

## Will You See Jesus?

John 12:20-36

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3/31/13

Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

- I. Introduction: Our text today is taken from the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gospel of John. As you turn there, let me set the stage for you. As recorded in the previous chapter 11, Jesus had just raised Lazarus from the dead. And as we continue into chapter 12, we're told that as word spread of this miracle that many begin to follow Christ. We read here of His triumphant entry into Jerusalem as the time of His crucifixion neared. And then as we get to verse 20 (where we will begin our consideration today) we're told that certain Greeks (or Gentiles) who were present approached the Apostle Phillip and expressed their desire to see Jesus. And so Phillip, along with Andrew relayed that request onto Christ and His response is so telling! And that's where I intend to focus our attention this morning.

From this text, it seems possible that those gathered were in hearing distance of Jesus. If so it would be reasonable to expect Christ to respond by saying something like, "Sure, here I am, come on over." But instead, Christ, in response to this request, began to speak of His death, beginning with the words, "***The hour is come,...***" And in our Lord's answer, we hear His explanation of what it is to "see Jesus." All who will see the risen Savior in heaven's eternal glory will see Him (His Person and finished cross work) as He is before leaving this earth. They will see Him in belief of the Gospel of God's Sovereign grace which sets forth how God saves sinners in and by the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus Christ. So the question posed by the title of my sermon is this: "Will You See Jesus?"

So look with me beginning in John 12, verse 20 where we read...

### II. John 12:20-36:

A. Verses 20-21: "***And there were certain Greeks among them*** <that is these Gentiles who had witnessed or at least heard of Christ having raised Lazarus from the dead, Gentiles> ***that came up to worship at the feast***: <The feast of the Passover> <sup>21</sup>***The same*** <these certain Greeks> ***came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus.***"

1. Many commentators think that these certain Greeks were expressing more than just a desire to visually see Christ due to His celebrity in having raised Lazarus from the dead. Rather it seems to have been an expression of their sincere desire to be with Him and to know Him as He truly is. And it's interesting that they are described as "certain" Greeks when we consider that Christ has indicated earlier in this book that only "certain" ones – called His sheep would come to see Him – see Him as He is revealed to them in salvation. We'll look at that in more detail a bit later.

2. But I also think there is significance in that their question was addressed to “Jesus” as they came saying “We would see Jesus.” That word Jesus is the same word that the angel instructed Joseph to name Him before His birth saying as recorded in Matthew 1:21, ***“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”*** The word “Jesus” means Jehovah God who saves! If you would see this “Jesus,” not as we might imagine Him to be but as He truly is, then your understanding of Him and what He accomplished must be that of (1) One who is Jehovah (God manifested in the flesh) and (2) One who has saved His People from their sins. Does that describe the “Jesus” you have come to see?

Continuing in verse 22 we read...

- B. Verses 22-23: ***Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. <sup>23</sup>And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*** Three times before in the book of John, Christ is quoted as saying, “Mine hour is not yet come.” On 2 of those occasions it is said that His enemies would not yet lay their hands upon Him because His appointed hour had not yet come. But now our Lord, as the time of His death approaches, answers those who would see Jesus by speaking of His death, beginning here by noting that God’s appointed time for it had come. The verses that follow show us clearly that this speaks of his death. But notice He speaks of it as that time in which He, the Son of man, would be glorified. There’s glory – a revelation of God that is uniquely discovered in the Person and finished work of Christ, in His death on Calvary’s cross.
- C. Verse 24: Continuing in verse 24, ***Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.***
  1. The Bible often uses this analogy of the farmer to teach us of salvation. We read how it is likened to planting and harvesting. And God the Father is called the “Lord of the Harvest.” As recorded in both the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (Mt. 9:37-38, Lk 10:2), Christ spoke of how the harvest was plentiful but the laborers are few and so He adds, “Pray ye therefore to the Lord of the harvest, <to God the Father> that He would send forth laborers...” This harvest is in reference to the end gathering of His church.
  2. Likewise in John 15:1 Christ said, ***“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.”*** A husbandman is another name for a farmer. A wise farmer plans what he will grow and follows his plan. He chooses the seed he wants to grow. And he plants it. And so does the Lord of the Harvest, choosing some, perhaps such as these certain Greeks, that He has planted in Christ and will harvest unto eternal life.
  3. And so here, Christ begins to expound upon the necessity of His upcoming death. If we will see Jesus, we will in this lifetime see the absolute necessity of His death and the absolute efficacy of His death to fully accomplish that which He came to do – to save His people from their sins.

4. The phrase “corn of wheat” here simply refers to a kernel of wheat or a wheat seed. Now if we take a wheat seed and lay it here on the table, nothing will happen. Keep in mind that many of the Jews expected a Messiah who would come and reign forever on earth as a king, not die the death of a common criminal on a cross. But Christ says unless the seed fall or be planted in the ground and die it will not bring forth fruit. In other words, no death = no life! Everlasting life comes from His death! And if we would see Jesus, we must come to grips with this – the necessity of His death and subsequent resurrection unto life of which He is speaking – how it is necessary and effectual for the salvation of all for whom He lived, died and rose again – His fruit.
5. Had Christ lived the perfect life of obedience (which He did live) and ascended unto the Father without having ever died, He would have His heavenly glory and we might speak volumes about the sinless example He left us, but there would have been no fruit – No hope of salvation for anyone. No death = no life! Back to John 12, picking up in v. 25...

D. Verses 25-26: ***He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. <sup>26</sup>If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.***

1. Here our Lord is showing us that there is a sense in which it can be said of His fruit (all those who are saved by His death, those who in time are given His blood-bought gift of faith) – there is the sense in which they too, by faith, die to live. First, they see their oneness with Him in both His death and resurrection, in that what He did, He did as their Representative and Substitute. So they come to know that it was for their sins that He died, to pay their debt before the justice of God. And they see their assurance of eternal life in His very resurrection, the proof that God’s justice was satisfied by the shedding of His precious blood for His people. By God’s mercy, having been made one with Him, they too will arise unto spiritual life in the new birth, and ultimately be raised unto heaven’s eternal glory itself.
2. And there is also the sense in which those who see Jesus (as He truly is), die to this world and to themselves. Being convinced of sin (as God the Holy Spirit) does for all those who are saved, they see the utter impossibility of being saved if salvation is conditioned in any way, to any degree on anything that proceeds from them, as sinners. A holy God requires a perfection they can’t render – that only Christ could and did render for them as their Substitute and Surety. And so as they examine themselves in this life, they see nothing that would commend them unto God. And in that sense, they hate that which proceeds from them in that they dare not present it unto God as the basis upon which they shall be saved – upon which they shall find acceptance. Like many of you, I once so dared to expect God to save me (knowing the scriptures say many shall perish), but I thought I was saved because (unlike them) I did my part – I believed what others would not. Thank God He gives His adopted children repentance from such notions when He brings them to see Jesus – to see how they must have the merit of that which He alone accomplished by His perfect obedience, even unto the death of the cross.

E. Verse 27: Now as we reach verse 27, knowing the hour had come, Christ begins to express the agony that He was experiencing in having the demerit of all the sins of all those for whom He would die laid upon Him – imputed or charged to His account that He might soon bear in their place the just wrath of God that would be equal to more than the sum total of the eternal miseries that would otherwise have awaited those for whose sins He bore. Sinners who perish, spend an eternity banished from the presence of God, but their suffering in hell never pays the debt due to a holy God. Only Christ’s infinitely valuable sacrifice could do (and has done) that.

He says in verse 27, ***“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.”*** Now remember, in Matthew’s Gospel when we read how Jesus began to show His disciples how he must go to Jerusalem and suffer and be killed, that even Peter, one of His disciples, rebuked Him and said “Be it far from thee, this can’t be so.” And here again, Christ is telling them, I’m troubled, but what shall I say? Shall I ask God to save me from this hour of my death when this is why I’m here. This is why I came. As the angel declared to Joseph, He came to save His people from their sins. And that fruit of salvation – that eternal life – only comes by His justice-satisfying death.

F. Verse 28: Continuing in verse 28, He prays, ***“Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”*** This speaks of a past, present, and future glory. God had glorified His name in creation, in His birth, and will glorify it in His resurrection and ever do so in His eternal reign. But here now, at His death will be manifested the very glory of God (the revelation of who He is, as He is uniquely known by those he saves) – as they see in this giving of life by His death, the majesty and glory of God in every attribute of His character. Hereby they behold how God can be just and holy in dealing with the sins of His people and still in loving-kindness and mercy save them. As He spoke through the prophet Isaiah, saying there is none like me. Look unto me and by ye saved and He distinguished who He was there in Isaiah 45 saying Look to me – a just God and a Savior! Oh what a glorious, God-honoring death He did die!

G. Verses 29-30: In verse 29 we read, ***“The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.”***<sup>30</sup> ***Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.”*** And these words in this passage today – they are recorded for our sakes, that if God is pleased, hereby we might see Jesus. Jesus has asserted to them that He must die and this voice of God the Father from heaven graciously confirms it as Christ is about to explain more concerning that which He will soon accomplish by His death as He continues in verse 31 saying...

H. Verse 31: *Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.* Christ is saying that “now” – now on the cross of Calvary is judgment being administered against the sins He would bear away by His death. And thereby, Satan, the prince of this world, is cast out.

1. Here at the cross is the world judged – all of redemptive history converging on the cross. Everything was settled there! God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is bearing away the just penalty due unto all the sins of each and every one for whom He lived and died. No good deeds of yours, no penance, no amount of suffering now or forever in hell will ever pay that which is due unto the infinite, holy justice of God. Only the infinitely precious blood of Christ – His death on the cross could so redeem – so pay in full the debt due unto the sins of a people that God declares of them, “Not guilty!” That’s what it is to be justified by the blood of Christ.
2. And Christ adds that “now,” by His death, Satan shall be cast out. Now we know from other scripture that Satan will not be permanently put down until Christ returns, but this refers to Satan’s being cast out or cast aside in this sense: The condemnation due unto the sins of God’s elect, has been totally removed by the death Christ died for them at Calvary’s cross.
3. A good commentary on how Satan is “cast out” is found in Hebrews 2, beginning at the end of verse 13 where we read, “...***Behold I and the children which God hath given me*** <that certain people>. <sup>14</sup>***Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;*** <He condescended to take into union with His Deity a sinless humanity – and for what purpose?> ***that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;***” That word “destroy” there means to render powerless. What is Satan’s power of death? This is speaking of eternal death. Elsewhere Satan is called the accuser, but that power to accuse God’s elect (the children which God the Father gave to Christ) is negated. Satan is cast aside, rendered powerless by the death of Christ whereby their sin debt was paid in full. They are redeemed! They’ve been bought! They are free and clear!
4. As Paul wrote in Romans 8, beginning in verse 33, “***Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.*** <He, the judge of all the earth, justifies – declares them not guilty but righteous> <sup>34</sup>***Who is he that condemneth?*** <Satan’s power to condemn has been rendered useless. His accusations cannot stick. Why?> ***It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again,*** <He arose – that confirms to us He got the job done. Satisfaction was made so He lives and so will all those for whom He lived and died. He...> ***who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.***”

Well, let’s read through the rest of these verses and I’ll make a few closing comments. Picking up at verse 32 Christ says...

I. Verses 32-36: <sup>32</sup>*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.* <sup>33</sup>*This he said, signifying what death he should die.* <...the death, as He was lifted upon into the air, nailed to a cross> <sup>34</sup>*The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?* <See here how they had not grasped yet the necessity of Christ's death, for the Messiah they expected would establish His kingdom and reign forever on earth.> <sup>35</sup>*Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you.* <Speaking of Himself> *Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.* <That's what it is to be lost – to not know the way.> <sup>36</sup>*While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them."*

1. As I read those final verses of our text today, I was reminded of how blessed we are to have the light of the Gospel of God's grace in this place – that Gospel light which shines on the Light of the World – the Lord Jesus Christ that we might see Him – see Him as He is seen in salvation, as the Lord our righteousness. And let us never take this for granted. All who hear this message will have heard the light of the Gospel preached, and thereby His righteousness is brought near. His righteousness – that simply refers to the perfect justice-satisfying merit of Christ's obedience unto death – the very righteousness by which we all shall be judged. I pray that God will cause all who hear this message to see Jesus – to see Him as the Prophet Jeremiah called Him, the Lord our Righteousness. The light of the Gospel is here just as Christ was there with them. Let's not take that for granted.
2. And before we leave this section I wanted to comment on those often quoted words from verse 32 where Christ said, "*And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*" Many, who are persuaded that Christ died for all and that he tries to draw all without exception unto Himself, will sometime quote this passage as a proof text. But the Apostle John had already settled this issue of the "all" of which this verse speaks in prior chapters.

As some of you know, the word "all" in this context, and as it is often used in the book of John, references a truth that was new to the Jews in that day – that God had a people, His elect, chosen from all nations, including from among these certain Greeks – the Gentiles. The truth is that Christ will draw all those whom He represented, all those for whom He came to save – all those for whom He lived and died. And as I say, Christ had already given us plenty of commentary on this as recorded earlier in John's Gospel.

- (a) First, in John 6, Christ referred to God’s elect as those who were given to Him by God the Father when He said in verse 37, **“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”** There we have the “all” that He shall draw unto Himself by His irresistible calling, who shall come to Him. They are those that the Father gave to Him.
- (b) And then in John 10:11 Christ said of Himself, **“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”** Now if Christ died for all then we would have to assume that “the sheep” here would refer to everyone who ever lived, but look further down in this chapter, beginning in verse 26 where Christ, in answer to those who would not believe said, **“But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. <sup>27</sup>My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: <sup>28</sup>And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup>My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.”** If you don’t agree, then just admit your argument is not with me but with God. These are His words.

### III. Closing:

Let me just share a few more thoughts in closing. Turn with me to Acts 17, a passage I just can’t resist sharing with you on this day when so many gather to celebrate the resurrection of Christ, at least celebrating the historical fact that He arose. And sadly, many remain blind to the real significance of His resurrection. I wonder how many truly see Jesus as He described ‘seeing Jesus’ – the victorious accomplishment of His death as seen in our passage today – a victory, proven to be so by His resurrection unto life. Truly without His death, there is no life. No death, no life!

In Acts 17, as Paul is wrapping up His sermon on Mars Hill in Athens, He closes with this, beginning at the end of verse 30, saying, **“...but now <God> commandeth all men every where to repent: <sup>31</sup>Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness <Whose righteousness?> by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.”** He assures us that we must measure up to this very perfect righteousness (His perfect obedience unto death) for it demands life from a just and holy God, just as sin demands death. How can any sinner possibly measure up to that? He can’t, unless God sent him or her a Substitute to do for them what they could never do for themselves.

The sins of God's elect, imputed (or charged to Christ's account) demanded His death, but His perfect satisfaction to the justice of God by His obedience unto death, rendered a perfect righteousness which demanded life – and so He arose from the grave. And just as sure as He lives, all those for whom He lived and died shall arise with Him, both spiritually, in the new birth (the gift of spiritual life) whereby they come to see Jesus – as He is, as the Lord their righteousness – and ultimately they will be raised from their physical death to see Jesus for all eternity in heaven's glory. The very merit of what He accomplished, His perfect righteousness, is imputed or charged to their accounts. And on that basis, God has declared them justified. That means they are truly righteous, not guilty in His sight!

Now few will argue that those who see Jesus in salvation shall evidence that by belief of the gospel, but the question I pose to you in closing is this: Is the gospel you believe God's gospel? Well, as I often do, I direct you to Romans 1 where we're taught in verse 16 that the gospel (God's gospel) truly is the power of God unto salvation. But it tells us in verse 17 why that's so. It says it is the power of God unto salvation, "for <or because> therein is the righteousness of God revealed." As we just saw from Acts 17, that's the standard by which we all shall be judged – the righteousness He rendered by His death on the cross.

For many religious folks, just like me in years past, their thoughts concerning Christ (including His death and resurrection) expose a lack of understanding of what He truly accomplished. I once thought that by Christ's death on the cross, somehow my salvation had been made possible, but that the ultimate, determining factor was in my response – whether or not I would believe. Knowing God commands us to believe, if I had been pressed about it, I would have had to admit that if God had commanded me to believe that pigs fly in order to be saved, it would not have changed at all my understanding of God at that time. I did not see Jesus and the necessity of His death on the cross for the salvation of any. If God saved me, a sinner, simply because I believed something, then He would have to dispense with who He is. He would dispense with His justice. He would have to decide to overlook my sins or look the other way. Could God, being true to who He is, just as well have devised another way whereby sinners could be saved? No – not, if you would see Jesus. No death – no life!

To see Jesus with the eyes of God-given, blood-bought faith, is to see both the necessity and the efficacy of His obedience unto death in your place, to establish for you the only righteousness by which God can be who He is, both a just God and a Savior!

Will you see Jesus?

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself – the Bible.

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