

A FRIEND, A FOE, AND A FEAST (Mk. 14:3-16)

The week leading up to the crucifixion was full of ‘behind the scenes’ activities. ... As we saw previously, the chief priests and scribes were plotting, while Jesus was attending to His Father’s will.

He begins in the home of Simon the leper where a woman anointed Him in preparation for His death and burial ... This must not be confused with a previous occasion when another woman entered the house of another Simon, - Simon the Pharisee. (Simon was a very popular name, - there were ten in the New Testament.) The woman in Simon the Pharisee’s house anointed the feet of Jesus (Lk. 7:36-50) ... whereas the woman in Simon the leper’s house anointed His head (Mt. 26:6-13; Mk. 14:3) and His feet (Jn. 12:3). The woman in Luke was a sinner (Lk. 7:37), but the woman in Mk. 14, - as John tells us (Jn. 12:3), - was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, and a devoted and devout follower of Jesus.

Another interesting feature is how this story is introduced, **Mk. 14:3** *And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper ...* It is like, “Oh, and by the way ...”

... He has been staying in Bethany since the previous Saturday ... On the Sunday He received visitors, on the Monday He entered Jerusalem, on the Tuesday He confronted the false religion in the temple, and on the Wednesday He taught in the temple courtyard, and that was when the chief priests, scribes and elders confronted Him, and also when He taught His disciples about the future ... He has been very busy ... in and out of Jerusalem ... back and forth to Bethany.

In all the busyness, an event which took place a few evenings earlier was recalled. What happened in Mk. 14:3-9, John tells us took place on the evening six days before the Passover (Jn. 12:1) which according to Jewish calculations puts it back to the previous Saturday evening, after sunset (Jews count their days from the evening at sunset to the next evening at sunset).

So, what happened was this ... They were in the home of Simon the leper for a meal (Mk. 14:3). This Simon was a *former* leper, for if he was *still* a leper nobody would have entered his home ... and there was every likelihood he was healed of his leprosy by Jesus. ... This was a lovely common touch that Jesus set aside time to spend with ordinary people, despite what was ahead of Him in this extremely heavy week. ... It beautifully illustrates what He had previously said, **Mk. 2:17** *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

All-in-all, this would have been a great evening, - a former outcast, hosting the Saviour. It would have been quite a meal, - Jesus, the twelve disciples, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Simon the leper = 17 plus any family Simon would have had, - i.e. his wife, children, and other members and friends. ... Quite a house-full! ... And Jesus was taking time in this busy period leading up to Passover.

... And there they all were ... all sitting reclining against each other ... feet spread out, sandals easy to take off ... and it was the norm to wash the feet of your guests. (Some might have particularly needed it! ☺) ... There was nothing extra-special about washing feet, - in fact, Jesus did it to His disciples (Jn. 13:1-11) ... and feet-washing remains a 'sacrament'/ordinance in some traditions today, along with baptism and the Lord's Supper. In New Testament times, though, it was courtesy, good manners, and the custom for the host to wash the feet of his guests.

However, this was very different for along came Mary with an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious (Mk. 11:3). ... Judas Iscariot reckoned (Jn. 12:5) it would have cost about a year's wage (300 denarii), - a phenomenal amount ... Spikenard came all the way from India ... Where did Mary get that type of money to buy such expensive perfume?! ... Well, obviously, she has been saving up for it, in preparation ... I wonder if on those previous occasions when Jesus came to visit, and when Mary sat listening to Him rather than being in the kitchen with her sister ... I wonder if Mary picked up on some things Jesus said that caused her to think one day He was going to die for her ... and I wonder if that is how she was prepared, and had this expensive perfume to anoint the Saviour with?

She poured it over His head ... and He sat there *still*, as everyone was watching. And John adds how she also 12:3 anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

Such a beautiful thing to do! ... What?! No, it's not, said one, for it's a waste! ... And that one was Judas Iscariot, Jn. 12:6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. ... He was thinking of how he could have siphoned off some of that 300 denarii! ... On one hand, there was Judas Iscariot who wanted everything he could take ... while on the other hand, there was Mary who wanted to give everything

she possessed! ... She was offering her savings to the Saviour! ... That is how much she loved Him!

Jesus did not scold Judas though, nor expose him for being a thief, - and there were a few others who tended to see it Judas' way as well ... Jesus simply told them, **Mk. 14:6** Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. **7** For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. ... Giving to the poor has its place ... but giving to the Saviour has *priority* ... *always*. **8** She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying.

... Previously, on their way up to Jerusalem, Jesus had told His disciples, **Mk. 10:33** the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: **34** And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again. ... But they didn't want to hear that! ... It looks very much as if He had also told Mary the same news, and she *did* believe Him, and she *did* accept what He was saying to her, and that is why she had the costly spikenard oil with which to anoint Him for burial ... And here we are today, fulfilling the prophetic words of the Saviour when He said, **Mk. 14:9** Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

... And then the Gospel writer leads us from a devoted follower to a despicable fraud, **10** And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray him unto them. **11** And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray him.

... In the darkness of that Saturday evening, Judas Iscariot went searching for the enemies of Christ ... He slithered his way into Jerusalem to 'cut a deal' with the chief priests and the scribes. He travelled from Bethany to secretly prepare to betray Jesus ... on that Saturday evening *before* the Saviour's entrance into Jerusalem, and *before* the Saviour went up into the temple. ... He was in the company of Jesus and the disciples all that time from the Saturday evening until the following Thursday evening ... looking for the best opportunity to make money from betraying Jesus. ... He had missed out on getting some of that 300 denarii, so he went to connive with the Pharisees for a mingy thirty pieces of silver. ... It wasn't a last-minute betrayal for he was arranging it *six nights before!* ... He had all that time in-between to reconsider, *but he didn't!*

Judas Iscariot was a bad rascal but, at the same time, it is hard not to feel sorry a bit for him ... especially the way Mark writes it, ¹⁰ *And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve* ... Such privileges that man squandered! He had spent so much time in the Saviour's presence over those past three and a half years ... and yet he had it in him to betray Jesus. Jesus *knew* he would betray Him though, as the Psalmist indicated, *Ps. 41:9* *Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.* ... Indeed, we can take that right back to Gen. 3:15, when God said to the serpent, *Gen. 3:15* *I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* That is what Jesus was alluding to in v.18, *And as they sat and did eat, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me.*

Luke tells us how the chief priests and scribes were wondering how they could kill Jesus before the Passover, and along came Judas and gave them the opportunity, *Lk. 22:4* *And he went his way, and communed with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him unto them.* ⁵ *And they were glad, and covenanted to give him money.* ... But, - at the same time, - they had to curb their excitement because if the people heard they were plotting against Jesus, the chief priests and the scribes feared it could cause a riot for Jesus had been proving so popular among the ordinary folk, ⁶ *And he promised, and sought opportunity to betray him unto them in the absence of the multitude.* ... There is nothing new about it ... enemies of Christ plotting and scheming ... It is extremely sad, though, when those who profess to belong to Jesus, keep such vulgar company. ... Thirty pieces of silver, - the price of a slave (Ex. 21:32), - that was all he would get for the Saviour!

The more you think about it, the sin of Judas is without equal ... but, also consider Adam who walked and talked with God in the garden, and yet exchanged his God-given privileges for the paltry and miserable benefits the enemy offered him. ... Just like Adam, Judas thought he was going to get more than he ended up with!

But, in both scenarios, God had it had the outcome already planned. ... ¹² *And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover [the celebration for the Passover would begin on the Thursday evening, at sunset], his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?* ¹³ *And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.* ¹⁴ *And whersoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the*

guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? ¹⁵ And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. ¹⁶ And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. ¹⁷ And in the evening he cometh with the twelve.

Imagine Judas listening to every word ... He would have been 'earie-wiggling' to find out all he could, to report back and get his money all the sooner ... Where are they going to meet? ... What time? ... What is going to happen? ... I'll have to tell the chief priests and scribes. ... His ears would have been 'red-hot' snooping in on all the conversations! ... He is looking forward to getting *that* money!

But, the Lord knew exactly what was going on in Judas Iscariot's mind for He didn't send them *all* to look for a place ... only Peter and John, **Lk. 22:8** saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. ⁹ And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? ¹⁰ And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.

I'm sure if Judas would have heard about the upper room, and where it was, he would have run as fast as he could to tell his 'handlers' ... Indeed, an upper room would have been an *excellent* place to show up and arrest Jesus ... It would have been perfect! ... No interfering crowds, no hysterical hordes of followers ... very little to go wrong ... *perfect!* ... But remember, Jesus already knew what Judas was up to, and that's why He sent only Peter and John to arrange it all privately.

Jesus had it already all arranged! ... He had the man in place for Peter and John to go and find ... and He had the man carrying the pitcher of water, - normally, the woman carried it. The man knew Who they were referring to when they said *the Master* had sent them, ... Jesus had it all planned, to every little detail. ... And something else ... Judas was kept completely 'in the dark'! ... He did *not* know what was going on! ... Sometimes we give the devil more credit than he is due ... He is neither like God and he is *not* God, - he is not all-powerful and all-knowing, and neither can he be everywhere, like God is. He tries to imitate God, *but* he cannot for he always makes mistakes ... And he only can understand *some* of what God is planning, and what he *does* understand, he cannot ultimately do anything about!

The intricate detail with which God planned every part of this final week is amazing. Every moment was accounted for, and it all worked within the parameters of those ordinary surroundings. Consider it again at its simplest ... Our Saviour came to a manger which was not His own, - Mary and Joseph had to *borrow* it ... He rode into Jerusalem on an animal which was not His own, - He had to *borrow* it too ... He stayed with friends in Bethany in a home which was not His own ... He *borrowed* a room for the Passover meal ... He wore a crown of thorns the soldiers made for Him out of branches lying around ... He wore a robe the Roman soldiers had *borrowed* from somewhere and they threw it over Him ... and He even *borrowed* a tomb ... Our Saviour stooped so low ... When He died on the cross, He stooped even lower than it is possible for any to stoop when He went down into the miry pit, to lift us up and out! ... And it was all part, - every little detail accounted for, - ... it was all part of God's plan of salvation.

Jesus did all this *for you and for me*. He didn't have to do it for Himself, but He did it for us. He prayed in the garden, **Jn. 17:1** *Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.* ... Every step He took was in His Father's will, and His Father's will for Him was that He would die on the cross of Calvary to take away our sins ... that we would believe in Him as our Saviour, and we would be saved. He would rise again from the dead, and enter Glory ... into the presence of His Holy Father. ... Then, our Saviour, ... the Man Who came to this earth Whose parents had to borrow a manger, and He Who had to borrow a donkey, and a place to stay at night ... that same Man entered Heaven where everything is His! ... And the next time we see Him, - when He comes for us, - it will be *us* who will be living in *His* home, along with *Him* ... and it will be our home too, **Jn. 14:2** *In my Father's house are many mansions ... I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.* ... And we shall be with Him forever, ... and that is why He came into this world for us!

A friend, a foe, and a feast ... Even before He went to the cross, He had already done far more than we deserve ...

Blest be the everlasting God, The Father of our Lord ...
 Saints by the power of God are kept, Till the salvation come;
 We walk by faith as strangers here, But Christ shall call us home.