

A Triptych of Love and Hate

[Mark 14:1-11](#)



Our Lord has just finished His in-depth teaching on eschatology on the [Mt. of Olives](#), teaching His disciples about things to come. Jesus had become very popular and the Jewish religious leaders were trying to find a way to eliminate Him. The emphasis from now on will be on the coming humiliation, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.

In this passage the leaders of the [Jews plot Jesus downfall](#) ([verses 1-2](#)), and get the opportunity earlier than expected through the [treachery of Judas](#) ([verses 10-11](#)). Meanwhile, sandwiched in between these two events is the story of the love toward him of [Mary of Bethany](#).

On a number of occasions, Mark begins one story and concludes it only after another story is interjected and resolved. This is a literary device designed to tie two incidents together thematically. This intricate story-within-a-story is what is called a "Marcan [triptych](#)."



Mark brings together certain events and themes which occurred at various times during this week and deliberately places them side by side so that we might see the contrast:

Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread was two days off; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth, and kill Him; 2 for they were saying, "Not during the festival, lest there be a riot of the people." (Mark 14:1-2 NASB)

We are told here that the [Passover](#) and the [Feast of Unleavened Bread](#) was two days away. If we are to accept literally that Jesus spent three days and three nights in the grave, we must put the crucifixion on Wednesday which is really a position that predates that Roman Church's view of a Friday crucifixion.

With [the crucifixion on Wednesday](#), the account at the beginning of Mark 14 would be Monday night with the events of the remainder of Mark 14 being on Tuesday.

[The feast of the Passover](#): The Passover was the first of the three annual feasts which all Jewish males were originally expected to attend. All male Jews within a fifteen mile radius of Jerusalem had to come to Jerusalem for the Passover. But far more actually came, some from a long distance. [Josephus](#), the Jewish historian, tells us that at these Passover feasts there were sometimes as many as [three million people in Jerusalem](#) and the surrounding villages. Jesus regularly attended Jerusalem for the Passover as did many Galileans. For a month before the feast Jewish synagogues would expound the meaning of the Passover and the lesson was taught daily in their schools. Roads were put in order and bridges repaired. Graves in the vicinity of Jerusalem would be whitewashed so that no one would tread on them by accident and thus be rendered 'unclean', excluding them from the feast. During the Passover all lodging was free and the city was so packed that outlying villages had to lodge visitors, while others would camp out in the vicinity.

On the 10th day of Nissan a lamb "without blemish" had to be set aside for each participating

group (usually, but not necessarily, a family group) of around ten or twenty persons. These family or other groupings would share a lamb and one or more of their number would go to the Temple with an unblemished lamb for sacrifice. Each Passover lamb was slain in the Temple as a sacrifice by a member of the group, the blood being caught in bowls by the priests and offered at the altar. The Passover sacrifice was the only sacrifice that was not to be done by the priests but by the members of the family. The representative would then return with the carcass, which would be eaten at the Passover meal in memory of the great deliverance from Egypt when God slew the firstborn of Egypt, and passed over the houses where the blood from a lamb was smeared on the doorposts and lintel ([Exodus 12](#)).

Passover is a type, or picture of something much greater—it pictured the redemption of God’s elect through the sacrifice of the sinless Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Speak to all the congregation of Israel, saying, 'On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers' households, a lamb for each household. (Exodus 12:3 NASB)

Who is the [anti-type](#) of the lamb? It is the Lord Jesus Christ. A lamb is rather symbolic in Christological interpretation. How do we know this? We learn this in the New Testament. When Jesus first appears publicly, John the Baptist introduces Him as the “Lamb of God”:

These things took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing. 29 The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:28-29 NASB)

John was speaking to a 1st Century Jewish audience. The image of “Lamb” would have communicated to them a lamb as a sacrifice. Writing to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul draws the parallel for all time when he says:

Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. (1 Corinthians 5:7 NASB)

The Lamb was to be a male lamb, one year old, without spot or blemish. Peter states that Jesus was such a sacrifice:

but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. (1 Peter 1:19 NASB)

The typical significance of the Passover is very clear in the New Testament writings. Probably no Mosaic institution is a more perfect type than this. The first Passover was celebrated on the 14th of Nisan. And almost two thousand years later Jesus Christ was crucified on the 14th of Nisan. While Israel was celebrating their Passover, Jesus, the true Lamb of God, was being crucified. He was the Lamb of God which the ancient Passover lamb typified. He died to save us from God's judgments just as that lamb died instead of the first-born.

Notice that our text says, “**Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread was two days off;**” The Feast of Unleavened Bread was to begin the very next day after Passover, on the fifteenth of the Hebrew month, Nisan. It was to last for seven days. On the first night, and again on the seventh, there was to be a holy convocation—these were high Sabbaths.

On this feast they would put grain in the ground and then pray to God to bring the harvest for the coming year. The Hebrews would pray, "[Give us life out of the earth.](#)" as they put the grain in the ground. What was happening to Jesus on this feast as every Israelite was praying, "Give us life out of the earth"? They were burying Him. Think about that!

As time went on, these two feasts were merged into one eight day feast:

***Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching.
(Luke 22:1 NASB)***

Josephus says, "We keep a feast for eight days, which is called the Feast of Unleavened Bread." Among the Jews the phrase "the feast of the Passover" could include all eight days, as could "the feast of Unleavened Bread". Mark is making things clear to his Gentile readers.

As with the other feasts of the Lord the prophetic meaning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is found in the work of the Messiah. Passover pictures the substitutionary DEATH of the Messiah as the Passover Lamb. The Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures the BURIAL of the Messiah, and the feast that follows, which is [FIRST FRUITS](#), pictures the RESURRECTION of the Messiah. Do you see the Gospel in the feasts?

Now the Passover and Unleavened Bread was two days off; and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to seize Him by stealth, and kill Him; (Mark 14:1 NASB)

So as we have seen Israel's Passover was a very important annual event for the Jews and is steeped in Biblical regulation as well as centuries of cultural tradition. Every aspects of the Passover shares one thing in common, they all point to the person and work of the Messiah, our Savior, Jesus Christ. And here we see the chief priests and the [scribes](#); those who for all their lives had observed this Passover awaiting Israel's Messiah were now planning to kill Jesus Christ. They were so blinded by their tradition that they could not see God's Lamb who was standing right in front of them. They were working around the Passover that points to Christ, while working to kill Christ.

The Chief Priest: These are appointed by Herod for a one-year term and rotated regularly among well-placed, wealthy families. The High Priest at this time was [Caiaphas](#) who was the son-in-law of the former high priest, [Annas](#), who continue to wield considerable power. The high-priestly office constituted the most powerful religious, and one of the most powerful political, positions in Jewish Palestine. The collective term Chief Priests included the High Priest, the Captain of the Temple, the Temple overseers, and the Temple treasurers. They are no friends of the Pharisees, who practice a much stricter form of Judaism. The chief priests apparently also have a financial interest in money-changing and sale of approved sacrifices in the temple.



The **Scribes** were professional Torah scholars charged with the responsibility of interpreting the Law. They oppose Jesus because he claims to speak and act for God ([Mark 2:7](#)) in ways that challenge their own authority and interpretations. Scribes could be either [Pharisees](#) or [Sadducees](#). The Scribes had little to do

with running the Temple, except through their enormous influence, but were respected by the people. The Chief Priests ran the Temple, but were in general despised by the people.

These religious leaders would have celebrated Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the nth degree. They would have crossed every “t”; they would have dotted every “i.” They would have kept every law and ritual perfectly—all the while plotting to put to death God in the flesh.

for they were saying, "Not during the festival, lest there be a riot of the people." (Mark 14:2 NASB)

These religious leaders were afraid of the crowds. Jesus was popular and highly regarded and the people were in an excited state because of the feast, and many were fellow Galileans. Emotions ran high as people recalled the history of their ancestors' deliverance from slavery in Egypt. For weeks leading up to the feast intense preparations were made. The Romans sent extra forces to Jerusalem to deal with potential disturbances and uprisings. It was Jewish belief that the Messiah would come at Passover to deliver his people from oppression.

There has never been a group of people as dedicated to the religious system as the chief priests, the scribes, and the Pharisees. And at the exact time that they were following through on the holiest of days, they were plotting to kill God in the flesh.

In sharp contrast to this, Mark gives us the account of what took place in Bethany. It actually took place a few days before this, for John tells us it was six days before the Passover. Mark is simply recounting it, not in chronological order, but as something he sets in contrast with the hatred of the priests.

And while He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; and she broke the vial and poured it over His head. (Mark 14:3 NASB)

Notice that this incident took place in the house of “[Simon the leper](#)” but this is hardly likely to be correct if taken literally. Simon was a resident of Bethany of Judah who had obviously been healed by the Lord of his leprosy. Leprosy was a disease that made a person an outcast among his people. Simon had been an outcast, but Jesus touched him and he was healed; now he is again a part of society, and takes advantage of an opportunity to express love and appreciation for the Savior. There dining together is a picture of fellowship. So we see a time of fellowship sparked by Simon's appreciation.

The fellowship was not limited to Simon and Jesus alone. There was an unnamed woman there who pours a costly perfume on Jesus. Who is this unnamed woman? In the Forth Gospel we find that this unnamed woman is Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus:

Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. 3 Mary therefore took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. (John 12:1-3 NASB)

All four Gospels have the account of a woman anointing Jesus with precious ointment and agree on

enough detail and language to suggest that they are all telling the same story. With the exception of Luke, all the Gospels locate the incident at Bethany on the eve of, or during, Passion Week, and make the anointing prophetic of the burial of Jesus.

Luke tells the anointing story in a way that puts it entirely at odds with the three other accounts. He places the story much earlier in Jesus' career ([Lk. 7:36-50](#)), drops the Bethany location and the reference to Jesus' burial, and changes the story to give it an entirely different point. Many see this as an entirely different incident but I think that the similarities to the other gospels are too strong to dismiss it. For example:

And behold, there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, (Luke 7:37 NASB)

Luke's phrase "an alabaster vial of perfume" is identical, word for word, with what we have in [Mark 14:3](#). Mark says the anointing took place in Bethany at the house of "Simon the leper," and Luke has Jesus addressing his host as "Simon". Do we have two different anointings that both involve "**an alabaster vial of perfume**" and happened in the houses of two different men named "Simon"? I think it is clear that Luke's anointing story is the same story found in the other three Gospels—a story that Luke moved and adapted for his own purposes of theological teaching.

Luke's anointing story does not name the woman (any more than the other Synoptics do), but he does make the unique specification that she was a woman "who was a sinner". Then, immediately following the anointing story, Luke names some women who traveled with Jesus:

And it came about soon afterwards, that He began going about from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God; and the twelve were with Him, ² and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, (Luke 8:1-2 NASB)

Here we see "Mary, who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out." Is Luke hinting that Mary Magdalene was the sinful woman who had done the anointing? Possibly!

Let me pose to you a possibility; Lazarus's sister Mary and Mary Magdalene may be the same woman. The Fourth Gospel has Mary (with her sister Martha) at the raising of brother Lazarus. Next, still in the company of her brother and sister, she anoints Jesus for his burial. Next (now called Mary Magdalene) she is at the cross, still with her brother (now called "the disciple whom Jesus loved). And finally, she is the discoverer of the empty tomb who runs to tell her brother ("[the disciple whom Jesus loved](#)") and Peter. If Mary Lazarus's sister and Mary Magdalene are one person, then her story moves directly from Lazarus to the disciple whom Jesus loved and proves that they are also one person.

The Fourth Gospel has carefully paired Mary with Lazarus in certain episodes and then paired Mary Magdalene with the "disciple whom Jesus loved" in certain episodes. This pattern could hardly be coincidental; it must be an effort to tell us something.

So this unnamed woman in Mark is according to the Fourth Gospel Mary Lazarus's sister who I think is also called Mary Magdalene from whom seven demons had gone out. I think knowing who this woman is

helps us to understand what she does:

And while He was in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining at the table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume of pure nard; and she broke the vial and poured it over His head. (Mark 14:3 NASB)

Mark tells us that the perfume was “[pure nard](#)”—this substance was probably an oil extracted from an East Indian plant in the Himalayas and which bore the same name as the plant. It was very costly because of the expense of importing it from India and, to transport it to foreign lands.



This perfume was in an “[alabaster vial](#)” which is a white, pure, marble type of stone that is formed from stalactites in caves. Because the perfumed oil was very expensive the bottle was designed only to release it slowly.

The Fourth Gospel tells us that she anointed both his head and his feet, which were both easily accessible to her as he lay, oriental fashion, on the couch beside the table. Mark tells us that she broke the vial and then poured it out on Christ's head. In the most lavish act that Mary could imagine, she took this valuable treasure and expended all of it upon Christ. She did not shake a few drops, as though offering Him a little of what was precious to her. She broke the alabaster vial to release all of its precious contents upon the sacred head of Jesus Christ.

Now, when we hear these stories, I think in our minds we have an image of this oily stuff running down His face—kind of goopy and messy. But the reality is this perfume was very light, and the moment it touched His hair it would have quickly evaporated and just left this absolutely wondrous aroma.

What Mary did here is worship! Mary had an attitude of devotion to Jesus. When we talk about worship, primarily we think of this—the worship service. Worship is more than just getting together to read Bible passages, sing songs, pray, listen to somebody preach—true worship comes from the heart. It's an expression of adoration. Worship can take place here, but just because we're here doesn't necessarily mean we're worshipping. If it's not coming out of our heart, then it's just a ritual—and ritual, without the corresponding heart-attitude, has never satisfied God.

What is worship? Worship is honor and adoration directed to God. The New Testament uses several words for worship. Two of them are particularly noteworthy: [proskuneo](#), which means: “to kiss toward, to bow down.” It signifies humble adoration. Another word used for worship is [latreuo](#), which means: “rendering honor or paying homage. Both terms carry the idea of giving, because worship is giving something to God. It begins with the giving of ourselves, and then of our attitudes, and then our possessions.

True worship comes out of a desire to please God, to show one's gratitude to God, to show one's love for God. True worship comes from the heart - a right reason behind it. And if we offer up something to God (time, physical effort, prayer, money, service to others) with the right heart, a heart of love and adoration and thanksgiving, then that is true worship. This is what Mary is doing she is worshipping her God. Mary didn't just pour a few drops of ointment on Jesus. She poured out all the contents! Her love was not calculated but extravagant. This probably represented all of Mary's life savings. She had probably invested everything in this one precious perfume that was probably being saved for burial; that would have been

common.

Just as we find in Luke's Gospel, Martha served while Mary again offers worship. Mary is sitting at Jesus' feet while her sister worked in the kitchen to prepare a meal. She was hanging on every word. To her, Jesus was the most important person in the world. And the Lord commended her for her action.

Those who are in love with Jesus and are overflowing with gratitude to Him sometimes do some strange things. At least outwardly they appear strange. Mary loved the Lord. Jesus had been a real friend to her. He had filled her life with hope. He had cast seven demons out of her. He had been there during some of the most difficult times of her life. Certainly one was when her brother Lazarus died. But Jesus had come, and her brother Lazarus was miraculously raised from the dead and given back to her.

Now they were there, all together, having one last meal together. No doubt, she thought this may be her last chance to do something special for her Lord. So she seized the opportunity and took an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, broke it, and anointed Him with it. We learn from the text that this perfume was worth over three hundred [denarii](#), which was a day's wage in that day. In other words, this was worth over a year's wage. This was true extravagance. This was true worship.

She had the right, the freedom, the prerogative to do what she did, but notice the attitude of the disciples:

But some were indignantly remarking to one another, "Why has this perfume been wasted?"⁵ "For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they were scolding her. (Mark 14:4-5 NASB)

What Mary did didn't make a lot of sense, especially to the cold and calculating. Immediately, the nit-pickers and complainers began to talk. They don't look at one another and say, "Well, that was kind of silly." The terminology is very strong. It says they responded very "indignantly"—that's a Greek word that means to respond with violent anger. They were very upset: "This perfume could have been sold for three hundred denarii and could have fed the poor."

We learn from the Forth Gospel that [Judas](#) is the one who first verbalized a protest, and the others followed his lead. Matthew informs us that the rest agreed with him and thus joined in the objection. Judas, you recall, was the treasurer of the group. Judas just couldn't stomach what was happening. All he saw was that a costly ointment worth over a year's wages had been poured out and ruined. Immediately, his mind began to calculate just how much money that ointment could have been sold for.



Now can we even begin to imagine how Mary felt in the midst of this? Put yourself in her place. She comes with most precious thing she had and freely, willingly gives it to her Lord. And all of sudden her fellow believers are against her, criticizing her, accusing her, and coming up with their better ideas. Have you ever done something you believed to be so right and have it interpreted as being so wrong? For a moment don't even think in terms of spiritual things, just the things we do for others and right when we think we will receive commendation, instead condemnation.

Please also notice that the complaint which began with Judas infects the whole body of disciples. The negativity spreads.

But Jesus said, "Let her alone; why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me.

(Mark 14:6 NASB)

Jesus stepped in and intervened, telling them to stop upsetting the woman (so the muttering had become apparent to all). He pointed out that what she had done was a good deed.

The use of "**good**" translates a word that more appropriately conveys beauty rather than moral good. So the *ESV* translates it, "For she has done a beautiful thing to me."

The disciples were wrong in intruding into another's adoration and appreciation of the Lord. How many Christians have had their enthusiasm stolen, their love for God lost, their desire to serve subverted, by the critics?

"For the poor you always have with you, and whenever you wish, you can do them good; but you do not always have Me. (Mark 14:7 NASB)

Jesus was not decrying the needs of the poor. He was rather pointing out His uniqueness and that this woman has responded to His uniqueness while she could. His very words about the poor remaining with them allude to [Deuteronomy 15:11](#), where the context demands caring for the poor.

"She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. (Mark 14:8 NASB)

Jesus directed the disciples' attention to His impending death. Mary may have grasped something of this, so that her act of lavish worship served to anoint the body of Jesus for burial. Two days later He would be beaten and lashed until the flesh lay open and quivering on His back. He would be taken to Golgotha, the execution site. Scores of criminals had been tortured and executed there; their flesh and blood would have splattered along the ground and stones. It is no stretch to imagine filthy Golgotha with the stench of decaying blood and tissue in the air. Yet the aroma of pure nard that anointed the thorn-crowned head and pierced feet of Jesus Christ might still offer a signal of the sweetness of life that His death would provide.



"And truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, that also which this woman has done shall be spoken of in memory of her." (Mark 14:9 NASB)

The Lord makes a promise, a promise that the sacrifice of this one woman, Mary of Bethany, will be spoken of in the whole world.

What book of the Bible do you tell an unbeliever to read that they may come to understand and believe the gospel? What book of the Bible says that it was written that men might believe in Jesus? The Forth Gospel!

Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹ but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. (John 20:30-31 NASB)

And in this book, that we send people to hear the gospel, is this story of Mary's worship. After twenty centuries of Christianity, everywhere the gospel is preached, we hear the story of Mary of Bethany's lavish worship and devotion to Jesus Christ her Savior.

Here we are today, 2000 years later, fulfilling this very word, telling again of the act of Mary of Bethany, when she anointed our Lord's head and feet.

There is a deliberate contrast here between the sacrificial love that Mary showed, and the base betrayal by one of the chosen twelve. One with a heart full of love and gratitude; the other only mercenary and out for what he could get.

And Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests, in order to betray Him to them. (Mark 14:10 NASB)

Jesus sandwiches the heart of the religious leaders and the heart of Judas in between the beautiful heart of this woman.

“One of the twelve”—What an ominous sound that has. He was of the inner circle, the ones upon whom Jesus leaned and depended, and yet he went to betray his Lord. One of the scandals of the Bible is that one of Jesus' handpicked followers betrays him.

Why did Judas betray Jesus, what was his motivation? There is no indication in any of our sources of any motive other than that of money:

Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. (John 12:6 NASB)

This infers that money seems to be the one thing which he valued above everything else.

Did Jesus know that Judas will betray him when He selected him to be an apostle? Apparently so:

"But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. ⁶⁵ And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father." (John 6:64-65 NASB)

Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" ⁷¹ Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him. (John 6:70-71 NASB)

Judas betrayed his Master for money. Greed seems to be the principle motivation of this pathetic figure. "How much will you pay me...?" was his question to the Jewish leaders.

And they were glad when they heard this, and promised to give him money. And he began seeking how to betray Him at an opportune time. (Mark 14:11 NASB)

Mark gives a brief summary of what the situation was. Matthew provides more detail. Matthew points out that obtaining money was always part of his intention and that he negotiated a price—thirty pieces of silver (which was the price of a slave). The price was probably a deliberate indication of the contempt the chief priests had for Jesus for they may well have had [Zechariah 11:13](#) in mind.

Judas' purpose was **betrayal**, but sinful man was in fact being made to fulfill the purposes of God for we know that in the first place it was God Who delivered Jesus into men's hands:

"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know ²³ this Man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. (Acts 2:22-23 NASB)

Peter recognized that the betrayal of Jesus by Judas was a fulfillment of prophecy that was written 1000 years prior to the actual act of sin. Peter refers to:

"A wicked thing is poured out upon him, That when he lies down, he will not rise up again." ⁹ Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me. (Psalms 41:8-9 NASB)

The betrayal of Christ was predicted 1000 years before it occurred. Jesus knew it was coming but it still had to hurt. The feeling was that of being thrown away by another human being and it is even worse when the one who throws you away is someone you love. And that is exactly what is happening with the Lord Jesus Christ, as Judas threw him to evil authorities.

What a contrast of hate and love. Judas, one of the twelve hates Jesus and sells him out for money. Mary loves Jesus and spends a whole year's wages in a demonstration of her love. The people's attitude toward Jesus isn't any different today, some hate Him and others love Him. How does your worship of Jesus compare to that of Mary? If others aren't mocking **our** worship we may want to question the depth of love for Jesus!

This message was preached by [David B. Curtis](#) on August 12, 2007 . Media #378.



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