

Exegetical Notes, John 12:20-36
“The Time for Judgment”

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John 12:20-36

Verses 20-22

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” ²² Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

- “Greeks,” meaning non-Jews. Since they were in Jerusalem for the Passover they must have been converts to Judaism, but they were not Jewish by birth.
- They came to Philip and asked for an interview with Jesus.
- Uncertain as to what he should do with the request, Philip took the matter to Andrew, and Andrew brought it to Jesus.

Verses 23-26

Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

- Jesus replied that the coming of the Greeks to him was a sign from the Father that Jesus’ time had come.
- Jesus used a grain of wheat to explain what was about to happen. Like the grain of wheat planted in the soil, so he would be buried. But as the planted wheat sprouts and produces many new grains of wheat, so he would draw many to him in his death and resurrection.
- He then laid down the general principle for Christian life. As Jesus laid down his life for the lost, so Christians must lay down their lives in service to him and the kingdom of God. Those who surrender their lives to him in this world will gain eternal life. Our goal is to be like Jesus in life and in death.

Verses 27-29

“Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.”²⁸ Father, glorify your name!”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.”²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

- Jesus then confessed that this principle even bothered him. In his flesh, he preferred not to have to die for our salvation.
- But he surrendered to the will of the Father for him despite his human desires. He prayed that he might be able to live so as to bring glory to God even as he died.
- During Jesus’ prayer to glorify God, he heard God speak from heaven declaring that he was glorified and would still be glorified. Some people in the crowd thought that the voice was thunder. Others thought it was an angel.

Verses 30-36

Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine.”³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

³⁴ The crowd spoke up, “We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this ‘Son of Man’?”

³⁵ Then Jesus told them, “You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going.”³⁶ Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.” When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

- Jesus explained to the crowd that the voice had spoken not for his sake but for theirs. It was the proclamation of God that the events which would result in the fall of Satan, the prince of this world, were about to begin.
- Jesus declared that when he died, Satan would be defeated. He used words which indicated that he would die by crucifixion and that his death would draw people to him.
- The teachings confused the crowd because they had been taught that the Messiah would never die. They asked him to confirm his identity to them again. Was he or was he not the Messiah?

- He told them, again, that he was the light. But that soon the light would be taken from them. He would return to the Father. He urged them to “walk in the light” while he remained with them for when the light was gone they would stumble in the darkness.
- When he had told them this, Jesus withdrew from them and devoted himself to prayer in preparation for what was ahead of him.

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