



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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John 12:12-19 Commentary New Revised Standard Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [*International Bible Study Commentary*](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [*International Bible Study Forum*](#).

(John 12:12) The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem.

“The next day” became what Christians call “Palm Sunday” (the day after the Sabbath). Jesus entered Jerusalem dramatically at a time when many people were asking themselves if Jesus would even come to the festival, because He was considered an outlaw by the chief priests and Pharisees who wanted to arrest Him (see John 11:56-57). With a grand procession, He gave a sign that announced He was God’s promised Messiah. Though all

four gospels teach highlights of Palm Sunday, only the Gospel of John indicates that Palm Sunday occurred five days before the Passover: for the dinner with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus occurred on the Sabbath six days before Passover (see John 12:1). On this “next day,” Jesus entered Jerusalem to bring peace, but not a peace that would have resulted if a political Messiah had raised an army and defeated their Roman oppressors. Jesus came to bring peace between God and repentant sinners, peace among believers in Him, and peace within the hearts and minds of sinners who turned from their sins and placed their faith in Him (see Luke 19:42).

(John 12:13) So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—the King of Israel!”

“The crowd” that went out from Jerusalem to meet Jesus were those who had come early to Jerusalem to prepare themselves spiritually to celebrate the Passover, and those who lived in Jerusalem who knew that Jesus had healed a man born blind or learned that Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. By entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Jesus gave many of these devout Jews the opportunity to spiritually prepare themselves for the festival by trusting in Him as the Messiah. The crowd used palm branches as flags or banners to wave and to welcome Jesus as they might welcome a victorious king or someone they believed would bring them victory over their enemies. They knew

that Jesus had healed the sick, restored sight to the blind, and had raised the dead. They considered Jesus their Champion, even as they considered David their champion after he slew the giant Goliath and defeated the Philistines. Surely, with the power of God that Jesus demonstrated, He could overthrow the Roman occupation of Jerusalem. So, they shouted “Hosanna,” which can be translated as “save now” or “save us!” Because of Jesus’ many signs and teachings, they knew He came in the name of the Lord with the blessing of God. The Holy Spirit may have worked upon the crowd and inspired the believers to remember and extol Jesus using some of the words in Psalms 118:24-29, “This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. *Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD.* We bless you from the house of the LORD. The LORD is God, and he has given us light. *Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will give thanks to you; you are my God, I will extol you. O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.*” One who comes in the name of the Lord is blessed by God because He is doing the will of God. The crowd wanted Jesus to keep doing the will of God and free them from slavery, even as Moses had freed them from slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt when they celebrated the first Passover. When they called Jesus the King of Israel, they expressed their faith that Jesus was the Messiah, the one God had promised them, and they expected would come to

save them.

(John 12:14) Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:

To give a sign that He was the Messiah, Jesus intentionally fulfilled the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9, which reads, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” The crowds did “rejoice greatly” as Jesus entered Jerusalem publicly, knowing He faced arrest and drawing the attention of everyone. Jesus entered as their king, their Messiah, who was triumphant and victorious in everything He said and did throughout His ministry. Unlike a conqueror of “this world” at that time, who would have entered Jerusalem riding in a chariot or on warhorse, Jesus entered Jerusalem riding humbly on a young donkey, a donkey that had never been ridden before, a donkey that obeyed Him and carried Him even while walking through a noisy crowd waving palm branches in its face, a donkey only God, the Son of God, could have controlled successfully (see Luke 19:30).

(John 12:15) “Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Look, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, John only wrote the portion of the above text from Zechariah that would alert

his readers to turn to Zechariah to read the full text. By word and deed, Jesus assured the people of Jerusalem that they had nothing to fear with His coming. Pretended messiahs before had led, and after Jesus would lead, the Jews into wars of rebellion that cost the lives of many, that was not the way of Jesus, the Son of God and Prince of Peace. However, Jesus did foretell that in the future the Jews would follow a false Messiah and their nation would be destroyed. In Luke 19:41-44, we learn more from Jesus' prophecy and His Palm Sunday entry into Jerusalem: "As Jesus came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, 'If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Indeed, the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God.'" Jesus' prophecy came true when the Romans suppressed a Jewish rebellion with the slaughter of many and destroyed the temple and Jerusalem in AD 70.

(John 12:16) His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.

The gospels emphasize that not even Jesus' disciples understood all His teachings all the time. They did not

understand the dramatic action Jesus took when He entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday until after Jesus was glorified. From the gospels, we know that God glorified Jesus when Jesus died on the cross. The gospels show how Jesus gave up His life when He died. It was not taken from Him. In John 10:18, we studied Jesus' prophecy about His death when He said, "No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father." Jesus was also glorified when He took up His life again and rose from the dead on Resurrection (Easter) Sunday morning. After Jesus was glorified, while Jesus walked and talked with them after His resurrection from the dead, He reminded them of what He had taught and how He had fulfilled the Scriptures (see Luke 24:13-35). After Jesus was glorified when He ascended into heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to remind them of what Jesus had taught them during His ministry. Today, as we study the Bible, the Holy Spirit will sometimes remind us of teachings that we need to know and apply to our situation or difficulty.

(John 12:17) So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify.

During Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, those who witnessed Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead kept telling people about what Jesus had done in nearby Bethany. Perhaps many were drawn to the parade because they saw the

waving palm branches and heard the crowd shouting, so they asked about the Sunday celebration. No wonder the chief priests and Pharisees wanted to kill both Lazarus and Jesus. Previously, we studied John 12:10-11, “So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.” Even if the Pharisees succeeded in killing Lazarus, unless they were intimidated, those who witnessed Jesus’ power over death when He brought forth Lazarus from the tomb would have testified to what they had seen. They would also have had good reasons to believe that Jesus had raised himself from the dead after the disciples told them that they had seen the risen Lord and what that meant to all who would believe this good news (gospel) of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

(John 12:18) It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him.

The fact that Jesus had performed a sign that He was the promised Messiah when He raised Lazarus from the dead was reason enough for the crowd to go and meet Him as He entered Jerusalem. Everyone knew that only God or one greatly blessed by God would have the power to raise from the tomb one who had been dead four days and give him life. Martha, Mary, and Lazarus most probably accompanied Jesus’ disciples when Jesus entered Jerusalem. If anyone doubted that Jesus had performed

this miracle, they could have met Lazarus and have heard the testimony of many witnesses.

(John 12:19) The Pharisees then said to one another, “You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!”

The crowd that cheered Jesus as He entered Jerusalem drew the attention of the Pharisees, who always seemed to have people who would come to them and report whenever Jesus worked a miracle. No matter what Jesus said or did, or what others claimed about Him when He healed someone or raised them from the dead, the Pharisees found a reason to complain about Him or claim that He was violating their laws and traditions and therefore a rebel and sinner. When the Pharisees accused Jesus of being a sinner, the man born blind that Jesus had healed answered them in John 9:25, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” When the Pharisees saw the crowds and heard their chants of Hosanna, they admitted that they could do nothing that would interfere with the crowds’ adoration of Jesus. They could not arrest Jesus in their presence. They would need to find another way and seek another time to arrest, kill, and silence Jesus. As they looked at the crowds, they testified in amazement, “The world has gone after Him!” But no matter what the Pharisees did eventually, after they crucified Jesus and He rose from the dead, the world went after Him and the world still goes after Jesus as the Lord and the Savior of the world or as One to

persecute by persecuting His faithful followers.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. On what day did Jesus enter Jerusalem to go to the festival? What happened to Him the day before and what day was that?
2. What word did the crowd use when Jesus entered Jerusalem? What did that word mean? Or what are some meanings of that word? Consider Psalms 118:25.
3. What did the crowd call Jesus? What do you think His entering Jerusalem meant to them?
4. To fulfill prophecy, what did Jesus do during the parade with His disciples?
5. Who did the crowd testify about? How or why could they testify to this?

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