

The Gospel of John

Believe and Live!

Lesson 13

John 12:1–50

The Crisis of the Cross

Jesus' public ministry has now ended. Amid the mounting hostility and with an arrest warrant hanging over His head, he and the disciples retreat to the small village of Ephraim, just north of Jerusalem. As they await the Passover, the Jews make their annual pilgrimage into the city in preparation for the celebration.

In chapter 12, John records three important events: the dinner hosted by Mary, Martha and Lazarus; Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem; and His visit with a delegation of Greeks who specifically request to meet with Him.

At a glance ~ **Read John 12:1–19.**

As you read through these verses for the first time, keep in mind it is the last week of Jesus' life. The atmosphere in Jerusalem is growing tense and many people are seeking Him. During the Passover celebration the population of the city would rise to over three million people. What stands out to you from your initial reading?

Would Jesus come to the feast in defiance of the religious authorities who were seeking to arrest Him or would He stay away? The entire city was buzzing with speculation about the answer to that particular question.

1. In John 12:1, John records that Jesus returned to the site of His greatest miracle. Where was it?

Mary, Martha, and Lazarus have prepared a special dinner in honor of Jesus' visit but not in their own home.

- a. At whose home do they prepare this dinner for Jesus? See Matthew 26:6 and Mark 14:3.

Little is known about Simon, except that he had been a leper and Jesus had healed him. It's probable that since the authorities were looking for Jesus, Simon may have been one of the few courageous enough out of gratitude to open his home to Jesus. It was probably a quiet, intimate gathering of the Lord's closest friends.

One can only imagine how Mary, Martha, and Lazarus' faith and love had grown for Jesus following the miracle in Bethany, but here John chooses to focus on one singular act of worship no doubt to emphasize its significance in every believer's life.

2. According to John 12:3, what did Mary do in worship of Jesus?

Commentators have speculated for centuries about where and why Mary acquired this costly perfume (estimated by today's value to be in the area of ten thousand dollars).

3. Compare John's account with the others in Matthew 26:6–13 and Mark 14:3–9, which give additional information. Note the findings below . . .

- a. What did Mary do?
- b. For what reason did she lavish this gift upon Jesus?
- c. What was the result that affected everyone in the room?

Mary poured out all the love in her heart for the Lord Jesus, she spared no expense. The extravagance of her act was unheard of in her culture, but it has left an impression for all time on everyone who reads of it!

4. Mary's act of love is in stark contrast to one in the room who was not a true worshipper of Jesus. Who is mentioned and why does he protest her act? vv. 4–6

- a. By what deed does John refer to him in verse 4?
- b. In hindsight, what does John record about him? v. 6
- c. How does Jesus respond? vv. 7–8

5. Who else were the religious authorities seeking at this time? Why? vv. 9–11

Selah ~

True love and worship as well as deceit and treachery, all were present around the dinner table that evening. It is a graphic visual to what is inside the human heart; and yet, Jesus loved every one of those individuals to the end! Those who knew Jesus worshipped Him by identifying with Him, fellowshiping with Him and serving Him.

- Personal: Have *you* ever done anything for Jesus that is absolutely over the top and completely extravagant just because you love Him? What was it and in what way did it have an effect on those around you?

In verses 12–26, we have John’s eyewitness account of the event where Jesus is welcomed as King in fulfillment of the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9: “*Hosanna!*” (meaning “Save us now!”) and “*Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! The King of Israel!*” But instead of riding a magnificent stallion worthy of a king, Jesus sits on the foal of a donkey—the most humble king in human history!

6. Look carefully at the other gospel accounts of this event: Matthew 21:1–9; Mark 11:1–10; and Luke 19:29–38. Note below the additional interesting facts you find.

7. Did the disciples understand the events that were taking place? When did they?
vv. 16–19

Earlier Jesus had made all the arrangements for His entrance into the city on Palm Sunday: He procured a donkey and reserved a room to prepare where He and His disciples would celebrate the Passover together. He knew what was coming and that this day would be an historical one for the nation of Israel.

- a. While the people shouted praises of “Hosanna!” and the palm fronds waved, in the heart of Jesus there was no triumph. What does Luke 19:41 tell us that Jesus did? (Verses 42–44 explain why.)

Kingly tears from the Son of God because His people did not recognize the time of His coming to them! Very soon He would offer Himself upon a cross on their behalf.

Verses 20–23 present a glimpse into the inclusion of the Gentiles in God’s plan of salvation. Some Greeks come to Philip who tells Andrew and together they speak to Jesus on their behalf. His talk with these Greeks prompts the announcement in verse 23: “*The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.*” A few verses further He will mention drawing all peoples to Himself.

In focus ~ (Key words) “Hates his life”

Look up the word(s) using the resources you have on hand (Bible translations, dictionary, concordance) and write a definition.

Hates his life (v. 25): _____

Jesus uses an interesting phrase to indicate the difference between loving the things of this world to the exclusion of God or loving God to the extent of being willing to do anything He asks. The Message translation puts it this way: *“Anyone who holds on to life just as it is destroys that life. But if you let it go, reckless in your love, you’ll have it forever, real and eternal.”*

Take a closer look ~ John 12:26

(Memorize and meditate on the memory verse each time you open your lesson.)

“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.”

The *grain of wheat* falling into the ground and dying has to do with serving Jesus by following His example. It is a matter of letting go of selfish ideas and the things of this world and looking to Jesus. We die to self in order that we might live and become fruitful. What is He teaching you that will help you to follow in His steps?

Time’s Up!

Outlook ~ Read John 1: 27–50.

Given the significance of the Lord’s struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane, it’s interesting that John makes no mention of it in his gospel account. What he does record in verse 27 is Jesus’ agony of spirit that we see reflected in the synoptic gospels. The incident recorded here took place at a different time but Jesus’ words reveal the ordeal He was about to face.

1. How do the Lord’s spoken words reveal His inner struggle? vv. 27–28

The observers nearby heard a thunderous noise and thought it to be an angel. Jesus indicated that the Father had spoken from heaven for the sake of the hearers.

2. What does Jesus say is coming? What will the result be? vv. 31–33
 - a. When Jesus is lifted upon the cross, what will He accomplish?

Jesus is talking about His own death but the people were expecting a Messiah who would remain with them forever. This threw them into a state of confusion: “*Who is this Son of Man?*” (v. 34).

3. Jesus warns them that the “light” would soon be gone. What does He tell them to do? vv. 35–36

Why did the Jews fail to recognize their Messiah when He performed so many miracles and fulfilled prophecy? John indicates that what is taking place is in fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy. They had missed their opportunity because their hearts were hardened and their eyes blinded by unbelief.

4. Summarize the intent of verses 38–41 below using your own words.

Jesus warned that they would have the light only a little while longer and that they should walk in that light lest darkness overtake them. They had the unique opportunity to hear God’s words directly from the mouth of God’s Son! Following this dialogue, He did not speak to the crowds again; instead, He hid Himself.

5. According to verses 42–43, there were some who did believe in Jesus; who were they? Why did they not speak out on His behalf?

If we expect to be effective servants for the Lord, we must be willing and able to testify to the truth about Him. In verses 44–50, Jesus lays out a mini sermon about His mission and the issue of judgment for those who reject Him.

6. What statement of truth does Jesus make in verses 44–45?

7. In what manner and for what purpose does Jesus say He came?
 - a. v. 46 –

 - b. v. 47 –

 - c. What will serve as judge on the last day? v. 48

Jesus Christ did not come into the world to judge it; He came into the world to save it. On that last day the instrument of judgment will actually rest on the Word of God (vv. 49–50). His life is the personification of faith. And before He goes to the cross, He issues not a command but an invitation to turn away from the darkness and to the light. He offers Himself as the way of salvation; they needed only to look and listen and be saved!

Selah ~

What about you? You've heard Him . . . you've seen His miracles in Scripture . . . you've had the opportunity to evaluate and choose. What conclusion have *you* made regarding the Son of God? If you've never prayed to receive Him as *your* Lord and Savior, you may do so right now. Just bow your head and pray these words: *“Lord Jesus, I confess that I’m a sinner in need of a Savior. I invite You now to come into my heart and be the Lord of my life. Fill me with Your Holy Spirit and enable me to live for You! Help me to become the person you died for me to be. I thank You that I now belong to You.”* If you prayed these words, let someone know: your group leader or your pastor and begin to walk forward in faith.

More like Jesus ~

Are *you* becoming more like Jesus? Absolutely! Every time you open the Word and spend time getting to know Him more intimately, you partake in the life-long process of drawing near—going deeper—bearing fruit—becoming more like Him. As you close your lesson today, determine to put into practice what you've learned by noting it below.

- Recite your memory verse _____

- Reflect on a lesson you received _____

- Respond with prayer and praise to God _____

Notes