

BibleWise

Each year we endeavor to add information about the Passion Chronology. This year we are answering three interesting questions: 1) How could the disciples have known what Jesus was praying if they were asleep? 2) Did Jesus really sweat blood? 3) Were all Jews against Jesus? You also might want to revisit our discussion of this question: On which day did the crucifixion take place? As you shape your own perspective on the Passion Week, take a look at the [comments from Rev. Jim Jones and BibleWise Scholar Mary Jane Chaignot](#).

The Passion Week - Chronology of Events (2017)

- Two months before the Passover, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. At that point, Jesus as well as Lazarus became marked men. The chief priests and Pharisees wanted to kill both of them. (**John 11:18-57**)
- While Jesus knew he was to die on the cross eventually, this wasn't the "appointed" time for the Pharisees and Scribes to put him to death. He stayed away from Jerusalem until the time of the Passover.
- The road to the resurrection begins six days before Passover. (**John 12:1**) That would make it Friday and not Sunday, as others suggest.
- Each event is listed in the appropriate Gospel, so you can go back and refresh yourself with the story.

Friday				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus arrives in Bethany;	26:6-13	14:3-9		12:1-11

Dinner at Simon's house

- John has Jesus staying in Bethany with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. Matthew and Mark have him dining at the house of Simon the Leper. Edersheim bridges this difference by suggesting that Simon may have possibly been Martha's husband or the father of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. Hence, Edersheim suggests that they were all in the same house.

Mary anoints Jesus

- The ointment Mary used on Jesus' head and feet cost about 300 dinars, a year's salary of a laborer.
 - Two hundred dinars is the amount Philip told Jesus they would need to buy bread for the 5,000 men, women, and children.

Saturday

Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
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Nothing recorded, but where else would Jesus be on the Sabbath?

Sunday

- On the way to Jerusalem - Jesus asks Peter and John to go to Bethphage and bring him a colt of a donkey that had never been ridden.
 - Bethphage means house of figs. It also refers to a species of late season figs that never appear ripe, even when they are edible.¹

Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Triumphal entry into Jerusalem	21:1-11	11:1-11	19:29-44	12:12-19

- Riding on a colt was a statement of meekness. The people expected the Messiah to arrive more majestically. In short, it was the meekness of majesty, which was manifested, entering the city with royal authority.
 - Think of the thoughtfulness of Jesus in having the mother accompany the colt - no separation anxiety for mother or colt. The Master doesn't overlook any details.
- The date of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem corresponds with the tenth day of Nisan - the day on which the paschal lamb was chosen for sacrifice and separated from the flock for the Passover meal later in the week. ² Look for the pattern of reasons why Jesus waited until the week of the Passover. Note the symbolism alludes to the Lamb of God being set aside for sacrifice.
- The palm branches were used not only to wave in praise and jubilation, but also to keep the dust settled by placing them on the ground since people were out in force to sing "Hosanna in the highest...peace in heaven and glory in the highest."
- There is an interesting contrast between the multitude of the heavenly host at Jesus' birth singing "Peace on earth" and this earthly group singing "Peace in heaven."
- The people were singing the Passover Psalm, which they would sing in a few days, that refers to the Messiah. ³
- Jesus planned his entry as a [counter procession](#) (p.13) to the Roman entry on the West side of the city. Jesus entered from the East.

Returned to Bethany

Monday				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Barren fig tree (p.14)	21:18-19	11:12-14		
Second cleansing of the Temple (p.15-16)	21:12-17	11:15-19	19:45-48	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The guilty fled, but the blind and lame stepped forward to be healed. <p>Jesus and his disciples returned to Bethany.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Barclay shows us where Jesus got his strength. "Before he joined battle with men he sought the presence of God. It was only because each day he faced God that he could face men with such courage." ⁴ 				
Tuesday				
<p>This was the last day of Jesus' public ministry and his last day in the Temple. He arrived early in the city and didn't leave for Bethany until late that night. Some scholars refer to this as the day of controversy and others as the day of rejection. It was both. ⁵</p>				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Fig tree withered	21:20-22	11:20-26		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The fig tree represented the barrenness of Jerusalem. Peter points out the fig tree is withered. Jesus responds with, "Have faith in God." Jesus gives his disciple a lesson on prayer that includes instructions on forgiveness. The disciples are going to have to rely on prayer and forgiveness to get through the next few days. 				
Jesus' authority is challenged	21:23-27	11:27-33	20:1-8	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The chief priest, the scribes, and elders were waiting for Jesus. They wanted to find out by what authority he could whip the money changers out of the Temple. This was a trick question. If Jesus responded by saying that he had the authority to do it, they would just arrest him for megalomania. If he responded that his orders were from God, they would arrest him for blasphemy. Jesus read their motive as if it were posted on a billboard. He agreed to answer their question if they would answer his first. He asked them whether John the Baptist's work, in their opinion, was human or divine. If they replied divine, then they would have to accept Jesus as the Messiah, because that was the basis of John's preaching. If they said human, then the people who followed John would undoubtedly riot. They had to admit they didn't know. It was the responsibility of the Sanhedrin to know the difference between true and false prophets and they had to shamefully admit they didn't know. Thus, Jesus didn't need to answer their question. 				

Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Parables of watchfulness to the nation: (p.17-18)				
Of two sons	21:28-32			
Vineyard of the wicked husbandmen	21:33-46	12:1-12	20:9-19	
Marriage of king's son	22:1-14			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All three of these parables indict the Jewish leaders. In the parable of the two sons, the Jewish leaders represent the unsatisfactory son, who did not do his father's will. They are the wicked husbandmen in the next parable. And lastly, they are the condemned guests at the king's feast. 				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
3 questions by Jewish parties:	22:15-40	12:13-34	20:20-40	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Jewish leaders take aim at Jesus, expecting to discredit him in front of the same audience. 				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Tribute to Caesar				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Pharisees asked if it was lawful to pay tribute to Rome. If Jesus said it wasn't lawful, they would just report him to the Roman authorities and wipe their hands clean of the matter. If he said it was lawful, the Jews would reject him because God was their only King. His questioners knew he was in a no-win situation. Jesus asked whose image was on the coin. When they replied Caesar, he told them to give back to Caesar the things that were Caesar's, but give to God what belongs to Him. 				
Resurrection				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Sadducees, who don't believe in resurrection, asked him who this woman who was widowed and remarried seven times would belong to in the resurrection. Jesus points out how clueless they are in understanding the scriptures. You can't think of heaven in the same way you think of life on earth. Heaven is not a continuation of this world. So their question is irrelevant. 				

Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
The Great Commandment				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matthew tells the story as though the lawyer is continuing the tirade against Jesus. Mark sees it differently. He describes the lawyer showing appreciation for Jesus' routing of the questioners. Jesus simply states the two commandments as they are listed in Deut. 6:5 - loving God with all your heart, soul, and might, and Lev. 19:18 - loving your neighbor as yourself. 				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus' irrefutable question about Christ	22:41-46	12:35-37	20:41-44	
Denunciation of Scribes and Pharisees-eight woes	23:1-39	12:38-40	20:45-47	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The whole thrust behind the "woes" was to point out to the Scribes and Pharisees the fact that life wasn't about them, but about God. Our lives should direct people to God, not to us personally. 				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Widow's mites		12:41-44	21:1-4	
Greeks (Gentiles) seek Jesus				12:20-36
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Gentiles asked Jesus to be their teacher.⁶ This was an opportunity to escape death. Jesus replied: John 12:27,28 (to .) Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. 				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Rejection of Christ by Jews				12:37-50
Jesus foretells destruction of the Temple	24:1,2	13:1,2	21:5,6	
Olivet discourse in "code"	24:3-25:46	13:3-37	21:7-38	
Destruction of Jerusalem				
Signs of Christ's Coming,				
Last Judgment				

Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Parables of warning:				
Fig tree and young leaves	24:32,33	13:28,29	21:29-31	
Household and porter watching		13:34-36		
The ten virgins	25:1-13			
The talents	25:14-30			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These parables highlight the importance of watchfulness and action: household and porter; the ten virgins; and the talents. To read the signs of the times, you need to be alert. A thief doesn't send you an announcement of his arrival: his weapon is surprise. All the virgins had lamps. The foolish just had a different expectation of when they would buy or borrow oil. When Jesus speaks of talents, he is letting his disciples know they had better use the knowledge the Master has given them. 				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Description of Last Judgment	25:31-46			
Conspiracy of chief priests and Judas	26:1-5,14-16	14:1,2,10,11	22:1-6	
Wednesday				
The record is silent. A day of rest and prayer.				
Thursday				
[6:00-9:00 p.m.]				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Last Supper:	26:17-35	14:12-31	22:7-38	13-17
Observance of Passover,				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Moses' Passover in Egypt, death was merely avoided. In the Passover Jesus celebrated, death wasn't avoided: it was confronted and conquered for all mankind. 				

Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Washing of disciples' feet				13:1-20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lesson in true greatness. Love is always willing to serve. Jesus was purifying their footsteps. He let them know they didn't need to be afraid to take the first step in loving. To follow in Jesus' footsteps means to walk with love, act with love, talk with love. The service of love is a constant cleansing of one's walk and life. 				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Naming of betrayer	26:21-25	14:18-21	22:21-23	13:21-30
Instituting of Lord's Supper	26:26-29	14:22-25	22:17-20	
<p>The order of the last supper is in 13 steps [some books show more steps, others fewer steps, so this is a general guideline]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The head of the company, Jesus in this case, opens with a prayer and 2. Gives the 1st cup of wine for everyone in the company to drink. 3. The head of the company washes his hands. This is where, it is believed, Jesus washed the disciples' feet. 4. The head of the company dips some of the bitter herbs into the salt water or vinegar and speaks a blessing, eats some of the herbs and hands them to the others. 5. The unleavened bread is broken into pieces, reserving half to be eaten after the supper, called the after dish. 6. The 2nd cup is filled and the youngest in the company (John) is instructed to ask questions about the significance of the Passover. 7. Psalms 113 and 114 are sung. 8. The 3rd cup of wine is filled, followed by prayer, and they all drink the cup. 9. Everyone washes his hands. 10. Supper begins by eating the unleavened bread and bitter herbs and the lamb. Everyone in the group must eat at least an olive size portion of the lamb. All of the lamb is to be consumed or destroyed. No bones of the lamb are to be broken. 11. The after dish of the bread broken earlier is eaten. It is believed this is where Jesus said, "Take eat, this is my body." 12. The 4th cup of wine is the point when Jesus told them to all drink of it, this was his blood. 13. Conclude with hymns and prayers. Psalms 115-118 and the Great Hallel – Psalm 136. 				
Foretelling of Peter's denial	26:33-34	14:27-31	22:32-34	13:37-38


Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Discourses:				
Christ the way, truth, life, (p.19)				14: 1-15
Promises the Comforter				14:16-31
The vine and the branches (p.20)				15:1-27
Jesus' going and returning				16:1-33
Intercessory prayer				17:1-26
This truly is the Lord's prayer. Read the whole prayer. Verses 1-5, Jesus is talking about himself; verses 6-19 are for his disciples; verses 20-23 are for each of us. We didn't get left out of that prayer. Verses 24-26 are the doxology.				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
[9:00-10:30 p.m.]				
Jesus prayer in Gethsemane	26:30,36-46	14:26, 32-42	22:39-46	18:1
<p>The question is often asked, "How could the disciples record Jesus' prayer if they were asleep?" The answer might surprise you. The word "sleeping" in the Aramaic also means "dozing" and "reclining." * Jesus was not right beside the disciples while he prayed. But he wasn't far away, and no doubt they heard the anguish of his words and could well have felt completely helpless, even to know how to pray for him. And so they were not alert – they could not stay awake. In all likelihood, Peter, James, and John dozed off at different times, and probably heard different parts of his prayer.</p> <p>Luke 22:44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. This verse is often interpreted to mean that Jesus actually sweat blood. But, the actual wording is a figure of speech that creates a powerful visual image of the overwhelming stress and suffering Jesus experienced. It wasn't meant to be taken literally -- that his sweat turned to blood. It's meant to describe the depth of his agony.</p> <p>*Rocco Errico, <i>Aramaic Light on the Gospels of Mark and Luke</i>, 2001</p>				
Betrayal and arrest (p.21-25)	26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-53	18:2-12
Healing of Malchus' ear			22:51	

Jewish ecclesiastical trial:				
Before Annas - 11 p.m.				18:13-23
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jesus is brought before an ex-high priest who has no authority. (p.26) 				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Before Caiaphas and Sanhedrin	26:57-75	14:53-72	22:54, 63-65	18:24-27
<p>Jesus had a large Jewish following. They certainly had not all turned against him. The Jewish rulers, however, were determined to protect what little power they had in the midst of Roman oppression. They were caught up in their own selfish power play to preserve their religious freedom and practices. Jesus was a threat to their Jewish traditions and to the deals the religious officials had made with Rome. In stark contrast, many of the Jewish people loved the message of the Galilean prophet. In fact, Jesus was arrested and tried at night because the high priest knew the people would rally to defend Jesus. (Rocco Errico, <i>Aramaic Light on the Gospels of Mark and Luke</i>, 2001)</p>				
Friday				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Peter's Denial	26:69-74	14:66-72	22:55-62	18:25-27
Before Sanhedrin at daybreak	27:1,2	15:1	22:66-71	

Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Judas hangs himself (Acts 1:16-20)	27:3-10			
<p>Most people believe that Judas hanged himself, per the account in Matthew. Luke has an interesting account in Acts when he says, Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. Acts 1:18 Some scholars contend that, in the process of hanging himself, he slipped and impaled himself on a sharp rock. Still others contend that Judas was murdered. We have no biblical account for the latter.</p>				
Roman civil trial				
Before Pilate (p.27)	27:2,11-14	15:1-5	23:1-5	18:28-38
Before Herod (Antipas)			23:6-12	
<p>With Jesus being a Galilean, Pilate feared taking action since Galilee was out of his jurisdiction. Pilate sent Jesus to Herod Antipas. Herod could easily have saved Jesus. He wanted Jesus to perform a miracle or two and answer his questions, but Jesus didn't do or say anything. Herod's guards dressed him in a purple robe, pushed a crown of thorns into his head. They hit and spit on Jesus before leading him back to Pilate.</p>				
Before Pilate	27:15-31	15:6-20	23:13-25	18:39-19:16
Crucifixion at Golgotha (Calvary) (p.28)	27:32-56	15:21-41	23:26-49	19:17-37
Seven Last Sayings of Jesus:	27:46	15:34	23:34, 43, 46	19:26-28, 30
1. Luke 23:34	Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.			
2. Luke 23:43	And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.			
3. John 19:26,27	Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother!			
4. Matt 27:46	And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?			
Ps 22:1	My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?			
5. John 19:28	After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.			

6. John 19:30	When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.			
7. Luke 23:46	And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:			
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Darkness, earthquake; Veil of the Temple (p.29) is rent	27:50-54	15:33,38	23:44,45	
Burial in tomb	27:57-61	15:42-47	23:50-56	19:38-42
Saturday				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Sealing of tomb, guard set	27:62-66			
The tomb was sealed. A Roman military unit called the Kustodian, stood watch over the tomb. The unit consisted of four rows of four men and they were roughly equivalent to Navy Seals. They formed an impenetrable wall of protection, preventing anyone from opening the tomb. The penalty for breaking the seal on the tomb was death--for all 16 guards as well as the seal-breaker. It was highly unlikely that these guards would leave their post!				
After the Sabbath (6:00 p.m.), Mary Magdalene and others purchase spices to anoint the body		16:1		
Sunday				
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
The empty tomb	28:1-8	16:2-8	24:1-8	20:1-10
Appearance to Mary Magdalene (article 1 (p.30), article 2 (p.31-32))		16:9-11		20:11-18
To the women	28: 9,10		24:9-11	
Report of the guard	28:11-15			
Appearance to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus		16:12,13	24:13-32	

Luke records two people walking with Jesus. One was Cleopas, the other is unnamed. Scholars believe that, when there is no name, it was probably a woman. This may have been Cleopas' wife.

Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Appearance to Simon Peter			24:33-35	
Appearance to company of disciples (except Thomas)		16:14	24:36-43	20:19-23
Activity	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Next 40 days before ascension				
Appearances:				
To disciples at Jerusalem; Thomas now convinced				20:24-31
To seven disciples at Sea of Galilee; the seaside Morning Meal and the charge to Simon Peter: "Feed my sheep"				21:1-24
Instructions to Apostles and 500 others on mountain in Galilee	28:16-20	16:15-18		
<p>The Disciples Fishing by Mary Ellen Dohr</p> 				
To all of the Apostles			24:44-49	
Ascension Probably at Olivet near Bethany		16:19	24:50,51	

Sources

- 1 Robert Jamieson, A.R. Fausset, and David Brown. *A Commentary*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1993. Vol 3 p. 313
- 2 Ibid. 313.
- 3 Ibid. 315.
- 4 W m. Barclay. *The Gospel of Mark*. London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975. p. 269
- 5 Hester H.I. Hester. *The Heart of the New Testament*. Liberty: Quality Press, 1963. p. 192.
- 6 Ibid. 192.
- Barclay, Wm. *The Gospels of John*, vol 2; Luke, Mark, and Matthew vol 2, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975.
- Borg, Marcus and John Dominic Crossan. *The Last Week*. San Francisco, CA: Harpercollins, 2006.
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Appendix of Explanations

Counter procession

Question: Bible scholars believe there were two processions headed into Jerusalem on the same day, Palm Sunday. Did Jesus plan his Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem as a counter procession?

Response: Jesus' preparation for his final hour was designed to show he had dominion over every detail. Yes, there was a counter procession. Jesus entered the holy city from the East, riding on a donkey. With his imperial cavalry and soldiers in attendance, Governor Pilate arrived majestically on horses from the West. The two processions were entering the city for different purposes: Jesus as the Prince of peace and Pilate as a keeper of the peace. Normally, only about 100,000 visitors came to Jerusalem for Passover. This particular year, however, there were 2.7 million in attendance. They knew something would happen if Jesus dared to come to town.

Pilate's procession was a display of imperial power—the kingdom of Caesar.

Jesus' entry was meek. He represented the kingdom of God.

It was not just a clash of kingdoms, but of theologies. Augustus was the son of Apollo and called the son of god. He was known as the savior who had brought peace on earth. After his death, there were reports that he ascended into heaven. His successors continued to bear divine titles as representatives of the son of god – the peace giver. On the other hand, Jesus was the Son of God. He was indeed the Savior of the world.

The Jews were looking for a Messiah to restore God's kingdom on earth. They wanted a majestic leader. That day, Jerusalem witnessed the clash of two kingdoms: the world vs. heaven. It was all part of Jesus' plan in fulfilling prophecy: "He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations" (Zechariah 9:10).

The king, riding on a donkey (Zech 9:9) will cut off the enemy and bring peace. "Jesus' procession deliberately countered what was happening on the other side of the city. Pilate's procession embodied the power, glory, and violence of the empire that ruled the world. Jesus' procession embodied an alternative vision, the kingdom of God."¹ This clash is central to the story of Jesus and early Christianity.

–GAL

Sources

1 Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan. *The Last Week*. San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins, 2006.

Barren Fig Tree

Question: Why does Jesus curse the fig tree? (Mark 11:13-21) This seems so out of character for him.

Response: I agree, it does seem out of character, especially when Jesus isn't willing to turn stones into bread when tempted by the devil. Also, the fact that he has fed the multitudes on two different occasions with a handful of loaves and fish makes you wonder why he would now curse a tree that didn't have fruit. Let's examine the circumstances.

Jesus knew this was not the time of the year for fig trees to bear fruit. Fig trees bear fruit twice a year - in June and September. This was April. Even if the tree had old fruit, it would be edible because even unripened fruit was edible. So he could have eaten from it if it had had fruit.

Some scholars suggest this was a rogue tree growing in a rocky area and Jesus was just commenting on the health of the tree. Mark 11:14 No man eat fruit of thee hereafter for ever.

Recognizing that Jesus was very clear about everything he did this particular week, we might not take the story so literally, but see the symbolism instead:

Israel was that barren fig tree. (Outward show, but no fruit.)

The nation of Israel had failed to recognize the Messiah.

Therefore Israel was condemned.

The tree had leaves. Leaves were an indicator that the tree would have figs. Its claim was false. Profession without practice was the curse of the Jews.¹

—GAL

Sources

1 William Barclay. The Gospel of Matthew. London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975. Vol 2 pp. 253-55.

Second Cleansing of the Temple

Question: What was so bad about the money changers? Every country has a place to exchange currency. Weren't the money changers doing their fellow Jews a service by providing the currency for the Temple?

Response: At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, he whipped the money changers out of the temple to present himself as the Messiah. It was appropriate for him to take such authority and first cleanse the temple of those who, under the guise of being God's chief priests, made God's house one of merchandizing. It was even more appropriate at the close of his career, when he entered the city as a king and publicly claimed authority. The first cleansing was for teaching and warning; the second cleansing was for symbolic judgment. This was part of prophecy.¹ Jesus "said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise." (John 2:16) That statement has a ring of the following Scripture and they should get the message.

Isa 56:7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

Jer 7:11 Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord.

There were two types of trading taking place:

1. Money changing.

- Every Jew had to pay a temple tax of one half-shekel. This could be paid before going to Jerusalem. A month before Passover, booths were set up in the towns for early payment. After a certain date, it had to be paid at the temple. It's similar to buying tickets in advance for a lower price than buying them the day of the event for a higher price.
- This tax had to be paid in certain currency, although for general purposes all kinds of currencies were equally valid in Palestine. The money changers exchanged unsuitable currency for correct currency for a price.
 - Let's say in US currency you owed 30 cents. If you gave them a 50 cent piece, you'd receive 5 cents in return. They would take the 30 cents and charge you 10 cents for the exchange and another 5 cents for giving back the surplus change. When the worker wage was about a penny a day that was a high price to pay.²

Second Cleansing of the Temple (continued)

2. Selling of doves

- For most visits to the Temple you were required to bring an offering. Women needed to sacrifice doves for purification after childbirth. Likewise lepers when they needed the priests to attest to their healing. Animals cost a lot less outside the Temple. All sacrificed animals had to be without blemish. The official inspectors for the Temple usually rejected anything purchased outside the Temple and would send people to one of their booths to buy an unblemished offering. A pair of doves could cost as little as 4 cents outside the Temple and as much as 75 cents inside the temple. If you only earn a penny a day, that's highway robbery. Jesus' anger was directed against those who made it impossible for simple people to worship in the House of God. In the noise and business of buying and selling, prayer was impossible.³

As you can see, the money changers weren't just providing a service.

–GAL

Sources

1 Wm. Barclay. *The Gospel of Matthew*. London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975. Vol 2 pp. 244-245

2 Ibid. pp. 244-245.

3 Ibid. p. 245.

Parables of watchfulness to the nation:

Question: What is the point of Jesus' three parables about the two sons, the wicked husbandmen, and the marriage of the king's son? I've never really liked these.

Response: The parables were directed at the Sanhedrin. In the parable of the two sons (Matt. 21:28-32), one son refuses to go and work in the vineyard, but later repents and goes to work. The second son says he will go, but doesn't.

According to Barclay, the tax collectors and prostitutes said they wouldn't work, but they turned their lives around. The Jewish leaders are the people who said they would obey God and then did not. The ideal son would be the one who agreed and obeyed. Of the two sons, the one who repented is preferred. This speaks to two classes of people: those whose practice is much better than their profession and those whose profession is much better than their practice.

If you could write a sound bite for this parable, maybe it would be: the really good person is the one in whom profession and practice meet and match.¹

The second parable (Mark 12:1-12) is about the vineyard. Jesus used terms familiar to the people, especially the Sanhedrin.

- The owner of the vineyard is God.
- The vineyard represents the people of Israel.
- The servants are the prophets.
- The son is Jesus.
- The cultivators are the rulers of Israel.

When you put the players into the parable, you can see the point Jesus was driving home to the Scribes and Pharisees.

The parable is full of truths.

- God is generous. The vineyard had everything.
- God is trusting. The owner left the cultivators to run the vineyard. God trusts us to run our lives.
- God is patient. He gave the cultivators many opportunities to pay their debt.
- God is just. God might bear long with disobedience and rebellion, but in the end He acts.
- Jesus regarded himself as a son not a servant.
- Jesus knew he was going to die. The cross was not a surprise ending.²

Parables of watchfulness to the nation (continued)

The third parable from Matthew 22:1-14 is about the marriage of the king's son. The Jewish custom was to send an invitation without the time. After the preparations have been made, the final summons was issued. In this parable, the invitation was refused.

The refusing guests symbolize the Jews. Long ago, they had been invited by God to be His chosen people. When God's son came into the world, they were invited to follow him, but they refused.

The people in the highways stand for the sinners and Gentiles who never expected an invitation.

Jesus used familiar stories that the rabbis told, which involved kings and garments. The first rabbinical story told of a king, who invited his guests to a feast without telling them the exact date and time; but he did tell them that they must wash and anoint and clothe themselves that they might be ready when the summons came. The wise prepared themselves at once and took their places to wait at the palace door. The foolish thought they would have plenty of time. The summons came without warning and the wise went in. The foolish were locked out. The rabbinic parable tells of the duty of preparedness for the summons of God, and the garments stand for the preparation that must be made. What about the wedding garment? That always disturbed me: if they got the invitation on short notice, why would they be rejected just because they didn't have the appropriate attire?

Jesus' lesson is showing how the Gentiles and sinners would be gathered in. The door is open to all, but when they come, they must bring a life which is appropriate for the occasion. Grace is not only a gift; it is a grave responsibility. A person cannot go on living the life he lived before he met Christ Jesus. He must be clothed in a new purity and a new holiness and a new goodness. The door is open, but the door is not open for the sinner to come and remain a sinner - rather for the sinner to come and become a saint. The parable had nothing to do with what the guest wore on the outside, but with what he carried on the inside.³

—GAL

Sources

1 Wm. Barclay. *The Gospel of Matthew*. London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975, Vol 2 pp. 259-260.

2 Wm. Barclay. *The Gospel of Mark*. London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1975, pp. 280-283.

3 Barclay. Matt. pp. 271-274

Christ the way, truth, life,

Question: Jesus is hours from the cross when his disciples tell him they don't know the way to the Father or who the Father is. (John 14:2-8) How can the disciples be so unprepared?

Response: The disciples weren't unprepared, they were frightened and grieving. They could see that all that Jesus had been telling them concerning his death was about to happen. Jesus was patient with them: he used language that would spark their understanding.

During the Passover meal, the disciples had just read the story of the first Passover celebrated in Egypt before the Children of Israel were freed by Pharaoh. When Moses asked God who he should say sent him to deliver the Israelites from Egypt, God told Moses to tell the people that I Am. Now Jesus was reminding his disciples of that very story – when he says, I am the way. Jesus and all he taught them is the road map to the Father. By using the “I Am,” he quells their doubts and fears. He tells them that because he is at one with the Father, they have seen the Father. But if they have any doubts about the Father, to think about all the works Jesus has done. He couldn't do any of that without the Father.

Talk about compassion! Think of all Jesus knew he was going to meet and yet he had patience with his disciples. They needed to be comforted. In fact, the next message he gives to them is about the comforter (John 14:16-31). Then he gives them a visual lesson in how God is caring for them by showing them some grape vines [see the Q&A about the vine dresser], and then he closes the discourses with a beautiful prayer for himself, for his disciples, and for us (John 17). He is telling his disciples and us that we can take our prayers directly to God.

–GAL

The vine and the branches

Question: Why was Jesus taking the time to talk to his disciples about grapes when he knew Judas would be returning with the soldiers?

Response: Jesus is operating on God's timetable, not Judas' or the Pharisees'. He took time to share a message that would last in the minds of his disciples. The expression, "a picture is worth a 1000 words," applies in this instance. He is establishing a metaphor between the growing of the grapes and the future of the Christian church.

Jesus explains to his disciples that he is the vine and that God is the vinedresser. These men knew grapes and how to cultivate them. He was showing them how to tend to church members. The vine is a 3-4 foot trunk that grows out of the ground. The branches grow in either direction out of the trunk. The vinedresser's responsibility is to get the largest and tastiest grapes out of the vineyard.

We are the branches. Look at this verse:

John 15:2

Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Bruce Wilkinson beautifully addresses the example of the vine and the branches in his book, **The Secrets of the Vine**. He divides this verse into two categories: disciplining and pruning.

It is frightening to contemplate that if we don't bear fruit we're cut off, or taken away. Wilkinson points out that in the Greek, the word "airo" means "take away as in take up or lift up." So what does this mean? If the new branch is trailing in the dust, it gets wet and muddy and is incapable of producing fruit. The vinedresser must come along and wash these branches and tie them up so they can grow and bear fruit. Wasn't Jesus teaching us this lesson when he washed his disciples' feet?

Jesus is speaking of cleaning the branch and lifting it up. God doesn't abandon us if we're not bearing fruit. He prepares us to be fruitful.

What about the second part of the verse – the purging? All that is required to grow a bigger crop is to give up what is unnecessary in our lives. Leaves can readily overtake a grape vine. Too many leaves rob the grapes of needed sunlight. So we need to get rid of unnecessary leaves. Symbolically that might translate to anything that drains us of our joy, robs us of our time and energy to accomplish things for God.

Jesus is preparing his disciples to start the church. The barren branch (member) needs the cleansing and lifting up process. The fruitful branch (member) needs pruning. This wonderful lesson let's Jesus' disciples know they can do this. They have God's love at hand to guide them, just as we do.

–GAL

Betrayal and arrest

This Month's "Did You Know" section focuses on Judas...

Did you know...

- In all four gospels, Judas is introduced to the reader along with the other disciples, but Judas' name always has the notation that he was the one who "betrayed" Jesus.
- The word for "betray" is *paradidomi*, literally translated it means to "hand over."
- Judas was the son of Simon Iscariot. Most scholars interpret this as being a "man of Kerioth." It was common for a father and son to have the same last name. Here Kerioth could refer to their hometown. There are two options: one is Kerioth in Judea, the other is Kerioth in Moab. In either case, Judas was probably the only one of the disciples that was not a Galilean.
- In John's gospel, Jesus says that he chose the Twelve, but that one of them was a devil – speaking of Judas, of course. This implies that even election as one of the Twelve is no guarantee of faith or faithful behavior.
- Unlike the Synoptics, which ignore Judas until Jesus' "hour has come," John has an additional story about him that is filled with literary significance.
- In John 12:1-11, Mary of Bethany (sister of Lazarus) anointed Jesus by pouring expensive perfume on his feet and wiping them with her hair.
- Judas spoke up, saying this was a waste and the perfume should have been sold so the money could have been given to the poor. (It was worth approximately a year's wage for a common laborer.)
- John adds that Judas didn't object because he cared about the poor, rather he was a thief and, as keeper of the moneybag, he oftentimes helped himself.
- The moneybag was probably a box made of wood that contained the funds replenished by the followers (most likely women, according to Luke) of Jesus. It might also have been used to contain the alms designated for the poor.
- The contrast in attitude between Mary and Judas couldn't be starker. Yet their juxtaposition makes the connection with Jesus' death quite explicit.
- Jesus tells Judas to "leave her alone" and that she had kept the perfume for his burial. And though people who had the means were known to spend lavishly on funerals, it was quite unusual to anoint someone who was still alive.

Betrayal and arrest (continued)

- It is obviously important for the author of John's gospel to suggest how it happened that one of the Twelve turned against Jesus – Judas was a “thief.”
- The gospel of Mark, however, makes no such assumption.
- In fact, the plot to kill Jesus was not initiated by Judas, but by the Jewish authorities.
- Some scholars think that Judas might have been a zealot who had had great expectations for Jesus. Those expectations might have been challenged after Jesus entered into Jerusalem without taking up arms against the authorities. (Think of his entrance: riding on a colt symbolic of a king, people shouting, “*Hosanna, Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord,*” people spreading their garments out in front of him, waving branches of palm trees – then, nothing.....except the cleansing of the temple. This was hardly the sort of revolution in which a zealot was ready to participate.)
- So Judas went to the chief priests, prepared to hand Jesus over to them.
- No doubt, this part of the story is true. There is no way the early church would have made this up. It surely was appalling and an embarrassment that one of the Twelve had done this. (Luke and John say that Satan entered into Judas; John quotes Psalm 41:9 saying that this was the fulfillment of scripture.)
- As it is, Judas deliberately turned Jesus in, knowing the chief priests wanted to kill him. That's a considerably different matter than becoming disillusioned with someone and walking away.
- Mark tells the story in its simplest form. Judas went to the chief priests with his proposition; they were delighted and promised to pay him.
- Matthew adds that Judas was the first one to raise the issue of money, and they agreed on thirty pieces of silver.
- Thereafter Judas looked for an opportunity to betray Jesus.
- Some scholars think Judas might also have been the one to give the chief priests additional information about Jesus' specific teachings, information that would be used against him at his trial – “destroying a temple made with hands” and “building a new one not made with hands.” If that was the case, it is then noteworthy that Judas was not a witness at Jesus' trial.

Betrayal and arrest (continued)

- It all raises the question as to why the chief priests didn't just arrest Jesus while he was teaching in the temple? The answer is simply that they needed to do it quietly. Any preemptive strike against Jesus in broad daylight might have instigated a riot, which would have brought the Roman army to their doorstep in a heartbeat. That, above all else, was exactly what they didn't want to happen.
- After his visit with the chief priests, Judas returned to the company of Jesus to observe the Passover meal.
- According to Matthew, when, during the meal, Jesus said that one of them would betray him, each disciple asked in turn, "Is it I?" When Judas asked the question, Jesus answered affirmatively, *yet none of the other disciples did anything in response*. This is completely mind-boggling since they were all very "distressed" over Jesus' announcement. Commentators have yet to come up with any explanation for their acquiescence in the matter.
- Matthew notes that Judas did refer to Jesus as "Rabbi," as opposed to "Lord," which was the typical address for a disciple or a potential follower. Those who opposed Jesus or resisted him usually called him "Rabbi" in this gospel.
- John makes Judas' identification even more explicit. Following Jesus' similar announcement, the disciples query each other (as they do in Luke) over who it might be. Peter asks the disciple "leaning on Jesus" to ask him. Jesus says, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then he hands it to Judas – again, no response by any of the disciples.
- John indicates, however, that it is at this moment that Satan entered into Judas, and Jesus tells him to "do what you are about to do, quickly."
- John also adds that the disciples did not understand what was going on. That doesn't exonerate them; it simply means that Jesus was in complete control of all these events, even to the point of telling Judas to move quickly.
- And, Judas obeys immediately. He went out into the night. The symbolism of the text again comes into play. Judas has chosen to leave the brightly lit room where they were celebrating their final meal and goes into the "darkness" of the night.
- In so doing, he has cut himself off from the light inherent in Jesus. It is reminiscent of John's prologue: "The light shines in darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."
- While Jesus was warning his disciples about staying awake and resisting temptation, Judas showed up with a crowd – chief priest, temple guards, elders...

Betrayal and arrest (continued)

- The kiss was their prearranged signal (though not in John). It implies that these people might not have recognized Jesus otherwise. The nighttime arrest, the clubs and swords also suggest they expected some sort of resistance.
- A kiss was the normal greeting between a disciple and his teacher. This kiss, however, is extreme. It could be translated “kiss with every show of affection.” It merely serves to heighten Judas’ hypocrisy.
- Jesus’ greeting of “friend” was, no doubt, genuine.
- Only Matthew records that Judas, after seeing that Jesus was condemned to death, repented for what he had done. He tried to return the money – it had become reprehensible to him.
- He confessed his “sin” and lamented that he had shed “innocent blood.” The Jewish authorities, however, were less than interested. The process had gone way too far to be derailed now.
- Judas, filled with regret and remorse, threw the money into the temple and hanged himself.
- Acts 1:18 has a different take on the demise of Judas. There it states that scripture had to be fulfilled concerning Judas. Moreover, he bought a field with his blood money, fell, and burst open. This claim is not easily reconciled with Matthew’s version. It is possible that the chief priests bought the field with the money they had given Judas, and henceforth named it “Field of Blood” but this is sheer speculation. (That different authors have different accounts is not unusual in biblical writings.)
- Judas disappears from the story, though he will be forever immortalized as “the one of the Twelve who betrayed Jesus.”

Mary Jane Chaignot

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Jesus is brought before an ex-high priest who has no authority

Question: Why was Jesus brought before Annas who was an ex-high priest with no authority?

Response: According to the historian Josephus, Annas was highly regarded since five of his sons and a grandson succeeded him as high priest. To appearances, he was the most influential member of the high priestly family. Another explanation is that the Sanhedrin had not yet arrived. It was about 11:00 PM and the Sanhedrin's 70 members didn't arrive until about 1:00 AM. They needed to take Jesus some place, so why not to Annas? The more plausible explanation is found in the Talmud. It says, "Woe to the house of Annas! Woe to their serpent's hiss! They are High Priests; their sons are keepers of the treasury; their sons-in-law are guardians of the Temple; and their servants beat the people with staves." The bazaars of Annas were the tents of the money changers and of those who sold doves in the Temple. Jesus had put a dent in Annas' profits by whipping the money changers out of the temple. Annas just wanted an opportunity to get even.

The questioning of Jesus by Annas was against the law. Jewish law prohibited a prisoner from being asked a question that might incriminate him. Jesus' response to the inappropriate questions was to point out that he had legal means to gather information but not by questioning him. An officer slapped Jesus in the face for his response. Yet, Jesus spoke the truth. He was reminding Annas of the law.

—GAL

Before Pilate

Question: When you read **John 19:12** And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: and **Mark 15:10** For he [Pilate] knew that the chief priests had delivered him [Jesus] for envy. Why did Pilate cave in to the Jews' demands to crucify Jesus when he couldn't find anything wrong with him?

Response: The Jews blackmailed Pilate. On this day, Pilate's past threatened him with being recalled by Rome. He had made three mistakes already and knew if he didn't do what the Jews were asking, he would lose his job as Governor. Even his wife, pleading that he should have nothing to do with Jesus, couldn't stop him.

His first mistake was refusing to remove the bust of the Emperor from the soldiers' standards when entering Jerusalem. Previous governors had understood that the Jews did not want an image of a ruler before them: God was their King. Pilate refused to remove the busts of the Emperor. When Pilate returned to Caesarea, the Jews followed him for five days. Finally, he ordered them to the amphitheatre. If they didn't stop hounding him, he would kill them. The Jews instantly bared their necks and told the soldiers to kill them. Pilate was unable with a clear conscience to kill so many, so he removed the busts from the standards in the future.

The second problem involved the building of a much-needed aqueduct. Pilate didn't have the money to pay for one, so he raided the Temple treasury. When the Jews protested, he dressed his soldiers in plain clothes and armed them with concealed weapons. When he gave the signal, they attacked the mob of Jews, killing many of them. This didn't make Pilate popular.

The third situation was a case of Pilate not learning his lesson the first time. He put up shields in the palace with Tiberius' name on them. The shields were devoted to honoring Tiberius. The emperor was regarded as a god. Once again, the people were outraged and this time they reported the matter to Rome. Pilate was ordered to remove the shields.

Pilate wanted to do the right thing and free Jesus, but he couldn't upset the Jews one more time without losing his job. Ironically, two of his misdeeds were giving tribute to a king in the holy city. The Jews believed this dishonored God. They only obeyed God. And yet they said, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar" (**John 19:15**).

–GAL

Crucifixion at Golgotha (Calvary)

Question: The Bible says when Jesus was on the cross he refused the wine, so why did he later drink the vinegar?

Response: A company of merciful women went to every crucifixion and gave the criminals a drink of drugged wine to ease the terrible pain. They offered the wine mixed with myrrh to Jesus, but he refused. It's interesting to note that myrrh was one of Jesus' baby gifts and now it was offered to him to ease the pain. The drugged mixture was similar to a narcotic sedative. "The vinegar (posca) was the equivalent of a first-century Gatorade, a sour wine that the soldiers drank to prevent dehydration in hot and humid climates."¹ When Jesus said he was thirsty, he was fulfilling **Ps. 22:15** [My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.], which describes what a victim of the cross experiences. A Roman soldier dipped a sponge in vinegar and lifted it to Jesus mouth. This fulfilled the prophecy in **Ps.69:21**[They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.] So Jesus wasn't asking for a drink to take away his pain, he was quenching his thirst.

—GAL

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1 Jeffery Donley. *The Everything History of the Bible Book*. Avon, Massachusetts: Adams Media, 2006. p. 141

Veil of the Temple

Question: Is it true that the thickness of the veil in the temple changed from Moses' time to Jesus' day?

Response: When the prototype of the first temple was built, the tent of meeting, they hung a curtain to separate the Holy of Holies where the Ten Commandments were in the ark. It was believed that God stayed in this area of the temple. Once a year, the high priest would go into the Holy of Holies. The veil represented a self-imposed separation. It went from being 15 feet wide by 15 feet long with a linen veil in the time of Moses to 20 feet wide by 60 feet long and 4 inches thick in the Temple of Jesus' day. These dimensions would dispel the myth that someone just ripped it in two. The veil was torn apart to show that people had direct access to God. Jesus' statements before the cross, introduced his disciples to the idea of being at one with God. Now everyone could go directly to God. It looks as though they kept making the veil thicker to have a greater degree of separation from God. I love Paul's comment in Romans.

Rom 8:38,39 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—GAL

Article 1

Question: King James Version Mark 16:9 "...he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils." In J.B. Phillips the interpretation of the seven devils are seven evil spirits. Is there any record of or conjecture as to what these seven devils might be?

Response: Most scholars agree that the verses 9-16 at the end of Mark were probably not written by the original author. Mark's gospel, for whatever reason, ended abruptly at 16:8. Someone found that totally unsatisfactory and added a better ending, borrowing most of the ideas from others. If this is true, then the author borrowed this idea from Luke 8:1,2 where it states: 1 "And it came to pass afterward, that [Jesus] went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him," 2 "And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils." (KJV)

Because these verses come immediately after the story of the dinner at Simon the Pharisee's house, where a woman washed Jesus' feet with her tears, people have long connected them. Many assume that the woman who washed Jesus' feet, though unnamed, is really Mary Magdalene. It's a stretch and one that scholars are becoming increasingly uncomfortable with. So for now, let's assume that *all* we know about Mary Magdalene is that seven devils were cast out of her.

Most commentators agree that this is an indication of the severity of her problem, whatever her problem was. Usually demon possession related to mental illness or aberrant physical behavior, but was not necessarily a morality issue. So there is no reason to suggest that she had previously been immoral. It's simply a way of saying her problem was severe. Now, in point of fact, the "seven" could suggest that she had been cured of seven different illnesses either all at once or on seven different occasions. And sometimes "seven" refers symbolically to "completeness." In that case, the author would be saying that she was totally filled up with demons, and he is then highlighting the remarkable nature of Jesus' cure. We can rejoice in that and be grateful for it, but to go beyond that would be to engage in sheer speculation.

—Mary Jane Chaignot

Article 2

Question: In the verse from John 20:17, after his resurrection, Jesus tells Mary, 'Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father.' I always wondered what that meant. Could it be that Jesus was telling Mary that his personal healing work was at a close and that she would have to look to the impersonal Christ to heal from that point on? Seems to me that his healing and teaching occurred before his crucifixion and that after his resurrection he was working out just his own salvation.

Any thoughts on this would be appreciated.

Response: John 20:17 is one of the most enigmatic verses in the Bible. The truth is that scholars don't know what it means either, especially in light of the fact that a mere 10 verses later, Jesus will invite Thomas to touch him. Literally speaking, if the reason Mary should not touch him is because he has not yet ascended to his Father, then one might rightly think he must have ascended (and returned) by the time he invites Thomas to put his hand into Jesus' side. But there is no mention of any ascension in these verses. Scholars also point out that in Matthew 28:9 when the women saw him, they "held him by the feet, and worshipped him." They are not told "not to touch him."

As it is written (a present imperative with a negative), it probably means, "stop doing something" as opposed to "don't even start doing something." So here it could mean, "Stop clinging to me," rather than, "Do not even think about touching me."

Why would Jesus tell Mary to stop clinging to him? The possibilities generally fall into three categories, each being dependent on how one interprets the word *for* (*for*...I am not yet ascended to my Father.). If the *for* is considered to be anticipatory, then it might mean: "Don't cling to me. Since I have not yet ascended, go tell my brethren (disciples) that I am ascending." If the *for* is thought to link the prohibition to what precedes it, it could mean: "Stop clinging to me, because you have to go tell my brethren." In that case, the "for I am not yet ascended..." acts like a parenthetical remark, an aside. Lastly, it could mean "Stop clinging to me, because I am not yet ascended. I am not ready to leave permanently so you don't have to hang on. This is not the last time you will see me."

We may never know exactly what Jesus meant by these words, but we do know that these are his first post-resurrection words, and they are spoken to Mary. At the least, he is confirming for Mary that he is alive, that he did not die. Things will never be quite the same. Perhaps he simply wants to tell her that he can't stay with her, he has to ascend. This, then, is the first good news of the gospel. "Let me go, so I can give you the fullness of what I have to offer." Jesus tells her to go to his "brethren" and tell them he is ascending. She is to share the good news not only with them but also with the whole world. Whatever sadness Mary felt at the tomb has been transformed by her encounter

Article 2 (continued)

with Jesus. She follows his command, running to the disciples to say, "I have seen the Lord." Regardless of their response, Mary has seen the Lord, of that she is certain. Her joy knows no bounds. She is the first disciple.

—Mary Jane Chaignot

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