

Marked for Sacrifice

Message 2 of 5 in the series: "Marked"

A. Because He exposed and opposed the religious leaders of Israel, Jesus became a marked man.

"It was now two days before Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The leading priests and the teachers of religious law were still looking for an opportunity to capture Jesus secretly and kill him. 'But not during the Passover celebration,' they agreed, 'or the people may riot.'" Mark 14:1-2 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! The Jewish High Council was plotting to kill Jesus because He exposed their religious hypocrisy, challenged their authority, and threatened the deals they had brokered with Rome to stay in power. They were also insanely jealous of Jesus' growing popularity. "Then the leading priests and Pharisees called the high council together. 'What are we going to do?' they asked each other. 'This man certainly performs many miraculous signs. **If we allow him to go on like this, soon everyone will believe in him. Then the Roman army will come and destroy both our Temple and our nation.**' Caiaphas, who was high priest at that time, said, 'You don't know what you're talking about! **You don't realize that it's better for you that one man should die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed.**' ...So from that time on, the Jewish leaders began to plot Jesus' death." John 11:47-50 & 53 (NLT)

B. A couple of days before Jesus was crucified, a woman marked Jesus' body for burial by anointing Him with a costly bottle of perfume.

"Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy. While he was eating, a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard. She broke open the jar and poured the perfume over his head. Some of those at the table were indignant. 'Why waste such expensive perfume?' they asked. 'It could have been sold for a year's wages and the money given to the poor!' So they scolded her harshly. But Jesus replied, 'Leave her alone. Why criticize her for doing **such a good thing** to me? You will always have the poor among you, and you can help them whenever you want to. But you will not always have me. **She has done what she could and has anointed my body for burial ahead of time.**" Mark 14:3-8 (NLT)

- Mary, Lazarus' sister, apparently realized better than anyone else the magnitude of sacrifice Jesus was about to make and responded with a beautiful act of worship and love. "Then Mary took a twelve-ounce jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard, and she anointed Jesus' feet with it, wiping his feet with her hair." John 12:3a (NLT)
- Judas scolded Mary for wasting a resource that could have helped poor people, but soon afterward Judas had no problem hypocritically selling Jesus out for money. "But Judas Iscariot, the disciple who would soon betray him, said, 'That perfume was worth a year's wages. It should have been sold and the money given to the poor.' Not that he cared for the poor—he was a thief, and since he was in charge of the disciples' money, he often stole some for himself." John 12:4-6 (NLT) "Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the leading priests to arrange to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted when they heard why he had come, and they promised to give him money. **So he began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus.**" Mark 14:10-11 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! Religious hypocrisy stinks! "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. **Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness.**" Matthew 23:27-28 (NLT)

IMPORTANT! By discussing how and why Mary anointed Jesus with perfume, we are participating in a fulfillment of prophecy right now! "I tell you the truth, **wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman's deed will be remembered and discussed.**" Mark 14:9 (NLT)

C. The night before He was crucified, Jesus made special arrangements to observe the Passover meal with His disciples to help them understand why it was necessary for Him to sacrifice His life.

IMPORTANT! The Passover meal commemorates how the angel of death "passed over" the houses of the Israelites who had marked the doorposts of their homes with **the blood of a spotless sacrificial lamb**. God commanded the Israelites to eat this meal annually so they would remember how He rescued them from slavery to wicked Pharaoh in Egypt. (see *Exodus 12*)

“On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, Jesus’ disciples asked him, ‘Where do you want us to go to prepare the Passover meal for you?’ So Jesus sent two of them into Jerusalem with these instructions: ‘As you go into the city, a man carrying a pitcher of water will meet you. Follow him. At the house he enters, say to the owner, “The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room where I can eat the Passover meal with my disciples?” He will take you upstairs to a large room that is already set up. That is where you should prepare our meal.’ So the two disciples went into the city and found everything just as Jesus had said, and they prepared the Passover meal there.” Mark 14:12-16 (NLT)

1. Jesus was cryptic about the location where He and the disciples would celebrate Passover because He knew all about Judas’ plans to betray Him. Jesus had many important things to teach the disciples during their last evening together, and He wasn’t about to let Judas carry out his plans until He was finished teaching. “In the evening Jesus arrived with the Twelve. As they were at the table eating, Jesus said, ‘I tell you the truth, **one of you eating with me here will betray me.**’ Greatly distressed, each one asked in turn, ‘Am I the one?’ He replied, ‘It is one of you twelve who is eating from this bowl with me. **For the Son of Man must die, as the Scriptures declared long ago. But how terrible it will be for the one who betrays him.** It would be far better for that man if he had never been born!’”
Mark 14:17-21 (NLT)

- Jesus was NOT a victim. He willingly sacrificed His life for us. No one took it from Him. “The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. **No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again.** For this is what my Father has commanded.” John 10:17-18 (NLT)
- Even though Judas’ actions fulfilled prophecy, Judas freely chose to go through with His plans and was morally responsible for his actions. “I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But **this is to fulfill this passage of Scripture: ‘He who shared my bread has turned against me.’**” John 13:18 (NIV) (*Psalms 41:9*)
- God doesn’t create evil, but He does control it. “You intended to harm me, but **God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done**, the saving of many lives.” Genesis 50:20 (NIV)

2. At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted a new memorial meal for His disciples to observe because Jesus’ death on the cross was about to make possible a new covenant between Holy God and sinful people.

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed 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 that 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.”
Mark 14:22-26 (NKJV)

- Whenever we observe the Lord’s Supper, we remember how Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross as our Passover lamb to rescue us from slavery to sin and death and create a new covenant. “**Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.**” 1 Corinthians 5:7b (NLT) “Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. **But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time.**” Hebrews 10:11-12a (NLT)
- Holy Communion/The Lord’s Supper requires each of us to take and eat. “**But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.**” John 1:12 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

1. Why did the Jewish religious leaders want Jesus dead? (John 11:45-53) Why didn’t they want to arrest and kill him during the Passover celebration? (Mark 14:1-2)
2. What was the significance of Mary anointing Jesus with costly perfume? (Mark 14:3-8, John 12:3) What reason did Judas give for scolding Mary? What do you think his real motivation was? (John 12:4-6)
3. Jesus didn’t object to Mary’s beautiful act of love and devotion. Share a time in your life when you gave someone a costly gift just because you loved them.

4. It seems odd that Jesus didn't just give his disciples the street address of the house where they would be eating the Passover meal together. What made him be so cryptic? (Mark 14:12-16)
5. Why do you think it was so important for Jesus to celebrate the Passover meal with his disciples the night before He was crucified? What connection did He want them to make? (1 Corinthians 5:7, 1 Peter 1:18-21)
6. Discuss the significance and meaning associated with the memorial meals of Passover and Holy communion. Why is eating important? Why is eating together important? Why is repetition important?
 - Passover: to remember God's deliverance from the angel of death and slavery to wicked Pharaoh, God instructed his people to eat a roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. (Exodus 12:1-30)
 - Holy Communion/The Lord's Supper: to remember His sacrificial death on the cross and the new covenant He was creating, Jesus instructed His disciples to eat a piece of bread broken from a shared loaf and to drink wine from a shared cup. (Mark 14:17-21, 1 Corinthians 10:16-17)
7. Why do we need a new covenant? (Hebrews 10:1-16)