

The Path of Life

John 12:12-28

Belief & Unbelief

- ❑ After the raising of Lazarus, many Jews put their faith in Jesus (11:45). But others went and told the Jewish leaders. The Jewish leaders considered Jesus to be a threat to their authority (11:46-48). “So from that day on they made plans to put him to death” (11:53, *ESV*). Thus Jesus withdrew “to a village called Ephraim,¹ where he stayed with his disciples” (11:54b).

Back to Bethany

- ❑ Six days before the Passover,² Jesus returned to Bethany. A dinner was given in Jesus’ honor (12:1-2). In an act of great devotion, Mary poured expensive perfume on Jesus (12:3). When it was learned that Jesus was in Bethany, many people came to see him and Lazarus (12:9).

Last Journey to Jerusalem

- ❑ The next day, Jesus went to Jerusalem. Read John 12:12-19. As Jesus approached Jerusalem, a large crowd went out to meet him, shouting, “Hosanna!³ Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel” (John 12:13, *NIV*).

1. What do you think the crowd was expecting from Jesus? What did they think Jesus was going to do?



- ❑ While many expected Jesus to be a political conqueror, he chose to present himself as the king who comes in peace, “gentle and riding on a donkey” (Zechariah 9:9; John 12:15).⁴
- ❑ Many people were attracted to Jesus (12:17-18).⁵ So the Pharisees⁶ said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!” (12:19, *NIV*)

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- ❑ Not only Jews were attracted to Jesus, Greeks⁷ were too. Read John 12:20-28.
- ❑ Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:23-24, *ESV*).

¹ Probably in the location of Ephron (2 Chronicles 13:19), also called Ophrah, about 24 km north of Jerusalem.

² “Passover” is the annual festival in which Jews remember and celebrate their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. This deliverance involved the sacrifice of a “Passover lamb” and the application of its blood on the doorframes of Jewish homes. When God’s judgment fell on Egypt, these particular homes were “passed over” (Exodus 12:1-14). Many Jews throughout the land (including Galilee) would travel to Jerusalem for this important festival.

³ “hosanna” was a Hebrew expression originally meaning “O save now!” It had become an exclamation of praise. Palm branches were used as a Jewish national symbol and a symbol of victory.

⁴ Many believed that Jesus was the Messiah (the promised king), but they misunderstood the nature of his kingship.

⁵ Many people heard about Jesus because witnesses “spread the word” (12:17-18). Throughout history, Christians have spread the word, and Christians today should *still* be spreading the word because Jesus is the giver of life!

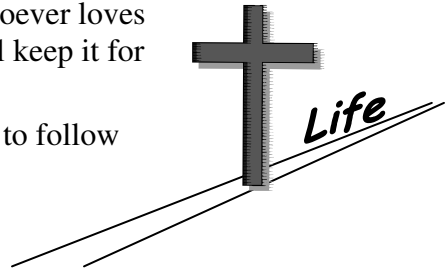
⁶ “Pharisees” – one of the main parties (groups) in the leadership of Judaism; known for emphasis of Jewish laws.

⁷ “Greeks” – not necessarily from Greece, but probably Greek-speaking Gentiles (non-Jews) who were “God-fearers” (that is, they were attracted to Judaism, but had not become full converts to Judaism).

2. What point does Jesus make by his statement in verse 24? How might this apply to Jesus' own life?

- ❑ Jesus knew that he would be arrested and killed, and he also knew that he would be raised from the dead (*Mark 10:33-34*). Jesus said, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom⁸ for many" (*10:45*). It was only through the death of the one man⁹ (Jesus) that "life" (abundant and eternal) could be given to the many.
- ❑ The principle of the seed – that death is the necessary condition for the generation of life – can be generally applied to Jesus' followers. Jesus said, "Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates¹⁰ his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (*12:25, ESV*).

3. What is needed to have eternal life?¹¹ What does it mean to follow Jesus? (*12:26*)¹² Is following Jesus easy? Is it worth it?



The Path of Jesus

- ❑ The path of Jesus was the path of the cross. As Jesus looked forward to the cross, his heart was troubled (*12:27a*).¹³ But he remained committed to the Father's will (*12:27b*). Through the cross, he defeated evil and death, and provided the way of life for all people (*12:30-32*).

Unbelief & Belief

- ❑ Many people "still would not believe in him" (*12:37*), yet "many even among the leaders believed in him. But...they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved praise from men more than praise from God" (*12:42-43*).¹⁴

The Life & You

- Do you desire "the life" that Jesus offers? Have you believed in him? If not, keep seeking knowledge of Jesus. If you believe, are you "following Jesus" in the way he has instructed? Read Mark 8:34-38 and 10:29-30, and seek God's help as you commit to the path of life.

⁸ A "ransom" is a price paid for release from captivity and/or punishment. The price paid was Jesus' life. The "released" are those of us who receive Jesus Christ through faith. We are released from captivity to sin and God's punishment of sinners. If we receive Christ (thus "apply his blood") he is *our* Passover lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7).

⁹ Jesus is the only person qualified to pay the ransom. He is the unique Son of God, and the only human being without sin (Romans 3:10-12, 23; Hebrews 4:15). In Christ, the righteous died for the unrighteous (1 Peter 3:18).

¹⁰ The love/hate contrast reflects a Hebrew idiom that communicates fundamental preference. To love one's life is to give it priority over the interests of God's kingdom; similarly, to "hate" one's life is to give God's kingdom priority over self-interest. Eternal life is found only in God's kingdom. So whoever refuses to let go of his worldly life loses his life, while whoever gives his life to God (thus in a sense dies to his former life) will keep it for eternal life.

¹¹ Eternal life comes through Christ's death. Eternal life is found "on the other side of the cross". To receive eternal life, we must be united with Christ through faith. As the Bible says elsewhere, we must die with Christ. Our old identity (outside Christ) must die, so that our new identity and life can begin (Galatians 2:20; Romans 6:8).

¹² Jesus said elsewhere, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good is it if a man gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?" (*Matthew 16:25-26a*). Jesus traveled the path of humility, submission to God's will, self-giving love, suffering and glory. To follow Jesus is to travel the path of Jesus.

¹³ Jesus' thoughts in verse 27 may be similar to what he experienced in Gethsemane (Mark 14:36).

¹⁴ Public confession of faith may bring trouble, but each believer should think about what it means to follow Jesus.