SMITH FOR CHRIST

TEACHING THE WORD · WATCHING THE TIMES



DEEP DIVE

John

Chapter Twelve, Verses 1–50

The Hour Has Come — perfume at Bethany, palms on the road,
Greeks at the feast — and a grain of wheat that must die

NASB 1995 | VERSE BY VERSE | FOUR VOICES | WITH DIAGRAMS

Six days before the Passover, Mary pours out a year's wages on His feet, the crowds wave palms, Greeks ask to see Him — and Jesus answers that the hour has come for the grain of wheat to fall into the earth and die. Read through four teachers — **David Guzik**, **R.C. Sproul**, **C.H. Spurgeon** and **Matthew Henry** — with the Greek behind John's key words.

THE PASSAGE

John 12:1–50

perfume · palms · grain · lifted up · unbelief

THE METHOD

Verse by Verse

Color-coded by teacher

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Five movements from the supper at Bethany to "I speak just as the Father has told Me"

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"Sir, we wish to see Jesus." — John 12:21

SECTION I · THE PASSAGE

John 12:1–50

The Hour Has Come — Extravagant love, a lowly King, a troubled soul — and the last public appeal of the Light of the world

† How to Read This Study

This study walks John 12 in 5 movements, in John's own order. Each movement opens with the full NASB 1995 text of those verses, marked with the Berean colors and shapes; then the Greek behind the key words; then the teachers, each in his own color — **David Guzik**, the pastor who walks the text verse by verse; **R.C. Sproul**, the theologian who presses every word for its doctrine; **C.H. Spurgeon**, the preacher who turns the doctrine into a call to the heart; and **Matthew Henry**, the Puritan commentator who gathers it into plain, practical counsel. The figures draw the passage so you can see where John is going. Read the Scripture first; then let each voice add its angle.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word — R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's
C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle — MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

KEY VERSE · JOHN 12:24

"Truly, truly, I say to you, △ unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, ☆ it bears much fruit."

† Before the Passage

John 11 ended with a death warrant: "from that day on they planned together to kill Him" (11:53), and orders that anyone who knew where He was should report it (11:57). Jesus had withdrawn to Ephraim. Now He comes back — to Bethany, two miles from Jerusalem, "six days before the Passover" (12:1) — knowing exactly what waits for Him. The clock of the Gospel slows down: Guzik notes that "Almost one-half of John's Gospel is given to this last week."

Chapter 12 closes the first half of John — what many call the Book of Signs. Lazarus's raising was the seventh sign; after this chapter Jesus does no more public signs and speaks no more to the crowds. From chapter 13 on He is alone with His disciples, then before Annas, Caiaphas and Pilate. John marks the turn with a summary of unbelief (12:37–43) and a final public cry (12:44–50). All through the Gospel "My hour has not yet come" (2:4; 7:30; 8:20); here, at last, "The hour has come" (12:23).

The Passover drew pilgrims by the hundreds of thousands — Sproul cites Josephus's figure of about 2.7 million people at one Passover in the 60s. Palm branches had been a symbol of national victory since the Maccabees, and the crowd's cry comes from Psalm 118, the last of the Hallel psalms sung at the feast: "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD" (Psalm 118:26). Jesus answers their political hopes with Zechariah 9:9 — a king "humble, and mounted on a donkey."

The Greeks of verse 20 were Gentiles who worshiped Israel's God — they could go no farther than the Court of the Gentiles in the temple. Their request brings Jesus' answer about the grain of wheat and His being "lifted up" to "draw all men" (12:32), the third time John uses that phrase for the cross (3:14; 8:28). Then John explains the nation's unbelief with two passages from Isaiah — 53:1 and 6:10 — and says that Isaiah "saw His glory" (12:41), the glory of Isaiah 6:1, "the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted."

I
MOVEMENT

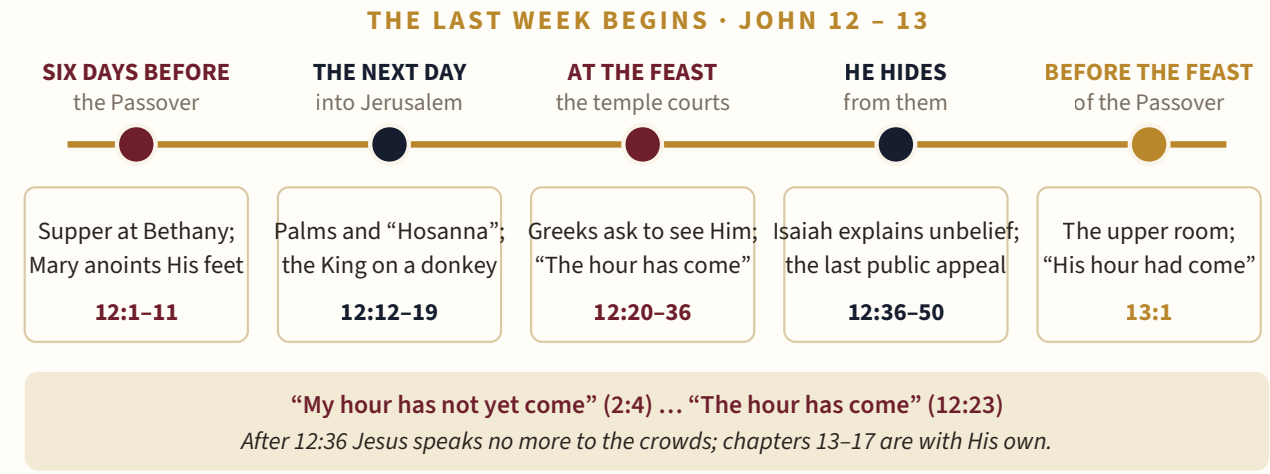
JOHN 12:1–11

Six Days Before the Passover

A supper at Bethany — Mary's extravagance, Judas's complaint, and a plot against Lazarus

> [1] *Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.* [2] *So they made Him a supper there, and Martha was serving; but Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him.* [3] *Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.* [4] *But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said,* [5] *"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?"* [6] *Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.* [7] *Therefore Jesus said, "Let her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of My burial.* [8] *"For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me."* [9] *The large crowd of the Jews then learned that He was there; and they came, not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might also see Lazarus, whom He raised from the dead.* [10] *But the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death also;* [11] *because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and were believing in Jesus.*
>
> JOHN 12:1–11

FIGURE · THE LAST WEEK BEGINS



Follow the days from Bethany to the upper room: chapter 12 is the turn from Jesus' public ministry to His hour.

νάρδου πιστικῆς

NARDOU PISTIKĒS · "PURE NARD" · G3487, G4101

Nardos is spikenard, an aromatic oil from the root of a plant that grows in the Himalayas — imported across half the known world. *Pistikos* (only here and in Mark 14:3) means genuine, unadulterated: nothing cut into it. A *litra*, a Roman pound, is about twelve ounces, and *polytimos* is "very costly." Judas puts the price at three hundred denarii (v. 5) — at a denarius a day (Matthew 20:2), about a year's wages for a laborer. Mary does not anoint His head, as at a king's coronation, but His feet, the servant's task, and she wipes them with her hair.

γλωσσόκομον

GLŌSSOKOMON · "MONEY BOX" · G1101

Originally a case for the mouthpieces of wind instruments, then any small box or bag for valuables. It appears only twice, both of Judas (12:6; 13:29). John's comment is blunt: Judas "was a thief" (*kleptēs*), and "used to pilfer" (*ebastazen*, literally "carried off") what was put in. The same imperfect tense says it was a habit. The one who priced the perfume at a year's wages is the one who will sell his Lord for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik sets the scene in the Gospel's proportions: "Almost one-half of John's Gospel is given to this last week." Mary's anointing is humble, extravagant and devoted; Judas's objection sounds pious, but John exposes it, and "Judas successfully hid the darkness of his heart from everyone except Jesus." Jesus defends her and ties the gift to His burial. On the plot to kill Lazarus he quotes Trapp — "What a giant like madness was this, to take up arms against heaven itself!" — and Spurgeon: "When men hate Christ, they also hate those whom he has blessed."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

In "Expediency & Extravagance" (February 2003) Sproul sets Mary beside Caiaphas. The council calculated what was useful; Mary poured out an anointing worth roughly a year's wages — "Talk about love. Talk about extravagant love." He calls it "a reckless manifestation of extravagant love and worship." Judas's concern for the poor was hypocrisy: "He was the keeper of the purse, the treasurer of the twelve disciples," and he stole from it. Sproul closes by asking what a man would give in exchange for his soul (Mark 8:36).

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In his evening reading on verse 2, "Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him," Spurgeon sees Lazarus as a man to be envied: "It was well to be Martha and serve, but better to be Lazarus and commune." "None of the trees of the garden yield such clusters as the vine of fellowship." And Lazarus is to be imitated, for every believer has been raised: "Jesus raised us, and by his life we live." It would have been ingratitude for Lazarus to be absent when Jesus came to his house — and it is the same for us who owe Him our life.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads the supper as a farewell visit to friends, and Mary's gift as generous, humble, believing love. Of Judas's complaint he says, "Proud men think all ill-advised who do not advise with them." Judas cared for the bag, not the poor. Jesus' defense of Mary is a rule for the church: "Christ would not have those censured nor discouraged who sincerely design to please him." The poor will always be present to be helped; He would not. And the plot against Lazarus shows how far hatred of Christ will go against those who bear witness to Him.

II
MOVEMENT

JOHN 12:12–19

Your King Is Coming

Palms, "Hosanna!" and a young donkey — the King God sent, not the king they wanted

12 On the next day the large crowd who had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, "Hosanna! △ BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even △ the King of Israel." 14 Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, 15 "FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; ☆ BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY'S COLT." 16 These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but ◷ when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him. 17 So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him. 18 For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, ◷ the world has gone after Him."

JOHN 12:12–19

"Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD; We have blessed you from the house of the LORD."

PSALM 118:26

> *"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*
>
> ZECHARIAH 9:9

ὡσαννά

HŌSANNA · "HOSANNA" · G5614

From the Hebrew *hôshîʿāh nāʾ* of Psalm 118:25 — *yasha'*, "save," and *na'*, "please, now": "Save us, we pray!" By Jesus' day it had become a shout of praise at the feasts, but it never lost its root. All six New Testament uses come at the entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:9, 15; Mark 11:9–10; John 12:13). The crowd cried "Save now!" and meant Rome; Jesus would save them, that week, from something far worse. The palms are *ta baia tōn phoinikōn* (G902, only here), "the branches of the palm trees."

ὀνάριον

ONARION · "A YOUNG DONKEY" · G3678

A diminutive of *onos*, donkey — a little donkey, a colt — and used only here in the New Testament. John does not tell how it was found (Matthew 21 and Mark 11 do); he simply sets the animal against the palms. The crowd's palms say "conquering king"; the donkey says Zechariah 9:9, "humble, and mounted on a donkey." John's quotation opens "Fear not" — the King who comes this way is not coming to crush His people but to save them.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik explains that palm branches were a symbol of Jewish nationalism, so "The crowd looked to Jesus as a political and national savior, but not so much as a spiritual savior." Their "Hosanna" draws on Psalm 118. Jesus answers by fulfilling Zechariah 9:9; with Morris, "The ass speaks of peace," and with Tenney, "He did not come as a conqueror but as a messenger of peace." The Pharisees' complaint in verse 19 is a confession of failure: "The popularity of Jesus was offensive to His enemies."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul (March 2003) traces the palms to the Maccabees: "The palm branch became their national symbol of victory," and later revolt coins bore it. "The people want someone to come into town, riding on a horse, who will drive the Romans out." But "The word hosanna is a plea that God would save right now," from the Hallel psalms the pilgrims knew by heart. "Jesus, instead of riding the steed of a military victor or a king, enters on a lowly donkey." The lesson: "He was the King that God had appointed, not the king they had conjured up in their own expectations" — a warning to all of us who come to Jesus with private agendas.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon preached the entry from Matthew's account of the same scene and the same Zechariah text ("The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem," No. 405, 1861). Jesus publicly claimed to be King — but refused to be a worldly one: "His kingdom is not of this world, else would his servants fight." In this kingdom "The law-book is here in the heart, the barrister is here in the conscience," and "His armies are loving thoughts, his troops are kind words." The picture is "Poverty enthroned on Poverty's own beast," and such a King always stirs the world: "Do not believe the gospel is preached at all if it does not make a stir."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry reads the palms and hosannas as a welcome to the King of Israel, and the donkey as humility, not pomp: "Christ has chosen the weak and foolish things." The disciples did not understand at first, but after He was glorified they remembered what was written of Him. On the Pharisees' admission that they were getting nowhere, he writes, "There is nothing got by opposing Christ," and "God will accomplish his own purposes in spite of them."

III
MOVEMENT

JOHN 12:20–26

Unless a Grain of Wheat Dies

Greeks ask to see Jesus — and He answers with a seed, a death and a harvest

20 *Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast;* 21 *these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."* 22 *Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus.* 23 *And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.* 24 *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.* 25 *"He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.* 26 *"If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.*

JOHN 12:20–26

"You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies;"

1 CORINTHIANS 15:36

FIGURE · THE GRAIN OF WHEAT

THE GRAIN OF WHEAT · JOHN 12:24–26, 32



THE SON vv24, 32–33	He dies ("the kind of death by which He was to die," v33) and is "lifted up from the earth" — and so He **"will draw all men to Myself" (v32): Jew and Greek alike.**
THE SERVANT vv25–26	"He who loves his life loses it" — the grain kept in the hand. "He who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal." **Serve → follow → "where I am, there My servant will be" → "the Father will honor him."**

Read the top row as the parable, then the two rows below as its two applications: the Son who dies and draws, and the servant who loses his life to keep it.

κόκκος τοῦ σίτου

KOKKOS TOU SITOU · "A GRAIN OF WHEAT" · G2848

Kokkos is a single grain or kernel — the same word as the "mustard seed" of the parables (Matthew 13:31) and Paul's bare seed in 1 Corinthians 15:37. John uses it only here. The verse turns on two outcomes: *monos menei*, "it remains alone" — safe, intact and fruitless — or *polyn karpon pherei*, "it bears much fruit." The Greeks have asked to see Jesus; He answers that they will see Him rightly only from the cross. The harvest of verse 24 is the "all men" of verse 32.

ὁ φιλῶν … ὁ μισῶν

HO PHILŌN … HO MISŌN · "HE WHO LOVES … HE WHO HATES" · G5368, G3404

Verse 25 sets *phileō*, fond attachment, against *miseō*, which can mean "to hate" or, in Hebrew idiom, "to love less" (compare Luke 14:26 with Matthew 10:37). The object is *psychē*, the soul-life, the self. The man who clutches his life loses (*apollyei*) it; the man who holds it loosely "in this world" will keep it "to life eternal" (*eis zōēn aiōnion*). Then three uses of "serve" (*diakoneō*, *diakonos*) in verse 26 — the servant goes where the Master goes, even to a cross.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that Jesus answers the Greeks' request by speaking of His hour, and "Jesus didn't mean that He would be glorified in the eyes of men." The glory He means is the cross: "Something the world could only see as disgraceful humiliation, Jesus saw as being glorified." The seed must die to bear fruit, and so must self-will in the disciple, who loses his life to keep it, follows, and serves. He takes Spurgeon's line on the order of grace and work: "We are not saved by service, but we are saved to service."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul (March 2003) observes that Gentiles could go no farther than the Court of the Gentiles; their request points ahead to a church that will include them. In John the hour of suffering and the hour of glory become one. On the grain he presses his doctrine of the atonement: "The Father makes certain that the wheat that dies bears fruit," and "It is not possible, not even theoretically possible, that the atonement of Christ could go without fruit" — Christ's death secures a people, not merely a possibility, a point on which other believers frame the atonement more broadly. Disciples share His road: losing life for Christ means sharing His shame and His honor.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

In "The Corn of Wheat Dying to Bring Forth Fruit" Spurgeon says Christ, though glorious already, was to be glorified through the shame of the cross — and "Christ is glorified in the souls that he saves." "Our Lord Jesus cannot bear to be alone," so He went into the ground. His teaching and example save no one without His death: "Christ's death is the life of his teaching." The same law holds for us — "Death precedes growth" — and for every servant of others: "The Saviour of others cannot save himself," and "A sermon that costs nothing is worth nothing."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry sees in the Greeks the firstfruits of the Gentiles, and in their approach to Philip a pattern: "Those that would have the knowledge of Christ must seek it." Christ's glory comes by His death, as the grain that "abideth alone" unless it falls into the ground. Those who serve Him must follow Him, and the Father will honor them — the honor not of the world but of heaven.

IV
MOVEMENT

JOHN 12:27–36

If I Am Lifted Up

A troubled soul, a voice from heaven, the ruler of this world cast out — and a warning to walk in the Light

27 *"Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour.* 28 *"Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."* 29 *So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him."* 30 *Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.* 31 *"Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.* 32 *"And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."* 33 *But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.* 34 *The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"* 35 *So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.* 36 *"While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.*

JOHN 12:27–36

> *"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;"*
>
> JOHN 3:14

τετάρακται

TETARAKTAI · "HAS BECOME TROUBLED" · G5015

From *tarassō*, to stir up, agitate — the word for water roiled at the pool (5:7). John uses it of Jesus three times: at the tomb (11:33), here, and at the betrayal (13:21) — and then tells the disciples, "Do not let your heart be troubled" (14:1, 27). The perfect tense means a settled state: "My soul has become troubled and stays so." This is John's Gethsemane, days early. Jesus weighs the prayer "Father, save Me from this hour" and lays it down: "for this purpose I came to this hour."

ὑψωθῶ … ἑλκύσω

HYPSŌTHŌ … HELKYSŌ · "I AM LIFTED UP … I WILL DRAW" · G5312, G1670

Hypsoō means to raise high or exalt; John uses it five times, all of the cross (3:14 twice; 8:28; 12:32, 34) — the lifting up is at once execution and exaltation, and verse 33 says He meant "the kind of death by which He was to die." *Helkō* is "to drag, haul" — of a net (21:6, 11) or a sword (18:10); in 6:44 no one comes "unless the Father who sent Me draws him." Teachers differ on "all men": all kinds of people, Gentiles with Jews (the Greeks of v. 20), or every person drawn without exception. In verse 31 the ruler of this world "will be cast out" (*ekblēthēsetai*, from *ekballō*, G1544).

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik holds both truths together: "Jesus received this crucial hour, yet it troubled Him because He knew what the agonies of the cross would involve." He quotes Clarke on the natural horror of death — "God has implanted that abhorrence in nature." Jesus refuses to ask for escape and asks instead that the Father glorify His name. His lifting up judges the world, casts out its ruler, and draws all peoples; with Maclaren, "The Cross is the magnet of Christianity." The crowd, confused by a dying Messiah, is urged to walk in the light while they have it.

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul (March 2003): "Jesus expresses the horror that grabs His soul." He reads "Father, save Me from this hour" as a moment before Gethsemane, swiftly followed by His acceptance of the purpose for which He came. The Father answers audibly — "I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again" — and some hear only thunder, which Sproul turns into a question for every hearer of God's Word: do we hear with understanding? "The way for Christ to be exalted was the road paved with the passion of His agony."

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's "Christ Lifted Up" (No. 139, 1857) calls the crucifixion Christ's glory: "I look upon the cross as the gate of triumph, as the portal of victory." "He was never so lifted up as when he was cast down." So the preacher's work is to lift up Christ crucified — "It is not hell, but Christ, we desire to preach" — for "Christ is his own attraction." Christ draws like a trumpet, a net, cords of love, a standard and a chariot: "the cross is the plank on which we swim to heaven."

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry notes that Christ's troubled soul and His trust in the Father belong together: "Holy mourning is consistent with spiritual joy." The voice from heaven seals His mission. He reads the cross as the judgment of the world, the casting out of Satan, and the means by which Christ draws people to Himself: "The cross of Christ, though to some a stumbling-stone, is to others a loadstone." And the light is given only "a little while": "Walk while you have the light."

V
MOVEMENT

JOHN 12:37–50

They Could Not Believe

Isaiah's two prophecies, secret believers who loved men's approval — and the Light's last public cry

37 *But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet* ⚠ *they were not believing in Him*. 38 *This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED?"* 39 *For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again,* 40 *"*⚠ *HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM."* 41 *These things Isaiah said because* △ *he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him.* 42 *Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue;* 43 *for* ⚠ *they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God*. 44 *And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me.* 45 *"He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me.* 46 *"*△ *I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in* ⟳ *darkness*. 47 *"If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for* △ *I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world*. 48 *"He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him;* ⚠ *the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day*. 49 *"For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.* 50 *"I know that* ☆ *His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."*

JOHN 12:37–50

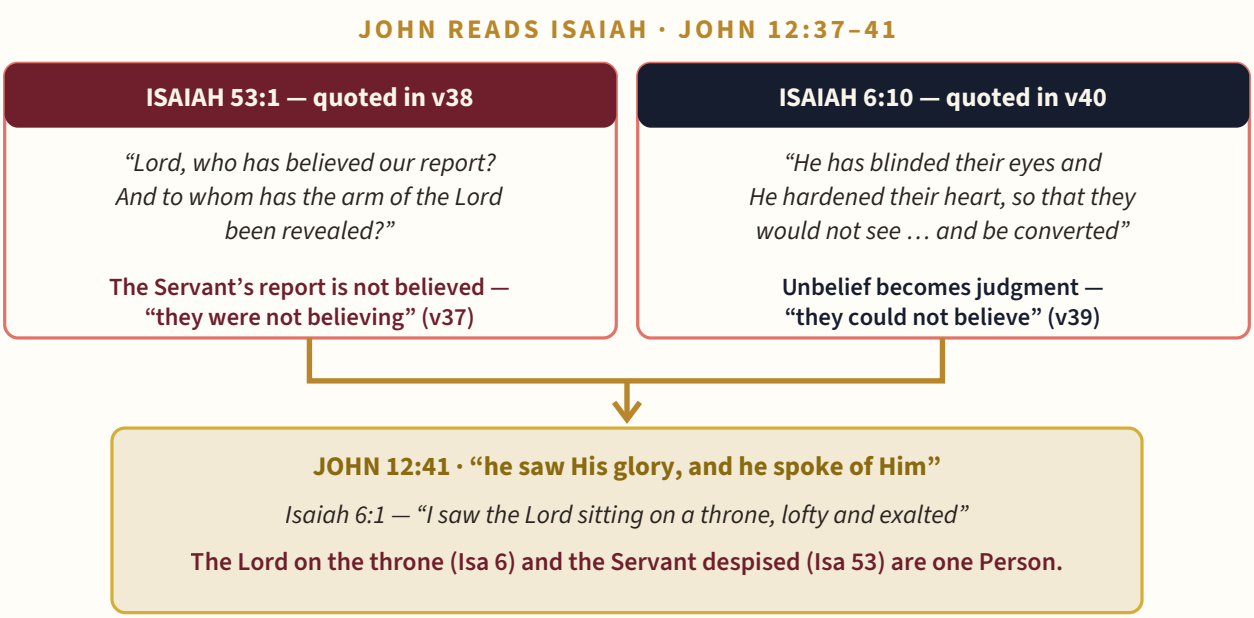
"Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?"

ISAIAH 53:1

"In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple."

ISAIAH 6:1

FIGURE · ISAIAH SAW HIS GLORY



John joins two passages of Isaiah to explain unbelief — and then says both were about the One whose glory Isaiah saw on the throne.

τετύφλωκεν … ἐπώρωσεν

TETYPHLŌKEN … EPŌRŌSEN · "HE HAS BLINDED … HE HARDENED" · G5186, G4456

Typhloō, to make blind, appears only three times (here; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 2:11). *Pōroō* is to petrify, to callus over — used of the disciples' hard hearts (Mark 6:52; 8:17) and of Israel's partial hardening (Romans 11:7; 2 Corinthians 3:14). Verse 37 says they "were not believing" (imperfect: they kept refusing); verse 39, "they could not believe" (*ouk ēdynanto*). John does not let either line cancel the other: a long refusal becomes a judicial inability. And Romans 11 adds what John 12 does not say — the hardening of Israel is "partial" and "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in."

ἀποσυνάγωγοι

APOSYNAGŌGOI · "PUT OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE" · G656

A word only John uses, three times: the blind man's parents feared it (9:22), these rulers feared it (12:42), and Jesus warns His disciples it will happen to them (16:2). Expulsion meant losing worship, family, trade and standing. John's verdict in verse 43 uses *doxa*, "glory," twice: "they loved the *doxa* of men rather than the *doxa* of God" — the same word as "he saw His glory" two verses earlier. Isaiah saw the glory of Christ and spoke; the rulers saw it and kept quiet to keep their own.

DAVID GUZIK · Enduring Word

Guzik notes that John has recorded many signs that "should cause us to believe in Him," yet the nation did not. He reads Isaiah 53:1 and 6:10 as showing both God's revealed truth and His judicial hardening, while the people remain responsible; with Morris, "He does not mean that the blinding takes place without the will or against the will of these people." On the silent rulers he gives Barclay's "Secret discipleship is a contradiction in terms," but also Trench's gentler question, "Are all Christians heroic? Is there no smoking flax?" Verses 44–50 are "the last words in John's gospel from Jesus to the public" — and, with Morris, "His last word is not one of condemnation. It is one of tender appeal."

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul (March 2003) says faith is not mere assent: even a raised Lazarus did not produce belief, so the Spirit must remove blindness. Isaiah 53 describes the report few believe, Isaiah 6 the commission that brought judicial blindness: "If people do not want to hear, God stops their ears. If they do not want to see, He covers their eyes." God "turns the sinner over to his sin, which is the most ghastly judgment any person can ever receive." And verse 41 is a claim for Christ's deity: "Isaiah saw Christ on the throne in His glory before Christ was even born." Sproul ends by grounding missions in the Father sending the Son and the Son sending the church.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon's short piece on this passage, "Believers Shall not Abide in Darkness," takes up the promise of verse 46 for Christians who cannot see the way ahead: "Perhaps the worst feature of darkness is, that it is so bewildering." "The question that now chills the heart is — How can God deliver me?" Like a river that seems blocked until "there has been a turn in the stream," God opens a road we could not see. So, "Cease from this unbelieving bewilderment" — and rest in the Lord.

MATTHEW HENRY · Commentary on the Whole Bible

Henry warns that light is lent, not owned: "Time is short, and perhaps opportunity not so long." He takes "could not believe" as a settled moral refusal met by God's just judgment, and reads verse 41 as a witness to Christ's divinity. Of the rulers he writes, "Love of the praise of men is a very great prejudice to the power and practice of religion and godliness" — yet he is charitable too: "Some are really better than they seem to be," and "It may be, there are more good people than we think there are." Christ's words will judge unbelievers on the last day, because they are the Father's words.

VI
THEME

CROSS-REFERENCES

The Passage in the Whole Bible

From the bronze serpent to the name above every name — where John 12 reaches back and forward

> *"And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived."*
>
> NUMBERS 21:9

> *"Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You,"*
>
> JOHN 17:1

> *"For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,"*
>
> PHILIPPIANS 2:9

> *"Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil,"*
>
> HEBREWS 2:14

> *"Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.""*
>
> JOHN 8:12

> *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*
>
> JOHN 3:16

R.C. SPROUL · Ligonier · St. Andrew's

Sproul reads verse 41 back into Isaiah 6: the One Isaiah saw "on the throne in His glory" was Christ before His birth — so the Lord of Isaiah 6 and the rejected Servant of Isaiah 53 are the same Person.

C.H. SPURGEON · Metropolitan Tabernacle

Spurgeon sees verse 32 as the whole of preaching: Christ lifted up on the cross "was never so lifted up as when he was cast down."

SECTION II · STUDY HELPS

At a Glance

Four voices, one chapter

Four teachers, one turning-point chapter. Guzik reads the scenes and their characters; Sproul supplies the history (Josephus, the Maccabees, the Court of the Gentiles) and presses the doctrine of the atonement and judicial hardening; Spurgeon turns each scene toward fellowship, preaching and service; Henry gathers it into proverbs. Sproul's reading of "bears much fruit" and the hardening is Reformed; other believers frame both more broadly. Spurgeon's entry sermon is on Matthew's account of the same day.

THE MOVEMENT	GUZIK · the text	SPROUL · the doctrine	SPURGEON · the heart	HENRY · the counsel
I · Perfume at Bethany	Half the Gospel is this week; Judas hid his heart from all but Jesus.	Expedience vs extravagance; a year's wages poured out in worship.	Better to be Lazarus and commune than Martha and serve.	Proud men think all ill-advised who do not advise with them.
II · The King on a donkey	A political savior wanted; the ass speaks of peace.	Hosanna = save now; the King God appointed, not the one they conjured.	Poverty enthroned on Poverty's own beast; the gospel makes a stir.	Nothing is got by opposing Christ.
III · The grain of wheat	Glory in what the world sees as humiliation; saved to service.	The wheat that dies must bear fruit; the hour of suffering is the hour of glory.	Christ cannot bear to be alone; death precedes growth.	Those who would know Christ must seek Him.
IV · Lifted up	He received the hour yet was troubled; the cross is the magnet.	Horror grabs His soul; some hear only thunder.	Never so lifted up as when cast down; preach Christ crucified.	Holy mourning and joy together; a stumbling-stone or a loadstone.
V · Unbelief and appeal	Hardening without coercion; no smoking flax quenched; a tender last word.	God stops the ears that will not hear; Isaiah saw Christ on the throne.	In bewildering darkness, wait for the turn in the stream.	Opportunity is short; more good people than we think.

JOHN 12:1–50 · A COMPARATIVE READING

† Key Insights to Carry

- **Love is extravagant; calculation is Judas's language.** Mary poured out about a year's wages; Judas priced it. Sproul set the chapter's two values side by side: expediency and extravagance. SPROUL
- **Pure nard, nothing cut into it.** *Pistikos* means genuine, unadulterated. Mary's worship was the real thing, and the whole house smelled of it. THE GREEK
- **Hosanna means "Save us now."** The crowd meant Rome. Sproul: they wanted a king "who will drive the Romans out"; God sent the King on a donkey. SPROUL
- **The palms and the donkey argue with each other.** Palms said national victory; the donkey said Zechariah 9:9 — humble, bringing salvation. Morris (in Guzik): "The ass speaks of peace." GUZIK
- **"The hour has come."** All through John the hour has "not yet come" (2:4; 7:30; 8:20). The Greeks' request is the signal: now the grain must fall. THE TEXT
- **A seed kept is a seed lost.** "It remains alone" is the fate of the self-protected life. Spurgeon: "Death precedes growth." SPURGEON
- **Troubled and obedient at once.** *Tetaraktai* (v. 27) — John's Gethsemane. Guzik: "Jesus received this crucial hour, yet it troubled Him." THE GREEK

- **Lifted up means both cross and throne.** *Hypsoō* in John is always the crucifixion — and always exaltation. Spurgeon: "He was never so lifted up as when he was cast down." SPURGEON
- **Isaiah saw Jesus.** The glory of Isaiah 6 is the glory of Christ (v. 41). Sproul: "Isaiah saw Christ on the throne in His glory before Christ was even born." SPROUL
- **Glory from men or glory from God.** The rulers loved the *doxa* of men more than the *doxa* of God (v. 43) — the same word as Isaiah's vision. Henry: "Some are really better than they seem to be," but silence is still costly. HENRY

† Questions for the Table

1 **What would it look like for me to "waste" something costly on Jesus this week — time, money, pride — without calculating the return?**

Mary poured out about a year's wages; Judas priced it.

12:3–8; Mark 14:9

2 **Like the crowd, what "private agenda" have I brought to Jesus — and how have I been disappointed when He came on a donkey instead of a warhorse?**

Sproul: the King God appointed, not the king we conjure up.

12:12–16; Zech 9:9

3 **What part of my life am I keeping "in the hand" so it stays safe — and alone? What would it mean to let it fall into the ground?**

A seed kept is a seed lost; death precedes growth.

12:24–25

4 **Jesus said, "Now My soul has become troubled," and still obeyed. Where is my soul troubled right now, and what would "Father, glorify Your name" sound like in that place?**

Troubled and obedient at once.

12:27–28; 14:1

5 **Whose approval am I most afraid to lose if I openly confess Christ — at work, at home, on the yard, with old friends?**

They loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.

12:42–43; Matt 10:32

6 **Jesus' last public words were an appeal, not a threat. Who do I know who is walking in darkness, and how can I point him to the Light while there is time?**

"Walk while you have the Light."

12:35–36, 46–47

John 12 opens with perfume and closes with a warning. In between, a crowd hails a King they don't understand, Greeks ask to see Him, and Jesus tells them where to look: a grain of wheat falling into the ground, a Man lifted up on a cross. The hour has come. The Light is still among us for a little while — believe in the Light.

Teaching the Word. Watching the Times. — Smith For Christ

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