

# John – An In-Depth Study

## [Part 15]

**John 12:1-8** [NIV] *“Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus’ honour. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ‘Why wasn’t this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year’s wages.’ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. ‘Leave her alone,’ Jesus replied. ‘[It was intended] that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.’”*

By this time Jesus was very near to His final act of love for all humanity, His sacrifice on the cross.

Coming to Jerusalem for the Passover was an act of the highest courage, for Jesus was now marked as an outlaw by the Jewish authorities.

The love that Mary had for Jesus overflowed in this act of extravagance.

Normally this was used to anoint the head of a person but Mary expressed her humility and worship by anointing Jesus on the feet and using her own hair to dry them.

It was against Jewish convention for a hostess to appear in the presence of men with unbound hair, but in this case Mary’s love was stronger than convention.

The expensive perfume was an essential oil from the roots of a native plant of North India. In biblical times spikenard [Greek *“pistikōs”* meaning unadulterated and *“nardōs”* meaning nard, or spikenard] was imported in sealed alabaster boxes which were only opened on special occasions. Its value was a labourer’s year’s earning.

We have in this passage of scripture character sketches.

**Martha** – she loved Jesus and as a practical woman showed that love by the work of her hands, and Martha always gave all that she could, hospitality.

In context of spiritual gifts given to the church that should be expressed in the church is hospitality. The Greek word *“philōnēxia”* meaning given to a friendly fondness of guests. [**Romans 12:13**]

**Mary** – we see in these scriptures three things that expressed Mary’s love for Jesus.

**a) Extravagance** – Mary took the most precious thing she possessed, and spent it all on Jesus. Love doesn’t count the cost, the only regret is that it was **not** more to give.

**b) Loves humility** – It was a sign of honour to anoint a person’s head. [**Psalms 23:5**] But Mary could not look as high as the head of Jesus, she anointed His feet.

The last thing that Mary thought of was to confer honour upon Jesus, she never deemed herself good enough for that.

**c) Unselfconsciousness** – On the day a girl married her hair was bound up, and never again would she be seen in public with her long tresses flowing loose.

For a woman to appear in public with hair unbound was also a sign of immoral woman, but Mary never even thought of that in her loving dedication of Jesus.

There are many who are self-conscious about showing their Christianity, concerned about what others think, not so with Mary.

**Judas Iscariot** – As far back as **John 6:70-71** John shows us that Jesus was well-aware that there was a traitor within the ranks.

It may have been that Jesus tried to reach Judas' heart by making him the treasurer of the group, an appeal to his sense of honour.

The best way to reclaim someone who is in the wrong is **not** to treat them with suspicion but with trust. **Not** to expect the worst but the best in that person.

Temptation too often comes from the point we are most qualified to perform.

Judas had often used the group's money for himself alone.

Jesus knew this was happening for He knew Judas' heart. [**John 2:24-25; John 6:64**]

Judas used a pious phrase to hide his true motives, but his lies opened him up to Satanic influence. [**John 13:27**]

The act of Jesus' response does **not** teach us to ignore the poor so we can spend money extravagantly on the church.

This was a unique act for a special occasion, an anointing that anticipated Christ's sacrificial death.

To help the poor was something that could be done at any time. [**Deuteronomy 15:11**]

For Mary this was a chance to show her love for Jesus that would never come again.

Don't put off an act of generosity when seized with the desire to do so, by tomorrow the impulse could have gone, or the person no longer available to help.

**John 12:9-11** [NIV] *“Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him.”*

For the Sadducees Jesus was a double threat.

Jesus was a threat politically as we have already explained.

Also Jesus and Lazarus were a threat because of the Sadducees did **not** believe in the resurrection of the dead.

This is why they wanted to get rid of Lazarus who was living evidence that they were wrong.

The Sadducees were willing to suppress the truth in order to further their own self-interest.

**Romans 1:18-22** [NIV] *“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God,*

*they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools”*

Paul had the same problem with the Roman church.

For many people, especially those in authority, self-interest is the most powerful force in their lives.

**John 12:12-19** [NIV] *“The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, ‘Hosanna!’ ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ‘Blessed is the King of Israel!’ Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, ‘Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.’ At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realise that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him. Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. So the Pharisees said to one another, ‘See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!’”*

The people who were praising God for giving them a king had the wrong idea about Jesus. They were sure Jesus would be a national leader to restore their nation to its former glory. They were deaf to the words of their prophets and blind to Jesus’ real mission. When it became clear that Jesus was **not** going to fulfil their hopes, most turned against Him.

Only after Jesus’ resurrection did the disciples understand, for the first time, many of the prophecies they had missed as Jesus fulfilled them.

Jesus’ words and actions took on new meaning and made more sense, giving them a deeper understanding of the truth.

The desire of the crowd not only to meet Jesus but to honour Him is a marked contrast to that of the Sadducees and Pharisees.

The practice of carrying palm leaves was an act of honour to a victorious person. The chant comes from **Psalms 118:25** and the description King of Israel makes clear the Messianic significance of the cry.

Jesus riding on a young ass is fulfilment of **Zechariah 9:9**.

The word Hosanna means save us now.

Jesus approached Jerusalem with this crowd hailing Him a conqueror must have hurt Jesus, for they were looking for the very thing He rightly refused to be.

Jesus’ whole action was of a prince coming in peace **not** riding on a horse when bent on war.

In the background to this event were the frustrated Jewish authorities and their ironic statement *“look how the whole world has gone after Him,”* a forecast of what is going to be in the end. [**John 3:16-17; Acts 4:12**]

This entry into Jerusalem was an act of courage, knowing that the authorities were determined to murder Him.

This entry was an act of defiance of all that humans could do, and an act of love’s last appeal before His total sacrifice.

**John 12:20-22** [NIV] *“Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. ‘Sir,’ they said, ‘we would like to see Jesus.’ Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.”*

The Greeks were characteristically seekers after truth, and would go from one teacher to another in their search for truth.

These men could well be Greek proselytes who would be able to join the Jews in the temple worship.

They may have seen Jesus cleanse the temple of moneychangers and sellers of doves, which prompted them to know more of a man who could do things like that.

No-one can say for certain, but it may be that because Philip is a Greek name that they considered he would treat them sympathetically.

Philip went to Andrew who had discovered one thing about Jesus, that He would never turn anyone away who was seeking the truth.

Andrew knew that to Jesus' presence there was an open door that no-one can ever shut.

**John 12:23-26** [NIV] *“Jesus replied, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.’”*

The reference to “*the hour*” points to the approaching crisis. Jesus' use of the title “*Son of Man*” to describe His character and mission in terms of the vision described in **Daniel 7:13-14**.

This is a beautiful picture of the necessary sacrifice of Jesus.

Jesus had to pay the penalty of our sin but also show His power over death, His resurrection shows He has eternal life.

Because Jesus is Son of God as well as Son of Man, He gives this same eternal life to all who have faith in Him. [**Romans 6:23**]

Every Christian must be so committed to living for Jesus Christ that we “*hate*” our lives by comparison to our dedication to serving Jesus Christ and bringing to Him and the Father glory and honour.

We do this by losing our life, our personal desires and goals, and living a life sacrificed to being a witness for Jesus to bring more to know Him, worship Him and eventually love Him. That's how we bring glory to God out of a deep gratitude of what He has done for us. [**Romans 12:1-2; Romans 6:1-10**]

**John 12:27-34** [NIV] *“Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!’ Then a voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.’ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. Jesus said, ‘This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.’ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. The crowd spoke up, ‘We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain for ever, so how can you say, “The Son of Man must be lifted up”? Who is this “Son of Man”?’”*

Jesus knew that His crucifixion, as the Lamb of God, was now very near, as physical lambs were being prepared for slaughter at the Passover. As a human being Jesus dreaded this very painful and humiliating end to His life.

But Jesus knew He must take on Himself all the sins of the world to be the **only** possible Saviour of humanity.

The prince of this world is Satan, an angel who rebelled against God. [**Matthew 4:8-9; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19; Revelation 12:9**]

Satan – tempted Eve in the Garden. [**Genesis 3:1-6**]

Satan – tempted Jesus Christ. [**Matthew 4:1-11**]

Satan – holds power of death. [**Hebrews 2:14**]

Satan – accuses Christians before God’s throne. [**Revelation 12:10**]

Satan – power of the air. [**Ephesians 2:2**]

Satan is real, **not** symbolic and is constantly working against God and tempting all to disobey God as he does.

Satan – can and should be resisted. [**James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9**]

Satan’s influence can be overcome. [**Revelation 12:11; Colossians 1:13-14**]

The crowd could **not** believe what Jesus was saying about the Messiah, they thought that the Messiah would never die. [**Psalms 89:35-36; Psalms 110:4; Isaiah 9:7**]

But other scriptures said that the Messiah would die. [**Isaiah 53:5-9**]

Jesus’ word did **not** conform with the crowd’s concept of the Messiah.

First, the Messiah had to die, then He would one day set up His eternal Kingdom [family of created children of God].

The crowd in response to Jesus’ word wanted to know who this Son of Man was.

Jesus gave the Old Testament term “*Son of Man*” new and enriched meaning.

This is shown by Jesus often using the title in close association with His suffering and death. [**Mark 10:45; Mark 9:31; Mark 10:33; Mark 14:21, 41; Luke 18:31; Luke 19:10; Matthew 20:18, 28; Matthew 26:45**]

Also Jesus used the title in identifying Himself with guilty humanity, but He never failed to teach that this suffering would lead to a life-giving resurrection. [**Matthew 20:18-19; Mark 8:31; Mark 10:33-34; Luke 18:31-33**]

Also Jesus used this title in conjunction with His ultimate victory for Himself and His followers. [**Luke 21:25-28; Luke 22:29-30; Mark 13:26-27; Mark 14:24-25, 62**]

Note also that the direct voice of God came to Jesus at the greatest moments of His life.

At Jesus’ baptism when He set out to do the work that God the Father had given Him. [**Mark 1:11**]

On the Mount of Transfiguration when Jesus finally decided to take the way to Jerusalem and His sacrifice on the cross. [**Mark 9:7**]

When Jesus’ flesh and blood had to be strengthened by the divine aid for the ordeal of the cross. [**John 12:27-28**]

**John 12:35-36** [NIV] “*Then Jesus told them, ‘You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark*

*does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.’ When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.”*

Jesus again points to the truth that He is the light in the world and it is only during our walk in this world, the few years of our life, that we can receive this light and reflect it in our lives. [**Ecclesiastes 9:5-6; Psalms 6:5; Psalms 146:4; Matthew 5:14-16**]

The decisions we make have to be made while we walk in the light of this short physical life, and we will be judged by Jesus Christ on our words and actions in this life. [**Matthew 12:37; 1 John 3:18; John 6:28-29; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Ecclesiastes 11:8-9**]

It is a statistical fact that there is a steep rise in the number of conversions to Christianity up to the age of seventeen and an equally steep fall after that age.

**John 12:37-41** [NIV] *“Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. This was to fulfil the word of Isaiah the prophet: ‘Lord, who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?’ For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: ‘He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn, and I would heal them.’ Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.”*

John quotes two passages from Isaiah in these verses.

First, **Isaiah 53:1-2** – This was Isaiah’s experience even after he had been warned by God that it would happen.

**Isaiah 6:9-10** also quoted here.

God had to encourage Isaiah after this disheartening experience – **Isaiah 55:10-11**.

**Isaiah 6:9-10** is also quoted by Jesus or echoed by His servant Paul. [**Matthew 13:14-15; Mark 4:12; Romans 11:8; 2 Corinthians 3:14**]

These passages of scripture seem to be saying that human unbelief is due to God’s action, that when a person fails to believe it is because God has shut their eyes and ears and hardened their hearts.

How can we reconcile these scriptures with God’s desire that all humans will be brought to repentance and saved? [**John 3:17; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9**]

The key to understanding these scriptures is found in the inspired statements of the apostle Paul.

**Romans 8:28-30** [NIV] *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.”*

The time of our calling is in accordance to God’s purpose, God knows in advance if we will respond to His calling in this present life or if we need to await for a resurrection back to physical life after Jesus Christ’s return to this earth. [**Revelation 20:11-13**]

Also note that the word “*firstborn*” is used, referring to the “*firstfruits*” of God’s eternal plan.

**1 Corinthians 15:20-23** [NIV] *“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.”*

Don't overlook the words "*each in his own turn*", which is a key to understanding what God tells us through Isaiah.

For a fuller explanation of this please download and study our article '*Predestination*' on our website.