

John 12:20-33 Jesus Must Be Lifted Up

******How did Jesus respond to news that some Greeks¹ wanted to see him (12:20-26)?** He responded by talking about a grain of wheat going into the dirt and that thus “dies”, but in so doing sprouts and bears much more grain, a veiled reference to His own soon death.

Literary Significance: The arrival of these Greek-speaking Gentiles was like a trigger; it signaled the end of Jesus’ earthly ministry to the Jews.² The focus of Jesus’ earthly ministry was on the Jews. However, it was God’s plan from the beginning for the Gospel to be offered to both Jew and Gentile.

One Wonders (12:21-22):

Why did the Greeks not go directly to speak to Jesus (12:21)?

Why did they approach Philip in particular (12:21)?

Why did Philip tell Andrew rather than going directly to Jesus himself (12:22)?

No answer is given to any of these questions; that is just what happened. We are not even told if Jesus agreed to meet with the Greeks or not.

How is Jesus’ response in 12:23-24 an answer to the Greeks request for an audience?

Jesus knew that after His death and glorification, all types of people would be drawn to Him (such as Greeks), not just Jews. Their request triggered in Jesus that the “hour” of his crucifixion had arrived. Prior to this, Jesus had said His time had not yet come:

- When His mother told Him at the wedding that they had run out of wine, He replied that His hour had not yet come, 2:4.
- When His brothers advised Him to go to the feast to make Himself public, Jesus replied that His time was not yet here, 7:4.
- When the Jews tried to seize Him they were unable to do so, because His hour had not come, 7:30.
- When Jesus taught openly in the temple, the Jews could not seize Him because His hour had not yet come, 8:20.³

These Greeks signaled a turning point in which the Jewish people have rejected Jesus and so now the gospel would go out to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Salvation would now be proclaimed to the whole world. But His death had to happen first.

Thus:

ESV **John 12:32** . . . when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

How does 12:25-26 apply to us? The love/hate extremes were used by Jesus for emphasis. It stands for fundamental preferences, not literal hatred.⁴ Anyone who loves this world more than Jesus probably does not have eternal life. Those who have truly been born again will die to self.

¹ The term Greeks refers to any Greek-speaking Gentiles in the Roman Empire, not just those from Greece.

² *ESV Study*, 2048.

³ Steven J. Cole, “Lesson 67: Why You Should Hate Your Life (John 12:24-26), Bible.org. Accessed February 15, 2020.

⁴ Carson, *John*, 439.

What does it look like to love your life in the sense that Jesus warned against (12:25)? It means living with only the here and now in view, as if this world is all there is. It means living for the same things worldly people live for (the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the boastful pride of life).

What does it look like to hate your life and follow Jesus (12:25-26)? It means you deny your inherent selfishness and pride and obey Jesus daily.

What did Jesus mean when He said “where I am, there will my servant be also” (12:26)? It means we will spend eternity in paradise with Jesus.

ESV **John 14:3** . . . I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

******How did Jesus predict that He would be crucified (12:27-36a)?** Jesus said He would be “lifted up” (12:32-34), a way of referring to death on a Roman cross.

John recorded that Jesus was troubled (12:27). It is from a word that indicates revulsion, horror, anxiety, or agitation.⁵ Why was Jesus troubled (12:27)? He knew that His crucifixion was near. Not only was crucifixion a horrible way to die, but the spiritual death involved with it was even worse.

What can we learn about Jesus’ mission on earth from 12:27b? He came to die.

Here, rather than pray to avoid the cross, what did Jesus pray (12:28)? He prayed that the Father would be glorified.

What was the purpose of the voice that boomed out of heaven (12:28-30)? It was not for Jesus’ sake, but for the peoples’ sake. This marked the third time a heavenly voice attested to Jesus’ identity. The first time was at His baptism, the second at His transfiguration, and now this time.⁶

John evidently understood what the voice said and knew it was the Father. Others heard it and thought it was an angel. Still others just heard thunder (12:29). If it couldn’t be understood, what good was it? What a person heard may have been tailor made for each person. It was probably primarily for the disciples, whose false expectations would soon be shattered and whose faith would be shaken to the core when Jesus was killed. It must have been highly dramatic. Timing is everything. Jesus’ prayer and immediately the heavens boomed.

Based on 12:31-33, what three things would Jesus’ death accomplish? 1) It would be a form of judgment for the world; 2) the ruler of this world would be cast out; 3) Jesus would draw all men to Himself.

⁵ Carson, *John*, 440.

⁶ *ESV Study*, 2049.

1) Jesus came to save the world; how was the crucifixion also a form of judgment (12:31)?

First, in killing Jesus, they thought they had judged Jesus. The truth was that God judged them in the cross. God's love rejected brings God's wrath.

ESV **John 3:18** Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

ESV **John 3:36** Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

ESV **John 9:39** Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."

Second, judgment and Satan being cast out are tied together. The cross may have looked like Satan won, but the cross was Satan's demise.

ESV **John 16:8-11** And when he [the Spirit] comes, he will convict the world concerning . . . judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

2) What was Satan cast out of (12:31)? He was cast of his position of deceptive influence over the world.

Comparing 12:31b to 12:32, what would the casting out of Satan result in? It would result in the drawing of "all" men to Jesus, even Greeks (12:20-21). It has been speculated that prior to this, Satan effectively kept the truth about God bottled up within Judaism. Jesus' death broke Satan's power and allowed the Truth to go out to all nations.

ESV **Revelation 5:9** . . . by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation . . .

•**“draw” (12:32):** To “draw” simply means to pull. The brand name of the trailer hitch on my truck is “Draw-Tite”. The hitch draws the trailer tightly along behind the truck. You draw water from a well. In English, sometimes “draw” has the idea of being attracted to something, such as a bee that is drawn to the flower, or a man to a woman's beauty, but that is not at all what the underlying Greek means. From from *helko*, it means to haul, to drag, to pull, to tug.⁷ Here are other places the same Greek word (*helko*) is used:

ESV **John 18:10** . . . Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it . . .

ESV **John 21:6** He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.

ESV **Acts 21:30b** They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple . . .

⁷ Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 251.

ESV **James 2:6b** Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court?

Significantly, this is the same Greek word used back in John 6:44.

ESV **John 6:44** No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.

Since draw is such a strong word, in what sense will Jesus draw “all” people to Himself (12:32)? If Jesus were to draw all men *without exception* to Himself, then everyone will come to faith in Jesus. However, Scripture states there will be men in hell. What Scripture teaches is that Jesus will draw all men *without distinction*, that is, all kinds of people. The arrival of the Greeks to see Jesus (12:20-21) reminds that it was time for the process to begin. For the moment, they hesitated to go directly to Jesus. After the cross, all types of men could go to Him as freely as any Hebrew.

Look at 12:33. What had Jesus said that showed what type of death He was going to die?

To be “lifted up” was a reference to crucifixion, wherein the condemned were lifted up on crosses.

So What?

How was what John wrote in chapter 12 designed to cause an unbelieving Jew to believe in Jesus?

1. Jesus explained His own death as necessary to cast out Satan and allow “all” people to come be drawn to Him.
2. The Father’s voice thundered from heaven in response to Jesus’ prayer.
3. Despite many signs, the majority of people still did not believe in Him, a fulfillment of Isaiah’s

**** = Ask this question before reading the text. This will engage people’s minds and focus their attention.

•You can hear this lesson being taught at SermonAudio.com/NTRF.

•Stephen E. Atkerson
NTRF.org
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The following are Dan Trotter’s Notes on this lesson:

XI. **John 12:20 (HCSB)** *Now some Greeks were among those who went up to worship at the festival.*

A. Robertson

1. no parallel passages from John 12:20-50
2. in Jerusalem
3. Monday

B. Three preliminary questions

1. why were Greeks at a Jewish festival?
2. Who were these Greeks?
3. Why did John mention this seemingly insignificant detail?
 - a. especially since he was in the midst of recording the momentous events of Passion Week

Week

C. "Greeks"

1. probably "God-fearers" (NIV SB)
 - a. people attracted to Judaism by its morality and monotheism (NIV SB)
 - i. but repelled by...
 - A/ the Jews' nationalism (NIV SB)
 - B/ the Jews' legalism (NIV SB)
 - b. they worshipped in the synagogues (NIV SB)
 - i. but did not become proselytes (NIV SB)
 - A/ Gill allows God-fearers may have been proselytes
 - 1/ proselytes of righteousness (Gill)
 - a/ circumcised (Gill)
 - b/ allowed to eat Passover (Gill)
 - 2/ proselytes of the gate (Clarke: or covenant)(Gill)(Clarke favors)
 - a/ not circumcised (Gill)
 - b/ not allowed to eat Passover (Gill)
 - i/ yet they could participate in the feast (Gill)
 - B/ if they were not proselytes
 - 1/ they could sacrifice (worship) in the court of the Gentiles (Gill)
 2. options as to who these Greeks were
 - a. Gentiles
 - i. see the "God-fearer options above"
 - A/ options
 - 1/ God-fearers
 - a/ who may or may not have been Jewish proselytes
 - i/ two possible kinds of proselytes
 - A) proselyte of the gate
 - B) proselyte of righteousness
 - 2/ summary → 3 options as to who these Gentiles were
 - a/ generic Gentile God-fearers who were not Jewish proselytes
 - b/ a Gentile God-fearer who was a proselyte of the gate
 - c/ a Gentile God-fearer who was a proselyte of righteousness
 - b. Jews
 - i. Jews living in Greece (Gill denies)(Clarke)(JFB denies)
 - ii. Hellenistic Jews living in Israel (Gill)
 - b. Jews
 - i. options
 - A/ Jews living in Greece
 - B/ Hellenistic Jews living in Israel

4. query: why were these Greeks mentioned?
 - a. answer (NIV SB)
 - i. John wanted to show that Jesus had come to die for the whole world (NIV SB)
A/ not just the Jews (NIV SB)

C. "festival"

1. Feast of Passover

XII. **John 12:21-22 (HCSB)** ²¹ So they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and requested of him, "Sir, we want to see Jesus."²² Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

A. "Bethsaida" (v21)



- 1.
2. this was near Decapolis (Clarke)
 - a. on the east side of the Sea of Galilee (DT)
 - b. a Gentile area (Clarke)
 - i. there might have been the "Greeks" who were inquiring (Clarke)

B. "Philip"

1. a Greek name (NIV SB)
 - a. which might explain why the "Greeks" came to Philip
 - i. although Philip was not the only disciple to have a Greek name
 - ii. his parents may have lived among Greeks (Gill)
A/ which would explain why Philip had a Greek name

C. "see"

1. means "to have an interview with" (NIV SB)(Gill)

D. "Andrew" (v22)

1. Philip may have consulted with Andrew on the propriety of the Greeks' request (Gill)
 - a. because the disciples had been instructed earlier by Jesus not to go to the Gentiles (Gill)
 - i. **Matthew 15:24 ESV** He answered [to the Syro-Phoenecian woman, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."
2. he was from Bethsaida also (JFB)

- XIII. **John 12:23-24 (HCSB)** ²³ *Jesus replied to them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.²⁴ "I assure you: Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it dies, it produces a large crop.*
- A. "glorified"
1. Jesus mentions his resurrection before he mentions his crucifixion ("dies," v24) (DT)
 2. definitions of glory
 - a. public manifestation of one's excellent characteristics
 - b. that which produces a "Wow moment"
 3. refers to Jesus's exalted, immortal, post-resurrection state
- B. "dies"
1. options as to the physical part of the metaphor
 - a. dies so the seed is non-viable
 - i. this is an impossible option
A/ a seed will not grow in that state
 - b. die in the sense that it completely disappears as a seed when the plant grows (NIV SB)
 2. Jesus is referring metaphorically to his burial in the ground as a seed
 - a. after which, he will be resurrected in order to produce a "large crop" (v24)
- C. "large crop" (v24)
1. this is probably the reason that Jesus answered the Greeks the way he did (DT)
 - a. the Gentiles would make the spiritual harvest a lot bigger than if it were just Jews (DT)(JFB)
 - i. <<The time is just at hand in which the Gospel shall be preached to all nations, the middle wall of partition broken down, and Jews and Gentiles united in one fold.>> (Clarke)
 2. Jesus is preparing his disciples against the shock of his death (DT)
 - a. to show that it was not in vain (DT)
- D. "Son of Man" (from sources culled from the internet)
1. Many have said that Jesus used this phrase to emphasize his humanity. The Jewish idiom used "son of" to show "a close and intimate connection with." Therefore, a "Son of Man" is someone who is human, who has humanity. There is nothing wrong with this idea, as long as one does not use it to detract from Jesus' divinity. After all, Jesus uses the phrase of himself when he forgave sins in Mark 2:10: "But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins..."

However, ironically, the phrase "Son of Man" is actually used by Jesus to emphasize his DIVINITY. He got the phrase from Daniel 7:13,14 "and behold with the clouds of heaven one like a Son of Man was coming, and he came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him.' (v14) And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom..." This reference is the only relevant use of the phrase "son of man" in the OT (there is another irrelevant use of the phrase in Psalm 144:3). From the context, it is obvious that Daniel is using the term of someone divine: the Son of Man was presented before God the Father (the "Ancient of Days"), and was given "dominion, glory and a kingdom." But we know even more than we can get from the context. Daniel was a prisoner of the Babylonians during the famous Jewish Babylonian exile (starting 587 BC). In Old Babylonian, the phrase "son of man" meant heir to royalty. So, when Daniel used the term, the term was functionally equivalent to saying that the one like a son of man is

rightful heir and successor to the divine throne. "Son of man" is essentially the same as "Son of God" in this context. In the NT, no one called Jesus the Son of Man (w/ the exception of Stephen as he was being stoned in Acts 7). Jesus used it of himself all the time. He is recorded as doing this about 90 times in the gospels. So, every time He used it, he was essentially saying, "I am God. And I will inherit a kingdom, and have dominion forever and ever. And I will establish that kingdom by "coming on the clouds" (Dan 7:13) in judgment upon my enemies."

It is debated whether the Jews in Jesus' day actually were using the phrase "Son of Man" as a messianic term. Regardless of how the Jews used the phrase, Jesus at least initiated the use of the phrase as referring to the divine messiah, if he didn't appropriate a phrase already in use.

So, to summarize: "Son of Man" = "Son of God" = God.

- XIV. **John 12:25-26 (HCSB)** ²⁵ *The one who loves his life will lose it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.* ²⁶ *If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me. Where I am, there My servant also will be. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.*
- A. "loves his life" (v25)
1. in this world
 2. Scripture
 - a. **Matthew 10:39 (HCSB)** Anyone finding his life will lose it, and anyone losing his life because of Me will find it.
 - b. **Luke 14:26 (HCSB)** "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, and even his own life—he cannot be My disciple.
- B. "lose" (v25)
1. amazing that Jesus could recruit anyone into the kingdom with a pitch like that
- C. "keep it" (v25)
1. in the next world
 - a. but also including preservation in this life in preparation for the next world (Gill)
- D. "hates" (v25)
1. this is a relative, not an absolute term (NIV SB)
 - a. compared to life eternal, our concern for this life is hatred (NIV SB)
 - b. obviously we are not supposed to "hate" our life in this present world (DT)
 - i. similar to when Jesus said we were to "hate" our mother and father
 - A/ **Luke 14:26 ESV** "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.
 2. Jesus is the supreme example of this
 - a. he "hated" his own life to the point of offering himself up to crucifixion (JFB)

- D. “where I am”
 - 1. options as to what place Jesus was referring to
 - a. the cross
 - i. the believer must die to his life
 - b. heaven
 - c. both (v26)

XV. **John 12:27-28 (HCSB)** ²⁷ *“Now My soul is troubled. What should I say—Father, save Me from this hour? But that is why I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify Your name!” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again!”*

- A. “troubled” (v27)
 - 1. Jesus troubled about his approaching death just like any human being would be (Clarke)
 - 2. compare the other evangelists’ descriptions of him in Gethsemane
 - a. he sweated like he was bleeding
 - b. he asked the Father to take the cup from him
 - 3. the fear of death has been put by God into human nature (Clarke)
 - a. as a principle of self-preservation (Clarke)
- B. “glorify”
 - 1. Jesus’ prayer was not for his personal deliverance (NIV SB)
 - a. rather, this concern was for his heavenly Father (NIV SB)
 - b. he did consider praying that way (NIV SB)
 - i. but he pulled back from doing that (NIV SB)
 - 2. how was Jesus to glorify the Father’s name?
 - 1. by being resurrected from the dead
- C. “voice” (v28)
 - 1. like at his baptism and transfiguration
- D. “have glorified” (v28)
 - 1. how?
 - a. << in the incarnation, ministry, obedience and miracles of Christ; and particularly in that late one in aising Lazarus from the dead>> (Gill)
- E. “again” (v28)
 - 1. by raising him from the dead and sitting him at His right hand (Gill)

XVI. **John 12:29-30 (HCSB)** ²⁹ *The crowd standing there heard it and said it was thunder. Others said that an angel had spoken to Him. ³⁰ Jesus responded, “This voice came, not for Me, but for you.”*

- A. “spoken” (v29)
 - 1. options
 - a. those closer to Jesus hear articulate words (Gill)
 - b. there was thunder as well as a voice
 - i. some heard only the thunder, some heard only the voice (Clarke)
- B. “angel” (v29)
 - 1. the Jews had a strong notion of the idea of angels conversing with men (Gill)
- C. “not for Me” (v30)
 - 1. not *chiefly* for Jesus

- a. the voice did come for Jesus (Gill)
 - i. answered his prayer
 - ii. comforted him during his apprehension concerning his approaching death
 - iii. to assure him of his future glorification
- D. “you” (v30)
 - 1. options
 - a. for the Greeks (Clarke)
 - i. they hadn’t had a chance to see miracles like the Jews had (Clarke)
 - b. to correct any unfavorable impression Jesus’ momentary agitation might have made (JFB)
 - c. to convince them that he was the Messiah

XVII. **John 12:31 (HCSB)** *Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be cast out.*

- A. “judgment”
 - 1. the cross was God’s judgment on the world
- B. “ruler”
 - 1. Satan (NIV SB)(Clarke)
 - 2. note that Satan does rule the world (DT)
 - a. but only the sovereign hand and permission of God (DT)
- C. “cast out”
 - 1. his apparent victory was rather nothing but his defeat (NIV SB)
 - a. the greatest evil redounded to the most good this world has ever known (NIV SB)
 - 2. a prince who is cast out of his kingdom can no longer rule it (DT)
 - a. and he can not rule the Christian
- D. “world”
 - 1. options
 - a. the whole world
 - b. the Jewish world (Gill)
 - c. the Gentile world (Gill)

XVIII. **John 12:32-33 (HCSB)** ³² *As for Me, if I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all /people/ to Myself.* ³³ *He said this to signify what kind of death He was about to die.*

- A. “lifted up” (v32)
 - 1. on the cross
 - a. ironic (DT)
 - i. usually lifted up means “exalted” (DT)
 - A/ actually, dying on the cross was the supreme exaltation of Jesus (NIV SB)
 - 2. Scriptures
 - a. **John 3:14 (HCSB)** Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,
 - b. **John 8:28 (HCSB)** So Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am [He], and that I do nothing on My own. But just as the Father taught Me, I say these things.
- B. “all people” (v32)
 - 1. all men without *distinction*
 - a. without regard to nationality or status or race (NIV SB)

- b. NOT all men without *exception* (DT)
 - i. all men are not saved (DT)
 - A/ some are going to hell (DT)
- c. significant that Greek Gentiles were present (NIV SB)
 - i. **John 12:20 (HCSB)** Now some Greeks were among those who went up to worship at the _____ festival.
- 2. this is the reason Jesus answered Philip and Andrew the way he did
 - a. ALL kinds of people, including these Greeks, will be drawn into the kingdom

II. **Short summary of John 12:20-33**

- A. The gospel is universal, for every ethnic group on earth, not just the Jews
- B. We imitate our Lord, who died and was then glorified
- C. If we are to be disciples, we must follow Jesus to the death
- D. Disciples lose whatever this life has to offer, but gain so much more, and that eternally
- E. The devil is defeated, Jesus and his church is victorious
- F. The resurrection of Christ glorifies the Father, and is absolutely fundamental to the gospel

Dan L Trotter