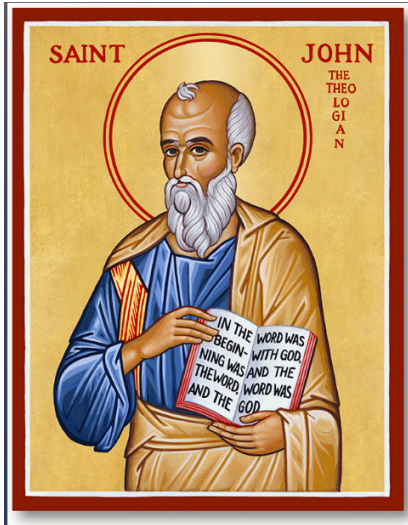


## John 12 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)



### Mary Anoints Jesus

12 Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 2 There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. 3 Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them[a] with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4 But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, 5 "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii[b] and the money given to the poor?" 6 (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) 7 Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it[c] so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. 8 You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

### The Plot to Kill Lazarus

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

### Jesus' Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem

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

"Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!"

14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:

15 "Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion.

Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!"

16 His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him. 17 So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify.[d] 18 It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him. 19 The Pharisees then said to one another, "You see, you can do 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 festival were some Greeks. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

### Jesus Speaks about His Death

27 “Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that 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 standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” 30 Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people[e] to myself.” 33 He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. 34 The crowd answered him, “We have heard from the law that the Messiah[f] remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” 35 Jesus said to them, “The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. 36 While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light.”

### The Unbelief of the People

After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them. 37 Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him. 38 This was to fulfill the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

“Lord, who has believed our message,  
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”  
39 And so they could not believe, because Isaiah also said,

40 “He has blinded their eyes  
and hardened their heart,  
so that they might not look with their eyes,  
and understand with their heart and turn—  
and I would heal them.”

41 Isaiah said this because[g] he saw his glory and spoke about him. 42 Nevertheless many, even of the authorities, believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God.

### Summary of Jesus’ Teaching

44 Then Jesus cried aloud: “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 as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness. 47 I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge, 49 for I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me.”

Footnotes:

John 12:3 Gk his feet

John 12:5 Three hundred denarii would be nearly a year’s wages for a laborer

John 12:7 Gk lacks She bought it

John 12:17 Other ancient authorities read with him began to testify that he had called . . . from the dead

John 12:32 Other ancient authorities read all things

John 12:34 Or the Christ

John 12:41 Other ancient witnesses read when

## Overview

### Comparison with Synoptic Gospels

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
The Woman with the Ointment/ The Anointing at Bethany	26:6-13	14:3-9	7:36-50	12:1-8
The Plot against Lazarus				12:9-11
The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem	21:1-9	11:1-10	19:28-40	12:12-19
Greeks Seek Jesus; Discourse on His Death				12:20-36
Conditions of Discipleship	10:37-39		14:25-27 17:33	12:25
"If Any Man would Come after Me"	16:24-28	8:34-9:1	9:23-27	12:25
The Day of the Son of Man	10:39 24:17-18 24:23 24:26-28 24:37-41	13:19-23 13:14-16	17:22-37	12:25
The Unbelief of the People				12:37-43
Judgment by the Word				12:44-50

### Themes

- Incarnation
  - "the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. 50 And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me."
- Replacement
  - 12 The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. 13 So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel!" 14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it.
- Rejection
  - 10 So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, 11 since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.
  - After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them. 37 Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him.
- Discipleship
  - 16 His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.

## Key Stories and Teachings

### The Woman with the Ointment/ The Anointing at Bethany

12:1-11 Woman anoints Jesus Feet at Bethany is closely paralleled in Mark 14:3-9<sup>i</sup>, Matthew 26:6-13<sup>ii</sup> and Luke 7:36-50<sup>iii</sup> – both forms of the story have Jesus being prepared for burial while alive.

What John stresses is:

- The extravagance of Mary's action
- The objection of Judas, which both underlines the value of the perfume and affords an opportunity to expose Judas' falseness
- And the remainder of the perfume is to be kept to anoint Jesus' body in a week.

12:5 Judas appears 5 times in John's Gospel and this is the only time his words are said. Do his words reflect a concern for the poor – or a disagreement with Jesus on his mission? Judas could have had a more radical mission and dying and saving people spiritually may not have mattered to him. John provides a motive: Judas is a thief and motivated by money. But there may be more going on here.

Basically Judas has missed the whole point of Mary's symbolic act. Jesus has returned to Jerusalem to die. And Judas is seeking to make money from it.

### The Plot against Lazarus

12:9-10 Lazarus is at risk because he is living proof of God's power through Jesus.

### The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem

Forms of leadership:

1. Leading a movement by getting in front of the parade that has already formed;
2. Leading through a dictatorship of an individual's will – making others follow you
3. Leading through submission to the cross to glorify God

12:12-19 Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem. (Mark 11:1-10<sup>iv</sup>; Matthew 21:1-9<sup>v</sup>; 9 and Luke 19:28-40<sup>vi</sup> – only John mentions the palm branches. The choice of riding an ass points to king promised in Zech 9:9-10<sup>1</sup>.

12:13 Only John's Gospel mentioned palm branches. The words of the crowd are from Psalm 118:25-26<sup>2</sup> and this Psalm is also used at the festival of the booths.

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### <sup>1</sup> Zechariah 9:9-10 (NRSV) The Coming Ruler of God's People

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you;

triumphant and victorious is he,

humble and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

10 He[a] will cut off the chariot from Ephraim

and the war-horse from Jerusalem;

and the battle bow shall be cut off,

and he shall command peace to the nations;

his dominion shall be from sea to sea,

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Footnotes:

Zechariah 9:10 Gk: Heb I

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 118:25-26 (NRSV)

25 Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!

O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!

26 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.[a]

Hosanna in Hebrew means “Save us, we beseech you.”

12:2-19 This is Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem and the people recognize him as king. The demonstration is prompted by Jesus' raising up of Lazarus as a sign/miracle. The miracle and the demonstration are linked in John. This section of this Gospel started with the shepherd discourse. Jesus bases his kingly claim on the care he takes of his own. The raising of Lazarus is a supreme expression of that care. And it vindicates his royal claim.

To enter God's reign is the goal of the journey through conversion, baptism, eucharist and enlightenment. To have everlasting life, resurrection life, is another image for that goal. In John the triumphant entry brings both images together.

### **Greeks Seek Jesus; Discourse on His Death**

12:20-50 The end of the public ministry is signaled by the arrival of the Greek/Gentiles. This causes Jesus to exclaim “The hour has come” and to speak of the grain seed that dies and is buried to bear much fruit. The overall atmosphere resembles Jesus evening in Gethsemane garden<sup>3</sup>.

12:23 The hour when Jesus is to be glorified is the hour of his death, resurrection and ascension, which also glorifies God's name. This provides a model for his followers.

12:23 Jesus sees this as the indicator that his time has come. This is key. This is when John is moving us from his Book of Signs to his Book of Glory. It follows on the raising of Lazarus, the anointing of Jesus, the triumphant entry and now the appearance of the Greeks. It will also mark the transition from the public ministry to the private ministry with his disciples.

12:26 Jesus then assures people that in losing our life we will rise again to new life. 12:29 The voice from heaven is clearly audible. Some interpret it as thunder, others as angels. John believes it was a theophany – an appearance by God -- the people around Jesus realize that somehow they have experienced a voice from heaven and in the presence of Jesus they are in the presence of God. This is God incarnate for John.

In Greek philosophy there is no appreciation of the excellence of self-sacrifice. Greek philosophy does not hold love as an ultimate value – and sacrifice comes from love.

Plato never took the step from Justice to Love in his Idea of Good. This is the point at which the ethics of Christianity leaves Greek philosophy behind. The Gospel of John directly confronts this with this story and the entire Gospel.

“25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” Self-love is self-destruction, self-centeredness is sin, and self-love is hell. The soul feeds on itself and destroys itself. Eternal life is essentially life focused on God and the spiritual, not self and the material.

Jesus then calls on the Greeks and the audience to Follow me – the same as in Chapter 1 with the original disciples. It is a Christian's duty to follow Jesus Christ. And the reward is being where Christ is.

12:27-33

“28 Father, glorify your name.” For the Father's glory Jesus has lived. (Incarnation) He will soon die for his Father's glory. His prayer is not to avoid death but to at whatever cost glorify his Father's name. John does not record the scene in the garden at Gethsemane. But he points to it clearly (18:1 and 11) and here we find the substance of his prayer.

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We bless you from the house of the Lord.

Footnotes:

Psalm 118:26 Or Blessed in the name of the Lord is the one who comes

12:34-36 “The Son of Man must suffer...” is in all four Gospels. The identity of the title in that declaration and in this passage gives a clue to the interpretation. The Son of God is the apocalyptic Christ comes with the clouds of heaven; that apocalypse is actualized in the moment of crucifixion. Of course the idea is too novel to find acceptance. It can be received only by the faith that grows from habitual companionship with the Lord.

12:27 Troubled – The Word has become flesh, is fully human, and is deeply troubled. The time has come and his natural, human instincts are to ask is there any way to avoid what is coming? His troubled heart knows about the dangers ahead. But also knows that it is by moving through the danger that glory will shine out to the world.

Jesus’ troubled hearty and prayer is answered by God’s voice, thunder. God is telling Jesus he is loved, be obedient, follow the way and watch.

### **The Unbelief of the People**

12:37-50 John the Evangelist is speaking on his own – this is his summary of where we are in the Gospel. We have an echo from the Prologue, and quotes from Jesus: the light has come into the world; the words come from the Father; Jesus glory and the importance of faith. Part 1 (12:27-43) the people’s faith and unbelief and Part 2 (12:44-50) different sayings of Jesus on faith and belief. The use of repetition is an important factor in Johannine technique.

12:39 John is viewing the lack of faith through Isaiah 53:1<sup>4</sup>. Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophetic ministry also fulfills what happened to prophets themselves, even those who performed miracles. They were rejected.

The human heart is not naturally good and not liable to believe good. It is naturally wicked and liable to be suspicious of what is right and beautiful. In the Bible, we naturally have blind spiritual eyes, and need the sovereign work of God to enlighten our eyes.

A person’s rejection of truth leads to a further inability to be able to receive truth; shutting the eyes against the truth so we paralyze spiritual sight.

12:43 What glory do we seek? The glory and approval of people is far less satisfying than the glory and approval of God. It is infinitely disappointing and ultimately murderous. To hear one word of praise from God can feed us for our entire lives.

Going forward, Glory is going to be a key concept, a decisive criterion, a divider between those who follow Jesus and those who retreat from the disapproval of others. In the end there is a choice to make: are we seeking man’s glory or God’s? Man’s definition of greatness or God’s? Man’s praise and approval or God’s? Man’s standards of success or God’s?

12:37-43 John and his community wrestle with why don’t people believe in Jesus? Their conclusion is that somehow people have had their hearts hardened, their eyes closed and their ears turned off. John also points out that there are also people who believe, but keep their beliefs in secret out of fear.

### **Judgment by the Word**

12:44-50 The chapter ends with Jesus summarizing his ministry: The light has come into the world constituting the occasion for self judgement between those who believe in him and are delivered from the darkness and those who reject him and are condemned.

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<sup>4</sup> Isaiah 53:1 (NRSV)

53 “Who has believed what we have heard?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

12:44-50 Jesus calls out that the real villain is darkness – a darkness that John has not yet named. He will name it in 13:27 “Judas son of Simon Iscariot.[h] 27 After he received the piece of bread,[i] Satan entered into him.” Jesus is battling Satan, the darkness.

Jesus also states that those who choose to remain in the darkness, he has not come to judge the world, but their choice will be the basis of a future judgement of them.

In a way with the light in the world shining brightly it also makes the darkness darker.

Jesus at the end of Chapter 12 is staring into the darkness and the darkness is staring back at him. Everyone who reads this chapter must at some point decide where to stand, in the light or in the darkness.

### **Reflections**

1. How do you characterize the Jesus you have come to know in John’s first 12 chapters?
2. How do you see/experience both the light and the darkness in the world around you?
3. Do you embrace or struggle with Jesus dying to glorify God? How? Why?

### **Bibliography**

- Raymond E. Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament
- The Harper Collins Study Bible
- L. William Countryman, The Mystical Way in the Fourth Gospel
- Josh Moody, John 1-12 For You
- The Oxford Bible Commentary
- William Temple, Readings in St. John’s Gospel
- Tom Wright, John for Everyone Part 2, Chapter 11-21

## Notes

### Raymond E. Brown Notes<sup>5</sup>

12:1-11 Woman anoints Jesus Feet at Bethany is closely paralleled in Mark 14:3-9<sup>vii</sup>, Matthew 26:6-13<sup>viii</sup> and Luke 7:36-50<sup>ix</sup> – both forms of the story have Jesus being prepared for burial while alive.

12:12-19 Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem. (Mark 11:1-10<sup>x</sup>; Matthew 21:1-9<sup>xi</sup>; 9 and Luke 19:28-40<sup>xii</sup> – only John mentions the palm branches. The choice of riding an ass points to king promised in Zech 9:9-10<sup>6</sup>.

12:20-50 The end of the public ministry is signaled by the arrival of the Greek/Gentiles. This causes Jesus to exclaim “The hour has come” and to speak of the grain seed that dies and is buried to bear much fruit. The overall atmosphere resembles Jesus evening in Gethsemane garden<sup>7</sup>. How Mark and John differ:

In Mark he prays to the Father that the hour might pass from him, in John he refuses to pray to the Father that he might be saved from the hour since this is why he has come.

In Mark he prays that God’s will should be done, in John he prays that God’s name be glorified.

12:44-50 The chapter ends with Jesus summarizing his ministry: The light has come into the world constituting the occasion for self judgement between those who believe in him and are delivered from the darkness and those who reject him and are condemned.

### The Harper Collins Study Bible Notes<sup>8</sup>

12:13 Only John’s Gospel mentioned palm branches. The words of the crowd are from Psalm 118:25-26<sup>9</sup> and this Psalm is also used at the festival of the booths.

Hosanna in Hebrew means “Save us, we beseech you.”

12:16 John accepts that Christian ideas about Jesus developed after his resurrection.

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<sup>5</sup> Raymond E. Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament

<sup>6</sup> **Zechariah 9:9-10 (NRSV) The Coming Ruler of God’s People**

9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!

Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you;

triumphant and victorious is he,

humble and riding on a donkey,

on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

10 He[a] will cut off the chariot from Ephraim

and the war-horse from Jerusalem;

and the battle bow shall be cut off,

and he shall command peace to the nations;

his dominion shall be from sea to sea,

and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Footnotes:

Zechariah 9:10 Gk: Heb I

<sup>8</sup> The Harper Collins Study Bible

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 118:25-26 (NRSV)

25 Save us, we beseech you, O Lord!

O Lord, we beseech you, give us success!

26 Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.[a]

We bless you from the house of the Lord.

Footnotes:

Psalm 118:26 Or Blessed in the name of the Lord is the one who comes



12:20-36 Jesus last public discourse focuses on his impending death.

12:20 Greeks is perhaps symbolic of the future ministry to the gentiles.

12:23 The hour when Jesus is to be glorified is the hour of his death, resurrection and ascension, which also glorifies God's name. This provides a model for his followers.

12:27 In the other gospels these or similar words are spoken in the Garden of Gethsemane.

12:44-50 This somewhat detached speech serves to summarize and conclude all that Jesus has said in his public work. It mirrors statements from earlier in John.

### **L. William Countryman Notes<sup>10</sup>**

12:1-11 The situation is very dangerous but the family of Lazarus and his sisters risks Jesus' presence. They are as loyal as the man born blind. Lazarus is not a host; he is a guest of honor in his family's house. And he is now a big attraction because he is the man Jesus raised from the dead.

The whole Bethany family are models of true believers. After dinner Mary performs an act of extravagant homage to Jesus, she demeans herself by wiping his feet with her own hair.

What John stresses is:

- The extravagance of Mary's action
- The objection of Judas, which both underlines the value of the perfume and affords an opportunity to expose Judas' falseness
- And the remainder of the perfume is to be kept to anoint Jesus' body in a week.

Matthew and Mark assume all of the perfume is used up, and that the act was an anointment for burial. In John it is not an anointment for burial – it may be seen as worship or anointment.

However such anointment was traditionally to the head. The anointing of Jesus feet is to remind us that Jesus is from above. The anointment comes from below, from an inferior being, as recognition of his true status.

12:2-19 This is Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem and the people recognize him as king. The demonstration is prompted by Jesus' raising up of Lazarus as a sign/miracle. The miracle and the demonstration are linked in John. This section of this Gospel started with the shepherd discourse. Jesus bases his kingly claim on the care he takes of his own. The raising of Lazarus is a supreme expression of that care. And it vindicates his royal claim.

To enter God's reign is the goal of the journey through conversion, baptism, eucharist and enlightenment. To have everlasting life, resurrection life, is another image for that goal. In John the triumphant entry brings both images together.

Jesus work seems like a success. There are still plenty of enemies, the dark is well populated. Yet there is a measure of truth when they say the cosmos is drawn to Jesus. More of the cosmos is being drawn to Jesus and it will radically affect the mode of his mission in the second part of the Gospel. Jesus will pay for this change with his life.

### **Josh Moody Notes<sup>11</sup>**

12:1 6 days before Passover – this explains why Jesus is in the vicinity of Jerusalem, staying with Lazarus family. The momentum of his story is about to pick up its pace. Jesus death has hung over the Gospel from the beginning and now the shadow of the cross is prominent.

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<sup>10</sup> L. William Countryman, *The Mystical Way in the Fourth Gospel*

<sup>11</sup> Josh Moody, *John 1-12 For You*

12:2 Jesus is reclining at the dining table with the other guests – his feet are away from the table behind the guests next to him.

12:2-3 Mary pours a pint of pure nard over Jesus' feet and Judas complains about her action. Jesus response stops Judas and points to a fundamental truth – worship of God should be extravagant.

12:5 Judas appears 5 times in John's Gospel and this is the only time his words are said. Do his words reflect a concern for the poor – or a disagreement with Jesus on his mission? Judas could have had a more radical mission and dying and saving people spiritually may not have mattered to him. John provides a motive: Judas is a thief and motivated by money. But there may be more going on here.

Basically Judas has missed the whole point of Mary's symbolic act. Jesus has returned to Jerusalem to die. And Judas is seeking to make money from it.

12:7 Jesus tells them Mary will save the perfume for his burial. Indicates his pre-knowledge of what is coming.

12:8 Frequently mis-interpreted passage in John. Judas has a false claim of a mission to the poor. Jesus is juxtaposing temporal poverty with spiritual damnation. In the kingdom of God, poverty will be eliminated.

12:9-10 Lazarus is at risk because he is living proof of God's power through Jesus.

Forms of leadership:

4. Leading a movement by getting in front of the parade that has already formed;
5. Leading through a dictatorship of an individual's will – making others follow you
6. Leading through submission to the cross to glorify God

The city that at first welcomed Jesus on Sunday would call for his crucifixion by Friday. It is reflective of the treacherous nature of popularity and crowd behavior.

12:14-15 Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey invokes Zech 9:9 and is a symbolism which observers would have grasped. This is a humble, lowly king, there to serve others – he is leading through humility and service.

12:19-20 Greeks wish to see Jesus. This symbolizes the non-Jewish world. (Also this and the other Gospels were all written in Greek.) It means that Jesus no longer belongs to just the Jews.

12:23 Jesus sees this as the indicator that his time has come. This is key. This is when John is moving us from his Book of Signs to his Book of Glory. It follows on the raising of Lazarus, the anointing of Jesus, the triumphant entry and now the appearance of the Greeks. It will also mark the transition from the public ministry to the private ministry with his disciples.

12:24 Jesus will be sown into the earth. Through his death and resurrection there will be much global fruit. The way to be fruitful is to die.

12:25 Jesus teaches us that we must die to ourselves in order to bear fruit. If we love life too much we can be selfish and not able to serve God.

12:26 Jesus then assures people that in losing our life we will rise again to new life. 12:29 The voice from heaven is clearly audible. Some interpret it as thunder, others as angels. John believes it was a theophany – an appearance by God – the people around Jesus realize that somehow they have experienced a voice from heaven and in the presence of Jesus they are in the presence of God. This is God incarnate for John.

12:30 Jesus gives an interpretation of the voice – it was a witness for “your benefit” because now is a supremely important moment. Now is the time for the judgement of the world. This is not the final judgement. This is God’s positive judgement of his Son as he raises him up. Jesus will be on the cross and he will draw people from around the world to himself. His will be the standard of faith for all people. This is a standard which we cannot meet but can only be given by faith.

12:37-50 John is closing the Book of Signs and opening the Book of Glory. He states the basic issue: even though Jesus did all of these signs, “they still would not believe him”. John is careful not to equate attendance, involvement or enthusiasm in ministry for genuine faith.

12:39 John is viewing the lack of faith through Isaiah 53:1<sup>12</sup>. Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophetic ministry also fulfills what happened to prophets themselves, even those who performed miracles. They were rejected.

The human heart is not naturally good and not liable to believe good. It is naturally wicked and liable to be suspicious of what is right and beautiful. In the Bible, we naturally have blind spiritual eyes, and need the sovereign work of God to enlighten our eyes.

A person’s rejection of truth leads to a further inability to be able to receive truth; shutting the eyes against the truth so we paralyze spiritual sight.

12:43 What glory do we seek? The glory and approval of people is far less satisfying than the glory and approval of God. It is infinitely disappointing and ultimately murderous. To hear one word of praise from God can feed us for our entire lives.

Going forward, Glory is going to be a key concept, a decisive criterion, a divider between those who follow Jesus and those who retreat from the disapproval of others. In the end there is a choice to make: are we seeking man’s glory or God’s? Man’s definition of greatness or God’s? Man’s praise and approval or God’s? Man’s standards of success or God’s?

12:44-45 Faith in Jesus is the standard by which we can tell whether someone is seeking God’s glory or not. If you reject Jesus, it is because you reject God, since Jesus is the perfect revelation of God himself.

12:42-43 Do we hear Jesus words, and do we live them publicly. That is the basis of judgement.

12:49 In Jesus’ view authority is an exercise of service, not of dominion, and submission is an exercise of love, not self-mutilation.

### The Oxford Bible Commentary Notes<sup>13</sup>

Three different scenes prepare the reader for what is to happen with Jesus:

11:55-12:11 The Anointing at Bethany – shows Jesus future burial will not be accidental – it is prepared for by Mary’s pious action.

12:12-19 The solemn acclamation pronounces Jesus is Israel’s king in a deeper way than the crowds can grasp.

12:20-36 Discourse with the Greeks – pointing to the meaning of Jesus’ imminent death. It shows that death leads to life.

In different ways these three scenes attempt to illuminate the two aspects of death and life revealed in Jesus’ last Passover: the meal with Lazarus; the acclamation by the crowds; and the appearance of the

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<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 53:1 (NRSV)

53 “Who has believed what we have heard?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

<sup>13</sup> The Oxford Bible Commentary

Greeks. Jesus is the one who has raised Lazarus; the crowds come out to see him for this act; and the Greeks and people witness Jesus distress before his death and his acceptance of the upcoming decisive hour.

Though many of these scenes are shared in the Synoptic Gospels, they appear to have different purposes in John: Mary's actions anticipate Nicodemus after Jesus has been crucified and it anticipates the acclamation of Jesus by the crowd – he is anointed by her.

12:12-19 In all four Gospels Jesus last days are introduced by the people acclamation – only John has Palms involved.

In the Synoptics the reason to kill Jesus is the cleansing of the Temple; in John it is the raising of Lazarus and the people's response to it.

12:20-36 Greeks asking to see Jesus prompts Jesus to reveal the mystery of his own imminent death – the grain of wheat that dies in the earth symbolizes the rich future harvest. The voice from heaven is a sign addressed to the audience, so they will understand that the Son of Man will be lifted up is really light present among them. These verses show that Jesus death will lead to life.

The voice of God/angel appears for the benefit of the audience – not to comfort Jesus as in the Synoptics. The crowd needs Jesus' interpretation to understand what is going on.

Jesus private agony in the Synoptic Gospels is transformed into a public agony in John. And a public confession of obedience to God's will.

12:37-50 John the Evangelist is speaking on his own – this is his summary of where we are in the Gospel. We have an echo from the Prologue, and quotes from Jesus: the light has come into the world; the words come from the Father; Jesus glory and the importance of faith. Part 1 (12:27-43) the people's faith and unbelief and Part 2 (12:44-50) different sayings of Jesus on faith and belief. The use of repetition is an important factor in Johannine technique.

### **William Temple Notes<sup>14</sup>**

One can look at Mary and plot the trajectory of her transformation. Within John – she is a follower who pled for Jesus to save her brother and professes her belief in Jesus; and now she knows he is in danger for his life, and she anoints his feet at a feast in her house. She is devoted and mindful.

12:12-19 The selection of an ass to ride into Jerusalem is a significant political and theological act. It represents the servant king has arrived. (Zech 9:9-10) When the disciples later reflect on this event, after the resurrection, they will understand the meaning of what he did. The crowd and the disciples may not have interpreted it at the time as a servant king – but later they did.

12:20-26

12:23 Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." In Chapter 2 at the wedding in Cana Jesus said his time had not yet come. Now he declares that the wait is over. It has come. He repeat it two more times when Judas leaves the last supper (13:31), and in the High Priestly prayer (17:1).

He uses the seed being planted in the ground and dying to bear fruit as a metaphor. To have life you must have death. Death is a condition of fuller life.

In Greek philosophy there is no appreciation of the excellence of self-sacrifice. Greek philosophy does not hold love as an ultimate value – and sacrifice comes from love.

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<sup>14</sup> William Temple, Readings in St. John's Gospel

Plato never took the step from Justice to Love in his Idea of Good. This is the point at which the ethics of Christianity leaves Greek philosophy behind. The Gospel of John directly confronts this with this story and the entire Gospel.

“25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” Self-love is self-destruction, self-centeredness is sin, and self-love is hell. The soul feeds on itself and destroys itself. Eternal life is essentially life focused on God and the spiritual, not self and the material.

Jesus then calls on the Greeks and the audience to Follow me – the same as in Chapter 1 with the original disciples. It is a Christian’s duty to follow Jesus Christ. And the reward is being where Christ is.

12:27-33

“28 Father, glorify your name.” For the Father’s glory Jesus has lived. (Incarnation) He will soon die for his Father’s glory. His prayer is not to avoid death but to at whatever cost glorify his Father’s name. John does not record the scene in the garden at Gethsemane. But he points to it clearly (18:1 and 11) and here we find the substance of his prayer.

12:34-36 “The Son of Man must suffer...” is in all four Gospels. The identity of the title in that declaration and in this passage gives a clue to the interpretation. The Son of God is the apocalyptic Christ comes with the clouds of heaven; that apocalypse is actualized in the moment of crucifixion. Of course the idea is too novel to find acceptance. It can be received only by the faith that grows from habitual companionship with the Lord.

12:36-50

The Book of Signs closes with two judgements:

- The Evangelist/author’s (37-43)
- Jesus (44-50)

### Tom Wright Notes<sup>15</sup>

12:1-8 Mary may have been keeping the perfume to anoint Jesus’ body after his death. In other words she may be saying more in her actions than she knows (like Caiaphas.) Her act of love is a prophetic statement about the fact that soon Jesus will be killed and buried, and buried so hastily that there might not be time to prepare his body. So she does it now.

12:9-19 The symbols of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem go with Hanukkah not Passover. Nonetheless Jesus supporters use palm branches to celebrate his entrance. (1 Maccabees 13:51<sup>16</sup>; 2 Maccabees 10:7<sup>17</sup>).

12:20-26 How interesting that Jesus response to hearing the Greeks wanted to meet him is to speak about the Father being glorified and a seed dying and being buried and generating fruit. He is, point to the answer to the question how will God save the world through the death of Jesus? Jesus’ death will be like sowing a seed into the ground.

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<sup>15</sup> Tom Wright, John for Everyone Part 2, Chapter 11-21

<sup>16</sup> 1 Maccabees 13:51 (NRSV) 51 On the twenty-third day of the second month, in the one hundred seventy-first year,[a] the Jews[b] entered it with praise and **palm branches**, and with harps and cymbals and stringed instruments, and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel.

Footnotes:

1 Maccabees 13:51 141 b.c.

1 Maccabees 13:51 Gk they

<sup>17</sup> 2 Maccabees 10:7 (NRSV)7 Therefore, carrying ivy-wreathed wands and beautiful branches and also **fronds of palm**, they offered hymns of thanksgiving to him who had given success to the purifying of his own holy place.

23 Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” This shows that at last we have reached the hour –now Jesus realizes that his time has come. The preparation is complete. The great moment is about to take place. For the glory of God.

We now watch Jesus move through a series of steps:

- Symbolic actions (John 13)
- Special teaching (John 14, 15, 16)
- Prayer (John 17)

12:27-36 There is an audible voice from heaven – that others can hear. Some thought it was thunder, others an angel, but John interprets it as the voice of God.

12:27 Troubled – The Word has become flesh, is fully human, and is deeply troubled. The time has come and his natural, human instincts are to ask is there any way to avoid what is coming? His troubled heart knows about the dangers ahead. But also knows that it is by moving through the danger that glory will shine out to the world.

Jesus’ troubled hearty and prayer is answered by God’s voice, thunder. God is telling Jesus he is loved, be obedient, follow the way and watch.

12:37-43 John and his community wrestle with why don’t people believe in Jesus? Their conclusion is that somehow people have had their hearts hardened, their eyes closed and their ears turned off. John also points out that there are also people who believe, but keep their beliefs in secret out of fear.

12:44-50 Jesus calls out that the real villain is darkness – a darkness that John has not yet named. He will name it in 13:27 “Judas son of Simon Iscariot.[h] 27 After he received the piece of bread,[i] Satan entered into him.” Jesus is battling Satan, the darkness.

Jesus also states that those who choose to remain in the darkness, he has not come to judge the world, but their choice will be the basis of a future judgement of them.

In a way with the light in the world shining brightly it also makes the darkness darker.

Jesus at the end of Chapter 12 is staring into the darkness and the darkness is staring back at him. Everyone who reads this chapter must at some point decide where to stand, in the light or in the darkness.

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<sup>i</sup> Mark 14:3-9 (NRSV) **The Anointing at Bethany**

3 While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,[a] as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head. 4 But some were there who said to one another in anger, “Why was the ointment wasted in this way? 5 For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii,[b] and the money given to the poor.” And they scolded her. 6 But Jesus said, “Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. 7 For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. 8 She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. 9 Truly I tell you, wherever the good news[c] is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

Footnotes:

Mark 14:3 The terms leper and leprosy can refer to several diseases

Mark 14:5 The denarius was the usual day’s wage for a laborer

Mark 14:9 Or gospel

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**ii Matthew 26:6-13 (NRSV) The Anointing at Bethany**

6 Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,[a] 7 a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. 8 But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, “Why this waste? 9 For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money given to the poor.” 10 But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me. 11 For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. 12 By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial. 13 Truly I tell you, wherever this good news[b] is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

Footnotes:

Matthew 26:6 The terms leper and leprosy can refer to several diseases

Matthew 26:13 Or gospel

**iii Luke 7:36-50 (NRSV) A Sinful Woman Forgiven**

36 One of the Pharisees asked Jesus[a] to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee’s house and took his place at the table. 37 And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. 38 She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner.” 40 Jesus spoke up and said to him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” “Teacher,” he replied, “speak.” 41 “A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii,[b] and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?” 43 Simon answered, “I suppose the one for whom he canceled the greater debt.” And Jesus[c] said to him, “You have judged rightly.” 44 Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. 45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.” 48 Then he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” 49 But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” 50 And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Footnotes:

Luke 7:36 Gk him

Luke 7:41 The denarius was the usual day’s wage for a laborer

Luke 7:43 Gk he

**iv Mark 14:34-36 (NRSV)** 34 And he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake.” 35 And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 36 He said, “Abba,[a] Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.”

Footnotes:

Mark 14:36 Aramaic for Father

**v Matthew 21:1-9 (NRSV) Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

**21** When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, <sup>2</sup> saying to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me. <sup>3</sup> If anyone says anything to you, just say this, ‘The Lord needs them.’ And he will send them immediately.[a]” <sup>4</sup> This took place to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

<sup>5</sup> “Tell the daughter of Zion,  
Look, your king is coming to you,  
humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”

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<sup>6</sup> The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; <sup>7</sup> they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. <sup>8</sup> A very large crowd<sup>[b]</sup> spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. <sup>9</sup> The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting,  
“Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

Footnotes:

- a. [Matthew 21:3](#) Or ‘*The Lord needs them and will send them back immediately.*’
- b. [Matthew 21:8](#) Or *Most of the crowd*

**<sup>vi</sup> Luke 19:28-40 (NRSV) Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem**

28 After he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

29 When he had come near Bethphage and Bethany, at the place called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of the disciples, 30 saying, “Go into the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it.’” 32 So those who were sent departed and found it as he had told them. 33 As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, “Why are you untying the colt?” 34 They said, “The Lord needs it.” 35 Then they brought it to Jesus; and after throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it. 36 As he rode along, people kept spreading their cloaks on the road. 37 As he was now approaching the path down from the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the deeds of power that they had seen, 38 saying,  
“Blessed is the king

who comes in the name of the Lord!  
Peace in heaven,  
and glory in the highest heaven!”

39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” 40 He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out.”

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