



# SUNDAY SCHOOL MARCH 30, 2025

Prayer:

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Old Testament.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Joshua 5:9-12.....</b>	<b>2</b>
The Passover at Gilgal .....	2
Overview .....	2
Biblical Context.....	2
Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context .....	2
Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe .....	3
Scholarly Metaphorical Interpretation & Modern-Day Context .....	3
Summary .....	3
<b>New Testament (Gospel) .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Mark 14:1-9 .....</b>	<b>4</b>
The Plot to Kill Jesus and the Anointment of Bethany .....	4
Overview .....	4
Biblical Context.....	4
Historical / Non-Biblical / Political Context .....	5
Historical Timeline / Biblical Timeframe .....	5
Scholarly Metaphorical Interpretation & Modern-Day Context .....	5
Summary .....	5
<b>Addendum.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>What is Passover? .....</b>	<b>6</b>



## OLD TESTAMENT

### Joshua 5:9-12

#### *THE PASSOVER AT GILGAL*

The Lord said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt.”

And so that place is called Gilgal to this day.

While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal, they kept the Passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho.

On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain.

The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

#### *OVERVIEW*

Joshua 5:9–12 marks a pivotal moment of transition for the Israelites. After 40 years of wandering, this passage captures their first Passover celebration in the Promised Land and their first meal from the land’s produce. It also signals the end of the miraculous manna God had provided in the wilderness. Theologically, this passage symbolizes a new phase of spiritual maturity, self-sufficiency, and fulfilled promise.

#### *BIBLICAL CONTEXT*

This passage follows a series of preparatory rituals:

- **Crossing the Jordan River** (Joshua 3–4), a miraculous event reminiscent of the Red Sea crossing.
- **Circumcision at Gilgal** (Joshua 5:2–8), reinstating covenant identity after the wilderness generation died.
- **Passover celebration** (Joshua 5:10), anchoring them to their deliverance from Egypt.

Joshua 5:9–12 thus serves as a **spiritual pivot point**—from wandering to settlement, from dependence on miracles to cultivating the land, from shame to restored identity.

#### *HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT*

- **“Disgrace of Egypt”** may refer to:
  - Their former status as slaves.
  - Their disobedience and faithlessness during the wilderness years.
  - The perception by surrounding nations that they were an aimless, cursed people.
- **Gilgal**, meaning “to roll,” becomes a symbolic site of transition. Archaeological evidence for Gilgal as a permanent city is scant, but it appears frequently in Joshua and Judges as a site of ritual or gathering.
- **The shift from manna to produce** reflects a broader transition from nomadic, divine-dependency to agrarian, land-based life. Canaan, under the control of various city-states (like Jericho), was being entered not only physically but politically—the Israelites were becoming part of a larger socio-political region with its own cultural and agricultural systems.



- The **Passover** here marks their integration into covenant rhythm in the new land, asserting a religious-political identity distinct from Canaanite practices.

#### *HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME*

- **Traditional Date:** Late Bronze Age (~1400–1200 BCE), depending on the dating system used (Early vs. Late Exodus Theory).
- This passage follows shortly after the **Exodus** (~1446 or ~1260 BCE, depending on interpretation) and the **40 years of wilderness wandering**.
- Jericho is the next major milestone, suggesting this passage occurs **immediately prior to the conquest of Canaan**.

#### *SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION & MODERN-DAY CONTEXT*

##### **Scholarly/Metaphorical Themes:**

- **Rolling Away Shame** – The phrase “disgrace of Egypt” symbolizes emotional, spiritual, and communal baggage. Crossing into a new land is paired with a sense of emotional liberation. Scholars often highlight this as a metaphor for *forgiveness, identity renewal, and freedom*.
- **End of Manna** – Manna symbolizes God's miraculous provision, but also immaturity or dependence. Eating from the land represents a shift to responsibility, maturity, and co-laboring with God.
- **Celebrating Passover** – Reaffirming identity before taking new territory. It's a moment of reflection before action—a pattern still seen in faith journeys today.

##### **Modern Day Reflections:**

- **Personal Application:** Many people experience spiritual “wandering” seasons. This passage speaks to *transitioning into purpose*, with God “rolling away” shame from past failures or hesitations.
- **Community Application:** For churches or organizations, moving from survival mode (manna) to sustainable practice (land's produce) can mirror growth, risk, and faithful action.
- **Political/Social Metaphor:** It also invites reflection on national or cultural renewal—how societies “roll away” historical guilt or generational trauma as they enter new collective identities.

#### *SUMMARY*

Joshua 5:9–12 captures the Israelites' transition from wilderness wanderers to inhabitants of the Promised Land. God declares the shame of Egypt has been “rolled away” at Gilgal, a symbolic place of new beginnings. They celebrate Passover, marking continuity with their past deliverance, and eat produce from the land—signaling the end of miraculous manna. This passage represents spiritual maturation, renewed identity, and entry into a season of grounded faith and self-sustaining responsibility.



## NEW TESTAMENT (GOSPEL)

### Mark 14:1-9

#### *THE PLOT TO KILL JESUS AND THE ANOINTMENT OF BETHANY*

It was two days before the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him, for they said, “Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.”

While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head.

But some were there who said to one another in anger, “Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor.”

And they scolded her.

But Jesus said, “Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish, but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

#### *OVERVIEW*

Mark 14:1-9 presents two interwoven narratives. On one hand, the passage opens with the chief priests and scribes scheming to arrest and kill Jesus, a plan motivated by both religious and political concerns during the Passover festival. On the other hand, it recounts an intimate moment at Bethany where a woman anoints Jesus with expensive perfume. Her act, though seemingly extravagant and wasteful to some, is declared by Jesus to be a profound preparation for his burial ... a prophetic gesture that underscores his impending sacrifice.

#### *BIBLICAL CONTEXT*

In the context of the Gospel of Mark, this passage marks a pivotal moment in the Passion narrative. It comes just before the Last Supper and the subsequent arrest of Jesus. Key biblical elements include:

- **Imminence of the Crucifixion:** The plotting of the chief priests and scribes reveals the growing opposition to Jesus’ ministry. Their fear of public unrest during Passover (a time of heightened nationalistic sentiment) contributes to their urgency.
- **Foreshadowing of Burial:** The woman’s anointing is interpreted by Jesus as preparation for his burial—a clear allusion to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the suffering servant who would bear the sins of many.
- **Contrast of Perspectives:** The narrative juxtaposes the cynical motives of the religious leaders and even one of Jesus’ disciples (often identified as Judas in parallel accounts) with the selfless, heartfelt act of the woman, highlighting themes of true devotion versus opportunistic criticism.



## *HISTORICAL / NON-BIBLICAL / POLITICAL CONTEXT*

Several layers of context enhance our understanding of this passage:

- **Religious Tensions:** During Passover, the expectation of a deliverer was high among the Jewish people. The religious authorities, however, viewed Jesus as a threat to both their spiritual authority and social order.
- **Roman Political Environment:** Judea was under Roman occupation, and the ruling authorities were cautious about any potential disturbances during major festivals. This political sensitivity contributed to the urgency behind the conspiracies against Jesus.
- **Non-Biblical Sources:** Ancient historians like Josephus provide external attestations to the turbulent atmosphere in Judea during the first century, marked by frequent conflicts and societal unrest. This background helps explain the motivations behind the secretive plots by the Jewish leaders.

## *HISTORICAL TIMELINE / BIBLICAL TIMEFRAME*

- **Timing in Jesus' Ministry:** The events described occur during the final week of Jesus' life. They are set just prior to the Last Supper, the arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, and ultimately, the crucifixion.
- **Passover Festival:** The plot to arrest Jesus is timed with the Passover celebration—a period when Jerusalem was filled with pilgrims and when nationalistic and messianic hopes were particularly potent.
- **Early 1st Century CE:** Scholars generally date the events of the Passion narratives to the early decades of the first century, with the Gospel of Mark likely composed around the late 60s or early 70s CE. This situates the narrative within a historical milieu of political tension and religious fervor.

## *SCHOLARLY METAPHORICAL INTERPRETATION & MODERN-DAY CONTEXT*

Modern scholars often explore the passage's deeper layers of meaning:

- **Symbolism of Anointing:** The anointing act can be seen as a metaphor for recognizing the inherent value and destined purpose of an individual—even when such a purpose includes suffering and sacrifice. In modern terms, it calls attention to acts of compassion and foresight that transcend immediate practical concerns.
- **Contrast in Value Systems:** The criticism by some disciples (and by extension, the religious establishment) of the woman's expensive perfume symbolizes a broader conflict between material concerns and spiritual or ethical commitments. Today, this might be compared to debates over the allocation of resources—where the short-term cost is weighed against long-term, often intangible, benefits.
- **Preparation for Transformation:** Just as the anointing was a preparatory act for Jesus' burial and subsequent resurrection, modern interpretations might see this as a call to prepare for transformative change. Whether in personal growth, community development, or even broader societal shifts, the passage encourages looking beyond immediate appearances to discern deeper, redemptive purposes.

## *SUMMARY*

Mark 14:1-9 intertwines a plot against Jesus with a profound act of devotion. The religious leaders, anxious about the potential upheaval during Passover, conspire to arrest Jesus secretly. Simultaneously, in Bethany, a woman demonstrates deep reverence by anointing Jesus with



costly perfume—a gesture that Jesus interprets as symbolic of his impending burial. This juxtaposition highlights the clash between superficial practicality and genuine sacrificial love, serving as a critical turning point in the Passion narrative. The passage sets the stage for the unfolding of events that lead to the crucifixion, inviting readers to consider both historical realities and timeless spiritual truths.

## ADDENDUM

### What is Passover?

Passover is a foundational Jewish festival that commemorates the Israelites' liberation from slavery in Egypt, as described in Exodus 12. According to the biblical account, God instructed the Israelites to mark their doorposts with the blood of a lamb so the plague of the firstborn would “pass over” their homes. This final plague convinced Pharaoh to release the Israelites, initiating their journey to freedom. The feast includes symbolic foods—like unleavened bread (matzah) and bitter herbs—to recall the haste of their departure and the bitterness of bondage.

Over time, Passover became not just a remembrance of physical liberation, but a ritualized celebration of God's faithfulness, justice, and covenant. In Joshua 5:10, celebrating Passover in the Promised Land for the first time symbolized a full-circle moment: from slaves to wanderers to free people with a homeland. For Christians, Passover also holds spiritual significance, especially in connection with the Last Supper, which was itself a Passover meal, linking Jesus' sacrifice to the lamb whose blood brings deliverance.