

John Chapter 12

This chapter focuses on the reactions of love and hate, belief and rejection toward Christ, leading to the cross.

John 12:1 "Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead."

"Six days before the Passover" was most likely the previous Saturday with Passover coming 6 days later. Thursday evening through sunset Friday.

The Lord Jesus was last with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, when He raised Lazarus from the dead. We learned in a previous lesson, that Lazarus had been dead four days when Jesus raised him. This great miracle caused many to believe that Jesus was the Christ.

The Jewish leaders held council and sought to kill Jesus, and Jesus left the Jews and went into a city called Ephraim. The length of His stay in Ephraim is unknown, but it was probably more than a few days.

Now, Jesus has come back to His friend Simon's home in Bethany which is just two miles from Jerusalem.

John 12:2 "There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him."

These last few days, He enjoyed being with His apostles and good friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Many assume that this Simon spoken of, in connection with this, is Simon the Leper. Lazarus, Mary, and Martha were guests here. In (Luke chapter 8 verse 44), it appears this is in Simon's home. It seemed Martha served Jesus.

Some believe this Simon was the husband of Martha. When Jesus came to this area there were most probably several families He could stay with. Simon had been healed of leprosy and Lazarus raised from the dead, so you know Jesus would have been welcome in either home.

John 12:3 "Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment."

The term used for "pound" actually indicates a weight around three fourths of a pound, approximately 12 ounces. "Spikenard" was an oil extracted from the root of a plant grown in India.

"Anointed the feet of Jesus": Since those who were eating reclined at the table, their feet extended away from it, making it possible for Mary to anoint the feet of Jesus. The act symbolized Mary's humble devotion and love for Him.

In other gospels, it seemed Mary had anointed Jesus head, as well as His feet. This perfume possibly cost a year's wages. Mary loved Jesus so much that she humbled herself and wiped His feet with her hair.

She had plenty of reasons to adore Him. He had raised her brother from the dead. A pound of ointment would have been a very large container. Mary did not realize that she was anointing Him for His burial.

John 12:4-5 "Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him," "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?"

Since one pence was a day's wage given to common laborers, 300 was equivalent to a year's wages (no money was earned on the Sabbath or other holy days).

A pence was a man's wages for one day, so you can see the cost of the perfume. Judas Iscariot was not really concerned about the poor. Judas was the one who carried the bag of money used for their expenses, and he wanted that three hundred days work of money in the bag, so he could help himself to some of it.

John 12:6 "This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."

Judas' altruism was really a front for his own personal avarice. Because he was the apostolic band's treasurer, he was able to secretly pilfer the group treasury for his own desires.

John left no doubt why Judas said this.

John 12:7 "Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this."

Mary performed this act to signal her devotion but, as in the case of Caiaphas, her act revealed more than she realized at the time. During the first century, lavish sums were spent on funerals, which included costly perfumes to cover the smell of decay.

John 12:8 "For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always."

This does not mean that alms should not be distributed to the poor, but was a reminder that, while the poor would remain, Jesus would not always be with them (see Matthew 26:11 and Mark 14:7).

This most all of the disciples did not understand, but Jesus was speaking of preparing His body for death. It is true that there are always the poor to help. Even in a fluent society like the U.S., there are always the poor around. There will never stop being a time when you can help them, but very shortly Jesus would be crucified and His body laid in the tomb.

John 12:9 “Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.”

Some of the Jews believed when Jesus raised Lazarus. Many of them came to see Jesus (the Miracle Man), and Lazarus also, who was raised from the dead. This was a real curiosity with all the people.

John 12:10-11 "But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;" "Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus."

This phrase signaled both a conscious, deliberate move away from the religion of the authorities and a move toward genuine faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God.

These chief priests were losing the respect of the people. They were no longer thought of as God's representative on earth. They wanted to kill Jesus, so they could get their power back so they could rule over the people.

Lazarus was a constant reminder of the super-natural power of Jesus. They had to get rid of him, so the people would forget this miracle. They were losing followers, and they felt, if they could get rid of Jesus and Lazarus, they would get their followers back.

This section (from 12-19), marks Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem referred to as Palm Sunday. It is one of the few incidents in Jesus' life reported in all four gospels. By this action, He presented Himself officially to the nation as the Messiah and Son of God.

The Sanhedrin and other Jewish leaders wanted Him dead but did not want Him killed during the Passover time because they feared stirring up the multitudes with whom He was popular.

Jesus entered the city however, on His own time and forced the whole issue in order that it might happen exactly on the Passover day when the lambs were being sacrificed. As the Scripture says “Christ, our Passover, also has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7). In God's perfect timing, at the precise time foreordained from eternity, He presented Himself to die. (verses 23; 10:17-18; 17:1; 19:10-11; Acts 2:23; 4:27-28; Gal. 4:4).

John 12:12 “On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,”

The next day was Sunday, the day after Jesus' visit to Bethany.

John 12:13 “Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

The supply of date palms was plentiful; they still grow in Jerusalem today. From about two centuries earlier, the waving of palm branches had become a nation, if not nationalistic, symbol, which signaled the fervent hope that a messianic liberator was arriving on the scene.

Hosanna is a transliteration of a Hebrew word that means “give salvation now.” It was a term of acclamation or praise occurring (in Psalm 118:25), which was familiar to every Jew, since that psalm was part of the Hallel sung each morning by the temple choir during the Feast of Tabernacles (7:37), and associated with the Feast of Dedication (10:22), and especially the Passover.

After shouting out the “Hosanna,” the crowds shouted (Psalm 118:26); significantly, the original context of this psalm may well have been the pronouncement of blessing upon a Davidic king. Jewish commentaries on the psalm have understood the verse to bear messianic implications. “He who comes in the Name of the Lord” refers to Messiah, especially in context with the phrase “the King of Israel,” though that messianic title is not from (Psalm 118).

Palm trees symbolize Israel. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell this with much more detail than the account here. They tell of the colt of an ass being acquired and Jesus riding on it. Many of the details of how they got it are not included here.

Read the accounts in these other Bible studies. We do see here, that Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday with shouts of adoration from the people.

John 12:14 “And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written,”

Jesus actually sent disciples to get the colt of an ass and told them where it would be tied.

John 12:15 “Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt.”

The synoptic gospels give more information here regarding Jesus’ selection of a young donkey (see Matt. 21:1-9; Mark 11:1-10; and Luke 19:29-38). They convey the fact that Jesus deliberately planned to present Himself to the nation in this manner as a conscious fulfillment of the messianic prophecy of (Zechariah 9:9).

Zech. 9:9 "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

John 12:16 “These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.”

You see, the disciples had no idea, even though Jesus had told them many times that He was to be crucified. They did not make any of the connection with these fulfillments of prophecy until after Jesus rose from the grave.

Looking back on the things that happened, they understood why each thing happened.

John 12:17 “The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record.”

This is saying that much more connection was made with Old Testament prophecy after Jesus rose from the dead, than when it was happening. Looking back, they could see clearly after they knew for sure who He was.

John 12:18 “For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.”

This great multitude of people was following Jesus, because He had raised Lazarus from the dead.

John 12:19 “The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.”

“The world”: meaning the people in general, as opposed to everyone in particular. Clearly, most people in the world did not even know of Jesus at that time, and many in Israel did not believe in Him. Often “world” is used in this general sense.

The Pharisees are saying here, that the whole world has gone after Jesus, and these Jewish leaders are not making any ground.

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1. How long before Passover did Jesus come to Bethany?
2. Who had Jesus raised from the dead at Bethany?
3. Where had Jesus gone when He left the last time?
4. Whose home was Jesus in?
5. How far is Bethany from Jerusalem?
6. Who actually served Jesus?
7. Some believe this Simon was whose husband?
8. How much ointment did Mary pour on Jesus?

9. If you put all four gospels' account together, what two places did she put the ointment?
10. What did she wipe the ointment with?
11. Who complained about Mary putting this expensive ointment on Jesus?
12. How much did he say the ointment could have been sold for?
13. How much was a pence?
14. Why had he complained, really?
15. How long did Jesus say the poor would be with us?
16. What two reasons had the people come for?
17. Why did the Jews want to get rid of Lazarus?
18. What did the people take with them to strew the path of Jesus with?
19. What did the Pharisees think would happen, if they could get rid of Jesus and Lazarus?
20. What do palm trees symbolize?
21. What was the cry of the people?
22. What did Jesus ride on going into Jerusalem?
23. What Sunday did Jesus enter Jerusalem?
24. Where was it prophesied in the Old Testament that Jesus would ride the colt of an ass?
25. When did the disciples remember all of this?
26. Who bear record of all this?
27. Why did these people follow Jesus?