



## The Light of the World (John 12)

*Notes: Week Twelve*

### John 12 (HCSB)

#### The Anointing at Bethany

<sup>12</sup> Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany where Lazarus<sup>[a]</sup> was, the one Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> So they gave a dinner for Him there; Martha was serving them, and Lazarus was one of those reclining at the table with Him. <sup>3</sup> Then Mary took a pound of fragrant oil—pure and expensive nard—anoointed Jesus’ feet, and wiped His feet with her hair. So the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

<sup>4</sup> Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot (who was about to betray Him), said, <sup>5</sup> “Why wasn’t this fragrant oil sold for 300 denarii<sup>[b]</sup> and given to the poor?” <sup>6</sup> He didn’t say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He was in charge of the money-bag and would steal part of what was put in it.

<sup>7</sup> Jesus answered, “Leave her alone; she has kept it for the day of My burial. <sup>8</sup> For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.”

#### The Decision to Kill Lazarus

<sup>9</sup> Then a large crowd of the Jews learned He was there. They came not only because of Jesus, but also to see Lazarus the one He had raised from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Therefore the chief priests decided to kill Lazarus also<sup>11</sup> because he was the reason many of the Jews were deserting them<sup>[c]</sup> and believing in Jesus.

#### The Triumphal Entry

<sup>12</sup> The next day, when the large crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, <sup>13</sup> they took palm branches and went out to meet Him. They kept shouting: “*Hosanna!* He who comes in the name of the Lord is the blessed One<sup>[d]</sup>—the King of Israel!”

<sup>14</sup> Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written: <sup>15</sup> Fear no more, Daughter Zion. Look, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt.<sup>[e]</sup>

<sup>16</sup> His disciples did not understand these things at first. However, when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about Him and that they had done these things to Him. <sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, the crowd, which had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify.<sup>[f]</sup> <sup>18</sup> This is also why the crowd met Him, because they heard He had done this sign.

<sup>19</sup> Then the Pharisees said to one another, “You see? You’ve accomplished nothing. Look—the world has gone after Him!”

## Jesus Predicts His Crucifixion

<sup>20</sup> Now some Greeks were among those who went up to worship at the festival. <sup>21</sup> So they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested of him, “Sir, we want to see Jesus.”

<sup>22</sup> Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup> Jesus replied to them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

<sup>24</sup> “I assure you: Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces a large crop.<sup>[g]</sup> <sup>25</sup> The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me. Where I am, there My servant also will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

<sup>27</sup> “Now My soul is troubled. What should I say—Father, save Me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify Your name!”<sup>[h]</sup>

Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again!”

<sup>29</sup> The crowd standing there heard it and said it was thunder. Others said that an angel had spoken to Him.

<sup>30</sup> Jesus responded, “This voice came, not for Me, but for you. <sup>31</sup> Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out. <sup>32</sup> As for Me, if I am lifted up<sup>[i]</sup> from the earth I will draw all people to Myself.” <sup>33</sup> He said this to signify what kind of death He was about to die.

<sup>34</sup> Then the crowd replied to Him, “We have heard from the scripture that the Messiah will remain forever. So how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’?<sup>[j]</sup> Who is this Son of Man?”

<sup>35</sup> Jesus answered, “The light will be with you only a little longer. Walk while you have the light so that darkness doesn’t overtake you. The one who walks in darkness doesn’t know where he’s going. <sup>36</sup> While you have the light, believe in the light so that you may become sons of light.” Jesus said this, then went away and hid from them.

## Isaiah’s Prophecies Fulfilled

<sup>37</sup> Even though He had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in Him. <sup>38</sup> But this was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet, who said:<sup>[k]</sup>

Lord, who has believed our message?  
And who has the arm of the Lord  
been revealed to?<sup>[l]</sup>

<sup>39</sup> This is why they were unable to believe, because Isaiah also said:

<sup>40</sup> He has blinded their eyes  
and hardened their hearts,  
so that they would not see with their eyes  
or understand with their hearts,  
and be converted,  
and I would heal them.<sup>[m]</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Isaiah said these things because<sup>[n]</sup> he saw His glory and spoke about Him.

<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, many did believe in Him even among the rulers, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, so they would not be banned from the synagogue. <sup>43</sup> For they loved praise from men more than praise from God.<sup>[o]</sup>

## A Summary of Jesus' Mission

<sup>44</sup> Then Jesus cried out, "The one who believes in Me believes not in Me, but in Him who sent Me. <sup>45</sup> And the one who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. <sup>46</sup> I have come as a light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me would not remain in darkness. <sup>47</sup> If anyone hears My words and doesn't keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. <sup>48</sup> The one who rejects Me and doesn't accept My sayings has this as his judge:<sup>[p]</sup> The word I have spoken will judge him on the last day. <sup>49</sup> For I have not spoken on My own, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a command as to what I should say and what I should speak. <sup>50</sup> I know that His command is eternal life. So the things that I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

### Footnotes:

- a. [John 12:1](#) Other mss read *Lazarus who died*
- b. [John 12:5](#) This amount was about a year's wages for a common worker.
- c. [John 12:11](#) Lit *going away*
- d. [John 12:13](#) [Ps 118:25-26](#)
- e. [John 12:15](#) [Zch 9:9](#)
- f. [John 12:17](#) Other mss read *Meanwhile the crowd, which had been with Him, continued to testify that He had called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead.*
- g. [John 12:24](#) Lit *produces much fruit*
- h. [John 12:28](#) Other mss read *Your Son*
- i. [John 12:32](#) Or *exalted*
- j. [John 12:34](#) Or *exalted*
- k. [John 12:38](#) Lit *which he said*
- l. [John 12:38](#) [Is 53:1](#)
- m. [John 12:40](#) [Is 6:10](#)
- n. [John 12:41](#) Other mss read *when*
- o. [John 12:43](#) Lit *loved glory of men more than glory of God*; v. [41](#); [Jn 5:41](#)
- p. [John 12:48](#) Lit *has the one judging him*

# Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*<sup>1</sup>

## John 12

**12:1-11** The anointing by Mary of Bethany foreshadowed Jesus' imminent arrest, trial, condemnation, crucifixion, and burial ([vv. 7-8](#)). The account is closely linked with the raising of Lazarus, whose presence served as proof of Jesus' miracle-working power and thus fueled the Jewish leaders' hostility toward Jesus. What is more, the anointing also revealed Judas's antagonism toward Jesus ([vv. 4-8](#)). While only [verse 3](#) is devoted to Mary's act of devotion, five verses speak of Judas's objection and Jesus' rebuke of Judas ([vv. 4-8](#)).

**12:1** On this Passover, see notes at [2:13](#) and [11:55](#). **Six days before the Passover** most likely refers to Saturday, which began Friday evening at sundown.

**12:2 Dinner** (Gk *deipnon*) refers to the main meal of the day, which was usually held toward evening ([Lk 14:12](#)). The term may also refer to a festive banquet ([Mt 23:6](#); [Mk 6:21](#)). It is used later of the Last Supper ([Jn 13:2,4](#); [21:20](#)). **Reclining at the table** may imply a banquet rather than a regular meal ([13:2-5,23](#)).

**12:3** A **pound** or half a liter was a large amount of **fragrant oil** or perfume ([11:2](#)). **Pure and expensive nard** was imported from northern India and used by the Romans for anointing the head. The Synoptic Gospels indicate that the perfume was kept in an alabaster jar ([Mt 26:7](#); [Mk 14:3](#)). Attending to the **feet** of a guest was the work of servants ([1:27](#); [13:5](#)), so Mary's actions showed humility and devotion. Her wiping of Jesus' feet with her **hair** is remarkable since Jewish women rarely unbound their hair in public.

**12:5** A total of **300 denarii** represents the modern-day equivalent of a year's wages (see note at [6:7](#)). This was a lot of money for a jar of perfume and a lot of money to "waste" by breaking the jar, as Judas observed.

**12:6** Judas's motivation was impure. Before he betrayed Jesus, he was already a **thief**.

**12:8** Jesus' response may have been an allusion to [Dt 15:11](#).

**12:12-19** Jesus' triumphal entry, with people waving palm branches to greet Him, is celebrated in Christian tradition as Palm Sunday. Jesus' riding into Jerusalem on a donkey fulfilled OT Scripture ([Zech 9:9](#); see [Ps 118:25-26](#)). The waving of palm branches, a symbolic act celebrating victory over one's enemy and/or reception of a king, may indicate that the people thought Jesus would take Israel's vacant throne and deliver the nation from Roman occupation and suppression. Yet Jesus' popular acclaim would not last; some people who now hailed Him as victor called for His crucifixion only a few days later.

**12:12** **The next day** probably refers to Sunday of Passion Week, now known as Palm Sunday. The **festival** was the Passover celebration.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "John 12".

**12:13 Palm branches** were a Jewish national symbol. The people hailed Jesus as the Davidic king of [Ps 118:26](#) (cp. [Mt 21:4-9](#)). [Psalm 118](#) was part of the Hallel ([Pss 113-118](#)), sung by the temple choir at major Jewish festivals.

**12:15** Jesus is depicted as the humble Shepherd-King of [Zech 9:9](#) who came to the Holy City to take His rightful place. An early messianic prophecy spoke of a ruler from Judah who would command the obedience of nations and would ride on a donkey ([Gen 49:10-11](#)). **Fear no more** may be taken from [Isa 40:9](#), which refers to one who brings good tidings to Zion ([Isa 44:2](#)).

**12:19 The world** was an obvious exaggeration, highlighting the Pharisees' frustration ([Ac 17:6](#)).

**12:20-50** This section concludes the first major unit of John's Gospel, which narrates Jesus' mission to the Jews. The approach of some Greeks signaled that Jesus' mission was approaching the climax in which He would die and thus reach all nations. His "hour" was now at hand ([vv. 23-26](#); see note at [2:4](#)); the Son of Man would shortly be "lifted up" (crucified) by men and highly exalted by God the Father ([12:32](#); see note at [3:14](#)). After these things Jesus would be able to draw people (Jews and non-Jews) to Himself ([12:32](#)). Further, the Jewish nation would suffer judgment for rejecting Messiah, who had performed so many signs among them ([vv. 37-40](#)).

**12:20 Greeks** likely refers to Gentiles, not necessarily Grecians (see note at [7:35](#)). They were "God-fearers" who came to Jerusalem to worship at the Passover festival.

**12:21-22** On **Andrew** and **Philip**, see notes at [1:44](#) and [6:5](#). The Greeks may have singled out Philip (who in turn went to get Andrew) because he and Andrew were the only two members of the Twelve with Greek names.

**12:23, 27** On Jesus' **hour**, see note at [2:4](#).

**12:24** The principle of life through death is illustrated by an agricultural example.

**12:25** Following Christ involves self-sacrifice, shown supremely at the cross.

**12:26** This truth extends beyond a disciple's earthly life to his eternal destiny ([7:34,36](#); [14:3](#); [17:24](#)).

**12:27** Jesus' expression of anguish may invoke Davidic psalms such as [Ps 6:3](#) or [42:5,11](#).

**12:28** This is one of only three times during Jesus' earthly ministry when a heavenly voice attested to His identity (cp. His baptism and His transfiguration, [Mt 3:13-17](#) and [17:1-13](#) and parallels).

**12:29** God's revelation through **thunder** and angels is well documented in the OT. Thunder was part of God's appearance at Mount Sinai ([Ex 19:16,19](#)). Angels (or the angel of the Lord) spoke to Hagar ([Gen 21:17](#)), Abraham ([Gen 22:11](#)), Moses ([Ac 7:38](#)), Elijah ([2Ki 1:15](#)), and Daniel ([Dan 10:4-11](#)).

**12:31** The **ruler of this world** in its fallen, sinful state is Satan ([14:30](#); [16:11](#); [1Jn 5:19](#)). **Now**, at the cross, the Devil would be **cast out**, or decisively defeated ([Lk 10:18](#); [Col 2:14-15](#)).

**12:32** This most explicit "lifted up" saying completes the earlier references in [3:14](#) (see note there) and [8:28](#). Very likely, the terminology echoes [Isa 52:13](#). **All people**, in the present context, means "all kinds of people"—both Jews and Gentiles ([10:16](#); [11:52](#); cp. [12:20-21](#)).

[12:33](#) On the **kind of death** Jesus was about to die, see note at [21:19](#).

[12:34](#) This is the final of several messianic misunderstandings featured in John's Gospel (cp. [7:27,31,41-42](#); see note at [7:25-44](#)). This reference may find its basis in passages such as [Ps 89:4,36-37](#) (which in turn is grounded in [2Sam 7:12-16](#)); [Ps 110:1](#); [Isa 9:7](#); and [Dan 7:14](#).

[12:35-36, 46](#) Jesus' answer was indirect. In light of the fact that the light would be with people **only a little longer**, His crucifixion was near ([7:33](#); [16:16-19](#)). He urged that they **believe in the light** ([9:4](#); [11:10](#); see note at [8:12](#)) while there was still time.

[12:36](#) When Jesus **hid from them**, He illustrated God's imminent judgment and completed His revelatory work to the people of Israel ([1:18](#)).

[12:37-50](#) This indictment identified Israel's wilderness generation with the unbelieving Jews in Jesus' day. Just as the ancient Jews saw God's power (performed through Moses) at the exodus ([Dt 29:2-4](#)) and turned away, so the Jews in Jesus' day watched miraculous signs (performed by Jesus) and responded with grumbling ([Jn 6:41,61](#); cp. [Ex 17:3](#); [Num 11:1](#)) and unbelief ([Jn 12:39](#)).

[12:38-40](#) John cited [Isa 53:1](#) and [6:10](#) to indicate that the Jewish rejection of Jesus was predicted by Scripture and thus served to confirm rather than thwart God's plan. [Isaiah 53:1](#) referred to the Servant of the Lord who was rejected by the people but exalted by God. [Isaiah 6:10](#) attributed people's hardening ultimately to God Himself (similar to Pharaoh's; see notes at [Rm 9:17](#) and [9:18](#)). These verses are the first in a series of fulfillment quotations in the second half of John's Gospel.

[12:41](#) The reference to Isaiah seeing **His** (Jesus') **glory** may indicate that Isaiah foresaw that God would be pleased with a Suffering Servant who would be "raised and lifted up and greatly exalted" ([Isa 52:13](#)). Like Abraham, Isaiah saw "Jesus' day" (cp. [Jn 8:58](#)).

[12:42](#) On fear of the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin, see notes at [7:13](#) and [9:22](#).

[12:44-50](#) This section summarizes Jesus' message and conveys His final appeal, bringing closure to the first major section of John's Gospel. **Sent Me** presupposes the Jewish idea of representation, according to which a messenger's identity is indistinct from that of the one who sent him. [Verses 48-50](#) echo Deuteronomy ([Dt 18:19](#); [31:19,26](#)).

## The Apologetics Study Bible<sup>2</sup>

### *John 12*

[12:1](#) Mark ([14:3-9](#)) and Matthew ([26:6-13](#)) seem to place this account on the last night of Jesus' life. But there is no explicit chronological connection there, so they probably relocated this passage thematically because of its message—preparation for burial. John preserved the exact chronology. [Luke 7:36-50](#) is an entirely separate incident with some similar details.

[12:3](#) Did the perfume cover Jesus' feet, as here, or His head ([Mk 14:3](#))? Probably both, since anointing a body for burial required covering the entire corpse.

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<sup>2</sup> Ted Cabal, ed., *The Apologetics Study Bible: Understanding Why You Believe*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1595.

[12:12-19](#) The way people acted on Palm Sunday contrasted dramatically with the crowd's clamoring for Jesus' crucifixion five days later. Some in the two crowds would have differed, but this was also the last time the onlookers thought that maybe Jesus was going to assume an earthly kingship and free His nation. When it became clear that was not His purpose, disillusionment and hostility reappeared.

[12:27-28](#) These verses sound like an equivalent to Gethsemane reported in Mt, Mk, and Lk. But here the context was public, so this must have been a separate, earlier incident. If Jesus really did believe He was to be crucified ([v. 32](#)), He surely would have wrestled with that fact more than once.

[12:32](#) This is not universalism (saving everyone) but the gospel offer to all without distinction—drawing people of every kind to Himself. Some will not receive Jesus, but for all who do, they will have the right to be children of God ([1:12](#)).

[12:39-40](#) Is this deterministic predestination? No, for in [Isa 6](#) (quoted here) God was responding to prolonged unbelief and rebellion by Israel and still held out hope for a righteous remnant who repented ([v. 13](#)). The same was true here, as some did in fact believe ([v. 42](#)). For those who didn't, God merely confirmed their freely chosen disobedience.

[12:41](#) In context, [Isa 6:10](#) wasn't even a prediction, much less one about Jesus. But Jews recognized typological as well as predictive prophecy. Typology is the repetition of a significant pattern of God's activity in redemptive history that can properly be ascribed only to Him. Isaiah did make predictions about the Messiah on numerous occasions, and the context of [Isa 6](#) looked beyond the present, evil generation of Isaiah, so it is understandable why John would believe that Isaiah previewed Jesus' glory.

#### Article: More Evidence for Life After Death

by J. P. Moreland

The case for life after death consists in empirical (observable) and nonempirical (theoretical) arguments. The empirical arguments are two: near-death experiences (NDEs) and the resurrection of Jesus. A sufficient body of evidence exists for the view that people have died, left their bodies, had various experiences, and returned to their bodies. Attempts to explain NDEs as natural phenomena fail in those cases where the disembodied person gained knowledge about things miles away (e.g., conversations of family members). One must be cautious about theological interpretations of NDEs, but their reality is well established. Some argue that, even if true, NDEs provide evidence only for temporary existence beyond death. Strictly speaking, this is correct. However, if biological death does not bring the cessation of consciousness, it is hard to see what could do so after death.

Jesus' resurrection is defended in other articles in this Bible. Suffice it to say here that if Jesus rose from the dead, this qualifies Him to speak about life after death because His resurrection provides evidence that He was the Son of God and means that He returned from the afterlife and told us about it.

The nonempirical arguments divide into theistic-dependent and theistic-independent ones. The former assume the existence of God and from that fact argue for immortality. If God is who He says He is, the case is proven beyond reasonable doubt. Three such theistic-dependent arguments are especially important.



The first is two-pronged and argues from the image and love of God. Given that humans have tremendous value as image bearers and God is a preserver of tremendously high value, then God is a preserver of persons. Moreover, given that God loves His image bearers and has a project of bringing them to full maturity and fellowship with Him, God will sustain humans to continue this love affair and His important project on their behalf.

The second argument, based on divine justice, asserts that in this life goods and evils are not evenly distributed. A just God must balance the scales in another life, and an afterlife is thus required.

Finally, there is the argument from biblical revelation. It can be established that the Bible is the truthful Word of God, and it affirms life after death. For this to be an argument, rational considerations must be marshaled on behalf of the Bible's divine status.

Two nontheistic dependent arguments exist for immortality. The first is a three-part argument from desire:

- (1) The desire for life after death is a natural desire.
- (2) Every natural desire corresponds to some real state of affairs that can fulfill it.
- (3) Therefore, the desire for life after death corresponds to some real state of affairs—namely life after death—that fulfills it.

Critics claim that the desire for immortality is nothing but an expression of ethical egoism. People do not universally desire it, and even when they do, it is a learned, not a natural, desire. Further, even if it is a natural desire, sometimes such desires are frustrated. Thus the desire argument is not necessarily a strong argument, but nonetheless it does have some merit.

The second argument claims that consciousness and the self are immaterial, not physical, and this supports belief in life after death in two ways: (1) It makes disembodied existence and personal identity in the afterlife intelligible. (2) It provides evidence for the existence of God. This, in turn, provides grounds for reintroducing the theistic-dependent arguments for life after death.

The argument for consciousness being nonphysical involves the claim that once one gets an accurate description of consciousness—sensations, emotions, thoughts, beliefs—it becomes clear that it is not physical. Conscious states are characterized by their inner, private, qualitative feel made known by introspection. Since physical states lack these features, consciousness is not physical.

The case for an immaterial self is rooted in the claim that in first-person introspection we are aware of our own egos as immaterial centers of consciousness. This awareness grounds intuitions that when one has an arm cut off, has a portion of one's brain removed, or gains or loses memories and personality traits, one does not become a partial person or a different person altogether.

While these two arguments provide some grounds for belief in an afterlife, they are far from conclusive. At the end of the day, the justification of belief in life after death is largely theistic dependent.



## NLT Life Application Study Bible<sup>3</sup>

### John 12

**12:3** Essence of nard was a fragrant ointment imported from the mountains of India. Thus, it was very expensive. The amount Mary used was worth a year's wages.

**12:4-6** Judas often dipped into the disciples' money bag for his own use. Quite likely, Jesus knew what Judas was doing (**2:24, 25**; **6:64**), but never did or said anything about it. Similarly, when we choose the way of sin, God may not immediately do anything to stop us, but this does not mean he approves of our actions. What we deserve will come.

**12:5, 6** Judas used a pious phrase to hide his true motives. But Jesus knew what was in his heart. Judas' life had become a lie, and the devil was gaining more and more control over him (**13:27**). Satan is the father of lies, and a lying character opens the door to his influence. Jesus' knowledge of us should make us want to keep our actions consistent with our words. Because we have nothing to fear with him, we should have nothing to hide.

**12:7, 8** This act and Jesus' response to it do not teach us to ignore the poor so we can spend money extravagantly for Christ. This was a unique act for a specific occasion—an anointing that anticipated Jesus' burial and a public declaration of faith in him as Messiah. Jesus' words should have taught Judas a valuable lesson about the worth of money. Unfortunately, Judas did not take heed; soon he would sell his Master's life for 30 pieces of silver.

**12:10, 11** The leading priests' blindness and hardness of heart caused them to sink ever deeper into sin. They rejected the Messiah and planned to kill him, and then plotted to murder Lazarus as well. One sin leads to another. From the Jewish leaders' point of view, they could accuse Jesus of blasphemy because he claimed equality with God. But Lazarus had done nothing of the kind. They wanted Lazarus dead simply because he was a living witness to Jesus' power. This is a warning to us to avoid sin. Sin leads to more sin, a downward spiral that can be stopped only by repentance and the power of the Holy Spirit to change our behavior.

**12:13** Jesus began his last week on earth by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey under a canopy of palm branches, with crowds hailing him as their king. To announce that he was indeed the Messiah, Jesus chose a *time* when all Israel would be gathered at Jerusalem, a *place* where huge crowds could see him, and a *way* of proclaiming his mission that was unmistakable. On Palm Sunday we celebrate Jesus' Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem as Lord of lords and King of Peace.

**12:13** The people who were praising God for giving them a king had the wrong idea about Jesus. They were sure he would be a national leader who would restore their nation to its former glory, and thus, they were deaf to the words of their prophets and blind to Jesus' real mission. When it became apparent that Jesus was not going to fulfill their hopes, many people turned against him.

**12:16** After Jesus' resurrection, the disciples understood for the first time many of the prophecies that they had missed along the way. Jesus' words and actions took on new meaning and made more sense. In retrospect, the disciples saw how Jesus had led them into a deeper and better understanding of his truth. Stop now and think about the events in your life leading up to where you are now. How has God led you

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<sup>3</sup>, *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), *WORDsearch CROSS e-book*, 1778-1783.

to this point? As you grow older, you will look back and see God's involvement more clearly than you do now.

**12:18** The people flocked to Jesus because they had heard about his great miracle in raising Lazarus from the dead. Their adoration was short-lived and their commitment shallow, for in a few days they would do nothing to stop his crucifixion. Devotion based only on curiosity or popularity fades quickly.

**12:20, 21** These Greeks probably were converts to the Jewish faith. They may have gone to Philip because, though he was a Jew, he had a Greek name.

**12:23-25** This is a beautiful picture of the necessary sacrifice of Jesus. Unless a kernel of wheat is planted in the soil, it will not become a blade of wheat producing many more seeds. Jesus had to die to pay the penalty for our sin, but also to show his power over death. His resurrection proves he has eternal life. Because Jesus is God, Jesus can give this same eternal life to all who believe in him.

**12:25** We must be so committed to living for Christ that we should "care nothing" for our lives by comparison. This does not mean that we long to die or that we are careless or destructive with the life God has given, but that we are willing to die if doing so will glorify Christ. We must disown the tyrannical rule of our own self-centeredness. By laying aside our striving for advantage, security, and pleasure, we can serve God lovingly and freely. Releasing control of our lives and transferring control to Christ bring eternal life and genuine joy.

**12:26** Many believed that Jesus came for the Jews only. But when Jesus said, "Anyone who wants to be my disciple must follow me," he was talking to these Greeks as well. No matter who the sincere seekers are, Jesus welcomes them. His message is for everyone. Don't allow social or racial differences to become barriers to the Good News. Take the Good News to all people.

**12:27** Jesus knew his crucifixion lay ahead, and because he was human, he dreaded it. He knew he would have to take the sins of the world on himself, and he knew this would separate him from his Father. He wanted to be delivered from this horrible death, but he knew that God sent him into the world to die for our sins, in our place. Jesus said no to his human desires in order to obey his Father and glorify him. Although we will never have to face such a difficult and awesome task, we are still called to obedience. Whatever the Father asks, we should do his will and bring glory to his name.

**12:31** The ruler of this world is Satan, an angel who rebelled against God. Satan is real, not symbolic, and is constantly working against God and those who obey him. Satan tempted Eve in the garden and persuaded her to sin; he tempted Jesus in the wilderness and did not persuade him to fall ([Matthew 4:1-11](#)). Satan has great power, but people can be delivered from his reign of spiritual darkness because of Christ's victory on the cross. Satan is powerful, but Jesus is much more powerful. Jesus' resurrection shattered Satan's deathly power ([Colossians 1:13, 14](#)). To overcome Satan we need faithful allegiance to God's Word, determination to stay away from sin, and the support of other believers.

**12:32-34** The crowd could not believe what Jesus was saying about the Messiah. They were waving palm branches for a victorious Messiah who would set up a political, earthly kingdom that would never end. From their reading of certain Scriptures, they thought the Messiah would never die ([Psalms 89:35, 36](#); [110:4](#); [Isaiah 9:7](#)). Other passages, however, showed that he would die ([Isaiah 53:5-9](#)). Jesus' words did not mesh with their concept of the Messiah. First he had to suffer and die—then he would one day set up his eternal Kingdom. What kind of Messiah, or Savior, are you seeking? Beware of trying to force Jesus into your own mold—he won't fit.

Caiaphas was the leader of the religious group called the Sadducees. Educated and wealthy, they were politically influential in the nation. As the elite group, they were on fairly good terms with Rome. They hated Jesus because he endangered their secure lifestyles and taught a message they could not accept. A kingdom in which leaders *served* had no appeal to them.

Caiaphas's usual policy was to remove any threats to his power by whatever means necessary. For Caiaphas, whether Jesus should die was not in question; the only point to be settled was *when* his death should take place. Not only did Jesus have to be captured and tried; the Jewish high council also needed Roman approval before they could carry out the death sentence. Caiaphas's plans were unexpectedly helped by Judas's offer to betray Christ.

Caiaphas did not realize that his schemes were actually part of a wonderful plan God was carrying out. Caiaphas's willingness to sacrifice another man to preserve his own security was decidedly selfish. By contrast, Jesus' willingness to die for us was a clear example of loving self-sacrifice. Caiaphas thought he had won the battle as Jesus hung on the cross, but he did not count on the Resurrection!

Caiaphas's mind was closed. He couldn't accept the Resurrection even when the evidence was overwhelming, and he attempted to silence those whose lives had been forever changed by the risen Christ ([Matthew 28:12, 13](#)). Caiaphas represents those people who will not believe because they think it will cost them too much to accept Jesus as Lord. They choose the fleeting power, prestige, and pleasures of this life instead of the eternal life God offers those who receive his Son. What is your choice?

## Caiaphas

### Strength and accomplishment

- High priest for 18 years

### Weaknesses and mistakes

- One of the most directly responsible persons for Jesus' death
- Used his office as a means to power and personal security
- Planned Jesus' capture, carried out his illegal trial, pressured Pilate to approve the Crucifixion, attempted to prevent the Resurrection, and later tried to cover up the fact of the Resurrection
- Kept up religious appearances while compromising with Rome
- Involved in the later persecution of Christians

### Lessons from his life

- God uses even the twisted motives and actions of his enemies to bring about his will
- When we cover selfish motives with spiritual objectives and words, God still sees our intentions

### Vital statistics

- Where: Jerusalem
- Occupation: High priest
- Relative: Father-in-law: Annas
- Contemporaries: Jesus, Pilate, Herod Antipas

### Key verses

"Caiaphas, who was high priest at that time, said, 'You don't know what you're talking about! You don't realize that it's better for you that one man should die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed'" ([John 11:49-50](#)).

Caiaphas is mentioned in [Matthew 26:57](#); [Luke 3:2](#); [John 11: 18](#); and in [Acts 4:6](#).

[12:35, 36](#) Jesus said he would be with them in person for only a short time, and they should take advantage of his presence while they had it. Like a light shining in a dark place, he would point out the way they should walk. If they walked in his light, they would become "children of the light," revealing the truth and pointing people to God. As Christians, we are to be Christ's light bearers, letting his light shine through us. How brightly is your light shining? Can others see Christ in your actions?

[12:37, 38](#) Jesus had performed many miracles, but most people still didn't believe in him. Likewise, many today won't believe despite all God does. Don't be discouraged if your witness for Christ doesn't turn as many to him as you'd like. Your job is to continue as a faithful witness. You are responsible to reach out to others, but they are responsible for their own decisions.

[12:39-41](#) People in Jesus' time, like those in the time of Isaiah, would not believe despite the evidence ([12:37](#)). As a result, God hardened their hearts. Does that mean God intentionally prevented these people from believing in him? No, he simply confirmed their own choices. After a lifetime of resisting God, they had become so set in their ways that they wouldn't even try to understand Jesus' message. For such people, it is virtually impossible to come to God—their hearts have been permanently hardened. Other instances of hardened hearts because of constant stubbornness are recorded in [Exodus 9:12](#), [Romans 1:24-28](#), and [2 Thessalonians 2:8-12](#).

[12:42, 43](#) Along with those who refused to believe, many believed but refused to admit it. This is just as bad, and Jesus had strong words for such people (see [Matthew 10:32, 33](#)). People who will not take a stand for Jesus are afraid of rejection or ridicule. Many Jewish leaders wouldn't admit to faith in Jesus because they feared excommunication from the synagogue (which was their livelihood) and loss of their prestigious place in the community. But the praise of others is fickle and short-lived. We should be much more concerned about God's eternal acceptance than about the temporary approval of other people.

[12:45](#) We often wonder what God is like. How can we know the Creator when he doesn't make himself visible? Jesus said plainly that those who see him see God, because he *is* God. If you want to know what God is like, study the person and words of Jesus Christ.

[12:48](#) The purpose of Jesus' first mission on earth was not to judge people, but to show them the way to find salvation and eternal life. When he comes again, one of his main purposes will be to judge people for how they lived on earth. Christ's words that we would *not* accept and obey will condemn us. On the day of judgment, those who accepted Jesus and lived his way will be raised to eternal life ([1 Corinthians 15:51-57](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:15-18](#); [Revelation 21:1-7](#)), and those who rejected Jesus and lived any way they pleased will face eternal punishment ([Revelation 20:11-15](#)). Decide now which side you'll be on, for the consequences of your decision last forever.

Being loved is the most powerful motivation in the world! Our ability to love is often shaped by our experience of love. We usually love others as we have been loved.

Some of the greatest statements about God's loving nature were written by a man who experienced God's love in a unique way. John, Jesus' disciple, expressed his relationship to the Son of God by calling himself "the disciple Jesus loved" ([John 21:20](#)). Although Jesus' love is clearly communicated in all the Gospels, in John's Gospel it is a central theme. Because his own experience of Jesus' love was so strong and personal, John was sensitive to those words and actions of Jesus that illustrated how the one who *is* love loved others.

Jesus knew John fully and loved him fully. He gave John and his brother James the nickname "Sons of Thunder" ([Mark 3:17](#)), perhaps from an occasion when the brothers asked Jesus for permission to "call down fire from heaven" on a village that had refused to welcome Jesus and the disciples ([Luke 9:54](#)). In John's Gospel and letters, we see the great God of love, while the thunder of God's justice bursts from the pages of Revelation.

Jesus confronts each of us as he confronted John. We cannot know the depth of Jesus' love unless we are willing to face the fact that he knows us completely. Otherwise we are fooled into believing we must love the people we pretend to be, not the sinners we actually are. John and all the disciples convince us that God is able and willing to accept us as we are. Being aware of God's love is a great motivator for change. His love is not given in exchange for our efforts; his love frees us to really live. Have you accepted that love?

### **Strengths and accomplishments**

- One of John the Baptist's disciples before following Jesus
- One of the 12 disciples and, with Peter and James, one of the inner three that were closest to Jesus
- Wrote five New Testament books: the Gospel of John; 1, 2, and 3 John; and Revelation

### **Weaknesses and mistakes**

- Along with James, shared a tendency to outbursts of selfishness and anger
- Asked for a special position in Jesus' Kingdom

### **Lessons from his life**

- Those who realize how much they are loved are able to love much
- When God changes a life, he does not take away personality characteristics, but puts them to effective use in his service

### **Vital statistics**

- Occupations: Fisherman, disciple
- Relatives: Father: Zebedee. Mother: Salome. Brother: James.
- Contemporaries: Jesus, Pilate, Herod

### **Key verses**

"Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment for you; rather it is an old one you have old commandment—to love one another—is the same message you heard before. Yet it is also new. Jesus lived the truth of this commandment, and you also are living it. For the darkness is disappearing, and the true light is already shining" ([1 John 2:7-8](#)).

John's story is told throughout the Gospels, Acts, and Revelation.

