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Mark 14:1 - 14:31



Gospel of Mark - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg offers a thorough analysis of Mark 14:1-31, which includes the story of Jesus' anointing in Bethany, six days before the Passover. Gregg explores the chronological issue presented in this passage and offers two possible solutions. He discusses Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Jesus and the theological controversies surrounding his motives. The passage also reveals Jesus' pre-arrangement for the Passover supper and the significant meaning behind his changed interpretation of the meal.

Transcript

Okay, we come now to Mark chapter 14. And there's an interesting chronological issue here, because we're going to find in verses 3 through 9 a story that's told in three of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and John, and in verses 3 through 9, it is the anointing of Jesus at Bethany. And the chronological problem here is that this chapter begins with the words, after two days it was the Passover.

We're now talking about something two days before the Passover. The problem with that is that the anointing of Jesus at Bethany occurred six days before the Passover, according to John chapter 12. John 12 says, then six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, who had been dead, whom he had raised from the dead.

It says, there they made him a supper, and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with him. And Mary took a pound of very costly oil, of spikenard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and it goes on. So, this anointing of Jesus at Bethany seems to be placed six days before the Passover, in John 12.

But it seems to be placed two days before the Passover, in both Matthew and Mark. Now, that's the chronological issue. There are two ways to solve it.

One is to say, the anointing took place two days before the Passover. But what John is telling us is not that the anointing took place six days before the Passover, but that six days before the Passover, that is, the night before Palm Sunday, Jesus came to Bethany and established that as his temporary residence until Passover. And during that week

sometime, though John doesn't tell us when, there was this feast at that home.

In other words, John 12.1 could simply be saying that six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived in Bethany and made that his lodging for the remainder of the time. But not that the anointing happened on that first day. Now, then the mention of they made him a supper in John 12.2 would not be saying that very day, but it was at some other day during that week, which we could deduce from Mark and Matthew, would be like four days later, two days before the Passover.

That would be one solution. There's a different one that I prefer, and that is that the anointing did take place six days before the Passover, and that Mark and Matthew are not telling us otherwise. But rather, Mark and Matthew are telling us that two days before the Passover, Judas betrayed Jesus.

And in that story is sandwiched in parenthetically, the story of the anointing of Jesus, which had happened earlier than that. Let me tell you why. If you look at Mark, and it's the same in Matthew.

In Matthew, I think it's in 26. In Mark 14.1, it says, after two days it was the Passover. And the feast of unleavened bread, and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by trickery and put him to death.

But they said, not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people. Then skip down to verse 10. Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray him to them.

So when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray him. Now, verses 3-9, which we skipped over, are the story of the anointing in Bethany.

If that story is taken as parenthetical, and I'll tell you in a moment why it might be included there as a parenthesis. But if it's taken as a parenthetical flashback to something that had happened earlier, six days before Passover, as John places it, then it is only telling about it here because it led to the event of Judas going to the chief priests, two days before the Passover. How did it do so? Because Jesus rebuked Judas on the occasion of the anointing, and we're told that Satan entered him.

And so it would explain the event that led to Judas going to the chief priests, but when he did so, was two days before the Passover. The anointing of Bethany was not two days before the Passover, but earlier, but is mentioned parenthetically in order to give the reasons why Judas took the step he did to betray Jesus. So we have two possibilities.

One is that John is not saying the anointing took place six days before the Passover. He's only saying that Jesus arrived in Bethany six days before the Passover. And that the anointing took place later in the week.

That is a possible solution. The other solution is that the anointing did take place, as John seems to say, six days before Passover, and that became the occasion of Judas, four days later, going to the chief priests and saying, I'll betray him. And they were glad because two days before the Passover they had just been plotting how they might get rid of him.

They wanted to get rid of him, and it seemed to be like something urgent to them. Urgent enough that they even contemplated, shall we do it during this feast? And they said, rule that out. No, not for reasons of wanting to keep the feast sacred, but because they thought it would be not practical.

It could cause an uproar with all the pilgrims in Jerusalem to arrest Jesus in a public setting. It would cause an uproar, and Jesus had an unknown number of sympathizers in the crowd. It could cause a riot if they sent the soldiers in to arrest him in a public way.

And that's the only reason they didn't want to do it at the Passover. As it turned out, they did end up doing it at the Passover, even though they initially said, no, we don't want to do it at the Passover, because that could cause an uproar of the people. But if they could find a way to arrest him without causing the uproar of the people, they didn't mind doing it at Passover.

They weren't trying to keep Passover sacred, as they should have been. They were just interested in not causing themselves too many problems in the public eye. And so they were glad when Judas came, because Judas was an insider in the group who could tell them about Jesus' private movements, where Jesus went when no one else knew where he was.

And this would give them the opportunity to arrest him, even at the Passover season, but without the crowd being present. As a matter of fact, the entire event of Jesus' arrest at night made it possible for his arrest and his trial to take place without the public knowing about it. And by the time he was condemned, or by the time the public learned of it, he was carrying his cross out to be crucified.

It was too late. The public, if they wanted to do an uproar, they'd have to do it against the Romans, because he was now a Roman criminal, and the Romans were going to crucify him. You might remember when he was on trial before Pilate, before he was condemned, there were crowds of people there calling out to crucify him.

But we don't know how many. It may have been a hundred, but it might not have been any of the same people who had said, Hosanna, you know, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. There were thousands, if not millions, of Jewish pilgrims who came to Jerusalem during the Passover.

That there might be some group of Sanhedrin sympathizers that were in the square

outside of Pilate's judgment hall at the time Jesus was being tried is not unthinkable, even though the general public would have been excluded. Because the Sanhedrin did not want the general public to be in on this. They were too concerned that the public might be too sympathetic toward Jesus and cause a problem.

Yet those who were in the square outside of Pilate's judgment hall were all on the side of the Sanhedrin. They all said, we have no king but Caesar, crucify him, give us Barabbas. They were all saying all the things the Sanhedrin wanted them to say.

It could be that the crowd that gathered there were gathered by the Sanhedrin, gathering their sympathizers so that Pilate would be pressured by a larger group of people. But still, this whole proceeding could have been kept out of the sight of the general public. Until, of course, Jesus was crucified.

That would be the first time the public would become aware that something had happened to him the night before. Anyway, this is how things worked out. And they were hoping to find some way to arrest him without causing a stir among the public.

And Judas, as an insider coming to say, I'll work with you on this, was their opportunity. They saw, okay, we can get him then in one of his private moments when no one knows where he is except his disciples. We've got one of the disciples here as an informant.

And so they offered him money. In verse 11 it says they promised him money. I believe in Matthew it actually says he asked for money.

He said, how much will you give me if I betray him? Some of the dramatic portrayals of the passion of Jesus in movies and so forth, I'm thinking particularly like of Jesus Christ Superstar, which doesn't hold very close to the text, tend to glorify Judas or whitewash him somewhat. They make it seem like Judas was really maybe a good guy who was just thinking poorly. He didn't really want to be paid.

I think it's in Jesus Christ Superstar, one of those dramas, they offer money. He said, I don't want money. Like he's not doing it for the money.

He's doing it because he's a hero. He wants to save Israel from the danger of a riot that would cause if Jesus proclaimed himself to be Messiah. Or alternately, some believe that Judas was a believer in Jesus and felt that Jesus was a little shy about offering himself as a Messiah.

That Jesus was taking a little longer than he should. That Jesus in fact was the Messiah and was going to drive the Romans out. But Jesus was for some reason reticent and therefore Judas thought that if he could get Jesus arrested, that this would get Jesus to rise up.

In his own defense, use his supernatural power and overthrow the Romans. There are

problems with these things and that is that they tend to make Judas have better motives than he probably had. We're told in the Gospel of John that Judas was a thief and he stole from the treasury of the apostles and of Jesus.

He actually ripped off Jesus of money and the apostles. It takes a pretty rotten crook to steal from the church. To steal from the offering plate.

Judas was not a well-intentioned fellow. And also the extremely common theory that he hoped that Jesus, if arrested, would simply throw off his attackers and supernaturally bring about a revolt against the Romans. That doesn't really fit the facts because Jesus wasn't arrested by the Romans.

It would not be the Romans that he'd be rising up against, but the Sanhedrin. He'd be rising up against those who arrested him, presumably, and they were Jews. That's not what the Messiah was expected to do.

That certainly wouldn't be what a patriotic Jew would try to get Jesus to do, is to rise up against the Jews. It was to the Jews that Jesus betrayed him, not to the Romans. So, all of these theories about Judas having good motives and so forth, they don't really fit the facts very well.

It seems better just to take it at face value. He wanted the money. He'd become disillusioned with Jesus.

And that raises the question, was Judas ever really a true Christian or not? And, of course, the issue of Judas being a true Christian who fell away, or a fake Christian who just revealed his colors, is a significant one with some theological camps who try to decide whether a true Christian can fall away or not. There are the Calvinists who say if you're really one of the elect, then you really can't fall away. And there's Armenians who say, well, you can.

You can be a true believer, a true follower of Christ, and fall away. It's a controversy, and often Judas is brought up as a case in point. Here's a man who was a follower of Jesus, and he fell away.

So, on the Calvinistic view, he never was a real follower of Jesus. He was a devil from the beginning. And they can point to the fact that a year before this, in the Bread of Life discourse in John chapter 6, Jesus said, have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? So that Judas was already recognized as a devil a year before this, in John chapter 6. Thus proving, they think, that he never was a real Christian.

But what about before John chapter 6? Judas had been among the twelve that were sent out to cast out demons, to heal the sick, to preach the gospel, and he had apparently been as successful as all the others in those activities. If he wasn't a real Christian, if he was actually a devil, it seems that we'd have Satan casting out Satan. The very thing

that Jesus said could not be.

It seems to me that Judas, when he was with the other apostles in these activities, must have been as sincere as they were. And after all, if he was a wicked man from the very beginning, his ability to conceal it from the men he lived with for so long is astonishing. Because even when Jesus said in the upper room, one of you will betray me, and moments later Judas gets up and walks out, everyone else stays at the table, no one there suspected that Judas was the one who was going to betray him.

They thought he was going to have to do some good deed to get some money to the poor or buy some things for the Passover. Jesus had just raised the point, someone at this table is going to betray me. Everyone is looking at themselves, is it I? Is it I? You know, it's the focus of everyone's attention.

Suddenly one man at the table gets up and leaves the room. You'd think, people say, maybe it's him. Maybe that's the guy.

But the funny thing is, even though that would be a natural suspicion, they didn't apparently suspect that. That's not one of the theories that crossed their minds. They thought maybe he was going to help the poor, maybe he was going to buy something for the Passover.

Or maybe he's the guy. No, that didn't even come to their mind that he's the guy. Which means that if he had been evil all the time he was with them, he certainly concealed the fact so much that they never even suspected him right up to the last minute.

Though they lived with him. Now obviously he had gone bad at some point before that night, but we don't know when. And I am of the opinion that he was at one time a true believer in Jesus, but he had become disillusioned.

I don't think he's the guy who got into the apostolic band right from the beginning planning to do damage to Jesus. If he was, he sure waited longer than he needed to and ended up doing a lot to promote the kingdom of God with the other apostles, spreading the gospel and so forth. If he just wanted to get in there and destroy Jesus from the beginning, why didn't he betray him earlier when the enemies of Jesus were looking for a chance? Anyway, I'm of the opinion that Judas just became embittered and gave up his faith in Jesus.

And why? Well, as I say, I personally think that the anointing at Bethany was the occasion that really set him off. And I think that's why it's mentioned in this connection, and I believe parenthetically, although I believe it happened four days earlier, I think Mark and Matthew both stick it in here as sort of the reason. It says, that story is in verses three through nine, and being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil, of spikenard,

and she broke the flask and poured it on his head.

But there were some who were indignant among themselves and said, why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor. And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, let her alone.

Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish, you may do good for them. But me you do not have always.

She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint my body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the whole world, what this woman did will also be spoken as a memorial of her.

And so it is. We read it here in the Gospels, which are read around the whole world. But there are some interesting points here, and that is that basically the interesting points are knowing the identity of the persons in the story, because Mark is vague about everybody except Simon the leper.

And yet we don't know who Simon the leper was. Both Matthew and Mark mention this was in the house of Simon the leper. However, in John's gospel, it indicates that Jesus was in the house of Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, who were good friends of his.

In fact, we're told that at this very feast, Lazarus was at the table and Martha was serving. It doesn't seem like she'd be serving a meal other than in her own home. And so it was apparently the house of Lazarus and Mary and Martha, but according to John chapter 12, verse 2. But here and in Matthew, it says it was the house of Simon the leper.

It's not a problem, it's just a question. Who is Simon the leper? There are two possibilities that have been suggested. Both of them work perfectly well.

One is that Simon the leper was the father of these three people who lived together, Lazarus and Mary and Martha. Which would, if he was a leper, he would not be present there. It would be his home.

And his family lived in it, but he as a leper had to live out in a leper colony. Therefore, the care and management of the home had effectively fallen to his adult children. And so we read of Lazarus and Mary and Martha, we don't read of any activity or even of the presence of Simon the leper, but it was his house.

It could be that he was the father of the three. And that's a reasonable suggestion. Others have suggested that Simon the leper was Martha's husband.

Since Martha was serving, the assumption is that it is her home. And she could have been married to a man named Simon, who either was at this time a leper or had been one and Jesus had healed him. No one knows if Simon the leper had been healed or not.

It seems likely that he would have been, since he was connected as he was in the circle of Jesus' friends. And since Jesus healed lepers on more than one occasion, ten of them on one occasion, and even raised Lazarus, a member of this family, from the dead, it would seem strange if they had a father or a husband who was a leper that Jesus would just leave that matter unattended to when he was so close to this family and had done things for other lepers. Presumably, no one knows for sure, but some think that this might be a man who had been a leper, but was healed by Jesus, but was still remembered as Simon the leper.

That would be his claim to fame, like Matthew the tax collector. He was no longer a tax collector, but the fact that he had been a tax collector and had been saved out of that became something as an identifier for him. Or Simon the zealot.

He had been part of the zealot party before, but he wasn't anymore, but he's now Simon the zealot. So, Simon the leper could easily be Simon the former leper. Although we're not told that he was there in the home.

It's possible that Simon the leper was the father and had died before this time, even before Jesus started his ministry. He might have even died of leprosy and was simply remembered in the community as Simon the leper. His house.

His kids live there now. We don't know, but there certainly is no reason to see a contradiction between Mark and Matthew's version saying this is the house of Simon the leper and John telling us that Mary and Martha and Lazarus were in that house and probably lived in that house and Martha was serving there. OK, so the identification of Simon the leper is questionable.

There's also the woman who did the deed in verse 3. It says a woman came in having an alabaster flask of very costly oil. How costly? The disciples quickly did the mental calculations and said this could have been sold for 300 denarii. That's 300 days wages, about a year's work, about a year's income.

Of a normal laborer. And even though the normal laborer of course earned a lower wage or they lived in a lower standard of living than say the middle class persons of our society, we would have to say that even the poor, the working poor of our land certainly would make 15, 20 thousand dollars a year. 15 anyway.

I don't know how they pay rent or even if they don't make 15, 12 or 15. Even if at that really low rate a year's wages would be worth over 10 thousand dollars by today's thinking and therefore this is very costly and the woman just seemingly wasted it. She

just poured it out all over Jesus.

John tells the story and he mentions how the fragrance filled the house. That's kind of a personal memory that comes out from an eyewitness. Because it wouldn't have to be mentioned but it was apparently something very evident that struck him and was memorable.

The fragrance of it filled the whole house, he said. John said in chapter 12. But Mark doesn't tell us who the woman was.

And neither does Matthew. It's just a woman. Strange that they don't mention who she was because it says that Jesus said she would be remembered for this deed wherever the gospel is preached and yet her name is not given here.

Some think maybe Mark and Matthew didn't know who she was. Or the other view is that she was so well known that she didn't have to be mentioned by name in the story. All the Christians knew her and knew who she was and it goes without saying what her name was.

However, John tells us who it was. It was Mary, the sister of Martha and of Lazarus. And though she received criticism, she received commendation from Jesus because, he said, she has anointed me for my burial.

Now, did she know that she was doing that or did he just interpret her act that way? Some think she just did this as an act of devotion to Jesus and he took it to be an anointing for burial because he didn't get a proper anointing for burial. Most dead bodies were anointed and treated and prepared for burial with an elaborate ceremony that included the pouring of perfumes and so forth on the wrapped corpse. Jesus, however, was hastily buried without receiving such an anointing for burial because he was taken down from the cross and buried rather hastily so that the Passover, or actually the Sabbath, would not overtake them.

About three in the afternoon he was dead and the sun would be going down in three hours and they wanted to get the body buried before sundown because that would be the beginning of the Sabbath. So, they got his body down, transported it and buried it in a three hour time. Not enough time really to do all the customary embalming, they wouldn't do embalming, but preparation of the body.

So, he was hastily put away in the grave and actually the reason the women were coming to the tomb on Sunday morning thinking he'd still be in it, not knowing he had risen, was they were coming to embalm his body. They were coming to prepare it. Embalming isn't the right word for it, but to anoint it.

They were bringing spices and things like that because he'd been buried just before the Sabbath and they came early morning after the Sabbath. They couldn't do anything on

the Sabbath so they waited until the first opportunity after the Sabbath to come and do what they had not had time to do when they buried him. But of course they found him alive so he never was properly anointed except here and Jesus seems to allude to that here.

I'm going to be buried. Buried people, dead people need to be anointed. This is it.

This is my anointing. Suggesting there will be no other and the reason there was no other is because he'd rise from the dead before they could get around to bring in the spices and anointing him. So he sees it that way whether Mary does or not.

Now I think she did. I think she knew what she was doing. If she didn't it would be a very strange thing to just come and pour perfume over a house guest.

I mean it's true, you usually did pour a little oil on a person's head when a house guest came. Anointing with oil was a customary thing and their hands too. Oil was used like soap.

To get the hands clean. But perfume would not be and not a whole flask of it worth \$10,000 or more. It's probable that she did see herself as anointing him for burial.

But how would she know? The disciples themselves didn't know. Martha probably didn't know that Jesus was going to die within a few days of that time. How would Mary know? Well Mary and Martha were very different kinds of women.

And Mary and the disciples were very different kinds of people. And we don't have very many stories about them that bring out their character. But we have one and you know the story I'm sure.

It's in Luke chapter 10. And it's another situation where Mary and Martha are hosting Jesus in their home on a different occasion earlier than this one. And Martha again is serving.

She's in character in both of these stories. She's the serving one. The disciples and Mary and Martha are there.

Perhaps Lazarus too, though it's not mentioned whether he's there. And it says in Luke 10.38. Now it happened when they went that he entered a certain village, which would have been Bethany. And a certain woman named Martha welcomed him into her house.

And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet. And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet. And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet.

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And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet. And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet. And she had a sister called Mary who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word.

But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she approached him and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me. And Jesus answered and said to her, Martha, Martha, you're worried about and troubled about many things but one thing is needed and Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken from her.

Now, this resembles the other story. Mary gets criticized, but Jesus defends her in both stories. She's doing what her sister is not sympathetic toward in this story and what the disciples are not sympathetic toward in the other story.

And she gets criticized in both stories, and Jesus stands up for her. In the second story, the one we're considering in Mark chapter 14, she has done something seemingly wasteful. And Jesus says, let me tell you what she did that for.

She anointed me for burial. Well, how would she know that he needed to be anointed for burial? She'd been listening. Jesus had told the disciples three times he was going to die and rise again.

They hadn't listened. I mean, they heard it, but they didn't understand it. The Bible says their minds were dull.

They didn't get it. Martha wasn't even in the same room to hear. She was in the kitchen serving.

Mary was there paying attention. Mary was hearing what Jesus was saying. We don't know all the things he was saying when she sat at his feet and listened, but she was paying attention.

She was getting it. As a woman, probably more intuitive than the disciples were anyway, and picking up on the nuances. And she apparently knew, as others did not, that he was facing his imminent death.

And because of that, brought the oil to anoint him, or the perfume, more properly. And so we have this sketch of the kind of person Mary was, and the kind that Martha was. And we know what kind of disciples were.

In fact, it says when she did this, in verse 4, Mark 14, 4, there were some who were indignant. Mark doesn't identify who. Was it the household servants? Was it Lazarus who was there at the table? No.

Matthew's more specific, and John's more specific still. In Matthew's Gospel it says the disciples criticized her. So the some that Mark refers to are the disciples in Matthew.

In John, it specifies Judas Iscariot. In fact, John only tells us about Judas Iscariot raising an objection. But there's no reason to doubt that once he raised it, other disciples found themselves in sympathy with him.

Judas raised the criticism. The other disciples apparently agreed and joined in in the criticism, as the other Gospels tell us. But in John 12, it says in verse 4, then one of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray him, said, Why was this fragrant oil not sold for 300 denari and given to the poor? But John tells us this, he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief.

And he had the money box, and he used to take what was put in it. And then Jesus gives, of course, his answer there. But you see, this answer was given primarily to Judas.

And we see that Judas, perhaps, objected to being scolded, to being rebuked, to having a woman defended over him in a controversy. And this confrontation between Jesus and Judas apparently was the thing that spurred Judas to go and to do what he did. And so it would seem that that would be why Mark would sandwich this story in there.

I may be wrong. Maybe the other harmonization is the better one. But this is what I personally think is likely.

Okay. Mark 14, 12. Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb.

Now that's different than in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, they had the Passover lamb on the 14th of Abib. And the first day of Unleavened Bread was the 15th of Abib, of Nisan.

So the customs of the Jews apparently had become altered by this time. Instead of having the Passover on one day, and then the next day is the first day of Unleavened Bread, they were now calling the entire Passover Unleavened Bread, or including Passover within Unleavened Bread. Apparently they killed and ate the Passover now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, rather than the day before, as the law specified.

And Jesus and his disciples no doubt followed the custom of the time. And so on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb. You know, I could be mistaken here because the first day of Unleavened Bread would begin the evening before.

And in a sense, if they ate the Passover lamb after sundown on the 14th of Abib, it would be already the next day by Jewish reckoning. So that could be why it's called the first day of Unleavened Bread. When they killed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him,

where do you want us to go and prepare that you may eat the Passover? So he sent out two of his disciples and said to them, go into the city and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water.

Follow him. These two disciples were Peter and John. We know that because we're told that in John's gospel.

No, Luke's parallel tells us it was, he sent Peter and John. Interestingly, Luke mentions Peter and John together on a number of occasions, this one, and also in the book of Acts, Luke mentions Peter and John going to the temple together on several occasions. They, they had been business partners and each of them had a brother that joined the disciples band with them.

But Peter and John, uh, when they became disciples, apparently became joined, uh, more in friendship and partnership than others. So that Jesus sent them as a team to do this. They may have been the two disciples that had earlier been sent to get the donkey, though we were not told who was sent on that occasion.

But we do know in Acts chapter three and Acts chapter four and Acts chapter five, that Peter and John are together arrested. They're going to the house, to the temple at the hour of prayer together and so forth. So, um, these two guys who were part of the inner circle, Peter, James, and John, uh, were pretty connected here in ministry, both before and after the death of Jesus.

And James, the third of them got killed early on in Acts chapter 12. He's the first apostle to die. So James and John were after that, the ones remaining who were the most important of the 12.

And I said James John, Peter and John, excuse me. And so it was those disciples. He sent two of his disciples.

They were Peter and John go to cities, find a man who's carrying a pitcher of water. That was unusual for a man to do. Women usually carried the pictures of water.

It's usually the women who drew the water and the female servants who brought it from the wells, the common wells in town to the homes. A male servant would not usually be the one doing it, but in this case it would be any, the kind of this signal to them, this is the guy you're supposed to meet. Um, this had no doubt been prearranged sort of like the beginning of the donkey.

When the two disciples came and some say, well, what are you doing with that donkey? And they said, the master has need of it. And Jesus said, that would be the counter sign. And then they'll let you take it.

There's sort of a similar secretive hookup here as well. No doubt prearranged by Jesus on

some occasions, which, as I said, at the time when we talked about the donkey cult, it shows that Jesus had connections in town that perhaps even his disciples didn't know about. And that Jesus, though he was busy with mystery, apparently had enough time to do some organizing of his activities too.

Making arrangements for the donkey and advance making arrangements for this upper room for the Passover. And the reason I say that these were with connections that perhaps the disciples were not familiar with is that he didn't just say, go to so-and-so's house. Like they knew him.

I mean, if it was some friend of the group, he could just say, well, we're going to hold it over at so-and-so's house. But instead he says, you'll need a guy who's got a water pitcher in town and wherever he goes in, say to the master of that house, who he speaks of as if it's not somebody they know. The teacher says, where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with my disciples? Clearly this was prearranged because in simply saying the teacher, if it had not been prearranged, the master of the house wouldn't know what teacher they're talking about.

There's lots of teachers, lots of rabbis out there. And yet it's clear this person would already have a room prepared for Jesus and for 12 guests. It says, then he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared and there make ready for us.

And his disciples went out and came into the city and found it just as he had said to them. And they prepared the Passover. And in the evening he came with the 12 to the upper room.

And this, their movements were apparently quite secretive. That would be deduced by the fact that the Pharisee or the chief priests were willing to pay Judas a sum of money to let them know about Jesus' movements. He was apparently moving around under the shadow of darkness much of the time and not doing public ministry, at least not at times when it would be in danger, he'd be in danger of being arrested.

He did public ministry in the temple in the daytime, but there's crowds there. He apparently felt safe then, but when he was alone with his disciples, he had to keep his movements somewhat private and secretive. And so he and the 12 show up there.

Now, as they sat and ate, Jesus said, assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with me will betray me. And they began to be sorrowful and to say to him one by one, is it I? And another said, is it I? Interesting how most of them were not sure about their own selves. They, most of them were not as self-confident as Peter turned out to be in the situation, nor were they guilty.

They wondered whether they would be capable of betraying Jesus. And Peter's the only one who was sure that he couldn't do that. And he turned out to be wrong.

So apparently a person ought to be humble enough to think, well, you know, there but for the grace of God, go I, I could do anything wrong. I could even betray Jesus if it came down to that. And they began to be sorrowful and to say to him one by one, is it I? Then he answered and said to them, it is one of the 12 who dips with me in the dish.

Now this is told in somewhat more detail in John's gospel where we're told that the disciple whom Jesus loved, who by the process of elimination, we have to say that would be John. John was sitting next to Jesus, closest to Jesus. Apparently between Peter and Jesus, John was sitting and Peter whispered to John, ask Jesus who it is.

When Jesus said, one of you will betray me. Peter said to John, ask him who it is. And John, apparently in a hushed tone that no one else could hear said to Jesus, who is it Lord? And apparently in an equally hushed tone, Jesus said, the one that I give this up to now in the course of a meal, they would dip bread into herbs and things like that to eat.

And they would also serve each other. They'd hand them to each other. So Jesus, as a signal that only John would know, dipped his bread and handed it to Judas.

And John tells us that then Judas got up and left the room. But when Jesus, Jesus had only told that to John, it's the one I'm going to give this to. The rest of the disciples didn't know.

He simply said to all the disciples, it's one of you who dips with me in the dish here. But there was a more specific signal that was communicated to John. And so John would be the only disciple who would have known why Judas got up to leave.

The others had other theories. Verse 21, the Son of Man indeed goes, just as it is written of him. But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed.

It would have been good for that man if he had never been born. That apparently means that Judas has a pretty bad fate. It's better for him never to have been born.

And therefore, although we read later in Matthew chapter 27 that Judas later hanged himself in remorse, it even uses the word he repented. We can't say that that was true repentance such as saves a man. There's two kinds of sorrow.

There's a godly sorrow that leads to repentance. There's another ungodly sorrow that leads to death. It's obvious that Judas's sorrow led to death.

He hanged himself and he was not truly repentant in a saving way. If he had been, it would be strange for Jesus to say it's better for him never to have been born. If in fact, despite the evil he committed, he was later forgiven and went to be with the Lord.

It would not be so that it were not better for him. It would have been better for him not to be born. Verse 22, as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it and

gave it to them and said, take, eat.

This is my body. Then he took the cup and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them and they all drank from it. And he said to them, this is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.

Assuredly I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Now, this is obviously what we call the Last Supper.

The Last Supper Jesus had with his disciples before his death. It was a Passover meal and at the Passover meal there were many symbolic actions done at the table as a remembrance of the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt. And Jesus obviously changed its meaning here.

This is a much briefer account of what went on than we have in some of the other places in the other Gospels and also in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. There is a longer treatment in some cases where he actually ended up saying, as often as you do this, do it in remembrance of me. That is, he changed the festival from being a remembrance of the Exodus and that salvation of the Jews in the past to a remembrance of the salvation that he would accomplish through the cross.

So they would continue to remember him through this Passover meal. We don't know whether Jesus intended for them to keep observing the Passover annually. It may be implied by his statement, as often as you eat this bread and you drink this cup, do it in remembrance of me.

Words that we don't find in this particular version, but we do find it in the Parallels. And the statement, as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, sounds like it means as often as you take the Passover. This bread, this Passover bread and this Passover cup.

So he would be saying that once a year when you take the Passover, as the Jews did, you will now be doing it for a different reason than other Jews do. You'll be remembering me and they'll be remembering the Exodus. And he may have meant that.

The early Christians actually took a Eucharistic meal, as we would call it, on a more regular basis than that. Initially, they broke bread for house to house on a daily basis. And that may have included a Eucharistic meal, because in the early church, the memorial meal that Jesus established here was kept at a regular feast, at what they called a love feast.

Eventually, these feasts in later Christian history were held on Sundays. But in the early days, they were held essentially every day in the early Christian community. So there's actually no biblical teaching as to how frequently Christians should do this.

If we took only the words of Jesus, one would assume that he thought they would do it annually. Some church traditions do it four times a year. Presbyterians, for example, take communion every three months.

Baptists that I grew up among, and many other groups, take it monthly, sometimes on the first Sunday of the month. Roman Catholics and Christians throughout history tended to take it on Sundays. And of course, it is possible, if you're a Roman Catholic, to have a daily Eucharist.

You can go to the Catholic Church any day you want to and take communion. So whether you take it daily, weekly, monthly, annually, there's precedent for all of those things, and there's no command of Scripture about it. So there's nothing really that says how often it needs to be done.

The truth is, there's not even a command that it must be done. He just said, as often as you do it, do it in remembrance of me. He didn't say, you must do it, but as often as you do, is what he said.

And so, although this has become kind of a central ordinance, or a central sacrament in some religious traditions, it isn't even one of the things that Jesus gave us a firm command about, about how often to do it, or even necessarily to do it. If you did it once every ten years, you'd be in violation of nothing that Jesus said on the subject. I suppose if you never took communion, it wouldn't specifically violate any command of Jesus.

However, Christians have always found it helpful, or desirable, to take communion with some frequency. But some of that may come from the fact that fairly early in Church history, they began to think of it as actually turning into the body and blood of Jesus. And they began to associate it with what Jesus said about the bread of life, in John chapter 6, where he said, whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.

And whoever does not eat my flesh and does not eat my blood will not have life. And therefore, associating those statements of Jesus with this meal, that later Christians and eventually the Roman Catholic Church began to say, well, Jesus said this bread is my body, and this cup is my blood, and therefore, the bread really is the body of Jesus, and the cup really is the blood of Jesus, and Jesus said, you have to eat my flesh and drink my blood to have life in you, so you have to take this on a regular basis in order to have eternal life. And so, what strikes me as a rather superstitious development in the Church, they began to think eternal life comes not because of faith in Christ specifically, not because of a spiritual connection with God, but because of what you put in your mouth.

That there's some kind of outward ritual that conveys eternal life to people. And that is, of course, what the Roman Catholic Church teaches, and it became the predominant view of the Church for much of history. Jesus never said those things.

First of all, when Jesus talked about eating his flesh and drinking his blood in John chapter 6, he was not talking about this meal. Or at least there's no reason why anyone would think he was, because he said it a whole year before the Last Supper. His discourse about the bread of life was on the Passover a year earlier than the Last Supper.

And he said when he gave that discourse in John 6, that there were some present tense eating my flesh and drinking my blood. He said, whoever is eating my flesh and is drinking my blood has eternal life. It's present tense.

Well, no one was taking the Eucharistic meal at that point. Jesus hadn't established it yet. He was not referring to taking communion as eating his flesh and drinking his blood.

He was talking about taking his words in, and believing his words, and receiving him in a spiritual sense, which was figuratively spoken of as eating him. But of course, it's very difficult for people not in their minds to associate that with the Last Supper, where Jesus said, this bread is my body, this cup is my blood. It is the new covenant in my blood.

But even that, I think the Roman Catholic Church in particular, and perhaps some Protestants as well, I know that the Episcopalians have a similar kind of doctrine, and I'm sure that the, I don't know, but I think the Eastern Orthodox probably do, is that the idea that when Jesus said this is my, this bread is my body, that he meant literally. And this cup is my blood, that he meant it literally. But there's no reason to think so.

In fact, the Gospel of John gives many evidences that people took Jesus literally when he wasn't intending to be taken literally. In John chapter 2, Jesus said, destroy this temple, and in three days I'll raise it up. And they took him literally.

Oh, but it's been built for 46 years. You're going to raise it up in three days? But he meant the temple of his body. They didn't understand that he was not speaking literally.

In the next chapter, he says to Nicodemus, you must be born again. Nicodemus says, what, a man can go back into the womb and be born again? He takes him literally. And Jesus meant it spiritually.

In John chapter 4, he meets the woman at the well and says, the water I give you, you'll never thirst again. She said, well then, give me some of that water so I don't have to come to this well and draw every day. You see, Jesus is continually saying things that are not literal, and people are making the mistake of taking him literally.

In the upper room, she said, this bread is my body, this cup is my blood. Roman Catholics and many others take him literally. Again, a mistake.

Of course, that bread was not his body. His body was sitting there with all its components still intact when he said, this bread is my body. There were no parts

missing.

His blood, he said, this cup is my blood, which is shed for the remission of sins. It hadn't been shed when he spoke that. When they drank that cup, he hadn't shed a drop of his blood yet.

He means, of course, this cup and this bread represent my blood and my body. And we talk that way all the time. We do that.

If you want to show me a picture of your family, you might say, and this is my mom, and this is my dad, and this is my brother. Really? Your mom and your dad and brother are right there on that piece of paper? They're flat, two-dimensional, colored ink? No, your mom and your dad and your brother are real people. They exist somewhere else.

The picture is a representation of them. You say, that's my mom, that's my dad. If you're showing someone directions on a map, say, that is Interstate 5. This is Interstate 405.

Oh, I thought they were made out of asphalt. No, it's just ink on a piece of paper. No, you mean that line on the paper represents Interstate 5. It isn't Interstate 5, but we say it all the time.

That's how we talk. That's how the Jews talk. At the Passover ceremony before Jesus changed it, the Jews would take the bread and they'd say, this bread is the bread of affliction of our fathers in Egypt.

Boy, this bread is the affliction of your fathers in Egypt. I thought their affliction was actually some real pain that they really suffered, some real affliction. And it certainly isn't the bread that they ate back then, because it would be moldy by now, and stale.

Obviously, this represents, this is a memorial, this bread reminds us of the affliction of our fathers in Egypt. So when Jesus took the same ceremony and said, this bread is my body, which is broken for you, he's saying, it's not the affliction of your fathers in Egypt, it's my affliction. You do it to remember my affliction.

You see, there's no reason to think that Jesus was trying to establish some doctrine of transubstantiation here. It's the most superstitious institution that has ever been introduced into the church since the time of the apostles. And I don't believe they believed it that way, but the church soon afterwards began to think that way.

Okay, so Jesus establishes it. Now he says, I'm not going to drink of the fruit of this vine again until I drink it new with you in the kingdom of God. The fulfillment of this is definitely up for grabs.

For example, the kingdom of God, as we've seen, refers to a lot of different events. The kingdom of God had already come before this. He also said that some of them standing

there would not taste death before they saw the kingdom of God come with power.

Of course, there's also the eternal kingdom, which will be universalized at the second coming of Christ at the end of the world, when every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus is Christ. The kingdom of God has different phases, and it's not always easy to tell what phase he's talking about in a given statement. I will not drink wine again or this cup, maybe the Passover cup again, before I drink it in the kingdom of God with you.

Now, this could be a reference to the fact that when he was on the cross, they offered him on a sponge wine and vinegar, and he refused it at one point. But just before he died, they offered it to him again, and he tasted it and said, it is finished. And it's possible that that tasting the fruit of the vine on that occasion was the signal that the kingdom of God was now official.

He now drank it again in the kingdom, or drinking it with them in the kingdom could refer to the communion that the church takes in the presence of Christ, where two or more gathered. He's there in the midst, and as we take communion together, he is drinking it with us in the kingdom. Maybe that's what he meant.

Many people think he means after his second coming and establishes the universal kingdom, then the Passover will be reestablished, and then he'll drink it again. It's hard to know which he means. He knew what he meant, but I don't, and I'm not sure anyone can be sure because there's too many different opinions.

Now, when they'd sung a hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives. The hymn they sang, traditionally, was a series of psalms called the Great Hallel, and they are six consecutive psalms, which starts with Psalm 113. They sang two of these psalms before the meal and four of them after the meal.

This is the traditional liturgy of the Passover. So, when Jesus sang a psalm with his disciples, or a hymn, it was this collection of psalms. There's a lot of interesting things in these psalms, which, if you read them with that in mind, that Jesus actually sang these psalms just before he died, it becomes very interesting.

For example, in the last of them, Psalm 118, it says in verse 22, The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing and it's marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord has made.

We will rejoice and be glad in it. Imagine Jesus singing that the day he was going to die. This is the day the Lord has made.

I'm going to rejoice and be glad in it. The cup my father has given me, I will drink it. Or, check out verse 27.

God is the Lord. He has given us life. Bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar.

You are my God and I will praise you. You are my God and I will exalt you. Imagine Jesus saying, bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar, when he was going to be the sacrifice bound to the cross within a few hours of that time.

Just reading through these psalms and remembering that Jesus sang these after the Last Supper and just before he was arrested, and what must have been going through his mind when some of these words were sung by him. It would probably give you some sense of what he was going through that night. Let's read a few more verses and then we'll take a break.

Verse 27. Then Jesus said to them, all of you will be made to stumble because of me this night. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered.

That's a quotation from Zechariah chapter 13 verse 7. But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee. But Peter said to him, even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be. And Jesus said to him, assuredly I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.

But he spoke more vehemently, if I have to die with you, I will not deny you. And they all said likewise. So that's how that ends here in the narrative of Mark.

There was more. There was this upper room discourse given in John chapters 13 through 16. That was given at this point, but is omitted by everyone except John.

And Mark skips directly from that to the Garden of Gethsemane, which is where Jesus was arrested. And we'll stop here and come back to that after a break.