

A prediction of death (12:20–36)

The Synoptics include many of Jesus' words and acts after entering Jerusalem in triumph. (See, for example, Luke 19:41–21:38.) But John records only a few items to climax Jesus' public ministry.

Greeks (12:20). These were Gentiles who had abandoned pagan gods and come to worship the God of Israel at the feast. They are not called proselytes, so they were probably not circumcised. There is evidence that hundreds of Gentiles across the Empire found the morality and monotheism of Judaism appealing, although they did not care for the rules, especially circumcision, required of full converts. "Greeks" does not imply that they came from Greece. There were many "Greeks" (Gentiles who spoke Greek) in Galilee and across the Jordan.

These Gentiles did not want just to **see** (12:21) in the sense of glimpsing Him in the crowd. They wanted to see Him in the sense of getting to know Him in some conversation.

5. John never does tell us whether the Greeks got to see Jesus. He only records Jesus' response. What did the coming of the Gentiles prompt Jesus to talk about (12:23–28)?

6. Why do you think their coming signaled to Jesus that the hour of His glory had arrived (12:23)?

7. The "hour" was the moment for both Jesus and the Father to be glorified (12:23, 27–28). What events were going to glorify the Father and the Son (12:24, 30–33)?

For Thought and Discussion: Give some examples of good and bad self-hatred.

Optional Application: What kind of dying do you need to go through in order to bear fruit (12:24)?

8. Why did these events, which appeared to be defeat and humiliation, actually glorify the Father and the Son?

Life (12:25). The first two instances of "life" in this verse are *psyche*—one's physical life or one's self. The last instance is *zoe*—the life that comes from God, the only kind that can exist in eternity. **Loves ... hates** is a typically Semitic way of expressing contrasts drastically and vividly. To love one's life/self, to be wrapped up in self-

fulfillment, self-actualization, self-enjoyment—this is selfishness. To hate one's life (compared to God and others) is self-sacrifice that leads to eternal life.

9. Rewrite 12:24–26 in your own words.

10. Jesus says that what is true for Him is true for His servant. In what specific ways is 12:24–26 relevant to you?

a. In what ways do you show that you love your life wrongly (12:25)? (Ask God to show you.)

b. In what ways are you showing proper indifference to your own life?

c. Where is Jesus? Where do you need to be in order to be where He is (12:26)?

11. Recall the meaning of light from earlier in this gospel (1:9; 3:19–21; 8:12). What is Jesus saying in 12:35–36?

For Thought and Discussion: Does “they could not believe” (12:39) mean that the Jews had no free will to believe? Why or why not?

Children of (12:36). A Semitic idiom for one who is “characterized by the quality in question.”

Summary (12:37–50)

12. According to 12:37–41, why did almost none of the Jews believe in Jesus, despite His signs that pointed to His identity and mission?

Saw Jesus' glory (12:41). Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord (Isaiah 6:3) and foresaw the rejection, death, and exaltation of Jesus (Isaiah 52:13–53:12).

Study Skill—Hebrew Thought

It is important for us to remember that most of the writers of the Bible came from a largely oriental culture and thought like Jews. We in the West are taught to think with the logic developed by the Greeks. This logic says, for instance, that contradictions are impossible. The Hebrew mind, by contrast, assumes that contradictions and paradoxes do coexist, so it has no trouble holding seemingly contradictory truths in

tension. Western minds resist paradoxes, so we try to reason them out logically. Our debates about predestination and free will are prime examples of this effort. The Jews knew that God was supreme, so everything that happened must be at least indirectly caused by Him. Yet they knew that He had given people freedom to make moral choices for which they were responsible. God caused hard hearts, yet men chose hard hearts (Exodus 8:15; 9:12). Because their Hebrew minds could accept this tension, the biblical writers did not reason it out for us. We need to learn to think like Hebrews if we are to understand the Bible.

Optional Application: Does 12:42–43 describe you in any way? If so, repent and ask God what you need to start doing differently.

13. Many prominent people did privately believe that Jesus was the Christ. What priorities kept them from confessing their faith publicly (12:42–43)?

Cried out (12:44). This suggests that Jesus declared these words in public (compare 7:37; 11:43), probably before He “hid himself” (12:36) from the Jews. John apparently positioned Jesus’ final appeal to His people here as a fitting summary and conclusion to Jesus’ public ministry. Hereafter, Jesus will not appear to the crowds until He is crucified.

14. What does Jesus say in His final appeal (12:44–50) about ...
His identity and relationship to the Father?

His mission?

those who reject Him and His words?

Your response

15. What one insight from chapter 12 seems most personally relevant to you right now?

16. How do you fall short or need to grow in this area?

17. What can you do to begin conforming your life more to God’s will in this area?

18. List any questions you have about 12:1–50.

For the group

Warm-up. Ask, “What is the most extravagant thing you ever did to show someone that you loved him or her?” Let everyone think for a while, then let one or two people answer. This may help the group relate to what Mary did when she poured outrageously expensive oil over Jesus’ feet.

Questions. Question 4 is a good type of open-ended question for groups that do not care for narrowly directive questions. If it works well for you, use it often when you discuss passages. If it leaves the group uncertain about what to say, ask some more specific questions about the scene.

Question 10 is a pointed application question designed to help you wrestle personally with Jesus’ words. You can focus on it if it seems to be the area you need to work on. Or, you can cover it lightly and concentrate on another area for application. Just be sure that you each face something for personal challenge.

Worship. Praise Jesus as He who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel, the King who comes with a mission of peace, the Anointed One who is anointed for death and burial, He who glorified the Father and Himself by His death, He who came as light, He who spoke and acted as the Father commanded, He who reveals the Father. Ask Him to help you believe in Him, keep His words, love Him more than your lives, and go where He does.¹

¹ The Navigators, [LifeChange: John](#), ed. Karen Lee-Thorp, The LifeChange Bible Study Series (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), 131–138.