

**“The Messiah Must Die!”
John 12:20-36**

Jesus is sought by the Greeks.

It is virtually impossible, being so far removed in time, and culture, and now having the complete revelation of the New Testament to interpret for us the Old Testament, for us to grasp the reaction of the Jews when Jesus of Nazareth reveals to them that He is Messiah:

John 12:20-36

Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. 21 Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

22 Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

23 But Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. 24 Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. 25 He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.

27 "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. 28 Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again."

29 Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him."

30 Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. 32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself." 33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

34 The people answered Him, "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this Son of Man?"

35 Then Jesus said to them, "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. 36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light." These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

Jesus of Nazareth made His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem, and in this act, fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 that Messiah would come into Jerusalem riding on the foal of a donkey. Jesus is making a bold public declaration that He is Messiah. Previously Jesus had avoided the crowds. Now He boldly claims to be Messiah!

Zechariah 9:9

**"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your King is coming to you;
He is just and having salvation,
Lowly and riding on a donkey,
A colt, the foal of a donkey.**

The great crowds that were in Jerusalem for the Passover were excited and cried out "Hosanna" or "Save Now!" They were ready to make Jesus their King. But they grossly misunderstood the nature of Messiah's kingdom.

The Kingdom of God is not an earthly kingdom but a kingdom of priests made up of born again Jews and born again Gentiles redeemed by the blood of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world!

The "world" in Jewish idiom was the combination of Jews and Gentiles. The Jews were quite all right with a Jewish kingdom but they had no concept of both Jews and Gentiles in the same body of believers.

The apostle Paul dealt with the problem of Gentiles and Jews in the same body of Christ, the Church, in Romans 12.

It is true that there was an allowance for a Gentile to convert to Judaism but there always remained a distinction in the Jewish mind between a "real" Jew and a Gentile proselyte.

That prejudice on the part of Peter revived and he had to be rebuked by Paul as recorded in Galatians 2. What Peter did was anti-gospel!

So the "world" has gone after Him!

The Pharisees were blinded to the concept of Jews and Gentiles in the same body of Christ; nevertheless Caiaphas spoke the truth in ignorance.

John 11:45-52

Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him. 46 But some of them went away to the Pharisees and told them the things Jesus did. 47 Then the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What shall we do? For this Man works many signs. 48 If we let Him alone like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation."

49 And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, 50 nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish." 51 Now this he did not say on his own authority; but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, 52 and not for that nation only, but also that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad.

Do you see what Caiaphas prophesied in ignorance [51]?

"...that He would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad."

In 12:19 the Pharisees see the response of the crowds and they panic!

19 The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!"

John then brings in the "world" in verse 20 as represented by **"certain Greeks."**

(20) There is not much agreement among the scholars about who these "certain Greeks" were.

These "certain Greeks" are probably not Greek-speaking Jews [referred to as Hellenists in Acts 6], but they may Gentile proselytes to Judaism. Gentiles were permitted to worship at the temple but were not allowed beyond the "Court of the Gentiles."

At the least these "certain Greeks" are "God-fearers".

We have the case of the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 9 and Cornelius in Acts 10. Though these men were not ethnic Greeks, the Jews, in the sense that these men were not Jews; would have called them Greeks.

But the main point is that just as the Pharisees feared, and just as John the Baptist had proclaimed, Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! The “world” is not every member of the fallen human race but as it says in Revelation 7:9-12.

After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" 11 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying:

**"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom,
Thanksgiving and honor and power and might,
Be to our God forever and ever.
Amen."**

So the “world has gone after Him”!

Well these “certain Greeks” go to a Galilean Jew with a Greek name.

(21, 22) They go to Philip who goes to Andrew. They both tell Jesus. Jesus would welcome the Greeks, but He is in the temple; the problem is too big for Philip and Andrew. They would not bring these “certain Greeks” into the temple. Paul got into trouble by being falsely accused of bringing a Gentile into the temple.

Acts 21:27-29

27 Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, 28 crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." 29(For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

"Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

Over 40 years ago I was invited to speak at a church in western Kentucky and on the pulpit where only the preacher could see it was a plaque that read:

“Sir, we would see Jesus.”

That is a good thing for anyone who presumes to preach to keep in mind.

We must preach “Christ, and Him crucified” or we will have failed in our calling. We should strive to be like Charles Spurgeon who was criticized because “All his sermons sounded alike.” His reply was, “Yes, I take a text and make a bee-line to Calvary with it.”

How does Jesus answer the request, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

If you are to “see Jesus”, i.e., really see and understand the gospel you must see and understand what Jesus means by His answer.

They asked to “see Jesus” and Jesus answers them.

(23) Jesus speaks of His death; His “hour” has come. Cf. 23 & 33.

In the gospel of John, the phrase “My hour has not yet come.” refers to the time of His death on the cross.

John 2:4

Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come."

John 7:30

Therefore they sought to take Him; but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come.

John 8:20

These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come.

(24) He sees His “seed.” Cf. Isaiah 53:10-11

**10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;
He has put Him to grief.
When You make His soul an offering for sin,
He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,
And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.
11 He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.
By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,
For He shall bear their iniquities.**

Do you “see Jesus”? Do you see the absolute necessity of His death?

Apart from His atoning sacrifice on the cross Jesus could do nothing for these Greeks. An earthly Messiah could avail them nothing at all. It is only as the spiritual Messiah, in His substitutionary atonement, that He can save them or anyone else.

John 12: 24 applies to Christ alone. **“Unless a grain of wheat...”**

Apart from the cross there is no spiritual harvest.

Without going into the mysteries of plant life think about what Jesus is saying. In the physical world of plants a dry dead seed will stay in that condition. I have dry dead okra seed in my freezer. Will any okra grow in that freezer? Stupid question!

But if I take some of those dry dead okra seeds out of the freezer and plant them in the earth, and they get some water, what happens? Plants grow and each plant produces many okra pods and every pod has many seeds. That is “much fruit”.

So you must see the absolute necessity of His death if you are to “See Jesus.”

And now His hour has come and the Messiah must die according to the OT prophets. Jesus had told His disciples what to expect but they could not comprehend a dead Christ.

Cf. Luke 18:31-34

Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. 32 For He will be delivered to the Gentiles and will be mocked and insulted and spit upon. 33 They will scourge Him and kill Him. And the third day He will rise again."

34 But they understood none of these things; this saying was hidden from them, and they did not know the things which were spoken.

(25) There are two different Greek words in verse 25 that are translated "life".

The first is **psuche** (psoo-khay'); this means breath, i.e. by implication the spirit of a man. Sometimes it means the animal sentient principle only.

Plants have a form of life but it is not a consciousness. So this word is distinguished on the one hand, as the rational and immortal soul; and on the other hand, as that which is mere vitality, even of plants: e.g., life, mind, and soul.

So the first kind of "life" is of the mind and spirit.
The life that is your mind is controlled by your desires.

The second word is **Zoë** (dzo-ay'); life (literally or figuratively).

This word means the duration of life: e.g., eternal life.

What Jesus says connects the principle of His sacrifice and the believer's self-denial. Whatever is between Christ and my desires must go!

If there is anything that I value more than Christ it will show that I was never a believer. Will we compromise the truth? Will we continue in sin?

The person who says, "Well, I know the Bible says ... **But** ..." What ever follows the "But" could cause you to learn too late that you were deceived.

(26) Jesus told us the way to discern if we are His disciples.

Serving Jesus necessarily means to follow Him.

Are we communicating to others? How does one “follow” Jesus?

To follow Jesus means to obey the Word of God. This is not legalism where a person is ruled by fear. There are those religions, which hold their followers by fear, and if a person does not obey their commands they will lose their salvation. If a religious group teaches that error they are legalists.

But the Apostle John explains what it means to “follow” Jesus in First John.

“We know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.” 1 John 1:3

To follow Jesus is to have a commitment to serve Him no matter what we have to give up. If that is too hard then we have not really trusted Jesus.

“... and where I am, there My servant will be also.”

A few years ago there was a WWJD fad. [What Would Jesus Do?]

The problem that I had with the WWJD fad is that each individual determined what Jesus would do without going to the Bible alone to make his or her decision.

“If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.”

Jesus says in 5:23 that if we do not honor the Son we do not honor the Father.

John 5:23

He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

Let me give you an example of how some people do not honor Jesus. A TV reporter is interviewing a man after he has survived a hurricane or a tornado. The man gives “God” the credit for sparing his life. But which “God” is the man referring to? The man may have the Lord Jesus in his mind but we cannot read his mind.

Would it not honor the Son to say the Lord Jesus Christ spared my life?
He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

So Jesus says that the one who serves Him, i.e., honors Him, the Father will honor. So how do we honor or serve Him? It is very simple to say.

Be sure that whatever is important to you is not keeping you from following Christ. Are you reading your Bible every day? If not, why not?

(27,28a) Jesus is fully aware of the horrors of the impending cross.
Jesus knew that Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 were about Him.

But the sinless Son of God recoils at the fact of being made sin.

2 Corinthians 5:21

For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

We cannot imagine the agony of soul that Jesus experienced when He was made to be sin and the awful and full wrath of God was laid on Him!

Jesus lived a perfect life under the holy law of God in order to earn the righteousness of God. He took the sins of His people on Himself as the antitype of all of the OT sacrifices and shed His precious blood to save sinners. **Do you “see Jesus”?**

(28b-30) A voice from heaven! They heard but did not understand.

Three times the Father speaks audibly to the Son.

At the **beginning** of His earthly ministry at His baptism, “This is My beloved Son, hear Him! He is **Prophet**: hear Him speak from God! Our Prophet reveals the Word of God.

Cf. Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; Psalm 2:7; Isaiah 42:1; John 1:29-34

Again at the **mid-point** of His earthly ministry, as He was transfigured, and as His appearance glistened in glory brighter than the noonday sun.

Not Moses and not Elijah; only Jesus is our **Priest**, hear Him!
Our High Priest represents His people to God.
Cf. Mathew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36

And here, **just before His death** on the cross, as He glorifies the name of the Father and the Father says, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.” Jesus is **King!** We submit to our King!

On each of the three occasions when the Father spoke audibly to the Son the subject was His death! **Jesus is Prophet, Priest, and King!**

He is Messiah and He must be “lifted up”! Messiah must be planted as a dead dry seed and come to life again!

Let me remind you what the word “glory” means.

The Greek word doxazo (dox-ad'-zo) translated “glory” here and in many other places means esteem or opinion. The higher your opinion is of something the more glorious it is to you.

2 Corinthians 4:6

For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But the people who heard the voice from heaven did not understand.
Some said it thundered and others said they heard an angel.

How about you? Have you only heard me make a noise this evening?
Have you heard and understood the Gospel? Have you repented of your sin and trusted Jesus Christ and only Jesus for your acceptance with God?

Obey the Lord but do not trust your obedience!

(30-33) Judgment - KRISIS, separating division. Prince [ruler] of this world is clearly Satan. The “drawing” of all is the “casting out.” Satan loses his power as the “nations” are drawn to Christ. The “all” are all nations, Jews and Gentiles. The “world” that so caused the Pharisees to panic.

Satan was defeated at the cross of Jesus Christ. Yes, Satan still goes about seeking whom he may devour. But his power is limited and he is under the absolute control of God. Satan is like a dog on a chain.

John 10:14-16

14 I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. 15 As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

Jesus clearly defines what He means by being “lifted up.”
“Lifted up” is His death on the cross.

“Draw” is a forceful word.

John 6:43-45

43 Jesus therefore answered and said to them, "Do not murmur among yourselves. 44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.

(34) Interpreted literally, Messiah would remain on earth forever as King of the Jews. They are showing how little they understood the Scriptures. And we would have the same problem if the Holy Spirit did not enlighten us.

The answer of the people is a malicious argument with what Jesus had said about Messiah dying. Especially His being “lifted up”; to be hung on a tree to die as a criminal!

They conclude that if He must die then He cannot be Messiah because of their carnal view of the Kingdom of God being a literal earthly kingdom.

(35-36) In response to their slurring remark, He reminds them of their responsibility. Jesus said in 8:24, **“If you do not believe that I Am He, you will die in your sins.”**

He came unto His own and His own did not receive Him [John 1:11].

How many words and signs did Jesus give to the Jews and yet most of them would not have Him as their King.

Jesus treaded upon the sea, Jesus raised the dead, and Jesus clearly claimed to be Messiah and yet most of these people died in their sins and went to an everlasting torment in hell!

How often have you heard the general call of the Gospel and yet you will not repent and follow King Jesus?

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