

John 12 Chapter Study

INTRODUCTION

Outline for John's Gospel

I. THE SIGNS • Chs. 1-11

II. THE END • Chs. 12-21

A. *The Anointing at Bethany • 12:1-11*

¹ Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead.

Last week in ch. 11 we saw the bizarre reaction of the Jewish leadership to the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

Instead of coming to their moral & spiritual senses, renouncing their past opposition toward Jesus, & embracing Him as their Messiah, they stiffened in their resolve to kill Him.

Jesus knew their rejection of Him was final & that they were plotting to assassinate Him so he took the disciples north of Jerusalem to a quiet & secluded rural area

Then, a week before Passover, He once again went to Bethany, the village of Lazarus, and his 2 sisters, Martha & Mary.

This is where Jesus usually stayed when visiting Jerusalem.

Bethany was just shy of 2 miles east of Jerusalem, an easy walk for those who traveled regularly by foot.

² There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. ³ Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

This is going to be my text for Sunday so I'll leave further comment till then.

⁴ But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, ⁵ "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"

300 denarii was equal to a full year's wages – a lifetime's savings.

⁶ This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

This gives us an important insight into Judas' character.

In v. 4, John identifies Judas as the one who betrayed Jesus.

John knew Judas was pilfering from the group purse.

As the treasurer of the band of disciples, Judas held the group's funds.

Traveling rabbis like Jesus were given donations by the people to help support them as they made their way throughout the countryside.

Donations never made them rich, but they did help pay for food & incidental costs that arose.

A fat donation of 300 denarii would swell the purse & make it easier for Judas to

dip into the till, which he'd already been doing.

John knew Judas was a thief, which meant that certainly Jesus knew about it too.

But apparently Jesus had told John to keep quiet & let it go.

What this tells us about Judas is that even in spite of seeing all the miracles & living with the Lord night & day for 3 years, he'd not come to a full-faith in Christ.

Judas could not doubt the reality of Jesus' claim to being the Messiah, not deny His power or perfect life.

Judas was a classic case of someone who's problem isn't a lack of evidence but a lack of willingness!

Judas followed Jesus, not for Jesus' sake, but for Judas'!

He was following for what he could get out of Jesus.

When Jesus first called him 3 years before, Judas saw the invitation as a way to *increase his prestige* as a disciple of a notable rabbi.

During the first 2 years, when it became increasingly clear Jesus was establishing Himself as the Messiah – Judas' stock went up even higher.

Not only was he a privileged disciple; he was in line for a cushy position in the Coming Kingdom.

But during the last year, it all started to unravel when the rulers refused to go along with Jesus' program and set themselves in opposition to Him.

The growing hostility toward Jesus made it obvious to Judas that he'd soon need to bail.

So he began preparing for the future by dipping into the till, embezzling coins to line his own pockets so when it finally all fell apart, he'd be ready.

He figured the deal he struck with the priests to betray Jesus was nothing more than a well-deserved *severance pay*.

For Judas, it was always *about Judas*.

And know this – there will always be Judases among the disciples.

There will always be those who look like one of us while all along they're angling for some selfish benefit. Always!

Don't be surprised when someone considered a leader or a vital part of the Body pulls a "Judas."

If it happened to the 12 – it's going to happen to us!

I like Jesus' reply to Judas . . .

7 But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. 8 For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always."

This is what we'll be looking at Sunday.

9 Now a great many of the Jews knew that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead.

Word about this special dinner for Jesus went out far & wide & many people came to see the One Who'd raised Lazarus from the dead.

This became a well-known miracle that only added to the *furor over & expectations on Jesus*.

Among those who came to see Jesus & Lazarus were some of the head honchos.

10 But the chief priests plotted to put Lazarus to death also, 11 because on account of him many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus.

As far as I'm concerned, this is THE MOST unbelievable, insane, wild statement in the entire Bible.

I have no problem with the parting of the Red Sea in Exodus.

I have no problem believing in the manna, the pillar of cloud & fire, water from a rock.

I have no hesitation in believing in a floating ax head, of fire from the sky consuming Elijah's offering on Carmel.

Jesus walking on water, turning water to wine, and raising Lazarus from the dead cause not a twinge of doubt.

What I find *preposterous* is that these priests would look at the *reality* of Lazarus' rising from the dead & conclude that both he & Jesus needed to be put to death! That is nothing but the height of insanity!!!

Why? Why would these guys decide Jesus & Lazarus had to be killed?

John tells us – Because many of the Jewish leaders were moving away from their opposition toward Jesus into faith in Him.

If the defection from their ranks grew, it would mean what they feared would come to pass – they would lose their position at the top of the heap.

Jesus threatened their comfy place at the pinnacle of Jewish social life.

These priests had heard enough of Jesus' teaching to know if they were to become His followers it would mean the end of the corruption that supported their office & funded their lavish lifestyles.

That was not a change they were willing to make.

This is precisely why people reject Jesus today.

It has nothing to do with evidence or the reasonableness of the Gospel.

In the end, people reject Christ because they don't want to change.

They love their sin more than God. THAT is the bottom line.

B. The Triumphal Entry • 12:12-19

12 The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!" 14 Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: 15 "Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey's colt."

This was the Sunday before Passover which came at the end of the week.

There were literally tens of thousands of pilgrims crowded into Jerusalem for the Feast, with people camped out all over the City.

One of their favorite places was on the western slope of the Mt. of Olives.

It was down this slope that the road from Bethany ran. [pic]

Jesus told a couple of the disciples to go to the village of Bethphage which was a little further along the road toward Jerusalem & borrow a donkey's colt.

When they returned, Jesus climbed on board, & they made their way toward Jerusalem.

Now remember, everyone was talking about Jesus & it was well-known He was staying in Bethany.

They were waiting for word He was on the way & when it came, they began preparing the road as they would for a royal visit.

Then they began shouting out lines from Psalm 118 which was believed to be prophetic of the Messiah.

John specifically says that Jesus' choice of a donkey's colt was according to Zech. 9:9.

Why a donkey? Why not a horse as seems more fitting for a King?

The answer is simple: The horse was an animal of war, not peace.

If a king rode a horse he was either going to or coming from war.

When a monarch was simply making the rounds of His kingdom, bringing the blessings of peace, he rode on a donkey.

So – here it was, the *very thing* the rulers had been *dreading* for a couple years – that Jesus would rise as a new claimant to Israel's throne.

Of course, their assumptions went farther – that once Jesus had a large enough following He'd lead an insurrection against Rome; the rebellion would be put down, & the Romans would take away their positions in retaliation for not dealing with Jesus themselves.

That Jesus came to Jerusalem riding on a donkey ought to have signaled them that He wasn't coming to wage war.

16 His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.

The disciples who trailed behind Jesus as He made his way down the steep slope into the Kidron Valley had no idea what was going on at the moment it took place.

It was only later they realized what had taken place was a dramatic fulfillment of prophecy – that Daniel had even identified the very day on which all of this was to occur.

17 Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. 18 For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign.

All of those who'd been at the tomb of Lazarus & seen the miracle of his raising were part of the crowd that followed Jesus from Bethany to Jerusalem.

As they went along, they were telling people about what they'd seen.

19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!"

And indeed it was looking more & more that way – that the movement around Jesus was growing.

The Pharisees, Jesus' perennial enemies, realize that they've talked too long; it's time to take action – & in fact, might already be too late.

C. Following Jesus • 12:20-26

20 Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast.

The ancient Greeks seemed to just be wired to want to investigate things.

They traveled all over, seeking for new ways & beliefs.

There's an ancient Egyptian statue located far south along the Nile.

Scratched into the stone of the statue are the initials of some ancient Greek traveler.

Many Greeks were passionately devoted to the pursuit of truth.

Classical Philosophy was birthed out of this longing to discover truth.

And not a few Greeks found the end of their search in the religion of Israel.

Some became *proselytes* – meaning they converted to Judaism, & went through the rituals to be counted into the covenant of Abraham.

Others maintained their Greek identity but bought into all the moral & spiritual beliefs of Israel.

That's who's being referred to here – Greeks who'd come to faith in Israel's God & wanted to celebrate the Passover.

The other gospels tell us that just as Jesus had begun His public ministry 3 years before with a clearing of the temple grounds, so he ended His ministry with another purge.

It's likely these Greeks were there in the Court of the Gentiles when Jesus cleared out the marketplace.

This piqued their curiosity, so they went to Philip and asked for an audience with this bold rabbi.

21 Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

They probably approached Philip because Philip was a Greek name.

Though he was Jewish, the influence of Greek culture was heavy on Israel and not a few families named their children with Greek names.

22 Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

Things were getting pretty hot & heavy for Jesus & Phil probably wondered if Jesus wanted to be bothered with these Greeks.

So he ran the idea by Andrew, & both realized that rather than just making the decision on their own, they ought to let Jesus decide Himself if He wanted to see them.

23 But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified."

John is the only one to record this detail of the Greeks wanting to meet with Jesus.

Then, He doesn't tell us *if* Jesus actually did meet with them or not.
That wasn't the intent – rather, the Greeks' desire to meet with Jesus carries **another lesson** – & that's what John keys in on in Jesus' reply.
Jesus had come as the Jewish Messiah, & had spent His entire life & ministry within the narrow boundaries of Israel.
He *did* take a couple of brief forays into marginally Gentile territory, but those were to minister to the **Jews** who lived there.
Jesus had concentrated His 3 years of ministry solely on the Jews – & they had **rejected** Him, even though God had done a perfect job of setting the stage for His arrival.
The hour was now close when the rejection of the Jewish leaders would reach its zenith, & that moment would prove the turning point in redemptive history.
For the Messiah would move from being a purely Jewish Savior, to being the Savior of the world.
That Greeks seekers after truth were asking to see Jesus was a preface, a foretaste of what was about to happen, & Jesus recognized it as such.

The fateful moment would only come through the cross . . .

24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. 25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Jesus knew what was coming. He knew all about the salvation He was about to bring.

What Adam had lost 4,000 years before He was about to restore.

But the path there lay through the narrow door of crucifixion.

Jesus wanted the disciples to understand that as His followers, He wasn't the only one who would have to die; they too would have to **die to self** if they were to follow Him into the new kingdom He was bringing.

26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

It's crucial we break this down & grasp what Jesus is saying here.

“If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me”

Follow Him where? What had Jesus just been speaking about?

The cross – about dying to self.

There are a lot of crazy ideas about what being a Christian means today.

A lot of Americans assume they're Christian by **default**.

They aren't atheist – they believe in God, so that counts for something.

Then by process of elimination they decide they must be a Christian.

They aren't Jewish. They aren't Muslim, nor Buddhist, nor Hindu.

So that means they must be Christian.

Others aren't that assuming, they realize there's more to being a Christian than being a god-fearing American.

They think being a Christian means you own a Bible & go to church once a month – as a way to kind of pay your spiritual fire insurance.

Others assume being a Christian means have a head full of theologically correct

positions on such things as the Bible, salvation, the Church, & whatever topic happens to be hot at the moment.

Others think being a Christian means being Republican or Democrat & voting a certain political ideology.

Here's what Jesus said - **"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me"**

He was talking about the cross!

The Christian is someone who *forsakes*, who *renounces* a life dominated by self, & instead seeks to be one through whom the resurrected Christ lives.

Paul says it this way in Gal 2:20 –

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

D. An Appeal to Believe: The Response • 12:27-50

27 "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again."

The cross was imminent, & its weight was already beginning to fall on Jesus.

But He would not try to get away from it – this is why He came.

At His prayer for God's glory, the Father spoke out loud for the 3rd time.

The first was at Jesus' baptism.

The second was at the Transfiguration – the 3rd, here.

When God said, **"I have both glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again."** He was speaking of how Jesus' had faithfully performed His ministry for 3 years.

Now as He looked to what was to come, God's name would be even further glorified.

29 Therefore the people who stood by and heard *it* said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him."

John & some others heard the words the Father spoke.

Others heard a voice but not the words spoken.

The rest just heard a rumbling sound as of thunder.

Though it's not made clear why some heard more than others – it's not hard to guess: Faith in Christ was the filter they heard through.

Those who believed without reservation heard the words clearly.

Those with doubts heard a voice.

Those who were uncommitted just heard rumbling.

If you find the Bible consistently difficult to understand, it may be that you're not approaching it by faith.

30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake."

Jesus' confidence in the Father wasn't based on such things as voices from the sky.

God spoke to let those standing round know that Jesus was still in the center of God's will.

There must never be any doubt about that – even in light of the cross.

31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

By driving the conspiracy to kill Jesus, the devil *over-reached* & lost the right to what Adam handed him in the Fall.

32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”³³ This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

This statement was about as contrary to the expectations of that day as was possible.

Roman crucifixion was a hideous & shameful way to die.

It was both so painful & humiliating it was against the law for a Roman citizen to be executed that way.

The victim was stripped naked, then nailed to a piece of lumber & hoisted up onto a pole where they could be seen by all.

They would hang there for hours, & sometimes days, in utter torment.

Crucifixion was reserved only for the most despised of criminals.

The idea that a victim of crucifixion would become the object of worldwide devotion was *beyond* laughable.

The **ONLY THING** that could possibly convince Jesus' followers to come out of hiding after the crucifixion, boldly & confidently claiming Him as their God & Savior is if they had some kind of mind-shattering encounter with Him afterward.

NO ONE worships a crucified man – *unless* He rises from the dead.

34 The people answered Him, “We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

It was clear to the crowd that Jesus was referring to the cross.

Since death didn't fit into their job description for the Messiah, they asked Him what He meant.

35 Then Jesus said to them, “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.”³⁶ While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

Though Jesus would soon be going to the cross and the light would be temporarily snuffed out, they must not forget the light & truth they'd seen in Him.

37 But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him,³⁸ that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: “Lord, who has believed our report? *And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?*”³⁹ Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again:⁴⁰ “*He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal*

them.”⁴¹ These things Isaiah said when he saw His glory and spoke of Him.

John explains the unbelief of the rulers.

Though it was ridiculous, it had been predicted by the prophet Isaiah. [53:1 6:9-10]

There comes a point in a person’s rejection of God when He withdraws His Spirit’s conviction.

He honors their choice to resist Him & gives them what they want – which is life, eternity really, without Him.

42 Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

What do we call people who make the wrong choice because of fear? *Cowards.*

Jared drove a real heap; it was a 1976 Ford Pinto station wagon.

It was so old and beat up it was difficult to know what the original color had been.

There were rust spots, a few primered patches, the left front fender had been replaced from a different color car.

There were numerous dents and scratches in it, and Jared got ribbed about his car mercilessly by the neighbor who all had late model cars & SUV’s.

He lived in a rather well to do area & his neighbors all were wealthy who liked to show off their status by buying a new car every other year.

Jared’s was the only car on the block older than 3 years.

At neighborhood events, the neighbors never let up in getting in digs about his heap.

When he drove by, they would just shake their heads.

What they didn’t know was that Jared was investing everything he had in a Formula 1 race car.

It was being built in a well known shop in the next town.

When the car was done, Jared practiced and practiced until he got his time in the competitive zone.

Entering his first amateur race, he won it easily. So he advanced.

Soon he was racing professionally, and became a well-known celebrity all over the country.

But still he drove his 76 Pinto to & from the track, and parked it in his driveway every night.

One day, he invited all his racing buddies & well-known people he’d become friends with to one of the neighborhood block parties.

His neighbors were stunned to see all these Hollywood stars and social celebs and asked what was going on. They all said they were friends of Jared, the famous race-car driver.

Up to that point, not one of those neighbors had realized that their Jared was the world-famous racer.

You can live for the praise of men or the praise of God – but not both.

Because what God values & man esteems are 2 totally different things.

Here's what cool if you live for God's praise –

One day, when all is said and done, He will put His arm around you, & vindicate you before all those who made fun of you for living for God.

44 Then Jesus cried out and said, **“He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. ⁴⁵ And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.**

To believe in Jesus is to believe in God.

If you want to know what God looks like – look at Jesus.

46 I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. ⁴⁷ And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. ⁴⁸ He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. ⁴⁹ For I have not spoken on My own *authority*; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. ⁵⁰ And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.”

In the final judgment, when the lost stand for reckoning at God's bench, the evidence will be quite clear.

Somehow – the record of each & every person's clear rejection of Jesus will be made known.

All the evidence and testimony to God's love & forgiveness that was made clear to them and they understood will be brought out.

Then the individual choices to resist in the face of the Spirit's conviction will be aired.

Then will come that last time, the fateful moment when it was all laid out before them in utter clarity, yet they turned away.

No one, not a soul will be able to say that they didn't have enough chances or evidence.

Each person's life will present its own case & evidence for judgment.