

Did Mary pour perfume on Jesus' feet?

Mary, called Magdalene, is not Lazarus' sister. The only information we have about Mary Magdalene is that she has been freed from evil spirits and that she was present at the time of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, accompanying her mother, Mary.

Did Mary pour perfume on Jesus' feet?

Narrative of the evangelist João

The evangelist John narrates that Jesus, six days before the Passover feast, went to the city of Bethany, city of Lazarus, who was dead for four days and whom Jesus raised from the dead (John 12: 1).

A dinner was offered and, as usual, Martha served the table, at which were Jesus and Lazarus, among others (Luke 10:40; John 12: 2).

At a certain moment, during the supper, in the presence of the disciples, Mary took an arrátel [1] of pure nard ointment, of great value, and anointed Jesus' feet. Then she started to dry Jesus' feet with her hair, so that the house was perfumed with the smell of the ointment (John 12: 3).

This is the same Mary who stayed at Jesus' feet, to listen to his teachings, while Martha took care of the household chores

(John 11: 2; Luke 10:42).

Narratives of the evangelists Matthew and Mark

Evangelists Matthew and Mark narrate a similar event, which deals with a woman who spilled a perfume, an act similar to that performed by Mary, brother of Lazarus, however, this woman spilled the nard on Jesus' head and did not use her hair to dry it.

Evangelist Mark situates the event in time as being two days before Easter, and both Matthew and Mark plot the place as the home of Simon the leper (Mark 14: 1-3; Mt 26: 6-7) .

Unlike John, the evangelists Matthew and Mark did not register the woman's name, which shows that she was a stranger from the circle of the apostles, since everyone knew Lazarus and his two sisters, Martha and Mary.

Knowing the person's identity or their relationship with another, which is well known, makes the narrators not forget to register the person's name. The evangelist John does not mention the name of the Samaritan woman, because she belonged to a people that did not communicate with the Jews, she was a woman and a foreigner, therefore, the disciples had no proximity to her. What marked the woman was her origin, Samaria, and the disagreement between Samaritans and Jews, matters sufficiently important for the narrative (John 4: 7).

Narrative of the evangelist Lucas

Luke recounts another event, involving Jesus and a woman, when a Pharisee invited him to eat. When Jesus was seated at the

table, a woman approached who, weeping, washed Jesus' feet with tears and wiped her feet with her hair; and then she kissed and anointed Jesus' feet with the ointment that was in the vessel (Luke 7: 37-38).

The Pharisee, seeing this scene, murmured, saying: "If he had been a prophet, he would have known who and which woman was the one who touched him, for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). The Pharisee knew the woman and labeled her as a sinner, but the evangelist Lucas did not know her and neither would her name be relevant, as she had no relationship with other New Testament characters.

Synoptic Gospels

What can be seen from reading the synoptic gospels is that, six days before the Passover feast, Mary, sister of Lazarus, in the city of Bethany, during a dinner, anointed Jesus' feet and wiped them with her hair. Later, another woman, whose name is not revealed, in the house of Simon the leper, poured the same perfume on Jesus' head, thus anointing her body (Mt 26: 7, 12; Mark 14: 3, 8).

In the narratives of the evangelists Matthew and Mark, Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of the leper Simon, when a woman poured an expensive perfume bottle on his head. The woman's action provoked indignation in the disciples, who claimed that the perfume was very expensive and that it could be given to the poor. Jesus, in turn, rebuked the disciples, highlighting the law (Deut 15:11), and that that woman's act was the harbinger of her death and grave, and that that event would be reported wherever the Gospel has announced (Mt 26: 10-13; Mark 14: 6-9).

John, in his Gospel, tells that the event happened in Bethany, six days before Easter, and that Lazarus was present. He

points out that Mary takes the perfume and anoints Jesus' feet, wiping them with her hair, while Marta served the table, which suggests that dinner took place at Lazarus' house.

Mary, called Magdalene, is not Lazarus' sister. The only information we have about Mary Magdalene is that she has been freed from evil spirits and that she was present at the time of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, accompanying her mother, Mary.

“And some women who had been healed of evil spirits and diseases, Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons came out” (Luke 8: 2).

Mary Magdalene, too, was not the sinful woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears in the Pharisee's house, as reported by evangelist Luke. There is no biblical basis for considering Mary Magdalene as a prostitute or sinner or, as Lazarus' sister.

St. Gregory the Great, who lived for almost 1500 years, was the one who wrongly identified Mary Magdalene as the “sinner” of Luke 8, verse 2, and as the same Mary of Bethany, Lazarus' sister.

The Marias

Evangelist John makes it clear that the woman who anointed Christ's feet in Bethany during a dinner was Mary, the sister of Lazarus (John 11: 2). It is unlikely that the evangelist was mistaken about the identity of the person who anointed Christ's feet and dried with his hair, as he knew both: Mary, sister of Lazarus and Mary Magdalene, so it follows that the woman who anointed Jesus' feet is not Mary Magdalene.

Evangelist Lucas, after narrating the episode of the woman

who, in a Pharisee's house, washed Jesus' feet with tears and wiped them with her hair, makes reference to Mary Magdalene as a follower of Jesus, with other women. Therefore, the evangelist Lucas knew Mary Magdalene, and there is no reason why he omitted her name, if the woman who washed Jesus' feet with tears was really Mary Magdalene.

It is worth mentioning that the event narrated by the beloved doctor took place around Galilee and, at a different time of the Passover, specifically the Passover that preceded the death of Christ. The last Passover is only reported in chapter 22, while the story of the woman who watered Jesus' feet has reported in chapter 7 of the gospel of Luke.

Despite the similarities between the stories narrated by the evangelists, the narratives of Matthew and Mark refer to the same woman who, in turn, is not Mary, the sister of Lazarus, nor the sinner reported by Lucas.

The differences between the story narrated by Matthew and Mark, that narrated by Luke and John, suggest that the story written by Matthew and Mark deals with a woman unknown to the apostles. She poured the precious balm over Christ's head, while the other two women, Mary, sister of Lazarus and the sinner, anointed Christ's feet.

Mateus and Marcos do not refer to the person of Lazarus, despite their historical importance, nor do they refer to Maria, Lazaro's sister, a woman well known to the disciples.

Although Jesus was in Bethany, populated by Mary and her sister Martha, Jesus was dining at Simon the leper's house two days before Easter, and not six days, as the evangelist John tells us.

The woman who is part of Matthew and Mark's narrative did not use her hair to dry Jesus' feet, she just poured out the perfume, which leads to the conclusion that it was not Mary, Lazarus' sister, and not even Mary. Magdalene, who was well

known to the disciples.