

EXPOSITION OF JOHN

Message #49

John 12:20-36

Here is a very significant turning point in John's Gospel. Jesus has not been nationally received as the Savior of Israel's sin, even though He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey on the very day predicted by Daniel (Daniel 9:25). Israel had not received Him (12:37), Israel's religious leaders wanted to kill Him, but in the backdrop of all of this there were certain Greeks, Gentiles, non-Jews who did believe in Him and did want to see Him. There are different verbs in Greek translated "see." The one used here (ορᾶω) is one that means more than just to visually look at Him, they wanted to be able to get to know Him, to discern all they could about Him.

These Greeks were not interested in seeing a miracle of Jesus Christ, they wanted to see and know Jesus Christ (12:21). Actually, they must have been like a breath of fresh air to Jesus Christ. These Gentiles went to Philip first. Philip had a Greek name which means "lover of horses." They probably thought our best chance is with the Galilean who has a Greek name. It is possible that they had known Philip or done business with him in Galilee. Philip would not make the decision himself because you just do not take a bunch of Gentiles to get to know Jesus Christ, when the program of God was aimed at the Jew. So Philip went to Andrew and Andrew went and told Jesus that some Greeks wanted to see Him.

Most Bible scholars believe that Jesus gave them the opportunity to get to know Him, because this is what launches Jesus into major instruction about His cross work, which certainly would include Gentiles.

As Dr. Ironside said, I have no doubt that Jesus met with these Gentiles even though we don't have any record of it (*John*, p. 498). In the context of the nation Israel not receiving Him and in the context of the Gentiles wanting to receive Him, Jesus took the opportunity to talk to them about some very serious matters. I am convinced based on **verse 29**, that the Gentiles were there to hear this discourse and what Jesus says is this:

IT IS TIME FOR JESUS CHRIST TO DIE ON THE CROSS SO THAT HE MAY DRAW ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE TO HIMSELF AND TO ETERNAL LIFE AND THIS IS THE MOMENT THAT GLORIFIES GOD.

Grace glorifies God because man has nothing to do with it and Jesus Christ going to the cross is pure grace. What really is at stake in the grace of God is the glory of God. In these verses there are a series of contrasts - you can love life or lose life; you can love the world or hate the world; you can live a lonely life or a fruitful life; you can serve self or serve God; you can honor self or honor God.

The instruction that Jesus gives from here until **John 13:30** is instruction with Judas present. The instruction Jesus gives from **13:31-17:26** is instruction without Judas being present. There is also a good probability that from **12:23** to **12:36** is instruction with Gentiles present:

INSTRUCTION #1 – Instruction concerning the glorious death of Jesus Christ. **12:23-24**

(Teaching #1) - The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified . **12:23**

I do not believe it is any coincidence that Christ makes this statement in the presence of Gentiles, because Jesus knew that the program of God by His death would swing out to them. Ever since Calvary, God has been glorified much more by Gentiles than by Jews. God was glorified by this Kingdom expansion that went from Jew to Gentile.

I want you to note here how the Godhead viewed the crucifixion - as a glorious moment. How do you view your own brutal execution as a moment that glorifies you? This was the moment that would bring sinners into a right relationship with God.

(Teaching #2) - In order for much fruit to come forth, something must die . **12:24**

Now **verse 24** is another “truly, truly” formula statement, which means this is dogmatic, unchanging, immutable truth.

See the staggering implication of this - if I don't die no one will have any connection to God. There will be no life. We will remain by ourselves in our sin. There will be no entrance into heaven. But if I do die, I open the door to much fruit.

Do not miss what is said here. Carefully observe what it is that saves people. Not Jesus' great teaching, not His good moral example, not by following Jesus' pattern of life; or trying to do the best you can; **what saves people is the death of Jesus Christ**. If men and women are to be saved, Jesus Christ must die in order to save them.

Millions and millions of people have been born out of the grain of wheat that fell to the ground and died. Millions are the fruit of the death of Jesus Christ.

INSTRUCTION #2 – Instruction concerning being eternally saved by Jesus Christ. **12:25**

Now before we tackle this, there is an important grammatical issue to observe and that does not show up in English but does show up in Greek before both nouns “life” and it is the article “the.” What this means is that John had some specific “life” in mind. He is not talking here about not enjoying life, or hating your very existence. He has something very specific in view, which he wants identified.

(Teaching #1) - The one who loves his life loses it. **12:25a**

The word love is philos (φιλος), which is the friendship kind of love. I take this to mean if you love your present life as a good friend and do not see it as a sinful life in need of a Savior, you will lose it. You will be eternally condemned. When you die you lose eternal life.

Jesus is saying, go ahead and love everything about your sinful life. Fall in love with your sinful self. Love your gossiping mouth, love your lying tongue, love your immoral pursuits, love your greed and lust, love your sin and you will go to hell. You will eventually lose. I heard one famous entertainer say - I have had a great life, I loved every bit of my life. I have no regrets and I would not change one thing. He did not see himself as a sinner in need of a Savior and the day he went into eternity was the day he lost.

Jesus lived an exemplary life on earth, but that life couldn't have saved anyone. If you want to see how far short of God's glory you really are, stack your life up against the life of Jesus Christ. If anyone could have loved the life He had lived it was Jesus Christ. He always did the things that pleased the Father. We love His life, certainly He could have too. But Jesus says for Me to really love My life, I must lose it so I can save sinners. Jesus says if I really want you to be My friend, I must not love My life, I must lose My life. If we want to be Jesus' friend we must not love our sinful life, we must turn to Him acknowledging it.

(Teaching #2) - The one who hates His life in this world shall have eternal life. **12:25b**

This was the very problem with Israel; they didn't hate their sinful life, they loved their sinful life. They were in love with their sinful life in this world and never even thought about the righteousness necessary to save them when they left this world. In fact, they wouldn't even acknowledge they were sinners in need of a Savior. But Jesus says if you want eternal life, you have to hate your sinful life and look to My cross and you will keep it. You must hate your arrogance and evil pride. You must hate when you gossip or lust or hate. You must see your sin for what it is and turn to My cross work and you will have eternal life.

INSTRUCTION #3 – Instruction concerning being a servant of Jesus Christ. **12:26**

If we keep in mind that Gentiles are in this context, Jesus is opening up the possibility not only of Gentiles being saved, but becoming servants as well. Now Jesus develops doctrine from one who is saved by Him to one who serves Him. The word “serve” is one from which we derive our term deacon (διακονη). Jesus is saying, I will permit any who are saved to serve Me but you must meet My criteria. There are three specific teachings He gives on this subject:

(Teaching #1) - The one who wants to serve Me must follow Me. **12:26a**

The present tense of the verb “follow” means a continual, habitual following. This is the continual pattern of a true servant. Now how do we follow Jesus Christ continually since He isn't even physically here? We follow Him by knowing and obeying His Word. If you want to be a servant of Jesus Christ you must obey the Word of God. You must follow it as your pattern in various contexts of life. You must make continual adjustments.

(Teaching #2) - The one who wants to serve Me must go where I am. **12:26b**

Since Jesus is physically right now in heaven seated at the right hand of the Father, He certainly is not challenging us to commit suicide so we can get to heaven quicker because the point is serving Him on earth. The principle being communicated is if you are going to serve Me, you must be willing to follow My direction and leading to where I want you to be. Notice the servant does not go where He wants, but where God wants.

Now many people say they want to go to a church where they can serve God and be used by God. However, don't miss this point. The first priority of service is knowing the Word so you can obey it and be directed by it. There are many people who think they are serving in their church when they ought to be getting out of their church and going to someplace where they can learn the Word of God so they can be properly directed by it. One who serves must be willing to follow Christ's direction, not one's own direction.

(Teaching #3) - The one who serves Me will be honored by My Father. **12:26c**

Some people don't like the subject of rewards or receiving honor, but Jesus taught it to His servants. What this comes down to is this - you either want to get the rewards and honor of the Father and go after them, or you don't want it and don't go after them. But if you want God the Father to honor you, you must be a servant of Jesus Christ.

INSTRUCTION #4 – Instruction concerning Personal turmoil in Jesus Christ. **12:27-28**

I doubt we will ever grasp the Personal struggle it was for the God/Savior to go through all of this. Hardly anyone, at this point, even knew who He was and He is about to die for their sins. There are three specific personal glimpses we get of what happened at this moment:

(Personal Glimpse #1) - Jesus soul was troubled . **12:27**

The Greek word “troubled” (ταρασσω) is one that means Christ was stirred up and troubled in His mind (G. Abbott-Smith, p. 440). The perfect tense means that this had started at a point in the past and continued into the present and into the future. This cross assignment was no picnic for Jesus Christ. He was troubled because He could look into the future and see everything that was going to happen to Him. He knew of the beatings, the thorns, the nails, the mockery, the wrath of God and the sin of man. To further complicate the issue, He could not pray for deliverance from it for this is the very reason He had come into the world. To this point, He could ask God the Father for anything and He would do it. He could walk into a cemetery and ask the Father to bring dead people back to life and He would do it. Had He asked God for legions of angels to show up and take Him away, they would have done it. But the whole purpose of Him coming here to earth was not to be an example or a good lesson or good teacher, it was to die and the hour had come. This was a very troubling moment.

(Personal Glimpse #2) - Jesus prayed that God the Father would glorify His name. **12:28a**

I want you to observe what Jesus Christ did when He was troubled - He prayed . In fact, He specifically prayed that God would glorify Himself, even though He was troubled by what was about to happen to Him.

Do you get this? Do you see this? How does God glorify His name by His Son dying on a cross? We could be offered eternal salvation through this one sacrifice and this sacrifice that enables us to be saved brings great glory to God. God's program could reach out to Greeks as well as Jews. God's name would be glorified all over the world, by this one death.

(Personal Glimpse #3) - God the Father audibly answered with a voice out of heaven. **12:28b**

There is no other person on earth that has ever prayed a prayer to God the Father and had God the Father thunder His voice out of heaven that says “I have glorified My name through You” and “will glorify it again.” This is the third time this has happened to Jesus Christ. It happened at His baptism (Matthew 3:17); it happened at His transfiguration (Matthew 17:5); and it happened again here. This very point proves Jesus Christ is the sinless God/man, Savior, Messiah and King. You don’t hear a voice from heaven at your baptism or when you have some peak spiritual experience, nor when you are facing some big issue. The truth is, we do not glorify God, Jesus does and our ability to glorify God is directly linked to Him.

INSTRUCTION #5 – Instructions concerning the voice, His cross-work and His departure.
12:29-36

The voice of God the Father was a comforting friend to Jesus Christ, but it was a perplexing mystery to the multitude. There was a multitude of people who heard the voice. Some thought it was thunder; others said it was an angel. If the people would have thought, you know He just asked the “Father” (v. 28) to glorify Himself, perhaps someone there could have suggested this is the voice of God the Father.

(Teaching #1) - This voice from heaven was not for Christ’s sake but the people’s sake.
12:29-30

This is exactly the same truth concerning His death, it was for His sake He died it was for our sake He died. Jesus Christ did not need to hear the Father’s voice to know what was happening; He was giving these people another opportunity to figure out who He was. But as you’ll see in just a moment, they didn’t get it. The people who heard the voice were saying it thundered or it was an angel. Jesus said this voice did not come for His sake but for your sakes.

(Teaching #2) - Judgment has now come to this world and Satan shall be cast out. **12:31**

The world is under the condemnatory wrath of God. The judgment of His wrath has already been pronounced, but it hasn’t as yet been executed. Satan brought the world under an Adamic curse in Eden. We are all born sinners ever since then. Up until the point when Jesus went to the cross, he controlled the world and in many ways today still does. However, this cross work of Jesus Christ is that which topples him and his power.

(Teaching #3) - Christ’s crucifixion will draw the character and quality of all kinds of people to Himself. **12:32-33**

There is no article before the noun “men” (v. 32), which means Jesus is not saying He is going to draw every single individual to salvation; what He says is the character and quality of all kinds of people will be drawn to My cross. All nationalities of people - Jews and Gentiles, all types of sinners - the heathen sinner to the respectable sinner, all types of genders - men, women and children will all be drawn to the cross on which I will be lifted up.

Jesus is specifically pointing out the fact that it was now time for Him to die. He is specifically pointing out how He would die, by being lifted up on the cross.

There are two main reactions to this instruction:

Reaction #1 - The reaction of the multitude. **12:34**

The multitude has no idea what Jesus is talking about nor who He is. **12:34**

These people had heard from the law that the Messiah was supposed to remain on earth forever. The religious leaders actually taught the people this. They did not present the great truths of Isaiah 53, which predicted that the Messiah must first suffer for sins.

Reaction #2 - The reaction of Jesus to the multitude. **12:35-36**

Christ says you have the light with you a little longer and you need to believe in it. The key to getting out of darkness and into the light is to believe in the light.

The most important question for you is what is your reaction to Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ is the light of the world; He is the light of life. Without Him, things will be dark, but with Him, life will be one of light and fruit. No matter how dark your life is, Jesus will take you out of the darkness and into the light.

All you must do is believe. If you will believe in Jesus Christ you will be saved. If you will serve Jesus Christ after you believe you will be honored.