

Daily Bible Study Commentary by Pastor Steve

We're excited to have you digging deeper into the Word. The best way to use this study guide is to read the Bible verse(s) first, then Pastor Steve's commentary. God bless you.

John 12:9-11

vs9-11: In these three verses John describes the changing attitude toward Jesus that took place in many of the nation's religious leaders after Lazarus was raised from the dead. He says many of them left their various religious responsibilities and groups to become His disciples (v11). And apparently some left Jerusalem, so they could travel with Him. The other gospels describe a final season of Jesus' ministry, between His seclusion in Ephraim (Jn 11:54) and His arrival at Bethany (Jn 12:1) (Mt 19:1-20:34; Mk 10:1-52; Lk 17:11-19:27). They reveal that from Ephraim He traveled north through Samaria into Galilee (Lk 17:11) and then south through Perea. The name "Perea" means "The Beyond" in Greek, and that region extended along most of the east side of the Jordan Valley as far south as the east side of the north half of the Dead Sea (Nelson Glueck, [The River Jordan](#), McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1968, p.29). Finally He passed through the city of Jericho before walking up through the Judean wilderness to Bethany. Those travels would have provided these new believers with the opportunity to join the crowds who were walking along with Him on His final mission before His arrest and crucifixion. In fact John says so many were "going away and believing" because of Lazarus that the chief priests decided to kill Lazarus as well.

John 12:12-13

vs12-13: On Sunday of that final week, the day after the Sabbath, crowds of pilgrims poured into Jerusalem to prepare for Passover. When they heard that Jesus was coming toward the city they rushed across the Kidron Valley and up the Mount of Olives, on the road that leads to Bethany. They hoped He would announce that He was the Messiah and that the glorious promises concerning the last days were about to begin. **vs12-13 (continued):** Before we describe what happened that day, we should note that Jesus actually made three different visits to the temple during that final week. This first one, which we are reading about now, took place on Sunday. During that day Jesus triumphantly rode into the city, went to the temple, looked around and then returned to Bethany (Mk 11:1-11). His second visit to the temple took place on Monday. On that day He went to the temple and cleansed it of those selling animals and changing money (Mt 21:12-17; Lk 19:45-48). That was the second time He did that (Jn 2:12-17). That evening He again returned to Bethany (Mt 21:17). His third visit to the temple was on Tuesday. And during that visit the religious leaders confronted Him (Lk 20:1-47), and His disciples asked questions about the destruction of the temple (Mk 11:27-12:40; Lk 21: 1-38). That night, and the next, He and His disciples spent the night on the Mount of Olives (Lk 21:37-38).

John 12:12-13

vs12-13 (continued): When the crowd met Jesus they turned around and began to walk back with Him toward Jerusalem, some in front and some behind (Mt 21:9; Mk 11:9). As the procession moved along, Matthew says, "Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road" (Mt 21:8). By this gesture they were treating Him like royalty (2Ki 9:13). By laying down a carpet of coats and branches they were "preparing the way of the Lord" (Isa 40:3); they were inviting the Messianic King to take His throne on Mt. Zion (Ps 2:6). Only John specifically mentions that it was palm branches that they selected for that occasion (v13), and palm branches also carried a symbolic meaning. There had been an independent Jewish kingdom in Israel from about 167 B.C. down to about 63 B.C., and one of the symbols of that kingdom was the palm branch. So by waving palm fronds or placing them on the road they were calling for Jesus to be like the priest Mattathias who began the Maccabean revolt against Greek oppression (Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, [The Macmillan Bible Atlas](#), Macmillan, 1968, p.118).

John 12:12-13

vs12-13 (continued): As they went down the Mount of Olives (Lk 19:37), with the temple in full view, they began shouting portions of Psalm 118. It's one of the "psalms of ascent" which were sung by worshippers on their way to the temple. It prophetically pictures Israel surrounded by hostile Gentile nations, but then says the Lord will rescue them (vs10-14). It then pictures the people of Israel responding to this deliverance by choosing to live righteous lives (vs15-21). The Messianic King is identified as the One who will lead this miraculous rescue and the people's return to righteousness, but then surprisingly the psalmist described Him as "the stone the builders rejected" (literal) (v22).

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John 12:12-13

vs12-13 (continued): This picture of a rejected Messiah is very unexpected, but it agrees with Isaiah's description of God's Suffering Servant (Isa 53:1-3). The psalmist says God Himself will cause this rejected "stone" to become "the chief (head) corner [stone]" (literal) (v22), meaning He will be the Person around which all of God's future earthly kingdom will be built. The psalmist says when that day arrives the people will marvel and be glad, but until then they will cry out, "I beg You, Yahweh, save now! I beg You, Yahweh, to prosper [us] now! Blessed [is] He who comes in the name of Yahweh! We bless You from the house of Yahweh (the temple)! Yahweh is God, and He gives us light!" (vs25-27a) (literal).

John 12:12-13

vs12-13 (continued): Matthew, when describing this same event, notes that the crowd inserted the title "Son of David" (Mt 21:9) into their chanting. Mark says they added, "Blessed [is] the coming kingdom of our father David" (Mk 11:10), which means the same thing. And Luke tells us that the word "King" was substituted into their chant, which in that context meant the Messiah who would sit as king on David's throne (2Sa 7:12-16). Undoubtedly most of the people in that crowd could recite Psalm 118 from memory, so the rescue they were calling for, and wanted "now," was the deliverance from the Gentile army (Rome) that occupied their land and the ushering in of an age of righteousness and prosperity as described in the earlier verses of the psalm.

John 12:14-15

vs14-15: By arranging to ride into the city that day on a young donkey (Mt 21:1-7; Mk 11:1-7; Lk 19:29-35), Jesus was making a statement of His own. He was directing the crowd's attention away from Psalm 118 to another passage of Scripture. The crowd wanted Him to rise up as a warrior, but the appointed time for the final battle that would destroy the armies surrounding Jerusalem (Eze 38, 39, etc.) had not arrived. Jesus had been sent to provide a spiritual salvation instead, one that would make possible the evangelization of Gentile nations, not their destruction. He must fulfill that promise first. In Zechariah 9:9-10, the prophet describes the day when Jerusalem will welcome a humble king, not a violent one. He says He will be "just and endowed with salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey, even on a foal of a donkey." Zechariah says this king will bring peace, not with a chariot, war-horse or bow, but by speaking "peace to the nations." In other words, it will be by spiritual conversion not violence that He will extend God's rulership "from sea to sea, and from the River [Euphrates] to the ends of the earth." In effect, the crowd was clamoring for Him to be a warrior, and by riding on the donkey Jesus replied, "No! I have a ministry of salvation that I must accomplish first."