

Bible Fellowship Teaching Plan for John 12:20-36 (July 12, 2026)
His Hour Has Come

Central Truth: Jesus reveals that His glory would be revealed through the cross, and everyone who believes in Him is called to follow that same pattern of dying to self, living in the light, and following Him.

John's purpose (20:31): "These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

Key Passage (35-36b): "So Jesus said to them, 'The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.'"

Opening Question: If someone asked you today, "I want to see Jesus," where would you point them? Would they be able to see Jesus through your life?

Lesson Objective: to understand why Jesus viewed the cross as His hour of glory, recognize the cost and privilege of following Him, and commit to walk in His light through wholehearted faith and loving, obedient service.

Background: John 12 marks the turning point in John's Gospel. He has completed His public ministry, the religious leaders have determined to kill Him (John 11:53), His triumphal entry has stirred Messianic expectations, and now certain Gentiles ask to see Him, signaling that His mission reaches to the entire world.

- I. The World Comes Seeking Jesus (20-23): The arrival of the Greeks signals that Jesus' mission extends beyond Israel and that the hour of redemption has arrived.
- A. "Greeks" represent the Gentile world.
 - B. Jesus seems to respond to their request by announcing to the people in the Temple that His hour has come.

Reflection Questions

1. Why is the request of the Greeks so significant?
2. Why didn't Jesus respond by discussing His popularity?
3. What does this passage reveal about God's heart for all nations?

Application: People all around us are asking that same question, often without using those words. Family members, neighbors, coworkers, and friends are looking for hope, peace, and purpose. Whether they realize it or not, they are looking for Christ. Will you lead them to Him?

- II. The Cross Is the Pathway to Glory, Illustrated by a Grain of Wheat (24)
- A. Unless the seed dies, it remains alone.
 - B. A seed produces fruit only if it "dies."
 - C. Jesus' death would bring forth the resurrection, forgiveness, and eternal life
 - D. This principle also applies to every believer.

Reflection Questions

1. What am I losing by keeping it back from God to use or dispose of as He would choose?
2. What do I need to surrender to God so that He can bear fruit in my life?

Personal Application: We naturally resist dying to self. We want comfort, recognition, control, and security, yet Jesus teaches that spiritual fruit

always grows from surrendered lives. God often accomplishes His greatest work through experiences we would never have chosen ourselves.

III. Losing Life to Find Life; Jesus Contrasts Two Choices (25)

A. Loving your life as seen in

1. Self-protection
2. Self-promotion
3. Temporary satisfaction

B. Losing Your Life for Christ

1. Surrender
2. Obedience
3. Eternal reward
4. Jesus is not calling believers to despise life, He is calling them to value Him above everything else.

Reflection Questions

1. Why is death to self essential in order to live for Christ?
2. What am I holding onto that keeps me from wholehearted obedience?
3. What do I truly treasure more than my relationship with God?

Personal Application: The greatest threat to spiritual growth is often not persecution but self-centeredness. We can become so focused on protecting our time, comfort, finances, or reputation that we slowly drift from wholehearted devotion. Jesus reminds us that the best place--the safest place--is not in self-preservation but in complete surrender.

IV. The Call to Follow and Serve: Jesus Calls Followers--Not Fans (26)

A. "Follow Me": The authentic Christian life is one that is patterned after Jesus

B. Following means

1. Trusting

2. Obeying

3. Becoming like Him

C. The one who follows Jesus abides with Jesus

D. The Father honors the one who follows His Son

E. The greatest reward of heaven is Christ Himself.

Reflection Questions

1. What distinguishes a committed disciple from an interested admirer?
2. Where is Jesus asking me to follow Him more closely?
3. Which matters more to me today: the approval of people or the approval of God?

Personal Application: Following Jesus is much more than believing the right things; it's allowing Him to shape every area of your life. Authenticity in the Christian life is measured by ordinary obedience in a loving relationship with God.

V. Jesus Chooses the Father's Will (27-30)

A. Jesus honestly expresses His anguish.

B. Yet He refuses to depart from His mission.

C. The Father answers from heaven, affirming His Son and His plan.

Reflection Questions

1. What does Jesus' example teach us about facing suffering?
2. How can we trust God's purposes when obedience is costly?
3. When have I had to choose God's will over my own comfort?

Personal Application: Every believer eventually faces moments when obedience is costly. Jesus shows us that courage is not the absence of struggle; it's choosing God's will in the midst of the struggle. Sometimes

our most effective prayer is not, “Lord, remove this,” but, “Lord, glorify Yourself through this.”

VI. The Victory of the Cross (31-33)

- A. Judgment of the world
- B. Satan is defeated
- C. The gospel is made available to all who would believe

Reflection Questions

1. Why do we find both justice and mercy in Jesus’ crucifixion?
2. What confidence does Christ's victory give believers today?

Personal Application: Many Christians live like Satan has already won, but Jesus reminds us that the decisive battle has already been won and He has conquered sin, death, and Satan. As a result, we can live with confidence instead of fear and fight **from** victory, not **for** victory.

VII. Live in the Light (34-36): The Closing Invitation

- A. Walk in the Light.
 1. Follow Christ
 2. Obey Christ
 3. Reject spiritual darkness
 4. Reflect Christ's character
- B. Believe in the Light.
 1. Trust Christ
 2. Anchor your eternal hope in Christ
 3. Find freedom in Christ
- C. Become children of Light.
 1. Live as those who have been given new life in Christ
 2. Pursue a growing, deepening relationship with Christ to be more like Him

Reflection Questions

1. What does walking in the Light look like in everyday life?
2. Is there any area where darkness still controls my thinking or behavior?
3. What practical steps can I take this week to reflect Christ more clearly?

Personal Application: Walking in the light is not just avoiding sin; it's living openly before God, responding quickly to His leading, and allowing His truth to guide every choice we make. Light always reveals. Darkness always conceals.

Major Applications

The Cross Changes Our Definition of Glory

- God's greatest victory came through apparent defeat.
- How has the cross changed the way I define success?

Fruitfulness Requires Surrender

- God produces eternal fruit through lives yielded to Him.
- What area of my life remains unsundered?

Following Jesus Is a Lifestyle

- Discipleship is much more than belief; it is daily imitation.
- Where is Jesus inviting me to follow Him more faithfully?

The Light Must Be Received

- Knowledge alone does not save.
- Faith leads to obedience.
- Am I merely admiring Jesus, or am I walking in His Light?

Closing Challenge

Jesus' final, public invitation was remarkably simple: "While you have the Light, believe in the Light, that you may become sons of Light." The Greeks came seeking Jesus, but Jesus pointed everyone to something far greater than a personal meeting with Him. He pointed them to the cross--the place where God's glory, justice, mercy, and love would be displayed perfectly. He then invited His followers to embrace that same pattern of life: dying to self, serving others, and following Him wherever He leads.

As we leave this lesson, each of us should ask: Am I merely impressed by Jesus, or am I truly following Him? The world is still saying, "We wish to see Jesus." May they see Him in us as we walk in His Light, bear fruit through surrendered lives, and faithfully reflect His glory.

Key Cross References

- John 3:14-21
- Matthew 16:24-26
- Mark 10:42-45
- Isaiah 53
- Daniel 7:13-14
- Hebrews 2:14-18
- Philippians 2:5-11
- Hebrews 12:2
- 2 Corinthians 5:21
- 2 Corinthians 3:18
- 1 Peter 1:3-9

Sunday School Lesson for July 12, 2026
John 12:20-36

Welcome to Sunday School on the go from the First Baptist Church in Tallassee. I'm Jim Glass, one of the teachers in the Pairs and Spares Class, and, in our current study, we've been discovering how John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, describes the life and ministry of the Lord "so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

On this second Sunday in July, as we see that purpose played out in every word on every page of this precious book, we come to chapter twelve where we find the impact of Jesus' ministry carefully illustrated in three events, the last of which closes with a message to the people. In the first event--the meal with Mary, Martha, and the recently-raised-from-the-dead Lazarus--, we find Jesus surrounded by an intimate circle of friends who cherished His love and friendship.

In the second event--Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem--John shows that Jesus had made a profound impression on the people, so much so that they acknowledged Him as King and joyously celebrated His procession into Jerusalem.

In the third event and our focus today, the growing influence He would have beyond the bounds of Judaism was previewed by a request by some Gentiles that they might see Jesus and how He went on to explain to the crowds there in Jerusalem that He, the Son of Man, would be lifted up so that no one who believes in Him would remain in darkness.

After the miraculous raising of Lazarus from the dead and the response we read about in chapter twelve, the religious leaders were convinced that Jesus must die. John told us in verse 53 of chapter eleven that, "From that day on they made plans to put him to death." As a result, the twelfth chapter is the turning point of John's gospel. Jesus has revealed Himself to the world

through His teachings and His miracles in so many ways, but all that has come to a close. From this point onward, John records the results of that revelation.

Quite a lot happens here in twelfth chapter, and Trey will speak about the dinner in Bethany, and the Lord's entry into Jerusalem that caused such an outpouring of Messianic hope and expectation that--verse nineteen-, "[T]he Pharisees said to one another, 'You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.'" Then, in verse twenty of chapter twelve and the beginning of our focal passage for today, John gives us just one example of how the world was going after Him: "Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.'"

"Certain Greeks" came to see Jesus. We know, as we've said before in our study of chapter seven, that the Jews classified all non-Jews as "Greeks," most likely because they were the foreign language group they were most familiar with. He could have meant Jews who lived in Greek lands and spoke Greek, or Gentiles who worshiped a number of gods and brought an offering to the Jewish temple to / cover their bases, so to speak. Most likely, they were converts to Judaism, seekers from Gentile populations who came to celebrate the Passover, or to find Jesus, having been impressed by this itinerant preacher from Galilee who had raised Lazarus from the dead or watched as the people celebrated His entry into the city.

These Greeks came to Phillip, maybe because Phillip had a Greek name or because he belonged to a Greek family, or perhaps they were from the ten Greek cities known as the Decapolis. They simply told Phillip, "We want to see Jesus." There's nothing in the words to indicate that they sought Him as the Messiah because they asked for Him by His personal Name rather than asking to see the "Rabbi" or the "Teacher." By asking to "see" Him, they meant to have a personal conversation with Him. Anyone could **see** Him in the Temple courts, but **they** wanted something more personal and more private.

They came to Phillip with their request. Since this was so unusual--that is--for a Greek to speak with a Jew in the Temple, Phillip seems to have been unsure as to what to do. Very early in His ministry, Jesus had told them not to enter any Gentile city--Matthew, chapter ten--, so he may have thought that Jesus would be reluctant to speak to a Gentile in the Temple.

So, Philip hesitates, weighing the request against the already-raging anger of the Pharisees, and passes the question to Andrew. Andrew also had a Greek name and was probably, like Philip, from Bethsaida. Still unsure as to what to do, they bring the problem--but not the Greeks--, to Jesus.

We don't know whether or not Jesus granted them an audience, but scholars have generally understood that, even if He didn't, what Jesus said next had a direct bearing on the request from this delegation of non-Jews. One commentator writes, "At once in this modestly urged petition He hears the whole Gentile world uttering its weary, long-disappointed sigh, 'We would see.' This is no mere Greek inquisitiveness; it is the craving of thoughtful men recognising their need of a Redeemer. ... In this little knot of strangers, He sees the firstfruits of the immeasurable harvest which was henceforth to be continuously reaped among the Gentiles."

Seemingly inspired by their request, Jesus recognizes that His hour had now come as we find in verse 23. This hour that He has referred to five times so far in John's gospel is the hour in which He would fulfill the purpose for which He had come to earth in His crucifixion, His atoning sacrifice, His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension to the Father.

He speaks of Himself as the Son of Man, and it's the title He uses most frequently. As we've said before, it's a title that goes back to the seventh chapter of the prophecy of Daniel. When Jesus refers to Himself as the Son of Man, He emphasizes His humanity and His union with us, even as the writer of the letter to the Hebrews reminds us in several places--first in chapter two, verse seventeen when he writes, "Therefore he had to be made like his brothers

in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”

Don't miss the tremendous importance of this declaration that “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” The Almighty God, Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, Ruler of the universe, infinite in holiness and all other perfections, all powerful and all knowing, and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future / entered the world He created in the Person of Jesus.

He became a man and took upon Himself our humanity, identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. And now, God is about to be glorified--He's about to be celebrated and honored as God--not in the glory of His creation as humanity beholds a magnificent sunset or marvels at His handiwork in the amazing complex functionality of the human body,--but He's about to be glorified by dying and paying the infinite penalty for the sin of each and every person who ever has or ever will live--First John, chapter two, verse two. His impending death would accomplish what His life could not accomplish, and it was so interwoven with His glory, that His death--terrible and tragic as it would be--was the prelude of His victory and supreme exaltation.

But all this was a mystery to the disciples, to the Greeks, and to whomever else might have been listening. So, in order to help His disciples and others understand how all this was going to work out for His glorification, the Lord Jesus offers three illustrations from nature and human life: first, a seed must die in order to bear fruit--verse 24; second, the experience of the abundant life only comes through sacrifice--verse 25; and, third, the life of service and ministry is the life of honor and the true glory--verse 26.

In the first of these illustrations, we find that Jesus understood the necessity of his own physical death. He says in verse 24, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but

if it dies, it bears much fruit.” In that day, this parable had a special meaning for the hearers. It seems that there were certain mysteries related to the growth of a corn stalk from a single seed that centered on Demeter, the Greek goddess of agriculture, fertility, and marriage. The people of that day didn’t understand the how a seed, buried in the ground, could reproduce itself only when it seemed to be dead and exposed to everything that would cause it to decompose and disappear.

As a result, a grain of wheat became a symbol of immortality. In applying this to His own future, Jesus was reaffirming the reality of His own coming resurrection, a resurrection that would come in spite of what His followers might see as a dead body, devoid of life, and without any possibility of resuscitation. He wanted them to understand that, just as only through burial in the ground can a seed fulfill its potential for fruitfulness, it was necessary that He die to be the “firstborn from the dead,” to show us the way out of death into eternal life. It’s also true that, only as we die to ourselves, are crucified with Christ, becoming dead with Him to the world and the things of the world, that we’re able to rise again in the newness of His life.

Jesus’ death was the prelude to His glorification as He fulfilled the purpose for which the Father had sent Him, and so He gives a second illustration of His impending death in verse 25: “Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” With these words, Jesus makes plain the application of His story of the grain of wheat: the person who is now loving his life with the intention of preserving it for himself or herself is actually losing it--seeds that aren’t planted can’t fulfill their purpose. If you’re trying to preserve the part of your life that Paul calls the flesh, or what we might call the part of us that’s always looking out for number one and rejecting the things of God, it’s an eternally destructive, self-defeating effort that keeps us from fulfilling our true purpose in life.

We’ve heard this expression of the law of the Spirit of life from Jesus throughout the gospels. After Peter scolded Jesus for telling his disciples that

He had to “go to Jerusalem” “and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life,” Jesus rebuked him and told all the disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul?”

Even if you or I were to gain the whole world, we would do so at the expense of the true value of our own lives because nothing in this earthly existence is capable of satisfying the deepest needs of our hearts. “Hating” our lives is the opposite of loving it. In other words, our attitude of love for the things of God should make our interest in everything else seem to be hatred in comparison. Only by dying to self and losing our lives in God’s purposes will we keep our lives for eternity.

Having placed His own life before them as the supreme example of dying in order to bear much fruit and losing His life to keep it to eternal life, Jesus offers a third illustration in verse 26: “If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.”

The life of service and ministry is the life of honor and true glory. For those who heard Jesus’ message, they quickly understood the picture of a servant, owned life and breath by his master, who waited on his master night and day / to do his master’s bidding / and his alone. Now, Jesus was about to be crucified, and to follow Him at this time would mean death, that’s why all His disciples fled from Him when He was arrested. But really, to die for Jesus would be much easier than living for Him day by day. It takes genuine, authentic, real-life commitment and self-sacrifice to be the kind of disciple, the kind of follower, that Jesus Christ calls us to be.

“If anyone serves Me, he must **follow** Me.” Jesus has set the example of putting away every lesser thing even to the point of hating one’s own life by

comparison in this world. Following Him and Him alone is so essential that the actual word order is “If **me** anyone serves, **Me** He must follow.”

And following Jesus doesn't mean we tag along, just keeping Him in sight of us. In following Jesus, we don't just join a church or wear a t-shirt that says, “I follow Jesus.” We study and imitate His life and we abide in His Word so that we follow Him, lock-step. We walk in His footsteps, move as He moved, act like He acted, think as He thought, and speak as He spoke.

The idea and the dignity of servanthood are prominent in the gospels and in the writings of Paul. Jesus taught that the path to pre-eminence in His Kingdom is the path of service--of ministry--even as He explained in Mark, chapter ten, verse 43: “whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

True greatness--the greatness that really matters to God into eternity--can't be gained without it, as Jesus says in Mark, chapter nine, verse 35: “If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all.” And to illustrate that, “He took a little child and had him stand among them”--Luke, chapter nine, verse 47.

Finally, the test that shows whether those who claim to be His disciples truly are His followers is the test of servanthood in the last judgment that we find in Matthew, chapter 25. “I was hungry--did you give me something to eat? I was thirsty--did you give me something to drink? I was a stranger--did you invite me in? I needed clothes--did you clothe me? I was sick--did you look after me? I was in prison--did you come to visit me? “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”

Alexander MacLaren reminds us that, “It is His Cross, and not His life; it is His death, and not His virtues, which He is here thinking about, and laying

it upon all of us as the ... sum of all morality that we should be conformed to it.” Imitating Jesus is at the very heart of following Him, because He came not to be served, but to serve, and give His life a ransom for many.

“If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me” --he or she must mirror me--do what I do, bear what I bear, love as I love, endure shame as I endure shame, set your hope on that which is eternal and enduring, just as I have set my hope on those things. Jesus doesn't say, “Everything in moderation;” He says you can't be My follower if you don't give up everything. His invitation is all or nothing. He's defined the relationship He wants with you and places His own life before us as the standard, the benchmark, the yardstick by which our own following is measured. He's not interested in enthusiastic admirers who **don't** get carried away with following Him. He doesn't want fans; He wants completely committed followers who consider themselves dead to self and alive to Him to follow Him in every way, anywhere He leads.

For the one who truly follows Jesus, He promises / “Where I am, there My servant will be also.” In preparing His disciples for what would happen in the next few days, Jesus told them in John, chapter fourteen, verse two, “In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” When He would be glorified through His suffering, they also could be assured of their place in heaven with Him, even as He promised in The Revelation, chapter three, verse 21: “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.” It's been rightly said that “To follow Christ is the whole of the Christian's duty; to be where Christ is / is the whole of his reward.”

The last promise that comes to those who serve and follow Christ, is that “if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.” God the Father Himself will esteem every authentic follower as someone personally connected to Him and exalted above death.

How does He honor those who serve His Son? Second Corinthians, chapter five, verse 21: “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” Peter opens his first letter by celebrating the honor God grants to those who are the servants of the Lord: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.” And there’s so much more we could add here.

// Suddenly, in the middle of this compelling call to follow Him, a dark cloud seems to appear that alters our Lord’s thoughts, perhaps as He considers the pain, the darkness, the horror that awaits Him and reflects on the fact that “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.” So, He asks in verse 27: “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ But, for this purpose, I have come to this hour.” In asking, “What shall I say?” the Lord reveals His intense, internal turmoil over what lay ahead / as His soul was troubled.

He voices His concern by asking: “What shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’” He already knew what the next few days held for Him. He knew the pain of the betrayal, the beatings, the curses, the nails that would pierce His hands and feet, and He would know the pain of His Father’s turning His face away from Him as He bore the punishment for all my sin and all your sin and everyone’s sin on the cross. In this moment of resolution, having just spoken of seeds falling to the ground and that those who love their lives will lose their lives, should He say, “Father, save Me from this hour?”

But it was for this hour that He had come. It was for this moment when He would be glorified **through** His brutal, redeeming death. Our salvation depended on the fixed and unwavering purpose of the Son of God. If Jesus had forsaken His purpose at this moment, all would have been lost, and we would be left in our sin.

John doesn't tell us, as the other gospel writers do, about how Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane with such an intensity that He told His disciples, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death" as "his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" while He poured out His heart to God, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

It's impossible to describe the intensity of this moment as the Son of God considers the price He will pay--the price He will pay alone--the infinite price He will pay for the sin of the world--my sin--your sin--past, present, future--all laid upon Him / that He would become sin for us. In this decisive moment before His disciples, before Jews, and before Gentiles, He resolutely declares, "for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name."

"Complete Your perfect plan to display Your justice and Your righteousness--Your holiness and Your love--by finishing the work You began from before the foundation of the world. Complete Your perfect plan even at the expense of My suffering, no matter the cost. I am willing to bear any pain; I will not back away from any misery." "Not My will, but Thy will be done." "Father, glorify Your Name."

"Then a voice came from heaven: 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.'" The gospel writers have already told us about God speaking from heaven at Jesus' baptism and at His transfiguration. God has glorified His Son's Name through the teachings, the healings, the sinlessness, the humility, the love, the example of Jesus / as He's fulfilled the Father's purpose as John wrote about in the first chapter: "No one has ever seen God. The one and only

Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side--he has revealed him." In all of God's work from creation onwards, the Father has glorified Himself through His Son.

And He would glorify His Name again. The death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus would glorify the Father. As the Name of Jesus is lifted up around the world today, the Father is glorified. As you and I die to self and find our life in Him, serving Him and following Him, He is glorified--all because Christ "for the joy set before him, endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." And, once again, there's so much more we could add here.

// "So," John tells us in verse 29, "The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to him.'" Those who were deaf to the voice of God heard only thunder, just as only a few could hear the wonderful voice of Aslan, the Great Lion of the Chronicles of Narnia, while others heard only a growl. Since it was the opinion of many of the Jews that God only spoke through angels--Hebrews, chapter two, verse two--some thought it was an angel that spoke. We don't know if they understood what the voice said, but they recognized its supernatural source.

For those who did understand the message or had it explained to them, Jesus said in verse 30, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine." In spite of the horror that tore at His heart as He contemplated what would happen in the next week, He told them the voice was for them. It was extremely important that the people in general and the disciples in particular understood that all the events that were about to happen were foreordained and directed by God the Father so that He would be glorified in Christ.

Then, in order to affirm their trust in Him as the Messiah in spite of what's about to happen, Jesus assures them in verse 31, "'Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up

from the earth, will draw all people to myself.' He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die." He needed them to understand that, although they will watch helplessly as the One they had trusted and followed is arrested and beaten and crucified and laid to rest in a borrowed tomb, the cosmic battle for the souls of mankind has already been won, and Christ has defeated death.

He was telling them, "Now the decisive event in the history of the world--the great moment when it will be determined who will rule this world--is about to occur.

There's been a long, continuing conflict between the powers of light and the powers of darkness--between God and Satan. Satan has so effectively ruled in the hearts of men and women that it could be said that he is the prince of this world; but Jesus says, "My approaching death will destroy his kingdom, break his power, and will be the means of setting up the kingdom of God that will last forever." The death of Christ would be the glorious culmination of God's plan for the redemption of fallen humanity and the restoration of a right relationship between us and God, and His resurrection would finally establish the righteous rule of God as prophesied by Isaiah in chapter nine: "Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever."

And how will this ultimate, decisive battle between good and evil, God and Satan, be decided? "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." Back in chapter three, Jesus told Nicodemus, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up." And the Jews, knowing they lacked the power to put anyone to death, understood that the Romans would have to do that for them, and their principal means of execution was by crucifixion--being lifted up from the earth on a cross to die a horrid and humiliating death.

In being lifted up, He would draw “all people” to Himself--people of every type, every nation and every tongue--Jews and Gentiles--including the Gentiles who had asked to see Jesus--anyone could look to Him and be saved. No one has any advantage over another, and all must come to Christ if they are to be saved, for He alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

John then pauses to summarize our Lord’s words in these verses when he says, “He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.” At this point in the story, did John know that Jesus would be crucified? Probably not. Even as the resurrected Lord Jesus walked with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, He asked them, “How slow of heart [you are] to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” It was the cross that would become His throne and it was the cross that became the means by which He would draw men and women, boys and girls to Him as His subjects, but it would take His disciples some time to understand it all.

As the Lord Jesus continued to impress upon the people in the crowd the truths they should have known about their own Messiah, nothing of what He was saying was making any sense to them, so they pressed Him with questions about the Son of Man and how He would die if the Messiah were to live forever--verse 34: “So the crowd answered him, ‘We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?’”

Where exactly they had “heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever” we don’t know. It seems that by “the Law,” they were including Psalms 89 and 110 and the word of the Lord through Ezekiel in chapter 37, verse 25, and Isaiah, chapter nine, verse seven. But they completely disregarded the very clear message of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, chapter 53.

His connection to the Son of Man spoken of in Daniel and some current ideas not grounded in scripture didn't make sense to them, so they ask, "Who is this Son of Man?" "If His dominion is everlasting, how can He be lifted up on a cross and crucified, / or are you telling us there's another Son of Man besides the one we've been told about?"

"How can our Messiah deliver us from our bondage to the Romans if He's going to be killed? It just doesn't make any sense!" Immersed as they were in the idea of a temporal, earthly deliverer, they couldn't imagine the idea of a Suffering Messiah Who would deliver them from sin and death and establish a spiritual kingdom. For us on this side of the cross, we completely understand how and why Jesus, the Son of Man, had to be lifted up, but they were totally confused by all this, in spite of claiming to know what God had revealed in the Law they thought they knew so well.

Jesus doesn't answer the question, or explain what He meant. Instead, He repeats the warning He had given previously in chapters seven and nine / here in verse 35: "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."

The Lord Jesus saw that they were offended by the mention of His death, so He encourages them--warns them--to put away their mistaken notions about Who the Messiah would be and what He would do. He's already identified Himself as "the Light of the world" in His powerful message during the Feast of Tabernacles in chapter eight. John identified Him in the opening words of his gospel by saying, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

In only three days, He would go away--He would be lifted up--so in this--His final appeal to the world--, it was absolutely imperative that they use the light of truth and righteousness that He's shined before them to lead them to Him as the Messiah and learn the way of life that He's offering, telling them,

“If you don’t walk while you have the light, you have no idea where you are or where you’re going, with the final result that the darkness of ignorance and unbelief, sin and death, will consume you.”

The Lord’s very last invitation to those who stood before Him there in the courts of the Temple brought together everything He’s said in the last thirteen verses: “While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” “Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.” “Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I have come to this hour.” “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.” “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” The truth that would set them free from sin and death was passionately proclaimed in those moments, but they had to appropriate it--they had to believe in the light, that they might share in the forgiveness and freedom the light would bring.

He had revealed their desperate need for the light. He revealed Himself as the Light. He offered them that Light. If they are to avoid the darkness, they must walk in the light and believe in the light--place their eternal hope in the One Who is the Light of the world, and reveal the genuineness of their belief in every aspect of their lives that, in so doing, they will become children of light--they will share in the very nature of the One Who is light.

MacLaren writes, “Absolutely we may rely upon it; unconditionally we must follow it.” “Faith and obedience turn a [person] into the likeness of that in which he trusts” and “will mould us, by their natural effect, into the resemblance of that on which we lean.” It’s what makes Christians become like Christ so that “we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another”--Second Corinthians, chapter three, verse eighteen. And John writes in the third chapter of his first letter, verse two, “Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that

when he appears we will be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.” That’s what it means to walk in, believe in, and be children of light.

Such was the Lord’s last call to the people of Israel, for John tells us in the second half of verse 36, “When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.” The Lord’s public ministry has come to a close. Those who had heard Him wouldn’t see Him again until He appeared as a criminal in the hands of the officers of the Sanhedrin on His way to be tried, charged as guilty, and crucified--lifted up in order to draw all people to Himself--as He laid down His life for His sheep and bore the full punishment for all the sins of the world.

Thank you for being a part of our brief overview of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus seen through John’s eyes that’s meant to lead you to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, by believing in Him, you might experience the fullness of life that can only come in Him.

Next week, John brings us to the Upper Room where Jesus shared the Passover meal with His disciples. Following Trey’s sermon from the first twenty verses of chapter thirteen about Jesus washing the disciples’ feet and the message that followed, we’ll hear John tell us about the identification of the one who would betray the Lord and the new commandment He gave them in verses 21 through 35.

As always, as it’s still a good thing to do, keep calm, trust in the Lord, and wash your hands! God bless you!

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