apostles, were reclined for dinner as well. Martha was undoubtedly busy making sure the evening went well. Perhaps, initially, her sister Mary was helping.

At some point Mary retrieved an alabaster jar of concentrated perfume worth “300 denarii” (Mark 14:5, John 12:5), which was about a year’s wages for a common laborer. Approximately \$30,000 in our economy. It was an extremely extravagant sacrifice offered in love and devotion to Jesus.

Looking at the detailed account of Jesus raising Lazarus in John chapter 11, and the Mary and Martha incident in Luke chapter 10, we get a much fuller understanding of this narrative.

Mary was certainly the younger and she wore her heart on her sleeve. She was more open about her emotions and was what I would call a bit dramatic. I have daughters, I know all about it. Mary was so devoted to the Lord Jesus, so grateful to Him for setting her free from whatever it was that held her captive before believing in Him and so grateful to have her brother back from the dead... She, once again, temporarily abandoned her duties, slipped into the dining room, and began ministering to Jesus.

This time she broke the expensive jar and poured out the even more expensive perfume and anointed Jesus’ head and His feet, wiping His feet clean with her hair.



Can you imagine? A woman's hair was considered so lovely that it was usually kept up and covered. Mary unbound it and used it as a towel. It wasn't like Jesus' feet were clean to start with, and it isn't like she could just go wash her hair with shampoo later. It was an extreme act. It was crazy - the extravagance, the cost, the abandon, the humble generosity, and devotion.

The perfume, even a little, let alone a pound of the stuff, filled the room with the scent. It would have been so strong, the taste of the food would have been lost, or at least altered. It isn't like anyone in the room

wouldn't have been keenly aware of the smell - it would have been intense. (John 12:3).



The other men were annoyed. The overwhelming smell, the intrusion of a woman interjecting herself into their little party, her self-denigrating, even self-degrading public display of devotion, and the wanton waste of expensive perfume from a male logic point of view. Why wasn't she helping out in the kitchen? Why was she interfering with their meal? Why was she embarrassing them with her adoration? Why was she throwing away a \$30,000 bottle of perfume?

The guys began to grumble. The grumbling, left unchecked, would have moved from a scorn aimed at Mary, to a contempt for Jesus because He allowed her to do it, to a general ridicule of Mary's family and more negative talk about the dinner and on and on. Once we allow ourselves to go negative and grumble... It becomes a fire that burns everyone in its path.

According to John's account the primary instigator and most vocal critic was Judas Iscariot (John 12:4). He vocalized his displeasure by saying "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?" John added a note saying that it wasn't because Judas cared about the poor, but because He was a money-grubbing thief.



**A great person
rebukes and forgives;**

**A small person is too
timid to rebuke and
too petty to forgive.**

Jesus wasted no time in rebuking the lot of them. I think we miss how forcefully Jesus defended Mary and therefore, what a slap in the face, it felt like to the men. Trust me they would have felt chastised, which is embarrassing... It is humbling to be firmly corrected in front of others. That's one of the worst things you can do to men. Men feel love, acceptance, stability, and well-being when they feel significant.

I know you'll say it's the same for women - well, it isn't. Women feel those things when they feel secure. When the nest is made and it's comfortable and its protected, safe, and secure... Then all is right with the world. For men, it's the size of the nest, how much the nest cost,

what upgrades he's made to the nest, how much better his nest is than everyone else's nest. Men don't care that much about the nest itself, but about how others view the nest... For men it's competition. Men need to feel significant and when they are publicly taken to task, they are deeply embarrassed and offended.

Judas, being the primary voice, would also have felt the brunt of Jesus' rebuke. Mark makes it very clear that immediately after this scolding, Judas went away to betray Jesus... It was the last straw for him.



Jesus picked up the voiced concern about selling the perfume in order to assist the poor. It is so shocking to

me, how many people throughout the ages try to bury Jesus' response. Many people contend that it's a mistake - that Jesus would never have uttered these words about the poor, "For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have Me." How self-absorbed, people say. How dismissive of the poor, people say... It's not possible that Jesus uttered these words, people say. Especially after having just talked about feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, shelter to the homeless, clothing to the naked, etc.

Again, it all stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of Christianity and a replacing of Jesus, and Jesus alone, as Savior with self-righteous moralistic ethics and holier than thou charitable generosity and social progressiveness.



Here, in Jesus' chastisement, we get confirmation that our understanding of the final section of chapter 25 was correct. There is one Gospel. There is one box to check. You must be 100% reliant upon Jesus... That means you believe in Him, your faith and hope is in Him, that you trust Him with the entirety of your salvation and therefore that you likewise trust Him with the entirety of your obedience... Obedience being the proof of that trust... You are profoundly devoted to him with a humble gratitude that would gladly, eagerly spend \$30,000 and make yourself the subject of human ridicule to show Him your love.

Jesus said it was right, good, and noble. So much so that her story is still told after 20 centuries. What's most striking about that to me, is that neither Matthew, nor Mark, record her name. We know it was Mary from John's account, but unlike the other two, he says nothing about telling her story. It's not about honoring Mary herself; it's about recognizing the rightness of her attitude and action.

Above all else, and to the abandon of personal comfort and pride, this woman focused on Jesus. She showed us what Christianity is all about. A generous service to the Lord first and foremost. Jesus commented that He wasn't going to be around much longer and so for 2,000 years people following in Mary's footsteps have shown their generous service to Jesus' Body on earth... The church... The community of Believers... Love one another... Build the Kingdom.

Notice very carefully what Jesus actually said... First, He defended her without qualification. It wasn't, "I do not condemn you... Sin no more." It was "Leave her alone!" Period. Then He confirmed that what she did was "Good." We don't know how much she intended her act as an anointing for His impending death. He talked about it enough, it should have been obvious to

everyone by now. Whatever her understanding, it is clear that she cared more about Jesus than she did about her personal possessions, wealth, or reputation. People could say, or do what they wanted, she was not going to be dissuaded from sacrificially serving, publicly honoring, and openly loving her Lord.

That then, is the thing that is noteworthy. The two biggest keys people miss, is first, that she is not named here, or in the parallel account in Mark... We Christians were never supposed to idolize, pray to, or worship other Christians. Notice, Jesus said it was what she had done that would be revered, not her that would be revered.

The second key is that Jesus specifically said that she would be remembered as part of the "Gospel being preached." Her deed was connected by God to the Gospel Message.

The Gospel is that Jesus is the priority above and beyond all other things. To be truly saved, one must focus on Him and be fully surrendered to His complete Salvation and to His perfect Lordship. She was, and that's the point.

It is no coincidence that we just talked about taking care of the poor... The Gospel is not about caring for the less fortunate around you. It is about a full abandon to Jesus - an intense devotion to Him. It is a reciprocal relationship. He loves you so much He died to save you. Embracing that, the Holy Spirit enables you to return His love. If you don't... Something is deeply a miss.

If you care more about the poor than Jesus, you don't get it. If you care more about your excess, your toys, your bank account, your investments, your expensive bottle of perfume than you do about Jesus, you don't get it. If you care more about your reputation, your pride, your coolness than you do about Jesus, you don't get it. If you care more about your friends, your family and yes, even your own physical life on earth, than you do about Jesus, you don't get it.

When you do get it, well then, you'll be in a position to help the poor without being condescending to the people you're helping. Without being self-sufficiently self-righteous about your good deeds that will make you think that you're earning God's favor. Without feeling superior to those who are not as hard working and generous as you are. Without the pompous, self-

congratulatory arrogance that comes from being better than everyone else.