



# Believe

## JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

*Bible Reading: John 12:12-19*

1. Jesus the King Enters Jerusalem (Jn. 12:12-19)
  - “Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem is narrated in all four Gospels (Matt. 21:1-11; Mk. 11: 1-10; Lk. 20:29-40). **All four versions share a common core:** Jesus is greeted by a crowd waving branches & shouting the words of Psa. 118:25; Jesus rides a donkey during the entry.” (Gail O’ Day, NIBC: John, p. 600)
  - “**The differences** between the Johannine account & those in the other gospels are especially pronounced. For example, **the Johannine version is considerably briefer...& contains no account of the preparation for the entry & the procuring of the donkey.**” (Gail O’ Day, Op Cit, p. 600)
1. Those who witnessed Jesus raise Lazarus tell people about it (Jn. 12:17-18)
  - “Verses 17-18 point to **two groups that now follow Jesus:** those who were present at the Lazarus miracle (v. 17), & those who have heard reports of the miracle (v. 18).” (Gail O’ Day, Op Cit, p. 602)
  - “**Two crowds are depicted in these verses.** The **first crowd** is the one that was **with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb.** This may have included a number of folk from Bethany, & perhaps a substantial number of others who had been present at the raising of Lazarus (11:45) & who had been invited back to the dinner in honour of Jesus (12:2). They would not be suppressed, & bore witness (Gk. *emartyrei*, NIV ‘spread the word’) to what they had seen, thus magnifying the witness borne by the sign itself (cf. 5:36; 10:38) & serving as models for all who bear witness to the truth. The **other came out from Jerusalem to meet him (12:12), stimulated in part by the reports of the miracle.**” (D. A. Carson, Pillar: John, p. 338)
1. These people respond to Jesus’ coming to Jerusalem (Jn. 12:12-13; Ps. 118:25-26; Zeph. 3:15)

## 1. With palm branches

- “When Simon the Maccabee drove the Syrian forces out of the Jerusalem citadel he was fe<sup>?</sup>ted with music & the waving of palm branches (1 Macc. 13:51, 141 BC), which had also been prominent at the rededication of the temple (2 Macc. 10:7, 164 BC).” (D. A. Carson, *Op Cit*, p. 336)
- “Since the Maccabean period, **palm branches were symbols of national triumph & victory** (2 Macc 10:7; 1 Macc 13:51). The palm branches thus suggest that the crowd greets Jesus as their **national hero**.” (Gail O’ Day, *Op Cit*, p. 601)

## 1. With a triumphant Psalm to welcome Messiah

- “These words occur in all four Gospel accounts & match the wording of the LXX of Psalm 118 exactly...**Psalm 118 is a royal psalm sung in thanksgiving for victory in battle**; verses 19-29 of the psalm provide the instructions for the liturgical celebration of the return of the triumphant king to the Temple. The use of Psalm 118 suggests that John 12:13 is to be read as the reenactment of this psalm’s liturgical celebration of a royal triumph.” (Gail O’ Day, *Op Cit*, p. 601)
- “All four evangelists refer to Psalm 118:25–26: ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,’ to which John & Mark add references to ‘the King of Israel’ (John 12:13) or ‘the coming kingdom of our father David’ (Mark 11:10). **Jesus is here portrayed as the victor who has defeated the enemies**; palm branches were commonly used to convey the celebration of victory.” (Andreas Kostenberger, *Encountering Bible Study: John*, p. 119)
- “...in the Midrash on Psalm 118 this line is understood messianically: **the one who comes is the Messiah** (Midrash Tehillim 244a; cf. SB 1. 150). So here; **the crowds do not simply pronounce a blessing in the name of the Lord on the one who comes, but pronounce a blessing on the one who comes in the name of the Lord**.” (D. A. Carson, *Op Cit*, p. 337)

## 1. As ‘King of Israel’

- “The Fourth Evangelist...reinforces the royal dimension of the crowd’s greeting by adding the words **‘the king of Israel’...These words come from Zeph 3:15...which celebrate God’s Heavenly enthronement as King**. The use of Zeph 3:15 highlights **the people’s hope in Jesus as the one who will restore God’s Kingdom in their nation...**” (Gail O’ Day, *Op Cit*, p. 601)
- “**Blessed is the King of Israel is not a quotation from Psalm 118, but messianic identification of ‘he who comes in the name of the Lord’.**” (D. A. Carson, *Op Cit*, p. 337)

## 1. Jesus tamps down their nationalistic expectations (Jn. 12:14-15; Zech. 9:9) – a corrective!!

- “In the synoptic gospels, Jesus’ riding on a donkey precedes the acclamation by the crowd, but in John it follows the acclamation & is **positioned as a corrective to the crowd’s misunderstanding of the nature of Jesus’ kingship**.” (Gail O’ Day, *Op Cit*, p. 601)
- “Jesus’ action is interpreted in the citation from Zech 9:9, affirming that **Jesus is king, but not the warrior king whom the crowd greets with palm branches**. He is instead the king who embodies the eschatological vision of Zech 9:9: ‘Triumphant & Victorious is he, humble & riding on a donkey, on a colt, the full of a donkey.’” (Gail O’ Day, *Op Cit*, pp. 601-2)
- “The allusion to Zeph 3 here provides **a further corrective to the crowd’s perception of Jesus**. They incorrectly used the words of Zeph 3 to **greet Jesus as their political savior**; the Fourth Evangelist makes a renewed appeal to Zeph 3 to show that **Jesus comes as the**

**presence of God among them, but not as the conquering hero.**" (Gail O' Day, *Op Cit*, p. 602)

1. Not riding on a warhorse or white stallion

- **"When political figures came to Jerusalem, every aspect of their entrance was choreographed to demonstrate power & authority. Their entrance was announced by trumpets. They were preceded by soldiers in full military regalia. Finally, they made their entrance riding on a brilliant white stallion or in a gleaming gold chariot pulled by magnificent horses. Jesus comes with no soldiers. He doesn't choose a warhorse but a young donkey."** (Matt Carter & Josh Wredberg, *Christ-Centered Exposition: John*, p. 503)

1. But riding in on a donkey – lowering the temperature, expectations, & fervor

- **"...to report the ride on the donkey immediately after the acclamation of the crowd has the effect of damping down nationalist expectations. He does not enter Jerusalem on a war horse (Is. 31:1–3; 1 Ki. 4:26), which would have whipped the political aspirations of the vast crowds into insurrectionist frenzy, but he chooses to present himself as the king who comes in peace, 'gentle and riding on a donkey' (Zc. 9:9)." (D. A. Carson, *Op Cit*, p. 337)**
- **"Jesus comes with no soldiers. He doesn't choose a warhorse but a young donkey. He shows what kind of King he really is. In verse 15 John quotes Zechariah 9:9-10 about the promise of a coming King. This prophecy says a lot about the kind of King who was coming. He is different from the average political ruler. The choice of the donkey reveals this King will achieve his victory through humility...meekness. He doesn't come to destroy other nations but to "proclaim peace to the nations." The Jews expect the Messiah to liberate them, crushing the nations in the process, but the King comes to bring peace to all nations."** (Matt Carter & Josh Wredberg, *Op Cit*, p. 503)
- **"Perceiving Jesus in nationalistic terms, the crowd goes out of the city to meet him along the road, which was the way to welcome generals & kings. They also wave palm branches, the symbols used to celebrate national victories."** (Craig Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel*, p. 95)

1. His disciples only understood what was happening after his death & resurrection (Jn. 12:16)

1. The Pharisees quarrel amongst each other because of Jesus' popularity (Jn. 12:19)

1. Jesus the Seed Falls into the Ground (Jn. 12:20-24)

1. Greeks (Non-Jews) come to Jesus (Jn. 12:20-22)

- **"The narrative moves the notion of kingship from a national to a global perspective. When Jesus approaches the city, the Pharisees complain that 'the world' has gone after Jesus (12:19). Readers soon learn that this is 'oh so true,' because a group of Greeks now ask to see him (12:20). Their presence expands the horizon beyond circles of Jewish and Samaritan believers that the Gospel has described, foreshadowing the time after the resurrection when Jesus will draw people from many different backgrounds to himself through the work of his disciples (12:32). As the Messianic king, Jesus fulfills the promises God made to Israel, but he does so for all people. The sign above his cross, which will call him King of the Jews, will be written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, so that it is clear that Jesus' kingship serves people everywhere (19:20)." (Craig Koester, *Op Cit*, p. 95)**
- **"[A]s Jesus approaches Jerusalem, a crowd bearing palm branches welcomes him; & the Pharisees say, 'the world has gone after him' (12:19). The narrator immediately adds, 'Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks (12:20). The Gospel's**

**sense of ‘the world’ includes ever-widening circles that encompass Jews, Samaritans, & Greeks.”** (Craig Koester, *Op Cit*, pp. 80-81)

- “Jesus recognizes [the Greeks’] coming as an indication that **the climax of his mission has arrived**. Immediately when he hears of them he says, ‘The hour has come,’ & goes on to speak of his glorification & his death.” (Leon Morris, *NICNT: John*, p. 522)
- “The arrival of the Greeks marks the beginning of a new section. These ‘Greeks’ are to be distinguished from Greek-speaking Jews. Because they have made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover feast, they may be Gentile proselytes but...they are non-Jews, representatives of the Gentile world.” (Gail O’ Day, *Op Cit*, p. 602)

1. Jesus lays out his future path (Jn. 12:24)

- “The significance of this parable for understanding Jesus’ death lies in **the contrast between remaining solitary (as a single grain) and ‘bearing much fruit’ (15:1-8)**. Jesus thus uses the seed parable to show that...**one comes to Jesus through his death**” (Gail O’ Day, *Op Cit*, p. 604)
- “The grain of wheat introduces us to a **paradox**, namely, that **the way of fruitfulness lies through death**.” (Leon Morris, *Op Cit*, p. 524)

1. Jesus & Alexander (Charles Ross Weede)

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three, One died in Babylon and one on Calvary. One gained all for self, and one Himself He gave. One conquered every throne, the other every grave.

When died the Greek, forever fell his throne of swords, But Jesus died to live forever Lord of lords.

Jesus and Alexander died at thirty-three. The Greek made all men slaves, the Jew made all men free. One built a throne on blood, the other built on love. The one was born of earth, the other from above. One won all this earth to lose all earth & Heaven. The other gave up all that all to Him be given. The Greek forever died, the Jew forever lives. He loses all who gets and wins all things who gives.

1. An Invitation to Follow Jesus (Jn. 12:25-26)

- “On another level **the seed depicts what it means for people to follow Jesus**...Those who make themselves the focus of their love are like the seed in Jesus’ saying. They are alone. Their love is self-directed. Moreover, in centering love on themselves they actually lose themselves. To have life – to truly be oneself – is to be in relationship with God & others.” (Craig Koester, *Op Cit*, p. 191)

1. Loving & losing or Hating & keeping our life (Jn. 12:25)

1. Loving & losing

- “**Verse 25 must be read against the backdrop of Jesus’ death**. The word *life* (*psyche*)... takes on particular significance here, because it is the same word used by Jesus to describe his gift of his life (10:11, 15, 17; 15:13). **To love one’s life is the opposite of Jesus’ own action; it places one outside of the community shaped by Jesus’ gift of his life & leads to the loss of that life**. This is reinforced in the antithesis of v. 25 b. **To hate one’s life in this world is to declare**

**one's allegiance to Jesus & so to receive his gift of eternal life.**" (Gail O' Day, *Op Cit*, p. 604)

- *"John means us to understand that 'loves his life' is a self-defeating process. It destroys the very life it seeks to retain."* (Leon Morris, *Op Cit*, p. 524)

#### 1. Hating & keeping

- **"Hates,' of course, is not to be taken literally...It points to the attitude that sets no store by this life in itself. People whose priorities are right have...an attitude of love for the things of God that all interest in the affairs of this life appear by comparison as hatred. Such people will keep their life 'for eternal life'."** (Leon Morris, *Op Cit*, p. 524)
- **"Here hatred is not an emotion but a movement away from the preoccupation with oneself. It corresponds to the death of the seed that Jesus spoke about...Those who follow him are like the seed in that they die to a life in which their love is focused on themselves. This begins the movement that leads to eternal life, which in John's gospel is life in relationship with God. To be clear, there are forms of dying to oneself & hating oneself that are destructive, not life-giving. Like self-love, self-hatred can become an isolating preoccupation with oneself – & a debilitating self-loathing makes relationship impossible. But Jesus speaks of a movement from love 'of' oneself through a hatred or turning 'from' oneself into the faith relationship with God that is eternal life."** (Craig Koester, *Op Cit*, p. 192)
- **"Here the destination is eternal life. And you can miss it by loving your life —that is, by making your goal in life to be safe & secure & comfortable & surrounded only by pleasant things. That is the pathway to perishing. Or, Jesus says, you can take another path & arrive at eternal life. That path is called hating your life in this world. Notice that he adds 'in this world.' Hating your life in this world means that you will choose to do things that look foolish to the world. You will deny yourself things, & take risks, & embrace the path of suffering for the sake of love. This, Jesus says, will lead to eternal life, not death.** (John Piper, *Where I Am*)

#### 1. Serving Jesus means following Jesus (Jn. 12:26a)

- **"Whoever serves me must follow me, & where I am, there will my servant be also.' Hatred or turning from oneself is not the goal. It is the transition from love of self into the service of Christ. All people will lose themselves & their lives – death is a given for everyone – but those who relinquish themselves in service to Christ remain in a relationship that bears fruit & brings them life. In this context they are no longer alone. They are with Jesus, sharing in community with him & his father. And this relationship has a future through the promise of resurrection. What it means to serve Jesus is suggested by the scenes that surrounded this passage. Martha serves by providing a meal for Jesus and others. Mary anoints Jesus' feet...To serve is to convey extraordinary love in the context of ordinary life."** (Craig Koester, *Op Cit*, p. 192)
- **"Verse 26 also has analogies in the synoptic tradition (Matt 10:38; Mk 8:34; Lk 14:29). While the synoptic versions establish a condition for following Jesus 'taking up one's cross', the Johannine version contains both condition (v 26a) and promise v. 26b & c). Since Jesus' ultimate service is the gift of his life & love, v. 26a calls the disciples to love as he loves & hence to serve as he serves."** (Gail O' Day, *Op Cit*, p. 605)
- **"How is it possible to hate our life in this world? The answer is in verse 26: we follow Jesus. We don't focus on ourselves & our situations. We pursue Jesus with every fiber of our beings. The way to love your life is to focus exclusively on yourself, & the way to hate your life is to focus exclusively on Christ. Seek him & you will deny yourself."** (Matt Carter & Josh Wredberg, *Op Cit*, p. 503)

- *“The outcome of all this is the service of Christ. Throughout this verse the first person pronoun is used with emphasis. Personal relationship to Christ is important. The servant must follow his Lord & be where his Lord is...’being where the Lord is’ entails suffering. It means losing the life for the Master’s sake. There is no other way of Christian service. But the verse concludes on a different note. Anyone who serves Christ in this fashion will be honored by the Father.”* (Leon Morris, *Op Cit*, p. 525)

1. Those who follow Jesus will be honored by the Father (Jn. 12:26b)

- *“Verse 26b affirms that the disciple is not only called to follow Jesus to his death, but also is offered the promise of following Jesus through his death to share in his glorification.”* (Gail O’Day, *Op Cit*, p. 605)
- *“Those who serve are honored by Jesus’ Father (12:26). To honor is to ascribe value to someone. All people need to know they are valued. The question is where their sense of value comes from. Most often honor is sought from other people. A person may be honored because of family, professional status, education, & personal achievements. Yet public opinion is fickle, an unreliable measure of a person’s worth. Praise fades quickly & honor seekers often compromise their principles in order to make others happy (12:43). Genuine honor comes from God... Taking the role of a servant may not be honored by the public, but it is valued by God. When the claims of faith conflict with those of society, it requires courage to follow one’s convictions. The assurance that God honors faithfulness & service helps people live with integrity in the present & to face the future with hope.”* (Craig Koester, *Op Cit*, pp. 192-3)