Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Hour Is Come
Scripture: John 12:17-26
Code: 1537

Turn in your Bibles to John chapter 12. We continue our study of the gospel of John. We move through verse by verse God's great presentation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. And as we come in to chapter 12, particularly the passage with which we're dealing, we come to another transition passage. We've seen several bridges built in John's gospel from one thing to another, and as we come to these verses, particularly 17 through 26, although it spills over throughout the remainder of the entire gospel of John, we come to kind of a preview of a great transition that's about to take place. And there are many changes happening right now in John's gospel at this point. It's time for Jesus to die, it's time for the gospel to be moved to the Gentiles. Great changes re taking place. The public ministry of Jesus Christ has come to an end and He is now going to begin His private ministry with those who love Him. So many bridges are being built, many transitions are taking place as Christ ends His great public ministry as Messiah presenting a Kingdom to Israel. Now He's going to become the crucified one offering salvation to the Gentiles and dealing primarily in these last days with His own, rather than with the whole of the nation. And so, there are transitions at this point and this passage indicates to us some of the aspects of these transitions.

Now to put your mind in the right perspective in terms of where we are, Jesus has just ridden into Jerusalem. And as He has entered Jerusalem, earlier in the chapter, the entire resident and pilgrim population who are there for the Passover are crying "Hosanna, blessed is the King of Israel, the Son of David who cometh in the name of the Lord," and they're hailing Jesus Christ as some conquering hero. As He moves into the city He has a multitude of people who are coming with Him from Bethany, and they are crying and shouting these things, "Hosanna," and "Blessed," and all of this, and as He reaches the outside of the city of Jerusalem, a great mass of humanity comes surging out of the eastern part of the city, meets Him there and this massive multitude caught up in the fervor of the moment all generated by the resurrection of Lazarus, a stupendous miracle which Jesus did, and feeling that this must be their great conqueror, come to throw off the yoke of Rome, begin to hail Him with "Hosannas" and "Blessed is the King," and all of this.

It's a joyous occasion, the Messiah has arrived. That's their feeling. God's anointed is here. David's heir is here. Anybody who could raise the dead can handle the Romans. At last we're going to see revolution. Messiah is going to lead a great conquering victory over the Romans. And so all of this massive demonstration takes place while the people in their brain have the idea that Jesus is arriving

as a political revolutionary, that the Messiah is going to lead a revolt on a political level. And it's all keyed on the fact that He raised Lazarus from the dead, a monumental miracle. And as we saw last week, when He enters the city He fulfills messianic prophecy, indeed He is the Messiah, just not the Messiah they thought He was. Zechariah said He would ride the foal of an ass, a colt, and that's exactly what He was riding. Genesis 49:10 said when He arrived the gathering of the people would be to Him and He arrived and sure enough the gathering of the people was to Him, just exactly as the book of Genesis said. Daniel said that exactly 483 years from the decree of Artaxerxes in 445 B.C. Jesus would enter into Jerusalem, and exactly 483 years to the very day on the 360th day of the 483rd year, and you remember the Jewish calendar was 360-day years, on the very day Jesus entered Jerusalem, that was the very day that Daniel had prophesied 483 years from the decree of Artaxerxes. So Jesus when He entered into the city fulfilled to the very letter the messianic prophecies regarding the arrival of God's anointed. And the people were sure that the kind of power that Jesus displayed could only be displayed by one from God. And they felt this must be our Messiah, even though Jesus tried to illustrate something to them by riding on this colt of a donkey, rather than on a white horse, He was not coming as a warrior, He was coming as a prince of peace. But they didn't get the illustration, they didn't understand it, not even the disciples understood it. And they continued to hail Him as a conquering hero who was going to be the political ruler who would overthrow Rome and oppression and set up the great Kingdom through which the Jews would rule the world.

And so they were looking for a political Messiah, and, of course, Jesus was no such thing. His Kingdom was not of this world. He called for a spiritual revolution. He called for repentance. He called for an acknowledgment of sin and a turning to Him for salvation. And they were unwilling at that point. They wanted a political Messiah, not a spiritual one. They wanted a political revolution, not a spiritual revolution. And so they would not accept Jesus Christ as the Messiah that He was. That's why within a few days from this they decide it's better to kill Him because He didn't turn out to be the political leader they wanted and they weren't about to buy all of His words about sin and judgment and punishment and repentance and salvation. They thought themselves already righteous. They thought themselves secure because they were circumcised, because they were the children of Abraham, and because they possessed the law of Moses. And they didn't need any of this repentance and any of this salvation, all they needed was political assistance. And when Jesus turned out to be a spiritual Messiah, they rejected Him and they decided to kill Him. He did not conform to their political aspirations.

They were ready to crown Him and they did, with thorns. They were ready to give Him a scepter and they did, a reed and mocked Him. They were ready to give him a robe and they did in ridicule. They were ready to hail Him as a King and they did with blaspheming sneers and mocking sarcasm. They were ready to lift Him up and they did, on a cross. And so a tremendous transition is about to take

place, Jesus is going to go from King to crucified in their minds because He refused to be what they wanted. He couldn't be what they wanted. They needed spiritual help. If He had been only a political Messiah, He would have done the greatest disservice to the entire world for He would have left men hopelessly in sin and so they didn't want the spiritual revolution He talked about, they didn't want the kind of Kingdom that He talked about and so they became completely full of hate, really, all generated by the leaders of the people. Instead of crying for His Kingdom, they cried for His blood.

And, of course, Christ was exactly the opposite of what they were looking for. He just didn't fit the messianic mold. You might put it this way, He was not what the people wanted and he was exactly what the rulers didn't want specifically because He tended to violate all their hypocrisy and expose them. And He threatened the security of their hold on the people and so they wanted to get rid of Him and they led the whole mass of people into the plot. But before you assume that Jesus was a victim, let me hasten to say that even though it was the hatred of the people and the inability of Pilate to do what was right and the Romans who were also involved, even though all these people were sinning and crucifying Jesus Christ, He was not a victim of their sin. He was not a victim of their hatred. God had merely designed that He would use the hatred of men to bring about the accomplishment of salvation. And Jesus was carrying this out step by step on a divine timetable, as we saw last week. And Jesus said in John 10:18, "No man takes My life from Me, I lay it down of Myself." And He told Pilate, "You couldn't touch one hair of My head if you didn't have permission from God." So the hatred of men generated the death of Jesus Christ but all within the framework of the plan of God. Jesus was no victim of a plot of men, He was really the key to a plan of God to unfold in the salvation of the world. And as the Old Testament said concerning the evil of men, "You meant it for evil, but I meant it for good."

So the end of our Lord's life is only a few days away. The hosannas are going to turn to hatred. The cries of King are going to turn to crucify Him. But that's all right, that's how it's going to be. God's going to use that to bring about salvation. The Kingdom was offered to Israel on a repentance basis, on a salvation basis and it was totally rejected for the final time and what was willful rejection became judicial rejection, and what was willful blindness became judicial blindness as God confirmed Israel's choice and maintained their blindness and does even today until the fullness of the Gentiles, and then God will go back to dealing with Israel and open their eyes.

Now in this passage we see this transition begin to take place. The King becomes the crucified. The Jews hardened in unbelief are left in their unbelief and Gentiles move into the scene. Those two major transitions are previewed right here. The move from the message to the Jews to the message to the Gentiles; the move from hailing Him as King to crucified; those two are the key transitions seen in verses 17 to 26.

Now in order to see how these transitions take place there are four aspects of this passage that I want you to look at. You have them on your outline in the bulletin. These four various features or

aspects will give for us the facts of the transition. I feel a little bit like the Apostle Paul this morning, in that I have many things to say unto you that are all woven into this text. And I want you to stay with me because I think there's some basic principles here that are very, very strategic for you to understand that are woven into this historical situation.

All right, there are four basic aspects we want to see...the crowd, the council, the certain Greeks and the cross. Those are the features that take up the four sections of this passage. The crowd is fickle. The council is frustrated. The certain Greeks are following. And the cross is foretold. And all of these unfold to show the transition.

All right, first of all, meet the crowd. Same crowd we've been seeing lately, the fickle crowd who follows whatever the whims happen to be at the moment. Verse 17, "The people therefore that were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his grave and raised him from the dead, bore witness." In other words, the whole mob is moving toward Jerusalem and all these people who saw the resurrection of Lazarus are starting to spread the word of what Jesus did. They're starting to tell everybody that He did this. They're bearing witness to this miracle.

Well as a result, in verse 18, "For this cause the people also met Him for they heard that He had done this miracle." The reason that the big mass of people move out toward Jesus is because they have heard about this miracle. And, I mean, let's face it, this crowd is a bunch of thrill seekers, they've been a bunch of thrill seekers since we first met them way long ago in the gospel of John. They followed Him all over everywhere to see His miracles. And that was a kind of exciting thing but then it really got exciting in John 6 when He started providing food for them. And after He had fed them, they followed Him all the more and finally He turned around and said to them, "You're not following Me now because you saw My miracles, you're following now because you get free food out of Me." They had great hopes that Jesus was the Messiah who was going to establish the final universal welfare state where everybody could free load off His miraculous powers. They were pure thrill seekers. They were only in it to get what they could get, to get their kicks out of it for the experience and the novelty of it. And now they had heard about this man raising the dead. I mean, how often have you met a guy who raised the dead, right? It's a celebrity.

So the whole crowd moves out to see the celebrity Jesus who has raised Lazarus from four days of being in a tomb. They're the fickle thrill seekers. Their homage to Jesus is totally superficial. They're the very identical mouths that a few days later will cry, "Crucify Him." They're now crying, "Hosanna." And it's an interesting thing, and if you study the Word of God and as you look at history, even today, you find out that Jesus has always been able to draw a crowd, always. Always been able to draw people to Himself, always. In John chapter 2 He drew some people and that began it. All the way through the rest of the gospel of John, clear to His crucifixion, and even at that point He's drawing

people to Himself, but the thing is, they're for various reasons. Sometime they came to love Him, sometime they came too look at Him, some time they came to stone Him. And just because someone comes to Jesus Christ and believes in Him in the sense of the initial aspect of faith doesn't mean he's saved. Sometimes in the Bible the word "believe" means total faith, saving faith. Other times it means superficial faith and you have to analyze the passage because it can mean either one at any given situation. And let me illustrate what I mean.

In John chapter 2 Jesus drew a crowd. Well He really went where a crowd was, He arrived in the temple and cleaned it out. He dismissed the crowd in no uncertain terms. And then a lot of people believed on Him because of what He had done there and because of the miracles that He did when He first arrived in Jerusalem. But Jesus knew the character of their faith and the Bible says many believed on Him because of the miracles which He did, but Jesus did not commit Himself unto them because He knew what kind of belief it was. It was pure superficial, pure thrill-seeker type belief, not saving faith, just a preoccupation and an interest in Jesus.

And that wasn't the only place. In John 6, as I said, they followed Him because they wanted the food. In John chapter 12, look, here's an interesting incident, verse 42, "Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on Him." You say, "Oh, that's terrific, many of the chief rulers believed on Jesus, boy, that's really wonderful. We've been hoping for that all along, isn't that great? A whole lot of rulers got saved."

No they didn't, that's as far as it ever got. Look at the rest of the verse, "But because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him." And Paul says in Romans 10:9 and 10, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in thine heart, thou shalt...what?...be saved." All right, they didn't want to admit it, they didn't want to confess Christ as Savior and Lord, they believed but they weren't going to put their lives in His hands. Why? Well, my goodness, they might get thrown out of the synagogue. Not only that, verse 43 gives you the real truth, "They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Take your choice, friend, you can have either one. Now that's the kind of faith that so often came to Jesus, illegitimate kind.

Now chapter 8 verse 30 gives us the key to understanding the difference. Chapter 8 verse 30 says this, "As He spoke these words many believed on Him." And, you know, you can get all excited about that and think, "Boy, how wonderful that many believed on Him." Then you come to verse 31 and you meet the real issue. "Then said Jesus to those Jews who believed on Him, 'If ye continue in My Word, then are you My disciples *alethos*in truth.'" In other words, surface superficial belief isn't the issue, a true disciple believes and continues in His Word.

Boy, that's important, I want you to hang on to that. A true disciple believes and continues. There's no such thing as a true disciple who believes and falls away, never was a true disciple, never was. Never was. A true disciple believes and continues.

So what about a person who believes for a while and then turns away? Do they lose their salvation?

They never had it. A true disciple believes and continues in My Word. If you continue in My Word, that's how I know you're My disciple. If you don't continue in the Word, you never were My disciple. It was all superficial.

Let me show you what I mean. James 2:17, and in James 2:17 you have a familiar passage. "Even so, faith if it hath not works is dead being alone." In other words, you say you believe and you don't have anything in your life to prove it, you don't follow Christ, you don't obey His Word, you don't continue in His Word, your faith is a lie. Verse 19, "Thou believest that there's one God, big deal, the devils believe and tremble." Believing isn't where it stops. That's not all there is to it. There's much more than that.

Let me show you now a key verse, Hebrews chapter 10 verse 38. Hebrews 10:38 says this, boy, this is an important passage, "Now the just shall live by faith." Now that's great, but what kind of faith is it? All right, now watch, there's two kinds of initial faith. "But if any man draw back," in other words, he says I believe and then all of a sudden he draws back, "My soul shall have no pleasure in him." Now watch verse 39, "But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul."

Do you see that? Somebody who has a superficial belief in Christ and falls back never did believe to the saving of the soul. Do you see the difference? "But we real disciples are the ones whose faith was to the saving of our souls." You see? It's possible to believe without ever being saved. The ones who believe and fall back are the ones who never were saved. The ones who believe and continue are the ones who believed to the saving of their souls. Boy, that's an important...let me show you another verse, 2 John 9. That's an important key. Now in 2 John 9 it says this, "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God." Now watch this, "He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ he hath both the Father and the Son."

How do you know a true Christian? How do you know somebody who really has Christ? How do you know somebody who really has God? Simple! He's the one who abides in the doctrine of Christ. Did you get that? Somebody who does not abide in the doctrine of Christ never had Christ to begin with. That's what it says. You can tell a true disciple, he continues in the Word, he believes to the saving of his soul, and he abides in the doctrine of Christ and abiding is the idea of dwelling there, continual.

Let me give you one other verse that comes to my mind and I think it's important. First John 2:19, here it is, this...this ends it for all. Listen to this, 1 John 2:19, "They went out from us," some people left the fellowship, "they went out from us but they were not of us, for if they had been of us they would have continued...what?...with us." Now watch this. "But they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." Somebody who superficially believes and falls back never was believing to the saving of the soul to begin with. If he had of, he would have abode in the doctrine of Christ, continued in the doctrine of Christ.

So Jesus got a whole lot of superficial people following Him around and He still does. The church is full of people like that. I was at a conference yesterday in the desert where I spoke all during the day, I felt like John the Baptist, outdoors in the desert, and I mean desert...I mean a hundred miles out from Victorville. And I had presented the message in the evening and a young man came to me and he just had tears in his eyes, he was crying, you know, just really crying. He wanted to go home, and camp...won't be here till tomorrow, but he wanted to go home. He said, "Will you take me home?" So I said, "What do you want to go home for?" He said, "Because all my life I've been living a lie." And he said, "Tonight I gave my life to Jesus Christ." And he said, "I want to go home and tell my family." So, I took him home. And he was just buoyant, you know, because he realized that the superficiality was over, that he had been playing a role. That's exactly the word he used, "I've been playing a role for years in the church."

Well he's not alone, friends. He's not alone. Proof of salvation is continuance. My disciples continue in My Word. That's My *alethos*disciples, my true ones. But the crowd is fickle. They're fickle. They're yelling, "Hosanna, we believe," and then they're yelling, "Crucify Him." There are so many people who are superficial. I tell you, we work with people all the time wh come to Christ and it's amazing how many people make some kind of a commitment to Jesus Christ and you can't ever find them again. They're just not around. You try to follow them up and they're just sort of half-way interested and half-way not interested and all you can say is it never was real to begin with.

So, we meet the crowd, fickle. And because they're so fickle they forfeit their Messiah, they forfeit the Kingdom and they forfeit salvation. Now we meet the council. If the crowd is fickle, the council is frustrated. And if it wasn't so sad it would be funny, verse 19, because these guys have to be the most frustrated group of people that have ever lived in the history of the world. The Pharisees have been trying to lay their hands on Jesus for so long now that it's getting to be ridiculous. And they can't touch Him. And they're plotting and planning and carrying out all their master ideas and nothing is ever happening right. They made a great big edit. Back in chapter 11 verse 57, they sent out a commandment, "If anybody knows where Jesus is, you tell us so we can take Him." Now just get a hold of that. That's their big law, commandment sent out by the Pharisees, you know, tacking it up

everywhere, "If you see Jesus report Him because they're going to take Him." So where's Jesus? Riding right into the middle of town. And what are the people doing? "Hail the King." And all the Pharisees are just, you know, tearing their hair out. This is...don't you understand our rule? I mean, they are frustrated. And what are they saying? Verse 19, "The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, 'Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing.'" It's typical of a situation like that where you blame everybody else in your group. "See, see, we listened to your ideas, now look where we are. The whole world has gone after Him." So, you know, whenever you want to really get into a heated argument and make your point, you exaggerate it. The whole world has gone after Him. They are really frustrated and, I mean, they could see the handwriting on the wall, right? Here's the whole populace of Jerusalem and it could be well two million people in the whole city and there are massive crowds around Jesus hailing Him as King. And they're finished, it's all over. It's over with. They've gotten their King. They don't care about the rules the Pharisees made, they could care less about the commandments. And do you realize that's a real first in Israel, friends, because boy, when the Pharisees sent something out, that was it. But not anymore, they are preoccupied with Jesus. And the Pharisees are frustrated.

Evidently there were two factions of them, the radicals and the more conservative. They probably had a couple of Republican-Democrat factions. One felt they ought to get moving and do this and the other and the other felt they ought to do it this way and there was one very liberal and one very conservative. And so the liberal radicals were saying, "See, we went along with you conservatives and look what happened." That's a familiar line. And it goes both ways. But these are kind of the words of helpless wrath, you know, I mean what do you do? Here they are, their plot has gone completely haywire. They have been unable to touch Jesus. They've tried again and again and again and some times He disappears out of their sight, other times they can't touch Him. They're restrained. They are frustrated and they seem like they're at the end of their rope. Their authority has been challenged. They made a rule, nobody could care less about their rule, they've gone after Jesus. And they're incapacitated, they can't do a thing.

It's kind of exciting to realize that the best laid plots of these men are worthless in terms of what God wants to do. God controls the acts of men. He controls the acts of men. He knows what men are doing, negatively and positively. God restrains and constrains men. God has mapped out the chart of history. For example, in the Old Testament it was God who gave Joseph favor in the eyes of the keeper of the prisoners, remember? God did that. In Numbers 23 it was God who moved Balaam to bless Israel when he got paid for cursing Israel. It was God who stirred up the spirit of Cyrus to release the Jews to return to Palestine. It was God who withheld Abimelech from sinning in the twentieth chapter of Genesis. It was God who didn't allow the brothers of Joseph to slay him. It was God who directed men. And Jesus is no different. At Jesus bidding the lame walked, the leper was cleansed, the blind saw, the deaf heard, the dumb spoke and the dead were raised. At His word the

disciples forsook their nets. Matthew left the tax table and Zacchaeus climbed out of the tree. He directed the affairs of men. At Nazareth His rejecters led Him to the brow of a hill, they were going to throw Him off and kill Him and He just passed through their midst and disappeared. Every time they tried to take Him, He escaped. Boy, I love it, even in the garden when they came to capture Him and they were looking for Him and asking questions and they asked, you know, who He was and where is He and this and that, and He says, "I am." And when He said that, the whole Roman army fell over backwards...pugh...just like that. He had so much control over every single move of history that they couldn't move one muscle without Him and His permissive will.

And so here He allows the crowd to hail Him. He pulls back the restraints this time to fulfill the Scripture. And He knows that by hailing Him and by His disappointing their political aspirations, their hatred will be all the greater and they will move to kill Him, and that's what He wants because that's what has to happen to provide salvation for the very ones responsible for His death. And it's interesting that though they're very frustrated here, by the time Friday rolls around they get their wish. Unfortunately in getting their wish, the death of Jesus Christ, they damn their souls to eternity.

So the first part of the transition is complete. Israel's rejection is full and final. Israel's rejection has taken place. The King being hailed is about to be the crucified. Now we come to number three, third little feature in this dialogue, verse 20 to 22, we meet the certain Greeks who were following. The crowd is fickle, council was frustrated and here's some certain Greeks and they were following. They were really interested in Jesus.

And this is a very beautiful thing, I want you to get this. Very often in the Bible we have some previews to things in the future. In the Old Testament, the prophecies of the Old Testament said that Jesus, Haggai said, "Jesus would be the desire of all nations." The Old Testament said that He would not only be the Redeemer of Israel but when Messiah came He would also be the Redeemer of all nations. And the prophecies were that the Gentiles would get in on salvation. And now with the blindness of Israel being confirmed right here as we watch it happen in John's gospel, God gives us a little preview of Gentile salvation and here comes a little group of Greeks who are like the first fruits of the harvest of the church, the first fruits of Gentile salvation. Israel's blindness that was willful has become judicial. Israel is now to be set aside and the fullness of the Gentiles begins. And as a little preview of that immediately at this transition point comes a little group of Greeks to whom Jesus delivers the message about His cross. The gospel is turning to the Gentiles.

All right, meet the certain Greeks. We don't really know who they are, we don't know their names. But notice verse 20, "There were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast. The same came therefore to Philip who was of Bethsaida of Galilee and desired him saying, 'Sir, we would see Jesus.'" Philip, one of the Twelve. "Philip cometh and telleth Andrew; and again Andrew

and Philip tell Jesus."

Now these are Gentiles and they want to see Jesus. Now at this point of transition we would be unfair to understanding the whole transition if we didn't examine a couple of portions of Scripture and so I want you to turn in your Bible to the ninth chapter of Romans cause I want you to see what's happening in the transition. When God set aside Israel by Israel's willful rejection, becoming judicial, when God set aside Israel and moved toward the Gentiles, He was fulfilling prophecy, the prophecy of the Old Testament. Romans 9:25, now watch this, Romans 9:25 quotes out of the book of Hosea. "And He saith also in Hosea, I will call them My people who were not My people and her beloved who was not beloved."

Now who was God's people? Israel. Who was God's beloved? Israel. Then the no people and the not beloved must be Gentiles. Right. Hosea even predicted that that would happen and it did. "It shall come to pass...verse 26...in the place where it was said unto them, 'Ye are not My people,' there shall they be called the sons of the living God." The no people becomes God's seed, God's chosen children. Now even in the midst of the choosing of this new people, verse 27 says, "A remnant of Israel will be saved," and we see that even today, even though God is calling out a people from the Gentiles today, still a remnant of Israel is also being saved. And that's why we're concerned with reaching that remnant with the gospel of Jesus Christ even today.

You see, just because Israel's set aside doesn't mean you don't evangelize Israel. That's ridiculous because you come over to the next chapter, chapter 10 in Romans, and just after Paul has said Israel is set aside and God is calling a new people, a no people who will now be His people, look what he says in 10:1, "Even in view of Israel's judicial blindness, brethren, my hearts desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be...what?...saved." That doesn't stop Jewish evangelism, Jewish evangelism is still a priority because God's got His remnant that must hear the truth of Messiah. And even the Jew who is under the judicial blindness of God in the sense that he belongs to Israel, to him comes verses 9 and 10 of chapter 10, that if he'll confess with his mouth and confess believe in his heart, he'll be saved. That's God's promise. So, God says I'm going to set Israel aside and I'm going to reach the Gentiles and a remnant of Israel among the Gentiles. And the church has that remnant.

Now go to chapter 11 verse 25 and I just want to show you two thoughts here...11:25, "I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery lest you should be wise in your own conceits that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles come in." Blindness to Israel, God gathering His people from the Gentiles, when they're all gathered and the fullness of the Gentiles comes, then God goes right back to Israel, verse 26, "And so, all Israel will be saved." Now God has temporarily set aside Israel to gather Gentiles. And here as we go back to John 12 we see a perfect illustration of that as the little preview of a band of certain Greeks illustrate to us the coming of

Gentile salvation. Now that's not to say a remnant of Gentiles weren't saved in the Old Testament anymore than it is to say a remnant of Israel isn't saved in the New Testament era. Both are true.

All right, now all along, incidentally, all through the book of John we've seen Gentiles being saved, haven't we? Little previews. The Samaritan woman, right? And the Samaritans from the village of Sychar, certainly. All the way along we've seen this take place. We've seen the salvation of Gentiles. Then the statement of Jesus in John 10 where He said, "Other sheep have I that are not of this fold." Then in chapter 11 verse 52 where it says, "And not for that nation only but that He should gather together in one the children of God scattered abroad," not just Israel but Gentiles.

So here comes a little band of these Gentiles. And evidently they're proselytes to Judaism. They haven't been satisfied by their own religion and so they've converted to Judaism and they're coming to the Passover to worship with the rest of the Jews. They're Gentiles but they're proselytes, they're converts to Judaism. And this was a very common thing. In fact it was so common that back in 1 Kings chapter 8 when Solomon was laying out the ground work and the ground rules for the temple, he had ordained a certain area for the Gentiles and it was called "The Court of the Gentiles," for all the Gentile proselytes. Now they could only go as far as into that court but it was a spacious court where all the Gentile proselytes could gather who came to worship God. So this is nothing new to see proselytes that are Gentiles. In fact, that was the whole point of Israel's existence, to reach the world and to gain those who would come and believe in the God of Israel.

So here comes this little group of proselytes to worship at the feast. And, of course, they get trapped in all the emotion and all the furor about Jesus and they want to know what's going on. They're not as knowledgeable in terms of messianic prophecy, undoubtedly, and they don't exactly know how to interpret all this, so in verse 21 they go to Philip and they ask for an interview with Jesus. And this is a very interesting thing because we really don't know why they went to Philip. There's all kinds of possibilities. It may be that Jesus was in the Court of the Women and they couldn't go in there, and Philip was lingering around in the Court of the Gentiles and perhaps they ran into Philip there. It's also true that Philip and Andrew both are Greek names and it may be that Philip and Andrew both spoke Greek very well and so consequently maybe they stayed in the Court of the Gentiles moving around ministering to the Greeks because they spoke their language so well and thus these Greeks contacted them there. It may be that they met by accident. It may also be that they came from the same area. Philip from Bethsaida of Galilee would be very near the area of Decapolis and in the area of Decapolis, the several cities that were there, were populated by Greeks, so it may have been that Philip knew some of these Greeks prior, that they had acquainted themselves prior to the time of the Passover and were renewing acquaintances here. We don't really know what the reason is, but we do know that Philip and Andrew are both Greek names. And it's interesting that the Greeks sought them out or met them for some reason. Whatever the reason is they said we want to see Jesus.

And it's an honest search, legitimate, honest. Because Jesus replies to it shows the honesty of it. Now Philip didn't take them to Jesus, he went to Andrew. You say, "Well why did he do that?" Well he was probably a little bit confused. You say, "What would he be confused about?" Well, number one, he knew the Lord was busy, right? The Lord was very busy because He had moved to the temple by this time and He was occupied, he didn't want to disturb the Lord. Plus, get on to this one, plus he remembered several things that Jesus said recorded, number one, in the tenth chapter of Matthew, don't look it up, I'll read it to you, verse 5, "These twelve Jesus sent forth and commanded them saying, 'Go not into the way of the Gentiles and into any city of the Samaritans enter not, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and as you go, preach and say the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.'"

In other words, when He sent the Twelve out He said, "Don't go to the Gentiles, the Kingdom is at hand. Go to the lost sheep of Israel." Well, in Philip's mind he sees all the people hailing Jesus as King and he thinks, "Hey, this must be the Kingdom, this must be it, we're getting ready for it and we're not supposed to go to the Gentiles, we're supposed to go to the lost sheep of Israel." We don't know what was going on in his mind, but likely he remembered those thoughts. Then also he must have remembered what Jesus said as recorded in the fifteenth chapter of Matthew, verse 24, "But He answered her not a word and His disciples came and besought Him saying, 'Send her away.'" This is the particular Syrophoenician woman. And then in verse 24 He answered and said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." So Philip must have been kind of been wondering just exactly what to do here in view of the...of all this hailing Him as King and the fact that the Kingdom was coming and the lost sheep of Israel which Jesus had kind of ingrained in their minds, but at the same time must have been confused, too, because he had heard Jesus say He had sheep of another fold, he had known what had happened in the conversion of the Samaritan woman and all those people in Samaria. He knew all of these things so it was a dilemma in his mind. And so he went to Andrew and if you know anything about Andrew, according to tradition, Andrew did one thing with everybody, took them to Jesus. That's what Andrew always did. And so that's what he does here. Together they brought them to Jesus.

Now evidently they decided that Jesus could decide for Himself which was the right decision. It doesn't say they came to Jesus, it says they came and told Jesus. It doesn't say anything about where the Greeks were. I believe that they were with them. You say, "Why do you believe that?" Because I've never seen Jesus yet turn down an honest seeker. And I believe right here He was turning toward the Gentiles in the transition. And I believe what He says in verse 23 and following, He says in the audience, not only of Jews and disciples, but of these certain Greeks. You say, "Well why doesn't John include them there?" Because John does that all the time. This is not the story of certain Greeks, it's a story of Jesus, right? He did the same thing with Nicodemus. Nicodemus

comes to Jesus and Jesus answers all the questions, gives him the whole plan of salvation and then you never hear what Nicodemus did. It doesn't even talk about him anymore because Nicodemus is incidental in John's mind to what he's trying to say. Nicodemus is not incidental to God, he's just incidental to John's purpose and so are these Greeks. They merely form the opportunity for Jesus to say what He says and John's concern in what he says at this point, not particularly what happened to these Greeks. But most commentators would agree that Jesus always received the honest seeker and at this point the move is away from Israel to the Gentiles. And so these Greeks are an illustration. And I believe they came with Philip and Andrew to speak with Jesus. And Jesus' reply to them comes in verse 23 to 26.

Now we know He wasn't just...for example, let me give you a little thing that will help you understand this. The end of verse 22, Andrew and Philip tell Jesus. Then in verse 23 Jesus answered and said, and He gives a speech. Now it sounds as though maybe He's just telling Philip and Andrew, right? But that's not so because you get over to verse 29 and it says over there there's a whole crowd of people there. So I believe that that crowd of people was not only the disciples but those Greeks and evidently some Jews who were hanging around, too.

All right, so we see the crowd fickle, the council frustrated, the certain Greeks following. Now Jesus' reply we see the cross, number four, foretold. And here you're going to see one of the most fantastic things, this is really something. Jesus always replies to the honest seeker, always, always, always. If any man wills to do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, right? John 7:17. "If you seek Me with all your heart, you shall surely find Me."

Now there's no passage, I think, in the New Testament that would shock the audience more than this one. Verse 23 to 26, I'm...this must have absolutely left them dumbfounded. You say why? Just watch this, watch this, verse 23, "Jesus answered them saying, 'The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified.'" Boy, does that sound good. They're all saying, "Hail King, Son of David, Hosanna," and He says, "The hour is come." What are they going to think? "Wow, He's going to do it now! Wipe out Rome, this is the hour." Naturally they're going to think that. The hour is come that the Son of Man shall be glorified...and when they think of glorified they think of Oh...here it is. Boy, I can just see them...Oh, you know, see. This is the day they've been waiting for.

Now there's more to this than just the surface, and I want you to hang on to this one. Daniel chapter 7, I'm going to read you two verses, just write them down. Daniel 7:13 and 14 and look at them at a later time. Back in Daniel, and every Jew was aware of this prophecy, Daniel, listen to this, 7:13, hang on, "I saw in the night visions and behold...here it comes...one like the Son of Man came in the clouds of heaven and He came to the Ancient of Days," that's God, "and they brought Him near before Him." The angels escort the Son of Man, see. "And there was given Him dominion, glory, a Kingdom that all people, nations, languages should serve Him, a dominion is an everlasting dominion. The Kingdom that shall not be destroyed."

Now, did you get that prophecy? Daniel said there's coming one called the Son of...what?...Man. And He's going to have an everlasting dominion and all the world is going to bow before Him. So when Jesus stands up here and says, "I am the Son of Man," what are they going to think? "The hour is come, the Son of Man is to be glorified." And they go...zoom...right back to Daniel 7, oh, it's here, see. They're going to remember that prophecy. The Son of Man is going to come to set up a world kingdom, and immediately they'll think of Daniel 7, it's here. Boy, and you can imagine the joy and the pounding of hearts. He's here, it's going to happen, we're going to have the kingdom and we're going to get to reign and rule in the kingdom. That was their dream, the golden age. And Jesus said He was the Son of Man, that's the name of their champion, they were waiting for Him. Their hearts must have stopped, this was it.

But then in the next verse, I imagine they had to pick them all up off the ground. But Jesus didn't mean the kind of glorified they thought He meant. The first sentence excited their hearts and every succeeding sentence staggered them. He spoke of death. He turned their dreams of conquest into visions of a cross. Didn't make sense. He says in verse 24, "Verily, verily," and they're probably just waiting...what's He going to say? "I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall in the ground and die, it abideth alone. If it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

Wait a minute, He's talking about dying. What's going on? You see, Jesus was a spiritual Messiah. He had to die. He...a political revolution wouldn't have done anybody any good. Politics keeps nobody out of hell. He had to bring the cross. He couldn't save the world by His perfect life. He had to do it by death. So in verse 24 He staggers them with a simple illustration of death, it's like a grain that goes into the ground and dies and when it dies life comes out of it. Now I know absolutely nothing about agriculture but I do know a little bit in terms of interpreting this passage because it is simple. Every basic seed or grain of wheat has a covering on the outside. As long as that covering is on the outside, that grain cannot reproduce. It cannot grow. When that grain is put in the ground, the rot and decay sets into that outer part and as it decays and decomposes, the life that is in the inside springs out and then that seed begins to grow and produce fruit. And that's exactly what Jesus says. As long as My body is alive, the life that is in Me cannot escape. It is when I go into the grave, the death of My body releases the power of life within My person. That's exactly what He's saying. I have to die to make people alive. Jesus had to die, didn't He? He had to bear our sin, die our death to provide life. He's like the seed that's up in the granary up there somewhere, it doesn't do any good for anything. It can't grow until it dies in the ground and that's the way it was with Jesus. He had to die. If Jesus doesn't die, then He remains alone. He doesn't produce life for anybody else because His life-giving power is like a seed, it's only good if it dies. And that's why the Bible says, are you ready for this?, He can only put away sin by the sacrifice of...what?...of Himself. That's the only way. That's the only way. He has to die.

Well, you can imagine their reaction. They were waiting for a King and He was talking about dying. Isn't it a marvelous thing that He was willing to die? We're the...we're the harvest, did you know that? We who love Jesus Christ, we're the harvest of His death, we're the fruit that sprang out of that seed that died. Blessed harvest...blessed harvest. And the history of Christianity is just this, is one long harvest yielded by the spiritual seed that was sown on Calvary's cross and that's the only way that Jesus could give life.

Now you know what's going to happen when He says this? I'm going to die? Automatically the people are going to say, "Oh, yike, you know, that's it. I'm not...what is this guy? I'm not following Him around. I mean, I want to get into the Kingdom, man, I want glory and honor and dominion and I want to reign and rule. I'm ready for the Kingdom. I'm tired of this oppression stuff. What is this death stuff?" You know, the aspirations of the people would naturally be for glory and honor and all the things that a kingdom would bring and boy, when you start talking about dying, that just turns them off. So Jesus speaks directly to those people and He makes a principle application in verse 25. He says, "Not only am I going to die, but catch this, people, he that loves his life is going to lose it." If all you seek is your exaltation, my friend, you're going to get debased. "And he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

Did you see what He's saying? Naturally the people are going to be turned off on the whole idea. And so He points right at them and says, "Get this principle, people, if you're not willing to follow Me in My death and die to yourself, you're going to lose everything. But if you think you're going to hang on for dominion and glory and self-honor and self-exaltation, you're going to lose it all." That's the principle. Simple principle. "I'm going to die. Maybe you don't want to be a part of somebody who is going to die, maybe you don't want to pick up My cause, then mark it well...if all you want out of this life is self-exaltation and glory, that's exactly what you won't get. But if you seek to humble yourself and follow Me, you'll save your life." That's a tremendous principle and that's what Jesus says to every man.

After all the shouting was done on this day, the only ones left were the ones who were willing to lose their lives for Jesus. That's a principle that's all through Scripture. Matthew chapter 10, powerful, powerful statement of Jesus. Verse 37, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." Did you get that? "He that love son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. He that taketh not his cross and followeth after Me is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it. He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."

If all you want is glory and honor and a kingdom and all the magnificence of the golden age, my friend, you'll lose everything. But if you're willing to take up your cross and follow Jesus Christ and

suffer for Him and with Him, then you'll be exalted and glorified.

In the fifteenth chapter of the same book, Matthew, verse 24 says, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me, for whosoever will save His life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for My sake shall find it." In Mark chapter 8 verse 34, "And when He had called the people unto Him with His disciples, He said unto them, 'Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.'" You go over to Luke and you see the same thing again, it's all over the place in the gospels, chapter 9 of Luke verse 23 says, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me."

You say, "What's the matter? Does God have a problem getting His truth across? Does God stutter?" No, but it's absolutely important to understand that no man honestly becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ if he's not willing to give up everything he is into the care of Jesus Christ. In the seventeenth chapter in that same book of Luke, other words of Jesus go like this, "Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it." You abandon your life to Jesus Christ and you'll save it.

There's the principle. And that leads to verse 26. The disciple who is willing to follow the route that Jesus took, who doesn't care about the self-exaltation, doesn't care about all the glory and the honor, that's willing to take the cause of Christ because he believes in it and because he loves Jesus, not because he wants his own glory, that disciple...watch him, verse 26, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me." You go where Jesus goes, friend. When you receive Jesus Christ you receive Him on that basis alone that wherever He takes you, that's where you go. Wherever He wants you to be, that's what you be. "If any man serve Me let him follow Me and where I am, there shall also My servant be." The true servant follows Jesus wherever He goes, he's always right where Jesus is. If it's death, that's what it is. If it's persecution, that's what it is. Whatever it is, that's where the true servant goes.

So you see what He's doing. He's saying He's going to die and then He separates the crowd, the true disciples. And the rest of them just kind of fade away and pretty soon they're yelling, "Crucify Him," it's all over.

You say, "Well yeah, if you follow Jesus Christ what do you get out of it?" Hang on to your hat and look at the end of verse 26. This is so great. "If any man serve Me," are you ready for this? "Him will My Father...what?...honor." Is that a promise beyond belief? I mean, to think of the honors of men...you know, men can have a lot of honors and in your day and my day, we've all had our honors...little awards and little things we've gotten. How would you like to be honored by God? Boy, what a thought. How God could honor this humble, depraved dust I don't know, but that must be the

measure of His grace, right? Just think, if you follow Jesus Christ and serve Him, you'll be honored by God. Anybody who honors the Son, the Father honors. What a promise, the very honor of God.

So, Jesus has shattered their ideas. He's offered a strange, shocking plan...death. And then He says if you're going to be a part of it, you've got to forget all your aspirations, your exaltation, your self-glory and you've got to be broken, selfless, self-sacrificing, humble individuals willing to die for Me. And that's certainly not quite what the Jews had in mind for their glorious kingdom, is it? And the transition is complete. From Israel to the Gentiles, from the King to the crucified, that's it.

And I say to you as we close, every man, you included, must count the cost to see if he wants to follow Jesus Christ to be glorified and honored by the Father, or whether he wants to spend His lifetime honoring Himself and exalting himself. As for me, I choose to be honored by God, to follow the Son and serve Him.

Father, we thank You, this morning, that this promise is real, that some day those of us who love and serve Jesus Christ will have the honor of the God if the universe in a tangible way, even as we experience His love and honor in a sense right now. But some day to dwell with Him in His dwelling place, to have all the blessings of eternity at our feet, thank You for such honor and we realize that we do not deserve it.

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