



**The Coming Cosmic Battle
A Hint of Things to Come
John 12:20-36**

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Much earlier in the book of John, Jesus revealed to a member of the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee named Nicodemus, that a change of cosmic proportions was coming. I'm sure Nicodemus did not understand it as such, but Jesus was very upfront with His mission. Salvation is about to be offered to the entire planet and not through the sacrificial system of Temple worship in Jerusalem.

This was to be significant.



John 3:13–18

“No one has ascended into heaven, except He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that **everyone who believes will have eternal life in Him. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.** For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him. The one who believes in Him is not judged; the one who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” (NASB 2020)

The plan, as described by Jesus, involved Him, the Son of God, the Messiah, to be lifted up in the same manner as Moses did (Numbers 21:9) when he made a bronze serpent image. Any who had been bitten by the serpents, who would look to the one lifted up, would be cured of the deadly poison coursing through their veins and be saved. They had to look, if they did not look, they would die. Their choice.

Jesus told Nicodemus that was the plan. He is the one who would be lifted up, and this would be done for the world, not just for Israel. Salvation would be made available to everyone based on what it was Jesus told him He would do.

Here in John 12, we begin to see that starting to take place. Earlier the Pharisees in verse 19 complained that “the world has gone after Him.” How little did they realize the truth in that statement.

John 12:20–21

“Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; these people then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and were making a request of him, saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”” (NASB 2020)

The key phrase for us today is in this verse. “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

The major feasts were a huge draw in Jerusalem, and Passover would be a huge draw throughout the Empire. We learn there are some Greeks who have come to worship at the Feast. These are not Jews but based on the Greek term used, they are Greek speaking gentiles. “Their presence at the Passover suggests that these Greeks are thought of as either proselytes or so-called God-fearers.” (Lincoln 2005, 348)

They are limited as to where they can go at the Temple.

Judaism was attractive to thinking Gentiles. “Among such were Lydia (Acts 16:14), many of the converts in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4), a part of Paul’s audience in Athens (Acts 17:17) and in Corinth (Acts 18:4). There were numerous converts to Judaism in the first century, and the early Gentile church owed a large number of its adherents to those who came to Christ from paganism by this intermediate step.” (Tenney 1976, 185-186)

The Greeks who request to see Jesus not only represent ‘the whole world’ (cf. notes on v. 19), but they stand in contrast to the Pharisees who are exasperated by Jesus’ growing influence. (Carson 1991, 435)

These non-Jews have heard and seen enough of Jesus that they are being attracted to learn more about Him. We see that many times in the church these days. But your neighbors and family members are the ones watching.

People see who we are and how we live, and they are attracted to it. What they have been seeing is not anything like how they live. They want to know more, and sometimes, all it takes is an invite from us. “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”



Inviting your friends and neighbors to church is one way of saying to them, “come and see.” We simply teach the Bible and always will make the connection for those looking, to understand that there is something more and they too can be saved. The cards we have at your tables are there intended for you to give to others and invite.

Call them seekers. Some fellowships look for and cater to those who are seeking. Here at Calvary, we are not targeting seekers and creating an environment where they would feel good about being here, instead, we invite those who are seeking to “come and see” just as Jesus did. “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

As they see and hear how we treat each other plus the word being taught, then the Holy Spirit is given the opportunity to work in their heart revealing truth to them. The question being asked, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus,” is answered. Yes, we do want to see those who are lost, saved. But I have learned over the years, that when you make disciples, and the sheep are being fed and are healthy, other potential sheep who look over the fence come in wanting to know more. And we are all part of bringing each one to Him and as they come to know Jesus, then we as a church disciple and help to grow these new sheep to be more like Jesus.

That is what we have been called by Jesus to do. Jesus is apparently unavailable and in a part of the Temple that you must be Jewish to access, and they are Gentiles. So, they talk to someone on the team who sounds like them and speaks Greek the way they do, they talk to Philip.

We forget, as we read this, that most Jews wouldn’t even have the time of day for a Gentile. They would never talk to one, not willingly. They believed ‘God created the Gentiles to be fuel for the fires of hell.’ (Barclay 2004, 243)

The reality though is the nation was supposed to be pointing the Gentiles to YAHWEH. They forgot the pre-Golden calf comment from Exodus 19 that they were to be a kingdom of priests for the planet. They forgot Genesis 12:3 “I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; **And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**” (NKJV)

These Greeks go to someone they may have overheard speaking and who spoke Greek. He most likely dressed more like they did than a Jew does and was apt to talk with them rather than shun them like most Jews would. Obviously, this is in the Court of the Gentiles and possibly Philip was talking to others there and had no problem doing so since he was from Bethsaida, a heavy Gentile area.

As we are being watched by our unsaved friends and relatives, we need to remember the question being asked of Philip. It is the same question we are being watched to answer. “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

I struggle with that every day. It is so easy to get upset when things go wrong or when we get cut off on the road.

As we help others or do ministry, it can be easy to be short with someone or not answer a question. We might not be fully in the moment and start assuming things that the one we are talking to has not said or even arrived at yet. Are we answering the question in what we do? Are we reflecting Jesus so others can see Him and not us?

Are we letting the Holy Spirit move folks at their speed rather than ours.

I get reminded of that more than I should. My loving wife loves me enough to confront me when I am not reflecting Jesus, and she has always been right too. I may not admit it right then and there, but she is. Don’ tell her that, okay?



Here at Calvary, our goal as a church, my goal as your Pastor is simple, to answer this question in what we say and do for those who want to see Jesus.

When we put Him ahead of our own agendas, amazing things happen. We really do reflect Jesus to others.

I sustained an injury years ago while traveling that resulted in tearing a muscle and damaging a nerve. I really didn't do anything other than pick my bag up from security either. But, bang, I felt the pain and then came the loss of control and usage of my left leg.

Getting home was a challenge and my work schedule was seriously impacted for weeks, because I could not use my left leg. It did heal, eventually. But it took a couple of months with a walker and a cane before it did. I had no idea though that I was being watched by others. You learn a lot at times like that.

A brother from church drove me to the doctor since Dianne had to work. That provided an opportunity to share Jesus we did not count on. My friend had muscular dystrophy and had to use a wheelchair, I had to use a walker. We pull up to the doctor's office, and I get out of the car to get his wheelchair out of the trunk, and I am using a walker. Meanwhile we are both being watched. As we head off to the doctor, the person who was watching us wanted to know what kind of an accident we had been in. No accident, but we were able to share Jesus with them. They could not understand why someone why muscular dystrophy would take the time to drive someone using a walker to the doctor, or why I would impose on him.

I didn't, he insisted on taking me. We were able to tell that person watching us, it was because of Jesus. They saw something being reflected.

Every day we have an opportunity to reflect Jesus to someone else.

Whenever we answer a question, someone asks, we reflect Jesus. Whenever we teach or minister to others, we reflect Jesus.

Every time I teach, I desire to answer the question, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

So, when did this encounter with the Greeks happen? Probably on Tuesday, but we are not told. Was it the result of another event earlier in the week involving Jesus in the Court of the Gentiles? Possible, but we do not know.

Earlier in the week Jesus had cleansed the Temple, specifically the court of the Gentiles. Since the leadership was into discriminating against Gentiles, the one place carved out for them, was where animals were being sold for sacrifice and money changing was taking place (Mark 11:15-17). In other words, the Gentiles were being pushed out. That could have been a reason why they wanted to see Jesus, or it could also be the miracles they saw Him doing as well (Matthew 21:14).

At any rate, they first go to Philip. Philip then goes to Andrew. Then both see Jesus. Why it happened that way, we are not told.

John 12:22–26

"Philip came and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. But Jesus answered them by saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 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. The one who loves his life loses it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it to eternal life. If anyone serves Me,



he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.” (NASB 2020)

Hearing that there are Gentiles looking for Him, provides for an opportunity for Jesus to announce the cosmic change coming. “The hour has come.”

There will be no more delay. Jesus is about to engage in serious direct spiritual warfare. Warfare that will also have manifestations in the physical world as well.

He also knows this as well, it is the plan, the one He and the Father worked on those thousands of years before. There is no plan B.

Everything in the scriptures has pointed to this coming event just days away.

In His response to Philip and Andrew, Jesus jumps to the end of the age. “Jesus sees in the coming of the Greeks the ingathering of the Gentiles with the Jews to form in him a new community that will worship him, and so he answers, “The hour has come that the Son of Man might be glorified” (12:23). The “hour” of Jesus’ death attests to the end-time at which Jews and Gentiles will be united together to worship and serve the one God revealed in Jesus.” (Kanagaraj 2013)

Jesus follows His announcement with a parable. It is short and simple, and it is about Him. This is one of the key Son of Man passages in John. Jesus is about to be glorified, but before that can happen, His death must take place and that death will bear a lot of fruit.

I am reminded of what Isaiah prophesied of the suffering Servant of YAHWEH.

Isaiah 52:13

“See, my servant will be successful; he will be raised and lifted up and greatly exalted.” (CSB)

YAHWEH wants us to know that His Servant, based on the command to see, is that the Messiah will prosper and be exalted. As we have seen, Jesus will be ignored by those He comes to initially, yet He is the one who not only rescues His people but will be “a light to the nations” which John has also told us about. Here in Isaiah, we obtain clarity. He will prosper.

There is more to the word prosper than what we see in the English translation. In Hebrew, the word used is יָשָׁקֵל (yaskil) used here as a verb. The sense is to thrive or make steady progress. Biblically, this word carries the following senses as a verb:

- to understand (cognitive) v., to perceive (an idea or situation) mentally.
- to prosper (thrive) v., to make steady favorable progress or succeed.
- to act wisely v., to act or behave in a way that demonstrates wisdom.
- to instruct (teach) v., to impart knowledge to.
- to consider (respect) v., to regard or treat with consideration, respect, and esteem.
- to study, give attention to, to study something, conceived of as paying attention to something.
- to take note, to observe with care or pay close attention to.
- to cause to prosper, to cause to make steady favorable progress or succeed.
- to heed, to listen, hear, or pay close attention to, and usually respond in conformity.
- to succeed, to attain success or reach a desired goal. (Lexham Press 2017)

The word is never applied to such prosperity as a man enjoys without any effort of his own, but only to such as he attains by successful action, i.e., by such action as is appropriate to the desired and desirable result. (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 501)



Because of the action of the Servant, His wise actions in the fulfillment of His mission, “he will be raised and lifted up and greatly exalted.” (Isaiah 52:13b, CSB)

The terms used in the Hebrew for high and lifted up, are terms that Isaiah likes to use.

יָרִים (rwm) be high, and נִשָּׂא (nissa) lifted up, as used in combination as Isaiah used them, describe God. No one else combines these two words in the Old Testament the way Isaiah does. “Exaltation” speaks of Jesus’ resurrection, “lifted up” describes His ascension, and “very high” refers to His session at the right hand of God the Father. (Fruchtenbaum 1998, 54)

John 12:25–26

“The one who loves his life loses it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it to eternal life. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.” (NASB 2020)

Jesus adds to the parable He has just told by talking about self-denial. This will be something that those who follow Him will do. We will be so taken up with what He has done for us on the cross, that as we follow Him, we deny our own selfish ambitions and die to ourselves.

This is part of being able to reflect Jesus to others. I can’t do that when I am living for myself.

Reflecting Ken has never saved anyone. Reflecting Jesus though, that is a whole other matter. Jesus is telling us that following Him means to embrace a paradox. If we love our life, we lose it, hate it and achieve eternal life. This isn’t the only paradox either. Following Jesus and living in the Spirit is so countercultural that we find our life becomes governed by things that the world tells us makes no sense.

The spiritual life is governed by similar paradoxes. “[God’s] power is made perfect in [our] weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). Do we want to be rich? We must become poor in spirit. Do we want to be first? We must be willing to be last. “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time” (1 Peter 5:6). If we want to rule, we have to serve. If we want to live, we have to die. (Hughes 1999, 301)

Following Jesus is a daily realization that the way we think we need to live, is not the way He designed us to actually do life.

In Genesis 3, Lucifer tempted Eve to push God off the throne and get onto it herself. She and Adam did that. The world has created a culture of what that looks like. It has turned it into a lifestyle being followed by billions today.

Then Jesus enters our life, we make Him the Lord of our life and then He teaches us what that really means. Being Lord means we are no longer on the throne, He is. It means dying to the way we thought we needed to do life and to live to the way He has designed life to be lived.

It means following Him and serving Him.

Being where He wants us to be. Doing what He wants us to do there.

That looks different for each of us depending on what it is He has called you to do. I have friends who pre-Jesus, were pointed to becoming scientists. But post Jesus, they followed Him to the mission field translating the Bible into a language that had never even been put into writing before. They followed Him into medicine, and some, into politics.



Following Him is not the same for everyone. He does not call all of us to go to the Congo as missionaries. He calls some of us to fund that.

I suspect that when we arrive in heaven, either through death or through the rapture, we will meet people we have never met before who are there because of our giving and they will let us know that.

Doing Christian radio is weird. You pray and then you go into a small room filled with electronic equipment and a couple of turntables. You talk into a microphone, but you see no one except maybe the person you replaced or the one replacing you. The message in the music is the gospel. The words you are saying on air are also that. You know you are on the air because the headset has a feed from that to confirm that you are. But thousands are listening.

Every so often you get THE phone call. "I have been listening to you and I need to know, how can I be saved." Suddenly, you realize what it is the Lord has you doing, so you remain faithful in what it is He has called you to do.

That is all we are doing when we follow Him. We simply remain faithful to what He has called us to do. Here is a thought for you, if you feel, right now, that your life is a bit stagnant, that your relationship with Jesus could be better, there could be a simple reason. Somewhere along the line, you stopped dying to self, and began embracing self and the culture.

1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (NASB 2020)

I love 1 John 1:9. It tells me it is never too late to be restored back into relationship. Once we do that and confess to Him that we slipped back into self-mode, He forgives us, and we are back in relationship. He doesn't want our walk with Him to be stagnant or a drudge. It should be exciting.

Jesus continues, knowing what "the hour" means.

John 12:27-30

"Now My soul has become troubled; and what am I to say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." So the crowd who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him!" Jesus responded and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for yours." (NASB 2020)

He knows the cross is coming. He knows pain and suffering is coming. He knows humiliation is coming. But He also knows glory is coming.

Ever say something, out loud, that reflected what you were thinking at the time. Jesus has just done that. Jesus is a man, He is also God, and we see that here in this statement. His soul is troubled because of something unconnected to all that we would normally consider troubling.

Jesus is about to have all the sin of the world, past, present and future, placed on Him and He will face, for the first time ever, separation from the Father (Matthew 27:46).

2 Corinthians 5:21

"God made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we would become the righteousness of God." (NET 2nd ed.)



On the cross, our sin was imputed to Christ. That is how Christ paid our sin debt to God. He had no sin in Himself, but our sin was imputed (attributed) to Him so, as He suffered, He took the just penalty that our sin deserves. At the same time, through faith, Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. Now we can stand before God sinless, just as Jesus is sinless. (Got Questions Ministries 2014-2021)

In His troubled state, Jesus turns to the Father and simply asks the Father to glorify Himself in what He does. Jesus is reflecting faithfulness, even as He begins contemplating what is ahead. His number one desire is to glorify the Father.

God audibly answers the prayer. As Jesus has been faithful to the Father, the Father has consistently glorified His name through the ministry of Jesus and will do so in His death, resurrection and glorification yet to come.

As normal, some misinterpret who was speaking. Jesus later tells His disciples, but the thundering sound was for them.

God is in all that they are about to witness and be involved in. They need to know that too. In light of what Jesus is about to say, the warfare taking place at this point is very real. The universe is about to be seriously reordered.

John 12:31–36

"Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself." Now He was saying this to indicate what kind of death He was going to die. The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how is it that You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up' ? Who is this Son of Man?" So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; also, the one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus proclaimed, and He went away and hid Himself from them." (NASB 2020)

Jesus begins to address what is coming up very soon, the cross and the reordering of the universe.

When Satan and his followers succeed in crucifying Jesus, they will be condemning themselves. How much control does Satan have over the world, so much that He refers to him as the ruler of this world.

The cross will mean the judgement of this world, it will also mean the defeat of Satan.

Given the context, this "ruler of the world" may well be seen as the evil prince who ruled the angels of the nations, in this case at work not only through the political leaders of the world system as a whole but specifically through the leaders ("rulers") of Israel (12:42; cf. 7:48). The rulers feared lest they be "cast out" from the synagogue (12:42); the ruler of the world, however, was now being "cast out" from his position for opposing Christ, stripping the opposition of its power in heaven (12:31). (Keener 2012, 880)

What Jesus will do is defeat Satan, retake the planet, and kick him out of all authority he usurped. When Jesus empties out Paradise, that becomes obvious. All of Satan's supposed power in heaven will be stripped from him. The war, declared in Genesis 3, will be over and Satan lost. Satan's hold over this world will be ended. Satan has no more power over us.

Colossians 2:15

"In this way, he disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by his victory over them on the cross." (NLT)



As His enemies lift Him up on the cross, they are judging themselves. His being lifted up on the cross will draw others to Him, beginning with the thief. Now, just as He hinted to Nicodemus, all people are now savable. Each of us still must make the decision yes or no, but it no longer depends upon the law and following it.

Through His death on the cross, Jesus will reconcile all of mankind to Himself making everyone potentially savable. He is not saying everyone will be saved, but those who look to the cross, just as those who looked to the bronze serpent, will be saved.

John 12:34

“The crowd then answered Him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how is it that You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’ ? Who is this Son of Man?”” (NASB 2020)

What the crowd knew of Messiah was only from the Torah, they have not been taught anything from Isaiah 53 or from Psalm 22. Those speak of his suffering. Again, they were looking for a Messiah that they wanted, not what God would give them. They still were looking for the conquering hero. That will come much later.

John 12:35–36

“So Jesus said to them, “For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not overtake you; also, the one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light.” These things Jesus proclaimed, and He went away and hid Himself from them.” (NASB 2020)

Jesus concludes His conversation with words that, as we live in these last days before the rapture of the church, we must take notice of. Right now the Light is still among us. The Holy Spirit is still evident here on earth through the church.

But that is about to end. Jesus gave us clear warnings of the signs of His second coming in Matthew 24 and for years, we have seen them take place but usually not all at once. But now, we see them all taking place, all at once, and with increasing frequency. Just like He said.

The next event on the calendar is one that comes with no precursor or warning event. It will simply happen.

Paul talked about this event with the church in Thessalonica.

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

“Now we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve like the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, so also we believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep as Christians. For we tell you this by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will surely not go ahead of those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a shout of command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be suddenly caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Nowhere did Paul allude to any prophecy or event having to take place first. He clearly pointed out that Jesus' return for the church was imminent. And he expected to be involved in it before his death. Jesus said the same about how soon.



Luke 12:40

“You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.” (ESV)

What we would say is that His coming for us is imminent. It is about to happen. This is the first time in history that all of the warning signs pointing to the second coming of Christ are happening everywhere all at once.

Imminency is built into the rapture passages as there are no signs, miracles, wonders, i.e. any specific event that must precede the rapture. (Olander 2009, 11-12)

But there are signs of the end of the age and the soon second coming of Jesus Christ at the end of the tribulation. As we see them all begin to converge (all these things), look up.

Are you ready to go?

Romans 3:21–24

“But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” (NLT)

Romans 10:9–13

“If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.”” (NLT)

ABC’s of Salvation

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner, tell Him that.
- B. Believe that Jesus died on the cross for our sin and that He rose from the dead.
- C. Confess that Jesus is Lord. Tell someone about what you have done.



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