

**The Gospel of John (76);
“The hour has come” (4)**

Introduction:

Today we will continue to consider this passage before us in which our Lord Jesus concluded His public ministry and then transitioned to His rather private and personal ministry to His apostles in the last several days before His arrest and crucifixion. Once again we read our passage, which is -- **John 12:20-36**.

²⁰Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. ²¹Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²²Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

²³But Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. ²⁴Most 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. ²⁵He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶If 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. ²⁸Father, glorify Your name.”

Then a voice came from heaven, saying, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.”

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

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

³⁴The 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?”

³⁵Then 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. ³⁶While 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.

The outline that we have employed to help us understand this passage has five divisions. We have addressed the first three. Here is the outline once again.

1. The desire and request of “the Greeks” (12:20, 21)
2. Jesus speaks of the necessity of His cross in order to inaugurate and advance His kingdom (12:22-26)
3. Jesus’ appeal for help from His Father to endure His cross (12:27, 28)
4. The Father purposed to glorify Jesus before the people through His cross (12:29-33)
5. Jesus exhorts those Jews who heard Him to believe that which they had been taught and had witnessed regarding Him (12:34-36).

Last week we began to consider the third division of this outline, in which we read of **Jesus’ appeal for help from His Father to endure His cross (12:27, 28)**. However, before we continue to consider this matter, I would like to elucidate further one of the statements of our Lord that may be not be readily understood or seriously taken to heart. In **verse 25** the Lord Jesus stated, “*He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*”

Our Lord had a way of stating matters that awakened people’s attention and stimulated their contemplation of the meaning and relevance of His words. In doing so He would often use contrasts or

opposites, to establish the stark distinction between His people who will inherit eternal life and those who will not see life, but who will experience the damnation of their bodies and souls in hell. In doing so, Jesus made clear that the way of life of His disciples was essentially different from the fallen people of the world. An example of this kind of language of stark contrasts is when Jesus said to the crowds,

“If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.” (Luke 14:26)

Another example would be when Jesus told his disciples,

“If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. ²⁵For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?” (Matt. 16:24-26)

Jesus spoke in a manner to awaken and convict His hearers, to awaken them to the radical difference from the world’s ways that His disciples were to live. And this is what He was doing in the manner that He stated the verse before us. Again, Jesus said, “He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

What was Jesus saying precisely? He was stating that to live with view to eternity should be the driving concern of life for His disciples. We should not regard the sinful ways and values of the world as the focus or purpose of our lives. Our desire and intention is to know God and live before Him and unto Him in this life, which will one day open eternal life before us. Our Lord asked elsewhere, “What shall a man give in return for his soul?” Would you exchange the eternal well-being of your soul for all the money or power, or pleasure that the world has to offer? The Christian answers,

“Not for a moment. The eternal well-being of my soul has far more value than anything this world could possibly offer or confer upon me. I resolve by the grace and mercy of God to love and serve Jesus Christ first and foremost in my thinking and living.”

Matthew Henry (1662-1714) wrote these comments on this verse:

See also the blessed recompense of a holy contempt of life. He that so hates the life of the body as to venture it for the preserving of the life of his soul shall find both, with unspeakable advantage, in eternal life. Note, *first*, it is required of the disciples of Christ that they hate *their life in this world*; a life in this world supposes a life in the other world, and this is hated when it is loved less than that.

Our life in this world includes all the enjoyments of our present state, riches, honours, pleasures, and long life in the possession of them; these we must hate, that is, despise them as vain and insufficient to make us happy, dread the temptations that are in them, and cheerfully part with them whenever they come in competition with the service of Christ (Acts 20:24; 21:13; Rev. 12:11). See here much of the *power of godliness* —that it conquers the strongest natural affections; and much of the *mystery of godliness* —that it is the greatest wisdom, and yet makes men hate their own lives. *Secondly*, those who, in love to Christ, hate their own lives in this world, shall be abundantly recompensed in the resurrection of the just. *He that hateth his life shall keep it*; he puts it into the hands of one that will *keep it to life eternal*, and restore it with as great an improvement as the heavenly life can make of the earthly one.¹

Now upon our Lord announcing that the time had arrived to die, that is, to be glorified (for He said, “My hour has come”), we read of His personal struggle as He was facing His death. We read His words of distress and petition in verse 27 and His Father’s response to Him in verse 28.

¹ Matthew Henry, **Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible**, vol. 4 (Fleming H. Revell Company, n. d., originally 1721), p. 1076.

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. ²⁸Father, glorify Your name.”

Then a voice came from heaven, saying, “I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.”

Last Lord’s Day we spoke about how the sufferings of Jesus Christ were in His human nature, as the God/man. **John Murray** (1898-1975) wrote of our Lord’s awareness of His impending sufferings that nearly consumed Him.

We may focus attention upon our Lord’s prayers in Gethsemane and by this means gain some insight into these implications and into their bearing upon His obedience. When Jesus prayed: ‘O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt’ (Matt. 26:39), we must not suppose that He did not desire that the cup should pass from Him. This would negate the reality that formed the background of the prayer and the sincerity that must be predicated of the Saviour. So we must ask: How could such a desire be entertained? He knew He was to die. To the necessity He gave repeated expression on earlier occasions. The only explanation is that at this time there was an unprecedented enlargement of knowledge in reference to what was entailed in His sufferings, particularly His suffering unto death upon the accursed tree. Mark tells us that ‘He began to be amazed’ (14:33). The inference is inevitable. There now invaded His consciousness such increased understanding and experience of the involvements of His commitment that amazement filled His soul. Our Lord was now looking into the abyss already beginning to inundate His soul, the abyss that He was to swallow up Himself. The recoil of His whole soul was inevitable. If He had not recoiled from the incomparable ordeal, it would be unnatural in the deepest sense. We must reckon with the enormity of His agony and the reality of His human nature. Here was the unrelieved, unmitigated judgment of God against sin. It filled Him with horror and dread. The recoil evidenced in the prayer is the proof of the ordeal and of the necessary sensibilities and sensitivities of His human nature.²

Here we see the human nature of our Lord Jesus on full display for us. His words reveal the great suffering He undertook when He bore the guilt of our sins. Here are the words of **John Calvin** (1509-1564).

Besides, it was highly useful, and even necessary for our salvation, that the Son of God should have experience of such feelings. In His death we ought chiefly to consider His atonement, by which He appeased the wrath and curse of God, which He could not have done, without taking upon Himself our guilt. The death which He underwent must therefore have been full of horror, because He could not render satisfaction for us, without feeling, in His own experience, the dreadful judgment of God; and hence we come to know more fully the enormity of sin, for which the Heavenly Father exacted so dreadful a punishment from His only-begotten Son. Let us therefore know, that death was not a sport and amusement to Christ, but that He endured the severest torments on our account. Nor was it unsuitable that the Son of God should be troubled in this manner; for the Divine nature, being concealed, and not exerting its force, may be said to have reposed (*being passive*), in order to give an opportunity of making expiation (*to cover sin*). But Christ Himself was clothed, not only with our flesh, but with human feelings. In Him, no doubt, those feelings were voluntary; for He feared, not through constraint, but because He had, of His own accord, subjected Himself to fear. And yet we ought to believe, that it was not in pretense, but in reality, that He feared; though He differed from other men in this respect, that He had all his feelings regulated in obedience to the righteousness of God, as we have said elsewhere. There is also another advantage which it yields to us. If the dread of death had occasioned no uneasiness to the Son of God, which of us would have thought that His example was applicable to our case? For it has not been given to us to die without, feeling of regret; but when we learn that He had not within Him a hardness like stone or iron, we summon courage to follow Him, and the weakness of the flesh, which makes us tremble at death, does not hinder us from becoming the companions of our General in struggling with it.

² John Murray, **The Epistle to the Romans**, vol. 2 (Eerdmans, 1959), pp. 154f.

As we stated last week, the desire of our Lord to escape undergoing His sufferings reveals to us that the desire to escape the tribulation that was about to come upon Him was not itself sinful. It is the natural, human desire to escape tribulation. But this desire would not govern His behavior. Jesus affirmed His Father's will for Him to die upon His cross. Jesus said, "***But for this purpose I came to this hour***" (12:27c). He would not seek to do His own (human) will, but He purposed to do the will of His Father, which was to enter and endure tribulation, in which He would suffer and die, but the result of His obedience to His Father's will unto death would be His resurrection from the dead and His glorification to be seated with His Father on His throne in heaven. It was His certain knowledge of His Father's will that moved Him to resolve not to escape His cross, but to remain committed to die. He saw that in dying, He would be in obedience unto His Father, which would glorify His Father in His death. Doing His Father's will was greater than His desire to avoid or escape the terrible sufferings of His cross.

The obedience of Jesus Christ was evident in His entire life, from His infancy unto His death. The Apostle Paul described the entire life of Jesus as one great single act of obedience. In comparing Jesus as the last Adam with the first Adam, Paul wrote,

Therefore, as through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so ***through one Man's righteous act*** the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. ¹⁹For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. (Rom. 5:18f)

Often when the obedience of Jesus Christ is addressed, it is distinguished as either His ***active*** or His ***passive obedience***. His active obedience was His intentional keeping the law of God throughout His life. He was always obedient. He never transgressed the law of God. He never sinned. The passive obedience of Christ is His choosing to be obedient to His Father through all the temptation and trial that resulted from obeying His Father in this fallen world, which was even unto His death upon His cross. He was obedient even unto death so as to die as a sacrifice for sinners. By our Lord's passive obedience unto His cross, He atoned for our sin. He paid for all of our transgressions as believers, suffering and dying on our behalf. Through His active obedience, keeping God's law perfectly through life, He attained the righteousness of the law that is credited to every believer, a righteousness in which every true believer will stand on the Day of Judgment. Through Jesus Christ's passive righteousness God has forgiven us our sins. Through His active righteousness He will enable us to stand as righteous before His throne on the Day of Judgment. And so,

(1) God forgives the believer of the guilt of all his sins--past, present, and future sins due to the passive obedience of Christ on the sinner's behalf when He died on the cross. Christ is regarded by the Father to have died on the cross in the place of the believing sinner. The believer's sins are forgiven him. His debt was paid fully by Christ's death.

(2) God treats the believer as if he were perfectly righteous due to the active obedience of Christ. Christ kept the law perfectly and that His righteous life is credited to the believing sinner as though he himself had lived that holy life. Thus God regards the believing sinner as righteous. He is seen to be as sinless and holy and righteous as God's own Son, Jesus Christ, for the Father views the believing sinner to be united with Him, to be ***in Him***. Thus in and through Christ, the believing sinner has a righteousness that entitles him to everlasting life. Only those united to Christ in justification have this blessing.

The Lord Jesus, God's own dear Son, did for us what Adam failed to do and what we could never do. He lived a life without sin, that is, He lived a life of full and complete obedience and compliance to the will of God. He alone is righteous. Here we see the glorious love of God to man, in that He gave His Son to die. The great 18th century evangelist, **George Whitefield** (1714-1770) said it this way,

Here then opens the scene of divine philanthropy; I mean, God's love to man; for behold, what man could not do, Jesus Christ, the Son of His Father's love, undertakes to do for him. And that God might be just in justifying the ungodly, though "He was in the form of God, and therefore thought it not robbery to be equal with God; yet He took upon Him the form of a servant," even human nature. In that nature He

obeyed, and thereby utterly fulfilled the whole moral law in our stead: and also died a painful death upon the cross, and thereby became a curse for, instead of, those whom the Father had given Him. As God, He satisfied, at the same time that He obeyed and suffered as a man; and being God and man in one person, He wrought out a full, perfect, and sufficient righteousness for all to whom it is imputed.

Here then we see the meaning of the word righteousness. It implies the active as well as the passive obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. We generally, when talking of the merits of Christ, only mention the latter, his death; whereas the former, his life and active obedience, is equally necessary. Christ is not such a Savior as becomes us, unless we join both together. Christ not only died, but lived; not only suffered, but obeyed for, or instead of poor sinners. And both of these jointly make up that complete righteousness which is imputed to us...

Now some do not seem to esteem very highly the righteousness that is based upon keeping God's law. They think and speak of the law of God only in a derogatory manner. They think little of God's law. But that is not how we should view the righteousness of God attained through the works of the law. As we just stated, the righteousness of the law is the very righteousness that our Lord Jesus attained through His active obedience to the law of God throughout his life and His passive obedience to God's law unto death. We should have high regard for the righteousness based on the law. The problem lies with us, not God's law. For sinners to attempt to gain righteousness through the works of the law is great error. To do so when one has the knowledge of the gift of righteousness through faith alone, is heresy, even foolishness (cf. Gal. 3:1, 3). But the righteousness which is based upon the law is not evil. "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good" (Rom. 7:12). The righteousness based upon the law is impossible for sinners to attain, but it was the righteousness that the Lord Jesus attained for Himself and for all His people. The righteousness that Jesus acquired through the works of the law is bestowed as a gift upon all who believe on Him. As Paul wrote, "For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17).

But we also emphasized last week that when Jesus said, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me", He was telling His disciples that to follow Him was to follow Him in the same path of obedience that He walked throughout His entire life even unto His cross. We, too, are to show forth through faith our active obedience in obeying God's laws, as He obeyed all of God's laws. And we, too, are to show forth our passive obedience, purposing to obey God even though it will cost us for doing so.

Our Lord's submission and obedience to His Father was unconditioned on whether He would suffer for doing so. We speak of the passive obedience of Christ because He was purposed to obey even when it cost Him His life to do so. Because of sin, we stop far short of giving our life. All too often we are only willing to obey God to the point of inconvenience. This is not Christian. When we went into the waters of baptism to profess publicly our faith in Christ, we were essentially saying that we would die to our own will, our own interests, and we purposed to walk in newness of life regardless of the consequences. But too often, Christians, at least professing Christians, will only go so far, but then they dig in their heels and say, "No more. I will do it my way or no way." That is what sin is.

Our Lord Jesus promised to those who follow Him that they would receive honor, and that from their heavenly Father. We read in verses 26 and 27 our Lord's promise to His disciples, those who follow Him, those who are His servants. Jesus declared:

²⁶If 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.

Our Father honored Jesus due to His obedience unto Him through His life and through His suffering and death. And Jesus promised that the Father will also honor, or glorify, all His servants. As **Matthew Henry** wrote:

Here are the wages which Christ promises to His servants; and they are very rich and noble. *First*, they shall be happy with Him: *Where I am, there shall also my servant be*. To be with Him, when He was

here in poverty and disgrace, would seem but poor preferment, and therefore, doubtless, He means being with Him in paradise, sitting with Him at his table above, on His throne there; it is the happiness of heaven to be with Christ there (ch. 17:24). Christ speaks of heaven's happiness as if He were already in it: *Where I am*; because He was sure of it, and near to it, and it was still *upon His heart*, and *in His eye*. And the same joy and glory which He thought recompense enough for all His services and sufferings are proposed to His servants as the recompense of theirs. Those that follow Him in the way shall be with Him in the end. *Secondly*, they shall be honoured by His Father; He will make them amends for all their pains and loss, by conferring an honour upon them, such as becomes a great God to give, but far beyond what such worthless worms of the earth could expect to receive. The rewarder is God Himself, who takes the services done to the Lord Jesus as done to Himself. The reward is honour, true lasting honour, the highest honour; it is the honour that comes from God. It is said (Prov. 27:18), *He that waits on his Master* (humbly and diligently) *shall be honoured*. Those that wait on Christ God will put honour upon, such as will be taken notice of another day, though now under a veil. Those that serve Christ must humble themselves, and are commonly vilified by the world, in recompense of both which they shall be exalted in due time.

Later in John 17:22 we will read the prayer of our Lord Jesus to His Father, in which He stated, "The glory that you have given me I have given to them." We cannot imagine the glory that we already have been given by Christ, a glory that will one day be fully manifested when we are resurrected and come forth through the final judgment. Paul wrote in Romans 8:18f,

¹⁸For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. ¹⁹For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

This was all secured for us through the obedience of Jesus Christ to the law of His heavenly Father.

Let us next give our attention to the fourth division of our passage.

IV. The Father purposed to glorify Jesus before the people through His cross (12:29-33)

Our Lord Jesus had prayed, "Father, save Me from this hour" (12:27). But then He appended His prayer, "But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name" (12:27f). It was then that the voice of God the Father spoke from heaven. We read, "Then a voice came from heaven, saying, 'I have both glorified it and will glorify it again.'" God the Father had glorified Himself throughout the entire life of our Lord Jesus. He declared that he would glorify Him further, intimating His cross, resurrection, and exaltation.

We then read our Lord's explanation of this voice to the crowds who had heard it.

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

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

Our Savior heard and understood clearly the message from His Father. All others, it would seem, did not perceive the content of what the Father said to His Son. The people standing by said that there was the sound of thunder. Others had understood that it was a voice and that it was directed to Jesus, but they had not understood the content of what was said. But further, they thought that it had been the voice of an angel, not the voice of God.

In the Old Testament the voice of God is sometimes equated with the peal of thunder. David wrote a song celebrating God having delivered him from all of his enemies. In poetic speech David described God's intervention in delivering him and giving him victory over his enemies. David wrote,

"The LORD thundered from heaven,

And the Most High uttered His voice
¹⁵He sent out arrows and scattered them;
Lightning bolts, and He vanquished them. (2 Sam. 22:14)

These words are found in 2 Samuel 22, but David repeated this song in Psalm 18, with slight variations. God speaks, even as it thunders from heaven. I recall when one of our daughters was quite small that she was frightened by a loud clap of thunder. I assured her, “You need not be afraid, for that is God speaking.” She asked me, “Daddy, what is He saying?” I told her, “He is saying I am powerful, and I have authority.” That seemed to satisfy her at the time.

But we might ask the question, if no one but Jesus recognized it was the voice of God the Father and no one understood the content of His speech, how could Jesus say unto them, “***This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake***”? (v. 30). It may have been for the later benefit of His disciples. **Donald Carson** (b. 1947) makes this case:

Even if the message of the heavenly voice is mediated through Jesus and not grasped immediately by the bystanders, that message, recorded in verse 28, is for the enormous benefit of the disciples among the bystanders once they have lived through the period of the cross and find themselves in urgent need of making sense of it all. Some truths the disciples could not manage to digest at the time (cf. 16:12). The Evangelist makes much of these; that is one reason why he constantly plays on the theme of misunderstanding (e.g. cf. notes on 2:19-22; 6:32ff.; etc.). But eventually they would remember what Jesus had told them the voice had uttered, and it would be for them a divine confirmation that the shameful cross, and all that flowed from it, was not a defeat but a victory, not final destruction but ultimate glorification. Even in the Evangelist’s day, Jews (and Gentile proselytes and God-fearers) most urgently needed to hear heaven’s pronouncement—the pronouncement that the cross did not stamp Jesus out as irredeemably cursed and condemned, but proved to be the locus of His glorification.³

But even if the crowds did not understand precisely what God had said, the thunderous voice served to accentuate the next words that Jesus spoke. He declared in **verses 31** through **33**,

Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³²And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself. ³³This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

This is a very important statement of our Lord that, in our opinion, establishes the amillennial understanding of the kingdom of God that is held by many who identify themselves as Reformed. Most evangelicals are premillennial in their understanding of the end times. This is the position that the second coming of Jesus Christ will take place prior to a future 1,000 year millennium on earth. They claim that they interpret Revelation 20 literally, that it describes Christ’s kingdom as yet future, a time on earth in which satan will be bound, and thereby effectively removed from the world, which will result in a state of peace among the nations of the world that will last 1,000 years. They say that earthly kingdom will be ruled by King Jesus, they say, who is seated on “David’s throne” in Jerusalem. Here is Revelation 20 that they argue supports their position:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ²He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the devil and satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while.

⁴And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand

³ Donald Carson, **The Gospel According to John** (William B. Eerdmans. 1991), p. 442.

years were finished. This is the first resurrection. ⁶Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (Rev. 20:1-6)

We who are Reformed⁴ would differ from their interpretation that Revelation 20 speaks of a future 1,000 year earthly kingdom. Rather, we assert that Revelation 20 sets forth the present rule of Jesus Christ over His kingdom during this church age. The “1,000 years” is an apocalyptic term to depict a kingdom of long duration (for the Lord does not want His people to know the date of His second coming). The binding of satan in Revelation 20 is not a declaration that the devil will be removed from the world, but rather, that his authority in his ability to “deceive” the (Gentile) nations will be removed. He is bound “that he should deceive the nations no more” (Rev. 20:3). “When Jesus was glorified, ‘lifted up’ to heaven by means of the cross, enthroned, then too was satan dethroned. What residual power the prince of this world enjoys is further curtailed by the Holy Spirit, the Counselor.”⁵ And we would argue that our Lord’s words in John 12:31 through 33 supports this amillennial understanding. Let us see how this is so from these verses.

First, remember what occasioned our Lord’s words. Certain “Greeks” (Gentiles) wished to see Jesus. This is what led Jesus to acknowledge that His “hour” had come to be “glorified”, that is to be crucified, raised, and enthroned. In verses 31 and 32 we read that this would result in (1) *the judgment of this world*; (2) *the ruler of this world being “cast out”*, (3) in His ability to “*draw all peoples*” unto Himself, that is, He would call unto salvation the elect of Jews and Gentiles from all over the world unto Himself as their Lord. These three results are precisely what is depicted in apocalyptic language in Revelation 20. Let us consider each of these.

1. Jesus declared that when He was “lifted up”, “the judgment of this world” would take place. (12:31a)

Was the death and resurrection of Jesus the judgment of the world? Jesus declared that it was. The world thought that it was passing judgment upon Jesus when it had Him killed, but actually God was passing judgment on the world through His Son dying on His cross. Now there is a sense in which God’s judgment will take place at the end of the age with the second coming of Christ. But there is a sense in which God judged, that is, condemned the world in the death of Jesus on His cross. **Edward Klink** stated on this verse:

What is important to notice is that the judgment of this world is directly connected to the cross. The cross is simultaneously the “glorification” of Jesus and the “judgment” of the world. It is the throne upon which the King of kings is crowned – His glory. Yet it is also the point of decision for the world, either as *the place of their salvation*, in which the cross is the sacrifice of the Lamb of God on their behalf, or *the place of their judgment*, by which they stand already condemned.⁶

Earlier we had read in John’s Gospel these words:

And *this is the judgment: the light has come into the world*, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. (John 3:19f)

God’s judgment began with the first coming of Jesus, His earthly ministry, and culminating with His death on the cross. Jesus did not come with the purpose of condemning the world, but to save the world. But when the world refuses to come to Him in faith for salvation, God’s judgment is passed respecting them. Those who do not believe on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are condemned, are judged, already. “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).

⁴ Ie. historically Protestant and Calvinistic

⁵ Carson, p. 443.

⁶ Edward W. Klink, III, **John**. Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Zondervan, 2016), pp. 554f.

J. C. Ryle (1816-1900) expressed the judgment of this world through the cross of Christ in this way:

I take it that the word we render “judgment,” can only mean condemnation, and that the meaning of the sentence is this: “Now has arrived the season when a sentence of condemnation shall be passed by My death on the whole order of things which has prevailed in the world since creation. The world shall no longer be let alone, and left to the devil and the powers of darkness. I am about to spoil them of their dominion by My redeeming work, and to condemn and set aside the dark, godless order of things which has so long prevailed upon earth. It has long been winked at and tolerated by My Father. The time has come when it will be tolerated no longer. This very week, by My crucifixion, the religious systems of the world shall receive a sentence of condemnation.”⁷

2. Jesus declared that when He was “lifted up”, that “*the ruler of this world will be cast out.*”

The ruler of this world is satan. Before satan had first sinned, he was an angel, to whom God had entrusted great authority. When God had first created the world and mankind, He had given satan authority over their lives. But then the devil in his rebellion sought to usurp God’s authority as his own. When he tempted Adam and Eve to sin, he led them into a state of rebellion to God even while they had placed themselves in servitude to himself. The devil is called the “god of this world (age)” (2 Cor. 4:4). He is the “prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2). The nations of the world do his bidding. In serving sin, they were serving the devil. Paul wrote,

And you He (God) made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²*in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air*, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. (Eph. 2:1-3)

But when Jesus Christ died upon the cross and was raised on the third day, He was seated on the very throne of God, exalted above all in creation, even over the devil and his minions. As a result of the reigning authority of Jesus as Lord, as king over the kingdom of God, the devil no longer had the power to keep the Gentiles in darkness and bondage. Peter wrote of our Lord’s exaltation above all evil spiritual powers. He wrote of Christ, “*who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him*” (1 Pet. 3:22). As one described this event:

The ruler of this world is cast out and replaced by a new ruler, the rightful King. The “hour” of the cross is therefore “the dethronement of the devil from his tyranny over men,” and at the same time (“the hour”) the enthronement of the true King, the glorification of the Son of Man.⁸

This deposing of the devil from his former uncontested authority over the world took place through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When Christ ascended into heaven and was seated on the throne of God, the devil was “cast out”, in other words, he was deposed of his authority. Jesus had effectively ***bound*** the devil so that he could no longer prevent the gospel from going forth to the entire Gentile world as it called people into Christ’s kingdom. This deposing or binding of the devil was necessary in order for the Kingdom of God to expand throughout the world.

Jesus had intimated of the deposing of satan during His earthly ministry. We read that Jesus had sent 70 of His disciples on a short term mission. He had given them authority over all infirmity, disease, and the power of demons to afflict people. When they returned to Jesus they were excited at the results that they had witnessed. We read of this in **Luke 10:17-20**:

¹⁷Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.”

⁷ J. C. Ryle, **Expository Thoughts on John**, vol. 2 (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1987, orig. 1869), pp. 399f.

⁸ Klink, III, **John**, p. 555.

¹⁸And He said to them, ***“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.”*** ¹⁹Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. ²⁰Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

When Jesus said, ***“I saw satan fall like lightning from heaven,”*** He was declaring that satan had lost his former authority to keep people under his rule, when Christ acted to set them free in order to come unto Him. When Jesus Christ, the God/man, had ascended into heaven and was seated on the throne of God, the devil was cast out.⁹

On another occasion the Lord Jesus intimated of the need to bind the devil in order to make a spoil of his house (i.e. the nations of the world). He had been accused of casting out demons by the power of the devil. He responded this way:

“Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. ²⁶If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ²⁷And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. ²⁸But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹***Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man?*** And then he will plunder his house. ³⁰He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. (Matt. 12:25-30)

In order for Jesus to enter “the strong man’s (satan) house (the fallen world)” and to plunder his goods, that is, save His people out of the devil’s kingdom, He must first depose the devil’s ability to keep “his goods.” When Jesus Christ was enthroned in heaven, the devil and all his forces put into submission to Him, Jesus had effectively “bound” the devil, which opened up the evangelization of the Gentile world. This is what is declared in Revelation 20, the passage on the “millennium.” This is what happened when our Lord was crucified, buried, raised and exalted as Lord.

3. Jesus declared that when He was “lifted up”, that He would “draw all peoples to Myself.”

Again, this was in the context of certain “Greeks” (Gentiles) who wished to see Him. Their desire indicated to Him that His hour had arrived, for upon His being lifted up, then He would draw “all peoples” unto Himself. He would declare to His disciples when He gave them the great commission.

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and ***make disciples of all the nations***, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen.

The devil could no longer keep His elect from all nations from coming unto Jesus Christ as Lord. His disciples could go forth into all the world to make disciples of all nations, for He now had authority over all nations, having wrested the authority from the devil, having been exalted as the God/man far above even him.

“O LORD, you are our God;
we will exalt you; we will praise your name,
for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure.
(Isaiah. 25:1)

⁹ We would assert that the war in heaven of Revelation 12 is a declaration of satan and his minions being deposed of their authority, that is, cast out of heaven, when the Child of the woman was caught up and seated upon His throne, that is, Jesus Christ upon His resurrection when the Father had given Him “all authority in heaven and on earth.”