

## General Comments on John 12

As noted in the previous chapter, the first section of text in this chapter (v. 1-11) continues the subject from the preceding chapter, that subject being the conspiracy against Jesus. The rest of the chapter contrasts public adulation (v. 9-21) with the glory of the Father (v. 22-50).

The multitudes are excited to see Jesus because of the great miracle of raising Lazarus (v. 11). John portrays the believers as being mainly interested in a physical deliverer while Jesus is a spiritual deliverer. The result is he is rejected. In contrast to the public glory Jesus receives (v. 12-18) is the glory which the Father gives him (v. 23). The things Jesus does which result in glorification by the Father ultimately result in popular rejection.

This chapter presents some sharp contrasts. The first is the contrast between Mary and Judas Iscariot (v. 3-8). Mary commits an act of mercy in anointing Jesus with very valuable spiced oil. Judas is angered at this act because he did not profit from it. While Mary is preparing Jesus for burial, Judas is bringing about his death.

The second is fleeting public adulation contrasted with the Father's eternal glory (v. 12-50). Jesus receives praise and greetings from the Jewish multitudes because they see him as a physical deliverer come to throw off the Roman occupation. The miracles tend to increase his fame as well. But, all of that fades when he fails to deliver what the people want. Instead, he fulfills the Atonement to accomplish the Father's will and receive glory from Him. While the people's worldly interest in Jesus fades, the Father's plans for the eternal kingdom are achieved.

The events of v. 12-19 are set in the context of the Passover feast identified in v. 1. The Passover feast is ripe with messianic symbols as it is the celebration of Israel's redemption from Egypt by Moses. Just as Moses struck the Egyptians and liberated Israel, so do the Jews at this time hope Jesus will strike the Romans and free Jerusalem. Hence the great welcome in v. 13, and subsequent abandonment when Jesus fails to deliver on their expectations for Him.

## Comments on John 12

1 THEN Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. 2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. 3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's [son], which should betray him, 5 why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? 6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. 7 Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. 8 For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

v1-8 Jesus returns to Bethany (v. 1) from his brief seclusion (cf. 11:54) and dines with the family of Lazarus. Martha serves, Lazarus dines with Jesus (v. 2), and Mary extends a great courtesy to Jesus of anointing him with very valuable oil and wiping his feet with the hair of her own head. Mary is very generous in the use of the oil, she uses so much the entire house is filled with the scent (v. 3).

But Judas Iscariot (v. 4) is displeased with her action because he could have embezzled the funds from the sale of the oil (v. 6), so he publicly censures her under false pretenses (v. 5). Jesus stands up for Mary and tells Judas to leave her alone as she is anointing him for his burial (v. 7). Jesus then informs him the poor will always be with them, but his time is now (v. 8).

This account is paralleled in Matthew's (cf. Matt. 26:6-13) and Mark's (cf. Mark 14:3-9) accounts. Those two accounts leave it ambiguous as to who is complaining while John explicitly identifies Judas and exposes his motives. Those two accounts also indicate the meal took place at the home of Simon the leper, and that Mary anointed Jesus' head as well as his feet.

v2 "Martha served", just as Mary is humbled, so too does Martha appear to be more contrite given the lack of grumbling present at the previous similar occasion, cf. Luke 10:40.

v3 Mary's act of exceptional charity is probably indicative of both her regret over her lack of faith in the events detailed in

the previous chapter (cf. 11:32), as well as her gratefulness over Lazarus being revived.

John's account omits the anointing of the head, which is present in the Synoptic accounts. John's intent is probably to emphasize Mary's contrition and humility in performing such a task. This would particularly be the case as in the light of ch. 13 where Jesus performs a similar act of humility in washing the disciple's feet.

That Judas could be so hard-hearted as to be unmoved by an act of humility such as wiping one's feet with your own hair indicates what a callous and selfish individual he was.

Mary's act might also be seen as a messianic anointing as it proceeds his triumphal entry. Symbolically this could be the case, but strictly speaking from an authoritative view a prophet would have performed such an act, cf. 1 Sam. 10:1, 1 Sam. 16:13. Also note that John omits the anointing of the head and only presents the anointing of the foot. Symbolically, that could have been taken to predict Jesus being esteemed as the foot and not the head by the people, and therefore being rejected. Or perhaps there is some suggestion of Isa. 52:7.

This action was central to speculation among early LDS Church leaders that Mary must have been Jesus' wife. The act was incorporated into the additional ceremony known as the "Second Anointing". It was interpreted as her laying claim to Jesus', her husband, body after his death, and was therefore repeated as part of the Second Anointing by couples who had been eternally married. See Orson Hyde's comments for a good general summary of the position, cf. Journal of Discourses, Volume 2, pages 81-82, October 6, 1854.

v5 "three hundred pence", a better translation for "pence" would be "denari". The amount cited is roughly equivalent to eleven month's wages for a common worker of the time. The value is exceptional. How it came to be in Mary's hands is a mystery, but the IV on v. 7 suggests she had been saving it for some time.

v7-8 John's intent is to show why Judas turns on Jesus and conspires against him. In the confrontation Judas publicly censures Mary for the expensive act of mercy, and Jesus then corrects him in front of everyone. For Jesus to stand up for a woman and censure a man in front of the woman would be a

considerable offense in a social context such as theirs, but Jesus cared little of the sexist mores of the time. Judas surely was humiliated for his deceitful act of impudence. The final thing that motivated Judas to conspire against Jesus: a petty act of revenge for publicly embarrassing him and denying him his mammon.

Matthew's account suggests the same thing as it places in sequence the conspiring Sanhedrin (cf. Matt. 26:3-5) then Mary's anointing (cf. Matt. 26:6-7), then the confrontation over the anointing (cf. Matt. 26:8-13), then Judas' collusion (cf. Matt. 26:14-16) all in sequence. Mark uses the same sequence also.

v7 The Inspired Version (IV) appends, "for she hath preserved this ointment until now, that she might anoint me in token of my burial".

v8 Jesus is not placing himself before the poor. Rather, his comment is accusative. The poor will always be present because people like Judas are holding the bag. As long as there are thieving self-promoters the poor will suffer, ct. Deut. 15:1-11, Acts 4:32-37, 4 Ne. 1:3, Moses 7:18.

**9 Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death; 11 Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.**

v9-11 Word spreads of the great miracle so many people go to see both Jesus and Lazarus (v. 9). The result is the conspiring Sanhedrin (cf. 11:47-53) decide they must not only execute Jesus, they must kill Lazarus as well (v. 10) since so many people believe because of him (v. 11).

The irony of them plotting to kill the one raised from the dead is great. We can only assume they do not believe he was actually raised from the dead, but was either not really dead or was feigning death.

v11 "many of the Jews went away", i.e., away from the Pharisees, towards Jesus.

**12 On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna:**

Blessed [is] the king of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. 14 And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, 15 Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt. 16 These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and [that] they had done these things unto him.

17 The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. 18 For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.

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

v12-19 The multitudes in Jerusalem for the Passover hear that Jesus will be coming (v. 12), so they take a symbolic cue from the Feast of Tabernacles and come out with palm shoots and herald him as the king of Israel (v. 13). Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a foal (v. 14), as predicted by Zephaniah and Zechariah (v. 15), but nobody understands the symbolism (v. 16). To add to the furor, people who were present when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead tell everyone all about it (v. 17), so all the more people come out to see Jesus (v. 18). When the Pharisees see how the people have gone after Jesus they lament their seeming fate (v. 19).

v12 As Jesus was staying at Bethany, near to Jerusalem, word of mouth spreads quickly that he is approaching.

v13 "branches of palm trees", John Lightfoot (1602-1675) in A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica comments on Matt. 21:8-9, which cover the same event, as follows:

[Strewed branches in the way.] Not that they strewed garments and boughs just in the way under the feet of the ass to be trod on; this perhaps might have thrown down the rider; but by the wayside they made little tents and tabernacles of clothes and boughs, according to the custom of the feast of Tabernacles. John also adds, that taking branches of palm trees in their hands, they went forth to meet him.... Again, "The boughs of palm trees, of which the law, Leviticus 23:40, speaks, are the young growing sprouts of palms, before their leaves shoot out on all sides; but when they are like small staves, and these are called young

branches of palms." And a little after, "It is a notable precept, to gather young branches of palms, the boughs of myrtle and willow, and to make them up into a small bundle, and to carry them in their hands," &c.

[Hosanna to the Son of David.] Some are at a loss why it is said to the Son, and not O Son: wherefore they fly to Caninius as to an oracle, who tells us, that those very bundles of boughs are called Hosanna; and that these words, Hosanna to the Son of David, signify no more than boughs to the Son of David. We will not deny that bundles are sometimes so called, as seems in these clauses...where it is plain, that a branch of palm is called Lulab, and boughs of myrtle and willow bound together are called Hosanna: but, indeed, if Hosanna to the Son of David signifies boughs to the Son of David, what do those words mean, Hosanna in the highest? The words therefore here sung import as much as if it were said, We now sing Hosanna to the Messias.

In the feast of Tabernacles, the great Hallel, as they call it, used to be sung, that is, Psalm 113-118. And while the words of the Psalms were sung or said by one, the whole company used sometimes to answer at certain clauses, Halleluia. Sometimes the same clauses that had been sung or said were again repeated by the company: sometimes the bundles of boughs were brandished or shaken. "But when were the bundles shaken?" The rubric of the Talmud saith, "At that clause Give thanks unto the Lord, in the beginning of Psalm 118, and at the end. And at that clause, Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord, (Psa 118:25) as saith the school of Hillel: but the school of Shammai saith also, at that clause, O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. R. Akibah said, I saw R. Gamaliel and R. Joshuah, when all the company shook their bundles they did not shake theirs, but only at that clause, Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord."

On every day of the feast, they used once to go round the altar with bundles in their hands, singing this, Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord; I beseech thee, O Lord, send now prosperity. But on the seventh day of the feast they went seven times round the

altar, &c. "The tossing or shaking of the bundles was on the right hand, on the left hand, upwards and downwards."

"The reason of the bundles was this, because it is written, 'Then let all the trees of the wood sing,' (Psa 96:12). And afterward it is written, 'Give thanks unto the Lord, because he is good,' (Psa 106:1). And afterward, 'Save us, O Lord, O our God,' &c. (Psa 106:47). And the reason is mystical. In the beginning of the year, Israel and the nations of the world go forth to judgment; and being ignorant who are to be cleared and who guilty, the holy and blessed God commanded Israel that they should rejoice with these bundles, as a man rejoiceth who goeth out of the presence of his judge acquitted. Behold, therefore, what is written, 'Let the trees of the wood sing'; as if it were said, Let them sing with the trees of the wood, when they go out justified from the presence of the Lord," &c.

Thus, the bundles of palm shoots the people held were representative of the Hosannas to the Lord Son of David, the Messiah, who would justify them.

"Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord", a quotation from Ps. 118:26.

v15 "Fear not, daughter of Sion", a quotation from Zeph. 3:14-16.

"thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt", a quotation of Zech. 9:9.

v16 The disciples don't grasp what is going on. They are probably too caught up in what they think is Jesus finally coming out as the physical king of Jerusalem. All this time they have been waiting for it, and now it appears to be happening. They don't realize that Jesus is about to defer this physical throne for his Father's heavenly throne.

v18 Sign seekers join the crowds who herald Jesus as the new king of Jerusalem.

v19 The frustration and jealousy of the Pharisees manifests

itself. This is probably referring to the Pharisees in general as opposed to the Sanhedrin in specific.

20 And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: 21 The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. 22 Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. 23 And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. 24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. 25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. 26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will [my] Father honour.

v20-26 Gentiles proselyted to Judaism are present at the Passover and solicit an audience with Jesus (v. 20-22). Jesus' says the time of fulfilment of his ministry is near (v. 23) and unless he goes ahead with his martyrdom none will have eternal life (v. 24), so he must do it. Jesus then issues a statement of inclusivity stating that all men who disdain the things of the flesh and love spiritual things (v. 25), all those who follow Jesus will be honored by the Father (v. 26).

With his mortal ministry to Israel drawing to an end, Jesus signals a change in his approach to Gentiles. Previously he kept Gentiles at arms length (cf. Matt. 15:21-28), now he tells them they are on the same footing as natural Israel. Jesus is foreshadowing the imminent ministry to all nations, cf. Acts 10. Note the statement in v. 25-26 opens the salvation offered in v. 23-24 to all people, not just Israel, who love spiritual things and follow Jesus.

John probably also includes this section to show that Gentiles were present among the crowd in v. 27-36, and just as the Jews generally rejected him, so do the Gentiles.

v20-22 The Greeks want to come and meet with Jesus, but they fear rejection. Hence their rather circuitous means of getting to him. Their fear of rejection is based on the general treatment they receive under the contemporary form of Judaism. They are used to being pushed to the fringes and of being exploited by Pharisees (cf. Matt. 23:15) because of being Gentiles, so they are timid when approaching the one who is heralded as the Messiah.

Note in v. 22 that Philip does not directly approach Jesus.

He consults with Andrew first, and then Andrew passes the request along. This lack of direct approach reflects the general perception and treatment of Gentiles among the society of the time.

v20 "certain Greeks", not men who are descendant of Judah come from Greece, but Gentiles from Greece.

v21 Why they approached Philip is unclear, but the additional detail John includes regarding his place of birth suggests there was some connection between himself and them along these lines.

27 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. 28 Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, [saying], I have both glorified [it], and will glorify [it] again. 29 The people therefore, that stood by, and heard [it], said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. 30 Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes. 31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. 32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all [men] unto me. 33 This he said, signifying what death he should die.

34 The people answered him, we have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man? 35 Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. 36 While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

v27-36 Jesus is endorsed by heaven (v. 27-30), but then publicly announces his imminent death (v. 31-33), and the formerly adoring crowd questions him regarding their expectations for him (v. 34). Jesus ignores their request to fulfil their expectations and tells them to live a spiritual life or they will be led astray, and then He secludes himself (v. 35-36).

The people at Jerusalem wanted Him to be their physical deliverer, the new David come to overthrow the Romans and restore the kingdom of Jerusalem to her former glory. Thus their adulation at the triumphal entry. But, when Jesus publicly announces he is shortly to be killed, the people want to know what he is talking about. Their expectations for a physical deliverer are not being met, and rather than question

their expectations they question Jesus' authenticity. Even another miracle, a verbal endorsement from heaven, is received with a mixed response that does not convince the people of Jesus' authenticity. He fails to deliver on what they want, so they reject him, all miracles aside.

The irony is as Heaven endorses and glorifies Jesus, the people are rejecting him. Jesus' interest is salvation and eternal life (v. 23-26), the people want a king.

v29 Given John's positioning of the text, it is likely the people that stood by included the Greeks spoken of in v. 20-26. Both Gentiles and Jews have certain expectations for the Messiah, and question Jesus when he fails to meet their expectations. It is not just the Jews in specific who reject Jesus, it is mankind in general.

v36 "departed, and did hide himself from them", just as was the case in 6:15 when the people wanted to force Him to be king, Jesus hides from them so they cannot. The expectation here is the same as that in 6:15, they want a physical deliverer from Roman occupation, not a spiritual one.

37 But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: 38 That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? 39 Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, 40 He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with [their] eyes, nor understand with [their] heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. 41 These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him.

42 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on 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.

44 Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. 45 And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me. 46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. 47 And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. 49 For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. 50 And I know that his commandment

is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

v37-50 John comments that even though Jesus did so many great miracles, the people still refuse to accept him (v. 37). He then quotes a passage from Isaiah to explain why this is, because their eyes are blinded and their hearts are hardened with sin (v. 38-41). As an example of this, John informs us there were many of the Levitical priests who believed in Jesus (v. 42), but they would not support him because they would be rejected by the Pharisees and lose their jobs if they did (v. 43). John then quotes a sermon of Jesus' wherein he states that whoever accepts himself is in fact accepting the Father (v. 44-46), and whoever rejects himself is rejecting the Father (v. 47-48). This is because the words he speaks are the words given to him by the Father (v. 49-50).

This section of text is a parenthetical commentary by John on why the people do not really accept Jesus (v. 37-42). In his commentary, John quotes Jesus (v. 44-50) to explain that whoever rejects Jesus is in fact rejecting the Father.

v42 "among the chief rulers also many believed on him", the "rulers" is a poor translation, a better rendering would be "priests". Among the chief priests many believed in Jesus, but they did not openly support Him as if they did the Sanhedrin and Pharisees would have them thrown out of the synagogues and Temple. The Levites, particularly the priests, were the ones who were supposed to be closest to God because of the service they provided in the Temple.

John includes this detail to show that all of people, even the ones who served God daily in Temple service, were more interested in worldly things than in the heavenly things. This is why Jesus was rejected.

However, after Jesus' crucifixion, a large number of priests do ultimately become Christian disciples, cf. Acts 6:7. It seems likely the same group here become the disciples spoken of in Acts.

v44-50 When the quotation of Jesus occurred is unclear, but it is plain the quotation in v. 44-50 does not occur in sequence with the events of v. 23-36 as before John starts his parenthesis the end of v. 36 says Jesus left and hid himself from the people. The content is similar to that of 3:15-19 and 8:12-29.

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