

When I Am Lifted Up From the Earth

Read John 12.12-33

I / INTRODUCTION: MAKING THE CONNECTIONS

1. As John explains in **ch 12.1**, these events transpired during the last week of our Lord's life and ministry.
2. Lazarus had been raised from the dead just a few weeks before [**ch 11**], and since then, the reports and stories of that great sign-miracle had spread far and abroad [**ch 12.9**]. Many were believing in Jesus [**ch 12.11**]. The Jewish leaders were becoming more and more infuriated and frantic – and frustrated – in their attempts to arrest Jesus, bring Him by force, and eliminate Him and terminate His ever-growing popularity and influence among the people [**ch 11.53, 57; 12.10**]. They were losing their control over the population.
3. Dinners were being held in Jesus' honor since His arrival here in Jerusalem for this Passover feast [**ch 12.1-8; Mark 14.1-9**]. Mary has anointed His feet, and Jesus has expressed the significance of that service of love by pointing to His impending death and burial [**ch 12.7**].
4. And now, the next very few days will be filled with the accounts of His final appearances ... accompanied by His own Divine commentaries on what they all mean ... countless Scriptures and prophecies will come to pass and be fulfilled.

II / vv 12-19 / 'BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING!'

1. **The next day...** may mean the very next day after the events described in **vv 1-9**.
2. We know this as *'The Triumphal Entry'* of Jesus into Jerusalem. He Himself planned and orchestrated this celebration to announce that He, Himself, is God's appointed and anointed King. This was to fulfill all the prophecies and fore-shadowings of the Old Testament. All of the prophecies of the 'scepter' and the 'rule' of God over His people pointed to Christ. David and Solomon and all the 'sons of David' who had ruled over Israel and Judah were the predecessors of Christ who would come to reign over the house of Jacob...and indeed over all the earth and the world.
3. Whereas, in the months preceding this week, Christ had 'hidden' Himself from public view and from the hostile intentions of the Jewish leaders [**see chs 10.40 & 11.54**], now He must come and show Himself as the King of the Kingdom of God/Heaven He had come to establish and inaugurate.
4. Remember also from **ch 11.55-56**, that thousands of pilgrims and worshipers were arriving daily in Jerusalem for this Passover feast. As they arrived, they, too, were hearing the reports of Jesus and especially the raising of Lazarus. They all were wondering and asking, **"Do you think He will come to this Feast?"** Jesus' arrival and appearance there answers their question.
5. **"Hosanna!"** is a recitation from **Psalm 118.25**: **"Save us, we pray, O LORD!"** 'Hosanna' is the Hebrew word used there. **"Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the LORD, even the King of Israel!"** / **again from Psalm 118.26**. However, we must not assume they are seeing Jesus from the same perspective as He is presenting Himself. They are still looking for an earthly king, a temporal king, even a political king who would save them from the Romans and restore Israel to their former glory as a sovereign nation and world power / **see ch 6.15**.
6. **Zechariah 9.9 had prophesied this arrival 500 years before**. John quotes this prophecy as a fulfillment.
7. **And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written...** We will remember, though, that Jesus, Himself, also had arranged for His own donkey to ride on, and had sent His disciples to fetch it for Him / **Matthew 21.1-7; Luke 19.28-36**.

8. But Jesus was not making an ostentatious show of celebrity or power here. Yes, He is the King, but it is His kind of King and Kingdom...and not the kingdom they were expecting or wanting. His Kingdom is one of salvation from sins, deliverance from the power of Satan and darkness, and redemption. It would require His death on the Cross, and His resurrection from death, and ascension into the Glory from whence He had come. Even His own disciples didn't understand the spiritual significance of this presentation ... and may have even been caught up in the fervor of the political aspects of the occasion.
9. John keeps with the theme of how Jesus' 'signs' [miracles] manifested His Glory – and especially with the recent raising of Lazarus from the dead. The sign showed and spoke for itself. The Jewish leadership are growing increasingly frantic with Jesus' acclaim.

III / vv 20-26 / '...BUT IF IT DIES, IT BEARS MUCH FRUIT...'

1. **"Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks."** Remember that these mandated Jewish feasts drew attendees and worshipers from all over the world – not just from the local environs / **see Acts 2.5-11 re: Pentecost & Acts 17.4.**
2. These 'Greeks' were most likely Gentile proselytes who had come to see that the God of Israel was the true God, and had believed in Him, confessed Him, and trusted Him for their salvation. We do know that they were worshipers, and not just tourists or curiosity seekers. They didn't live from around those parts. But they had heard about Jesus. **See also ch 7.35.**
3. So when they arrived in Jerusalem, they wanted to see Him. As they began to ask around, they heard about Philip. The name 'Philip' is not a Hebrew or Jewish name – it is a Greek name. Or Philip himself may have had Greek family members and acquaintances due to his background. We don't know...just speculation. But for whatever reason, **so these came to Philip ... and asked him, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.'** After consulting with Andrew, they both went to Jesus to tell Him these Greeks wanted to meet Him.
4. **And Jesus answered them...** Did He answer just Philip and Andrew? Or maybe the disciples as a group? Or were the Greeks who wanted to meet Him present also? We don't know. What we do know is that Jesus tells them and us who we must see if we truly want to 'see' Him!
5. **The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified!** This is the 'hour' or 'time' for which He had come into our world. His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem as King was to announce and bring in His sovereign Kingdom of salvation and redemption ... but it would come only through His sacrificial death on the Cross. He had come into the world to reign in Life, but it would be from His death and resurrection from that death He would die.
6. **Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of what falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.** He, Himself, is that 'grain of wheat' who would die ... by so dying and resurrecting, He would bring and give eternal life to all who believe in Him! **His death is the way to spiritual life and glory!**
7. I can do no better than to quote from Pastor J. C. Ryle here: "Our Lord here illustrates a great Scriptural truth by a very familiar fact in nature. That fact is, that in plants and seeds life comes by death. The seed must be put into the ground, must rot, decay, and die, if we want it to bear fruit and produce a crop. If we refuse to bury the seed, and will keep it without sowing it, we shall never reap any harvest. We must be content to let it die if we want [wheat] ... But this sentence was also meant to teach a wider and broader lesson still. It revealed, under a striking figure, the mighty foundation truth, that Christ's death was to be the source of spiritual life to the world. From His cross and passions was to spring up a mighty harvest of benefit to all mankind. His death, like a grain of seed-[wheat], was to be the root of blessings and mercies to countless millions of immortal souls. In short, the great principle of the Gospel was once more exhibited – that Christ's vicarious death (not His life, or miracles, or teaching, but His *death*) was to bring forth fruit to the praise of God, and to provide redemption for a lost world."

8. And likewise, what was true of Jesus' life is also true of our own. **The only way we can live spiritually in His eternal life is to die to our own lives through repentance from our sin and faith in Christ!** If you love your own life – seek to keep it to yourself and for yourself – you will lose it, both here and now and forever. But if you die to your own self-seeking and self-serving will and surrender yourself to the Gospel of Christ's death, resurrection, and eternal life, you will both save your life here and now while you are living it, and you will enjoy eternal life forever with Him!
9. **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.** Jesus Christ uses these two verbs to describe our repentance from sin and faith in Him: 'serves' and 'follow.' This is what a 'believer' is: one who 'serves' and 'follows' Christ.
10. **I have sought to make this the rule of my life, and I commend it to you also.** This is Jesus' command, call, and commission on each of our lives. To serve Christ means that you will follow Him. Wherever He leads you [and He will], and whatever He gives you to do ... do that. It's not our prerogative to choose where we go or what we do. But when Jesus reveals it to us and leads us into it, we gladly follow. We serve Him by following Him. And, what Jesus promises us is that, when we do, He Himself will be there with us, working His sovereign purposes and will. But it goes much farther than just this life here and now – Jesus points also the forever to come. He promises us His Presence here and now, wherever we are and whatever we are doing ... but He also promises that if we follow Him here and now, we will also be with Him forever. **See also ch 14.1-4**
- We are told in **Revelation 14.4: It is these who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.**
 - And again in **Revelation 7.15-17: Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He who sits on the throne will shelter them with His Presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their Shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.**
11. And forever, **If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.**

IV / vv 27-33 / 'AND I, WHEN I AM LIFTED UP FROM THE EARTH'

1. What Jesus reveals and expresses here is way too deep for us to adequately comprehend or explain. They express the infinite and perfect union of both Deity and humanity in one glorious Person, the God-Man. But we'll take His words and worship Him.
- **His agonizing cry: Now is my soul troubled.** This is the same word He used in **ch 11.33 & 38.** It is the most violent internal agitations and turmoil we can suffer. And Jesus suffered it. But it was so much more than mere unrest or agitation of soul like we all suffer. For Jesus, it had to be the impending prospect that He was facing of taking our sin upon Himself and dying under the Holy curse and wrath of God as our Substitute. Pastor J. C. Ryle again: "This sentence implies a sudden, strong mental agony, which came over our Lord, troubling, distressing, and harassing Him. What was it from? Not from the mere foresight of a painful death the cross, and the bodily suffering attending it. No doubt human nature, even when sinless, naturally revolts from pain and suffering. Yet mere bodily pain has been endured for weeks by many a martyr... without a groan or a murmur. No! It was the weight of the world's imputed sin laid upon our Lord's head, which pressed Him downward, and made Him cry, 'Now is my soul troubled.' It was the sense of the whole burden of man's transgression imputed to Him, which, as He drew near the cross, weighed Him down so tremendously. It was not His bodily sufferings, either anticipated or felt, but our sins, which here, at Gethsemane, and at Calvary, agonized and racked His soul."

- His solemn question: **What shall I say?** How is He going to respond to this internal trouble? I don't know how to interpret or explain Jesus' question to Himself. What He is expressing here is that He has two paths He can pursue: He can either choose the path of His own comfort and convenience, or He can obediently surrender to His Father's desire and pleasure to save His people from our sins by the death He must die – and which He is anticipating with this inward pain of His soul... He will explain...
 - His prayer of suffering flesh and blood: **Father, save Me from this hour[?]** Is this the prayer I shall pray? Is this what I shall say out of this extreme anguish of my soul? But if I am 'saved' from this awful hour and experience of suffering my Father's Holy wrath against the sins of those for whom I am dying ... then I can't do what He has sent me to do...
 - His meek confession: **But for this purpose I have come to this hour...** NO! I can't be saved from this awful hour! This is the very express, specific, and gracious purpose for which the Father has sent me and for which I have come into the world...
 - His petition of a perfectly submissive and obedient will: **Father, glorify Your Name!**
"Father, I have come to do your will. I have come to please you. I have come to glorify your Name and your grace by dying for the people you have given me to save – even if it means being made a curse for them, taking their imputed guilt of their sins upon myself, and being punished for their sins in their place."
2. It was at that time that the Father audibly spoke from Heaven: **"I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."** This has to be the Father's public, audible testimony to the Scripture's all-encompassing testimony to the Son, Jesus Christ. Everything that is recorded in Scripture, everything that's been done in the history of the world has all been focused on the Father's purpose, plan, and pleasure to point to the Son, to focus all attention on Him, and glorify Him for His love and obedience to the Father's will.
 3. Jesus then makes this bold pronouncement about what He would accomplish when He was 'lifted up' on the Cross: **'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. This pronouncement passes the verdict of condemnation on Satan and his usurped power, dominion, and authority that he has held over the world's systems and people – all with God's permission, of course. Satan has usurped this dominion ever since his own rebellion and fall into sin from his originally-created angelic state. Then he corrupted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and cast the whole human race and the world into the curses of sin, destruction, and death. BUT now Jesus has come, and by His death on the cross and His resurrection and ascension into Glory, God **'disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in [Christ]'** / **Colossians 2.15**. Satan, indeed, bruised Christ's heel – but Christ has crushed his head in fulfillment of the First Gospel Promise given to us in **Genesis 3.15**. [This victory story is celebrated also in **Revelation 12.1-12**]
 4. Jesus Christ exercises His Gospel victory by promising, **"I...will draw all people to myself."** Everyone who has ever been saved, is being saved, or will be saved until all for whom Christ died are saved ... ALL are saved by the efficacious, all-sufficient, all-victorious Cross of Christ! And that includes 'to the Jew first and also to the Greek' [Romans 1.16].
 5. And in the end, we all will sing the new song, everyone of us with palm branches in our hands [Revelation 5.9-10 & 7.9-10]:
'Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth!'

DO YOU BELIEVE?