

The Church of the Servant King

Survey of the Bible Series – The Gospel of John (SB_JN12C_Jesus Predicts His Death and Commands Disciples to Walk in the Light)

Jesus Predicts His Death on the Cross (12:27-36)

In verses 27-28, Jesus continues to address His disciples after Andrew and Philip told Jesus that certain Greeks were interested in seeing Him (vv. 20-22). It is interesting that Andrew and Philip bring the request, but not the Greeks to see Jesus. Could it be that Andrew and Philip hesitated to bring the Greeks due to a type of racial prejudice similar to that with which Peter was confronted on the housetop in Joppa some period after Jesus' resurrection (Acts 10:9-16)?¹

In verse 27, we gain insight into Jesus' humanity through His personal distress as He anticipated the burden that lay ahead of Him. Jesus knew that He could not pray that the Father deliver Him from "this hour" since all of His life had been directed toward what He was to accomplish in "this hour." Therefore, Jesus acknowledges the purpose of the Father in "this hour" and He prays – "Father, glorify Your name." In this passage, we see the personal struggle of Jesus as He does not falter in carrying out the Father's will for His life. Prayer is the result of an attitude that acknowledges one's dependence upon the heavenly Father.² John does not include a detailed account of Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane as does the Synoptic Gospel writers (Matt 26:36-46; Mk 14:32-42; Lk 22:39-46) even though He does describe His betrayal and arrest (Jn 18:1-11).

Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him. (Heb 5:7-9)

At this point, a heavenly voice speaks just as it had at the baptism and at the transfiguration in the Synoptics. This is the only utterance from heaven noted in John's Gospel during Jesus' ministry.³ The voice affirms that Jesus' ministry has glorified the Father's name in spite of the world's rejection. However, only Jesus understood the utterance. The crowd did not understand it even though it was for their benefit. They should have interpreted the heavenly noise as an endorsement of Jesus' ministry and prayer.

Even though the heavenly noise was a promise of the ultimate victory of Jesus, it was also a message of judgment to the world that had rejected Christ. "Christ's death would provide life for those who believed, but it was to be a judgment on the world, which was a system arrayed against God, and a judgment on Satan, the prince of this world (v. 31)."⁴ Through Jesus' death on the Cross, He would accomplish a glorification of the Father, bring about judgment upon the unbelieving world and Satan, and provide the means by which all could be delivered who so chose to accept Him.

¹ See J. W. Shepard, *The Christ of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946), 485 quoted in J. Dwight Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 379.

² Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, 380.

³ Darrell L. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2002), 486.

⁴ Pentecost, *The Words and Works of Jesus Christ*, 380.

The crowd attempts to reconcile Jesus' statements with what they could recall from Scripture (i.e. the "law"). They rightly believed that the Messiah would reign forever in His kingdom based upon such passages as 2 Samuel 7:7-16; Psalm 72:17; 89:35-37; 110:4; Isaiah 9:7; and Ezekiel 37:25. However, they overlooked the passages that indicated the Messiah would also be a suffering servant (Psa 22:6-7, 14, 16, 18; Isa 52:14; 53:3, 5-12).

Wherever I have gone with all the sons of Israel, did I speak a word with one of the tribes of Israel, which I commanded to shepherd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?' Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, 'thus says the Lord of hosts, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be ruler over My people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth. I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The Lord also declares to you that the Lord will make a house for you. When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant [*David's ultimate descendant – the Messiah*] after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and **I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever**. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And **your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever**. In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David. (2 Sam 7:7-16)

May his name endure forever; may His name increase **as long as the sun shines**; and let men bless themselves by him; Let all nations call him blessed. (Psa 72:17)

Once I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. **His descendants [seed] shall endure forever**, and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established **forever** like the moon, and the witness in the sky is faithful. (Psa 89:35-37)

The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, 'Thou art a priest **forever** according to the order of Melchizedek.' (Psa 110:4)

There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness **from then on and forevermore**. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. (Isa 9:7)

And they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they and their sons, and their sons' sons, **forever**; and David My servant shall be their prince **forever**. (Ezek 37:25)

But I am a worm, and not a man, a reproach of men, and despised by the people. All who see me sneer at me; they separate with the lip, they wag the head. (Psa 22:6-7)

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within me. (Psa 22:14)

For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet. (Psa 22:16)

They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots. (Psa 22:18)

Just as many were astonished at you, My people, so His appearance was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men. (Isa 52:14)

He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. (Isa 53:3)

But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people to whom the stroke was due? His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth. But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief; if He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong; because He poured out Himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors. (Isa 53:5-12)

Jesus' response to their question is recorded in verses 35-36. His answer would have seemed to be tangential at best to the issue at hand in the minds of His questioners. One wonders why Jesus did not answer more directly and solve the confusion by declaring the Resurrection through which a Messiah who died would be brought back to an eternal life in which He would reign forever. Instead, Jesus exhorted the crowd to receive the light that He had come to give. The light would soon be gone and they should respond to the light while the light was available to them. Only by so doing was there any hope for the Messianic kingdom in their lifetimes, even if it was after Jesus' sacrificial death and after a 7 year Tribulation period that had been prophesied by the prophet Daniel (see Dan 9:25-27).

It is my belief that Jesus did not explain this chronology of events in order to filter through the motives of those showering praise upon Him. Were they truly spiritual and willing to accept God's will and timing so that they might have a chance of enduring the persecution of the Roman Empire that would surely follow? Or, were they just looking at Him for what He could do for them in the physical realm?

Principle: God's deliverance, even in the physical, temporal realm is always associated with spiritual realities. In other words, spiritual reformation precedes physical, temporal deliverance.

Application: Is there an area of your life or a problem with which you are wrestling over which you need temporal deliverance, e.g. health, job, marriage, family, emotional, etc? Have you seen the connection to the spiritual issues in your life yet? Is there a sinful thought pattern, a pattern of emotional revolt, a pattern of self-justification and rationalization that is preventing God from accomplishing deliverance in your life?

The Hardening of Unbelief and the Compromise of Faith (vv. 37-43)

In spite of the many miracles that Jesus had performed to include raising Lazarus from the dead, John notes that not many had come to believe in Him. John sees the connection between this fact and Isaiah's prophecy (Isa 53:1). Just as in Isaiah's ministry, the people didn't believe because the consequence of repeated rejection is a hardening of the heart and spiritual blindness (Jn 12:40 cf. Isa 6:9-10; Ex 7:13-14, 22-23; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34, 35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 5, 8; Eph 4:17-18). However, even through their rejection, God provided salvation to the world.

Some did believe as John notes, yet they maintained their silence in order to maintain their status quo with those who did not believe. Some of those who believed were among the leaders as John notes (v. 42). They had grown accustomed to the approbation of men and had not yet grown spiritually so that the praise of God was a greater reality than the condemnation of men. The trade-off or compromise is noted for eternity in the Word of God which is imperishable. It is possible that Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-3) and Joseph of Arimathea (Jn 19:38) were in this category, although at Jesus' burial, they found the strength to come forward.

Walk in the Light (vv. 44-50)

Jesus' final public summary in John reaffirms the inseparable connection between Jesus and God the Father. To believe in Jesus is to believe in the one Who sent Jesus. To fail to keep Jesus' words does not mean that Jesus judges since He came to provide salvation in His 1st Advent. In verse 46, the phrase – "I have come" – is in the perfect tense and emphasizes His continuing presence as light in a world of spiritual darkness. Therefore, in the sense that His words remain after His death is the sense in which judgment remains because they are the words of the Father. It is the heavenly Father's standard by which one should measure themselves and that standard is inseparably tied to Jesus and responding to Him.⁵ In this passage, Jesus is either a lunatic or truly the Son of God to make such claims. One cannot ride the fence and believe that He was just a good man, a good example, or a prophet among equals.

⁵ Darrell L. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture*, 489-490.