

## *JOHN 12 | Summary of Israel's Response*

### *Mary Anoints Jesus' Feet*

1 Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. 3 Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

4 But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him) said,

5 Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?

6 He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it. 7 Jesus said,

Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial. 8 For the poor you always have with you,<sup>1</sup> but you do not always have me.

### *Crowd Welcomes Jesus into Jerusalem*

9 When the large crowd of the Jews learned that Jesus was there, they came, not only on account of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 So the chief priests made plans to put Lazarus to death as well, 11 because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

12 The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him crying out,

Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!

14 And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

15 Fear not, daughter of Zion. Behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!<sup>2</sup>

16 His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. 17

---

<sup>1</sup> **Dt 15:7-7** If among you, one of your brothers should become poor, in any of your towns within your land that Yahweh your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother. **Dt 15:11** 11 There will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.

<sup>2</sup> **Zec 9:9-10** 9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you. Righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. 10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations. His rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.

The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. 18 The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another,

You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!

*Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus*

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. 21 So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, Sir, we wish to see Jesus. 22 Philip went and told Andrew. Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 And Jesus answered them,

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves me, he must follow me. And where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honour him.

*Jesus' Final Interaction with the Crowd*

27 Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name.

Then a voice came from heaven:

I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.

29 The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, An angel has spoken to him. 30 Jesus answered,

This voice has come for your sake, not mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world. Now will the ruler of this world be cast out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

33 He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. 34 So the crowd answered him,

We have heard from the Torah that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?

35 So Jesus said to them,

The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the 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.

### *Unbelievers and Secret Believers*

When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them. 37 Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him, 38 so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

39 Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said,

40 He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.

41 Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him.

42 Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue. 43 For they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God.

### *Jesus' Final Cry*

44 And Jesus cried out and said,

Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. 45 And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. 46 I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. 47 If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. 48 The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge. The word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. 49 For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me.

## *Biblical Worldview*

### **1. John 12.**

- a. John 12 summarises Israel's response to Jesus after the first eleven chapters, which have covered three full years of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus has given Israel three full years to make up her mind about him. This is the fourth of four Passovers in John.
- b. The characters who respond to Jesus include:
  - (1) Jewish leaders (Jn 11:46-57, v. 9).
  - (2) Lazarus, Martha, and Mary.
  - (3) Judas.
  - (4) Crowd of Jewish believers.
  - (5) Greeks.
  - (6) Disciples.
  - (7) Father.
  - (8) Crowd of Jewish unbelievers.
  - (9) Isaiah.
  - (10) Secret believers.
  - (11) Humanity.
- c. This is a great drama in which all characters in the story must respond to the central character, Jesus. It is the same today!

### **2. Mary Anoints Jesus' Feet (Jn 12:1-8).**

- a. Six days before the Passover (v. 1) would be Saturday. Jesus has come up from Ephraim (Jn 11:54) to Bethany, two miles from Jerusalem (Jn 11:18).
- b. At sundown, after the weekly Sabbath, Lazarus, Martha, and Mary hosted a dinner in Jesus' honour (v. 2). As usual, Martha is working (v. 2) and Mary is worshipping at Jesus' feet (v. 3). Lazarus, having been raised from the dead, is a witness of Jesus (v. 2).
  - (1) From *Matthew*, we learn the dinner was at the house of Simon the leper (Mt 26:6). Mary also poured the expensive ointment on Jesus' head (Mt 26:7). The disciples as a group were indignant at the waste, not just Judas (Mt 26:8). Jesus called Mary's act a beautiful thing (Mt 28:10) and said what she had done would be told in the whole world in memory of her (Mt 28:13).
  - (2) From Mark we learn Mary broke the flask (Mk 14:3) and that the ointment was worth 300 denarii (Mk 14:5), almost a year's worth of wages for a day labourer.
  - (3) Mark and Matthew seem to place this event on the last night of Jesus' life, but there is no explicit chronological connection there. They relocated this passage thematically because of its message—preparation for burial. John, by contrast, preserved the exact chronology. Lk 7:36-50 is an entirely separate incident with some similar details (*Apologetics Study Bible*).
- c. Verse 3 contains one of the most beautiful pictures in all of the Bible. Mary, on her own initiative, took a pound of expensive pure nard ointment and anointed Jesus' feet with her hair (v. 3). The house is filled with the perfume fragrance (v. 3).
  - (1) The ointment "spikenard," is an Indian oil that comes from the roots of the nard plant. It was pure, imported, and contained in an alabaster flask.

- (2) Mary anointed both Jesus' head, symbolising his royalty, and his feet, symbolising her humility.
  - (3) Normally Jewish women never unbound their hair in public. Loose hair was a sign of loose morals. But Mary's love for Jesus overrode her sense of propriety.
  - (4) Mary was misunderstood and criticised, but that is what usually happens when somebody gives his or her best to the Lord (W. Wiersbe).
- d. In vv. 4-6, John provides more information about the character of Judas. In ch. 6, we learned that Judas did not believe in Jesus (Jn 6:64), was a devil (Jn 6:70), and would betray Jesus (Jn 6:71). Here we learn Judas is a thief and opportunist (v. 6). In the next chapter Satan will officially enter him (Jn 13:27).
  - e. Jesus links Mary's act to his burial (v.7). This shows Mary most likely understands Jesus is about to die. It is for this understanding that Mary is to be praised. Her extravagant act is appropriate, given the significance of Jesus' coming death. Caring for the poor is indeed important, but Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection is infinitely more important.

### 3. The Crowd Welcomes Jesus into Jerusalem (Jn 12:9-19).

- a. Many Jews learned Jesus was in Bethany and came to see him and Lazarus (v. 9). The news Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead had spread over the final weeks leading up to Passover.
- b. Many Jews were going away from the Jewish leaders and believing into (ἐπίστευον εἰς) Jesus (v. 11). This again shows there were many more believers in Jesus than just the disciples.
- c. The Jewish leaders continued to lose their grip on the Jewish people. In response, the chief priests, especially Caiaphas and Annas, planned to put to death both Jesus (Jn 11:53) and Lazarus (v. 10). They are clearly getting desperate.
  - (1) There is no record they put Lazarus to death. What happened to him?
- d. The next day, Sunday, the crowd hears Jesus is coming to Jerusalem (v. 12). Because of Passover, Jews from outside Jerusalem greatly outnumber Jews who live in or near Jerusalem. It is much more difficult for the Jewish leaders to control the crowd from outside Jerusalem. This crowd largely consists of non-Jerusalemites. The triumphal entry crowd (from Galilee and elsewhere) was generally a different set than the crucifixion crowd (from Jerusalem).
- e. On their own initiative, the crowd meets Jesus with palm branches, a symbol of nationalistic hope (1 Mac 13:51; 2 Mac 10:7), and cries of "Hosanna" (v. 13). They quote Ps 118:25-26, showing they understand the Messianic significance of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. They are officially recognising him as king (v. 13). He is the "light" God has made to shine upon Israel (Ps 118:27).
  - (1) **Ps 118:25-26** 25 Save us, we pray, Yahweh! Yahweh, we pray, give us success! 26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh! We bless you from the house of Yahweh. 27 Yahweh is God, and he has made his light to shine upon us.
  - (2) This event is recorded in all four gospels and is hugely important. It is the only public demonstration Jesus allowed during his earthly ministry (T. Constable, 324).
- f. Jesus shows his alignment with the crowd by finding a young donkey to sit on, in fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy (Zec 9:9).

- (1) **Zec 9:9** 9 Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you. Righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
  - (a) Zec 9 was not totally fulfilled at Jesus' first coming because Israel rejected him. It will be fulfilled at his second coming.
- (2) He came on a donkey indicating peace, not a horse indicating war (Re 19:11).
- g. The disciples are slow to understand what is happening (v. 16). But later, after Jesus had ascended to the right hand of the Father, they remembered this fulfilment of Messianic prophecy (v. 16). It was the Holy Spirit who gave them insight (Jn 14:26).
- h. In vv. 17-18, we see the second of two reasons why Jesus allowed Lazarus to die in ch. 11. Firstly, as a result of Lazarus' being raised, many more Jews were believing into Jesus (v. 11). This was because of the eyewitness testimony of the the crowd who had been present when Jesus raised Lazarus (v. 17). Secondly, the reason a large crowd went to meet Jesus as he entered Jerusalem was precisely because of Lazarus being raised (v. 18). Lazarus' death directly set up Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. This shows that when Jesus allows believers to experience undeserved suffering, illness, or death, he has some greater purpose in mind. There was a purpose for Lazarus' death, and there is a purpose for our undeserved suffering.
- i. The Pharisees again recognise they are unable to stop Jesus and make another ironic statement: "Look the world has gone after him" (v. 19). This statement flows well into the next scene, where some Greeks wish to see Jesus (v. 20). Great literary craftsmanship, John!

#### 4. Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus (John 12:20-26).

- a. The Greeks wishing to see Jesus at this strategic moment (vv. 20-21) foreshadows the amazing and surprising receptivity of the Gentiles to the gospel message of Jesus, as recorded in Acts. It is the Galileans, not the Judeans, who will spread the gospel among the Gentiles (v. 21).
  - (1) The wise men indicated Gentile positivity to Jesus at the beginning of his first coming (Mt 2:1-2). Now these Greeks indicate Gentile positivity to Jesus at the end of his first coming.
  - (2) God has always intended to save the Gentiles through the Jewish Messiah.
    - (a) **Is 49:5-6** 6 It is too light a thing that you [Jesus] should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel. I [the Father] will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.
    - (b) **Is 56:7-8** 7 ...My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. 8 Lord Yahweh, who gathers the outcasts of Israel declares, I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.
- b. The hour for Jesus' death and resurrection has finally arrived (v. 23). Jesus will die as a grain of wheat in order to produce much fruit (v. 24), including much fruit among the Gentiles (v. 20). The time has come for Jesus to die for the sins of the world (Jn 1:29). The "hour" in *John* means the time of Jesus' death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification.
  - (1) **Jn 1:29** 29 The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!

- c. As disciple makers, the disciples are to become like Jesus, hating their life in this world (v. 25), following Jesus (v. 26), serving Jesus (v. 26), and being with Jesus is (v. 26). The reward for disciple making is eternal life (v. 25) and honour from the Father (v. 26). For many the disciples, this will mean going abroad to the Gentiles to preach the good news of Jesus.
  - (1) Sacrifice for Jesus yields blessings for others—and for oneself—that far exceed the sacrifice (T. Constable, 332).
  - (2) “The true disciple’s life will essentially duplicate the experiences of his or her Lord” (T. Constable, 332).

## 5. Jesus’ Final Interaction with the Jewish Crowd (Jn 12:27-36).

- a. Jesus’ soul is troubled (v. 27), probably because Israel is rejecting him. It also may be because of the suffering and death he is about to experience. But he doesn’t ask the Father to save him from the hour of suffering and death (v. 27). Jesus has come to this hour for the purpose of suffering and dying for humanity (v. 27). Jesus’ highest priority is that the Father be glorified (v. 28).
  - (1) John did not record Jesus’ struggle in Gethsemane, as the Synoptics did (Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42). He narrated that struggle on this occasion instead (T. Constable, 333).
  - (2) “Jesus instructed His disciples on the cost of commitment to the Father’s will by disclosing His emotions” (Blum, 317-18).
  - (3) “The whole of his life’s dedication is concentrated in this statement” (Tenney, *John*, 130).
- b. The Father’s voice comes from heaven to inform the crowd that he has glorified himself through the life of Jesus, and now he will glorify himself through the death and resurrection of Jesus (v. 28). The crowd is confused about the voice (v. 29), but Jesus says the Father’s voice has come for their sake (v. 30).
  - (1) The Father’s voice was heard on three occasions: Jesus’ baptism (Mt 3:17); Jesus’ transfiguration (Mt 17:5); and here.
  - (2) Some in the crowd offer a natural explanation; others offer a supernatural explanation. Both explanations are wrong.
- c. Jesus then tells the crowd two monumental things are about to happen:
  - (1) The world will be judged, and the ruler of this world will be cast out (v. 31).
    - (a) The “ruler of this world” is a title for Satan (Jn 14:30; 16:11; Mt 4:8-9; Lk 4:6-7; 2 Co 4:4; Eph 2:2; 6:12). The death of Jesus might appear to be a victory for Satan, but really it signalled his doom. The cross defeated Satan. He only functions as he does now because God permits him to do so. His eternal destruction is certain even though still future (Re 20:10). God will cast him out of heaven, out of the earth, and into the lake of fire forever (Mt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30).
  - (2) Jesus will die by crucifixion and thereby draw all believers, Jew and Gentile, to himself (v. 32-33).
    - (a) This does not mean universal salvation, but it does mean unlimited atonement and God’s general call.
      - 1) **Jn 1:12** 12 ...To all who did receive [Jesus], who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God....

- d. The crowd is wondering if Jesus is the Messiah, and they expect the Messiah to remain forever (v. 34). They are confused at Jesus' statement, and previous statements, that the Son of Man must be lifted up (see Jn 3:14). They want a clear answer to their question, who is the Son of Man (v. 34)?
- (1) This is the last mention of the crowd in *John* (Morris, 532).
- e. Jesus answers their question indirectly. He is the light that is among them for a little while longer (v. 35). Now is the time for them to walk in the light (v. 35), believe in the light (v. 36), and become sons of light (v. 36). If not, darkness will overtake them, and they will not know where they are going (v. 35). Jesus really meant what he said, for after he said these things, he departed and hid himself from them (v. 36). Truly the light was among them for a little while longer (v. 35).
- (1) **Is 50:10** 10 Who among you fears Yahweh [the Father] and obeys the voice of his servant [Jesus]? Let him who walks in darkness and has no light trust in the name of Yahweh and rely on his God.
- (2) **Jer 13:16** 16 Give glory to Yahweh your God before he brings darkness, before your feet stumble on the twilight mountains, and while you [Israel] look for light he turns it into gloom and makes it deep darkness.

## 6. Unbelievers and Secret Believers (Jn 1:37-43).

- a. The key word of this section is "believe," which occurs six times. Despite the signs Jesus did, the majority of the Jewish people and especially the Jewish leaders did not believe in him (οὐκ ἐπίστευον εἰς αὐτόν) (v. 37). This is exactly opposite of what John wants his readers to do (Jn 20:30-31). They could not believe (v. 39) because they responded to Jesus with negative volition, and God subsequently blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts. See *Negative Volition*.
- b. Israel's rejection of Jesus fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah:
- (1) John links Isaiah 52:13-53:12 directly to Jesus by quoting Is 53:1 (v. 38). Jesus surely is the suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. "What he has heard" is Jesus' words and the "arm of Yahweh" is Jesus' works.
- (a) **Is 53:1** 1 Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of Yahweh been revealed?
- (2) John links Israel's rejection of Isaiah's message 700 years earlier to Israel's rejection of Jesus and his message now (v. 39-40).
- (a) **Is 6:10** 10 Make the heart of this people dull and their ears heavy, and blind their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.
- (b) It is God's desire for Israel to see, hear, understand, turn, and be healed. But Israel has chosen not to humble herself and seek God. So God responds with a judicial hardening of Israel's heart, as in the case of Pharaoh (see Ro 9:17).
- (c) This is not deterministic predestination, for in Is 6 God was responding to prolonged unbelief and rebellion by Israel and still held out hope for a righteous remnant (Is 6:13)(*Apologetics Study Bible*).
- (3) Isaiah saw Jesus' glory and spoke of him (v. 41).
- (a) **Is 6:3** 3 ...Holy [the Father], holy [the Son], holy [the Spirit] is Yahweh of hosts. The whole earth is full of his glory!

- (b) This means that Jesus is to be found throughout the book of *Isaiah*, all 66 chapters. The Bible is a totally integrated and interconnected book, which is one of the primary proofs it is from God.
- c. John adds that there were actually many among the Jewish leaders who believed into (ἐπίστευσαν εἰς) Jesus, but they would not confess it publicly (v. 42).
  - (1) The reason they would not publicly confess Jesus is because:
    - (a) They otherwise would be put out of the synagogue (v. 42).
    - (b) They loved glory from man more than glory from God (v. 43).
  - (2) Nicodemus (Jn 7:50-52; 19:39) and Joseph of Arimathea (Jn 19:38) were among these secret believers. Later they became more public about their faith.
  - (3) This shows one is justified by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus alone, and not through public confession of Jesus. Secret believers may love glory from man more than glory from God, but they are still believers and justified.

## 7. Jesus' Final Cry to Humanity (Jn 12:44-50).

- a. Jesus previously cried out at the Jerusalem temple during the Feast of Booths (Jn 7:28, 37). He cries out one last time before his death (v. 44). This cry goes beyond Israel to all humanity.
  - (1) **Jn 7:28** 28 So Jesus cried out, as he taught in the temple, You know me, and you know where I come from. But I have not come of my own accord. He who sent me is true, and him you do not know.
  - (2) **Jn 7:37** 37 On the last day of the feast [of Booths], the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.
  - (3) **Jn 12:44** 44 ...Jesus cried out and said, Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me.
- b. Jesus again emphasises that he is the physical manifestation of the Father (Jn 1:18). Whoever sees him, sees the Father (v. 45). Whoever believes into (εἰς) him, believes into (εἰς) the Father (v. 44).
  - (1) **Jn 1:18** 18 No one has ever seen God. The only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.
- c. The purpose Jesus came into the world was to be the light (v. 46) and to save the world (v. 47). It is through faith in him that one comes out of the darkness into the light (v. 46).
  - (1) **Jn 1:9-12** 9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God....
- d. Vv. 47-50 focus on Jesus' words. The Father's commandment is eternal life (v. 50), and the Father has given Jesus the commandment as to what to say and speak (v. 49). Jesus says exactly what the Father has told him (v. 50), and has not spoken on his own authority (v. 49). This is why we who hear Jesus' words must keep them (v. 47) by believing into Jesus (v. 44). If we reject Jesus and do not receive his words, we will be judged on the last day by those words (v. 48). Jesus' words are eternally important to us, for by those words we will be judged. All humanity will be judged based upon Jesus and his words.