

WORD OF TRUTH

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SIR, WE WOULD SEE JESUS

“The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him. And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus” (John 12:19-22).

Remember in chapter 11, Jesus has raised Lazarus from the dead. Then at the beginning of chapter 12 a dinner is given in Bethany. Lazarus is present, Martha served, and Mary anoints Jesus with expensive perfume, and Jesus commends her for this deed, and her spiritual insight. (You may hear my audio sermon, and read my PDF article *She Hath Done What She Could*). <http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=118082356330> .Many of the people were curious about Lazarus, but the chief priests wanted him dead -- again! (John 12:10).The raising of Lazarus only added to the curiosity, and to the crowd at Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem, which is a short distance from Bethany.

“On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt”(John 12:12-15).

Matthew’s account mentions He is publicly called “*the Son of David*”. This is a Hebrew reference to “*Messiah*”. Christ here was **publicly** acknowledged as the Messiah, *The King of Israel*. John Gill’s comments on Matthew 1:1 are helpful here: “*This account of Christ begins with the name of the Messiah, well known to the Jews, the son of David; not only to the Scribes and Pharisees, the more learned part of the nation, but to the common people, even to persons of the meanest rank and figure among them.- --- Nothing is more common in the Jewish writings, than for כִּי בָּנִי "the son of David" to stand alone for the Messiah;*”

“The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him (John 12:19). Yes, they were getting worried, because He *appeared* to be unstoppable, and they believed they *must* stop Him. They had some valid concern here. His fame had rapidly spread, and now *Gentiles* were hearing about him more than before. Yet, as it is whenever certain words as “world” are used in the Bible, the context must be considered. Here it is obviously used in a *state* context. These Jews were not saying the entire, inhabited, earth was following Christ, but *many more* were now following Him there in divided Israel. Remember in His lifetime of 33 ½ years, Jesus had *never* been out of the borders of original Israel. While He was here on earth, His following, while growing, was *never* extremely large. Yet **very soon** His fame and influence was to grow rapidly .

Even now, certain Greeks desired to see Jesus. “*Not Grecian Jews, but Greek proselytes to the*

Jewish faith, who were wont to attend the annual festivals, particularly this primary one, the Passover” (JFB Commentary).

It was getting near the time of Christ’s crucifixion, because He was God’s *true* Passover Lamb. Once He is offered to God, it would not be long until the gospel light in it’s fullness would also go to the Gentiles. Remember, He said **“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24)**. Even though some Gentiles **were** converted, like the woman at the well, the Syro-Phonician woman, and a few others, the message was *primarily* to the Jew until **after** Christ’s resurrection. Even later, Paul said **“To the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16b)**. After Christ’s resurrection, as the Jews more and more rejected the gospel, God turned to the Gentiles. This was in His eternal purpose, as the OT foretold. Yet an elect remnant of Jews are going to be saved over the course of history until Christ returns. (See Romans 11:4,5)

But, here in John 12 these Greek proselyte Jews desired to see Him. *“These men from the west represent, at the end of Christ’s life, what the wise men from the east represented at its beginning; but these come to the cross of the King, even as those to His manger” (Rudolph Stier)*. Some commentators believe He ignored the Greeks. But, Stier believes He addressed them as does Thomas Scott. *“The difficulty the apostles found about mentioning these “Greeks” to Jesus, as well as the subsequent discourse, strongly implies that they were uncircumcised persons. It is supposed that they lived in the confines of Galilee and thus got acquainted with Phillip. They were favorable to the Jewish religion, and came to Jerusalem to worship; yet it is not said that they ate the Passover. They had heard of our Lord’s miracles, and were desirous of seeing Him and receiving His instructions, and they respectfully applied to Phillip for that purpose. But he, perhaps fearing, lest an interview with Gentiles would render his Lord still more obnoxious to the Pharisees, did not make it known to Him, till he had previously conferred with Andrew about it. Probably, Jesus ordered them to be introduced to Him, and spake what follows in their presence, though He might see good not to admit them to a private conference, ‘because Christ when He sent them (the Apostles), forth to preach, forbade to go into the coasts of the Gentiles (Matthew 10: 5,6). They were in doubt whether such uncircumcised persons were to be admitted to converse with Jesus, so they consult Him first before they brought them to Him.’” (Thomas Scott gives credit to Whitby for the last quote).*

Christ’s immediate reply was to speak of His impending death and resurrection. **“And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. 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. He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal” (John 12:23-25)**. If Christ’s sacrifice hadn’t taken place, **not one** would *really* be saved in the Old Testament or the New Testament. All the sacrifices under the law would have meant **nothing** as far as eternal salvation. All the sermons Jesus preached, the feeding of the multitudes, the miracles and healings, including the raising of the dead, **would have all meant nothing!** All humanity would remain lost were it not for the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Why did these Greeks want to see Jesus? We are not told. We can only surmise that it had to do with the Savior’s increasing fame. The raising of Lazarus was no secret. This story had spread like wildfire. This is obvious from the desire of the Jewish leaders to kill Lazarus, and the great

concern of the Pharisees about Jesus' spreading fame and popularity. Interesting it is that the height of Jesus earthly popularity was **here** at the triumphal entry, just shortly before He was put to death.

Whatever their reasons for desiring to see Him, they were not alone. Many desired to see Him. His fame had spread so much that His enemies could see no way to stop it, except to put Him to death. The Greeks were polite in their inquiry about Jesus. It seemed to be a respectful request. They did not wish to harm Him. They were no doubt curious, but was there something **more**? Could it be that God was pricking their hearts? It was not yet time for the Gentiles to be evangelized, but that was going to change *very soon*. Soon He was going to die for the sins of His people -- all those of the Old Testament who worshiped God, and tried to keep the law, and all those to follow in the New Testament, many who are Gentiles, who could only come as ***“aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world”*** (Ephesians 2:12).

Remember, these were not the first to want to see Jesus. At His birth, shepherds came to see Him in the stable. Later, wise men from the east came following the star they saw. Even in the Old Testament, some had a desire to see God, as Moses did. He was shown God's back (see Exodus 33:18-23). Pre-incarnate visits of Christ the Messiah were given a few times. Many scholars believe Melchisedek was the pre-incarnate Christ (see Hebrews 7:1-4). The fourth man in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego was said by Nebuchadnezzar to be ***“like the son of God”*** (Daniel 3:25b). Was it an angel, or the pre-incarnate Son of God? I personally believe it was very likely Jesus Christ in pre-incarnate form. He is ***“the angel of the covenant”*** (See Judges 2:1). What do you think?.

“There was a fourth seen with them in the fire, whose form, in Nebuchadnezzar's judgment, was ‘like the Son of God’; he appeared as a divine person, a messenger from heaven, not as a servant, but as a son. ‘Like an angel’ (so some); and angels are called sons of God, (Job 38:7). In the apocryphal narrative of this story it is said, ‘The angel of the Lord came down into the furnace’; and Nebuchadnezzar here says ‘Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him’ (Daniel 3:28), ; and it was an angel that shut the lions' mouths when Daniel was in the den, (Daniel 6:22). But some think it was the eternal Son of God, the angel of the covenant, and not a created angel. He appeared often in our nature before he assumed it in his incarnation, and never more seasonable, nor to give a more proper indication and presage of his great errand into the world in the fulness of time, than now, when, to deliver his chosen out of the fire, he came and walked with them in the fire. Note, Those that suffer for Christ have his gracious presence with them in their sufferings, even in the fiery furnace, even in the valley of the shadow of death, and therefore even there they need fear no evil. Hereby Christ showed that what is done against his people he takes as done against himself; whoever throws them into the furnace does, in effect, throw him in. ‘I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest’ (Acts 9:5) compare with Isaiah 63:9”

(Matthew Henry). I agree with Matthew. Henry here.

Isaiah saw Him ***“high and lifted up”*** (Isaiah 6:1). Christ verifies this: ***“These things said Esaias (Isaiah), when he saw his glory, and spake of him”*** (John 12:41). This is just naming a few of the visits God made to man *before* the birth of Christ. Remember, Jesus Christ did not begin existence in the stable in Bethlehem -- He only began to be a man from that point on.. He

became the “God-man” *“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus“ (1 Timothy 2:5).*

Like these Greeks, “We would see Jesus” We who are bought by His blood have seen Him in a way. We have by faith seen Him carrying that cross down the Via Dolorosa. We have seen Him nailed to it by Roman soldiers. We have seen Him suffering in agony as the crowd mocked Him, and cried for Barabbas, the robber, to be released instead of Him who committed no crime, and who knew no sin. Barabbas was **like us**. He knew sin. He was a thief. We are **also**-- thieves who have stolen God’s glory--Murderers who, because of our vileness nailed the Savior to Calvary’s cross. We saw Him forgive the repentant thief on His right side. We heard Him say the seven last sayings from the cross including *“It is finished”* Remember, He willingly laid down His life for His sheep. No man could take it from Him. We have seen Him buried in a borrowed tomb. We all must be one day buried **unless** He catches us away first. We saw the stone placed there, and guards to keep the dead man in his grave by order of Pontius Pilate. But we saw the grave stone **rolled away** the third day and the resurrected Jesus raised from that tomb and stepping out of His neatly folded grave clothes --for **our** justification --ours and all those from past ages and future ages that God has designed to save. Yes, we that are redeemed have seen Him --in spirit, and long for that great day when we shall behold Him. All of us who are His **true blood-bought saints** shall see Him face to face one day *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure“ 1 John 3:1-3).*

Have **YOU** seen Jesus? Have **YOU** been drawn to Him, confessing **YOUR** sins and trusting in Him to save **YOU**? If you have not, may the Holy Spirit draw you, and lead **YOU** also to say “Sir, I would see Jesus”. He is able save **YOU!**. No one who has a **true** God-given desire and call to salvation will be turned down if he asks God.. *“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17).*

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (Revelation 22:21).

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