

Example of Jesus Living under Pressure

Jesus the Disciples, and the Gentile Visitors (John 12:20-36)

July 19, 2009

I. Review

In John 12, we see Jesus as He relates to 4 different groups of people and the lessons that we can learn as we study this section. So far we have studied the first two groups. In both of these groups we see radical worship given to Jesus:

1. Jesus and His Friends (John 12:1-11)

Mary gives extravagant worship as she anoints the body of Jesus for His burial.

2. Jesus and the Passover Pilgrims (John 12:12-19)

This is the story of Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Radical worship is given to Him as they proclaim, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel." They lay palm branches down before Him as He rides into Jerusalem on a donkey as a conquering King!

Now we will look at how Jesus responds to the third group of people.

3. Jesus and the Gentile Visitors (John 12:20-36)

II. Jesus the Disciples, and the Gentile Visitors (John 12:20-36)

A. Jesus and the disciples: John 12:20-26

Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; these then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, 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. He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. 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.

Notes:

1. The request (12:20-22): Philip and Andrew tell Jesus that some Greeks desire to see him.

2. The Greeks at the feast (12:20).

The mention of Greeks is significant. They were the wanderers of the ancient world and the seekers of truth. These Greeks were probably God-fearers who attended Jewish synagogues and feasts. Their coming was symbolic of the coming of Gentiles to worship God through Christ (John 10:16).

3. These Greeks may have been Greek proselytes; if so they would have been able to join the Jews in the temple worship. But it is not certain that they were so committed. At least they were religious seekers since they had come to worship. Many Gentiles were attracted to Judaism's ideas because of its higher moral emphasis compared with paganism. These men had probably come from the Decapolis and may even have known Philip who came from nearby Bethsaida. It may be assumed that their quest to see Jesus was prompted by a desire to learn from him rather than mere curiosity. Maybe John sees them as examples of the 'world' going after Jesus.

4. Why did the Greeks approach Philip about seeing Jesus? (21-22)

Perhaps because Philip had a Greek name; or he may have had some contact with Greeks from the Decapolis area. Philip went to . . . Andrew, and Andrew and Philip . . . told Jesus. Since crowds of people probably wanted to speak with Jesus, the disciples may have tried to do some screening (Luke 18:15-16).

5. The response (12:23-24): The Savior speaks of his impending death.

Jesus had been moving toward His decisive hour (John 2:4; 4:21, 23; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20).

6. The coming of the Greeks confirmed that the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified (cf. 12:23; 13:1; 17:1).

7. For most people death is their humiliation. But for Jesus death was His means of entry into glory. His willingness to die for others' sins in obedience to the Father (Isa. 53:10, 12) brought Him renown (glory; John 12:16; 17:1, 5).

8. I tell you the truth introduces a solemn affirmation. The analogy of a kernel of wheat "dying" in the ground and producing many seeds teaches that death is necessary for a harvest.

9. It is difficult to imagine how they would have understood the opening words of Jesus. They would hardly have been so well informed as John's readers about the significance of the hour (23). The Greeks may have thought in terms of the triumphal entry.

10. The wheat analogy (12:25-26):

It illustrates a general paradoxical principle: death is the way to life. In Jesus' case, His death led to glory and life not only for Himself but also for others.

In the case of a disciple of Jesus, the principle is similar. A disciple must hate his life in this world. To "hate his life" means to be so committed to Christ that he has no self-centeredness, no concern for himself. On the other hand the man who loves his life will lose it. Anything in life can become an idol including goals, interests, and loves (Luke 12:16-21; 18:18-30).

A believer should undergo a spiritual death to self (Rom. 6:1-14; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Gal. 6:14).

Being a servant of Jesus requires following Him. Many of Jesus' original servants did follow Him-in death. According to tradition, the early disciples died as martyrs. Jesus' word was thus a prophecy and also a promise. His true disciples (those who serve Him) follow Him in humiliation and later in honor or glory (Rom. 8:17, 36-39; 2 Tim. 2:11-13).

Summary: Jesus is not deceived.

He tells His disciples (vv. 20-28a) and then the crowds that He is about to be killed (vv. 28b-36).

From the context it can be seen that for Jesus his 'hour' was his approaching passion. This is clear from the glorification theme and from the grain of wheat illustration. The formula I tell you the truth (24) points out the importance of the announcement. The principle in nature that death is essential for further life was applied by Jesus to himself by inference. Wheat reproduces its own kind, and Jesus regarded his passion in the same light. His death would produce life for many. The contrast between loving and hating (25) brings out in sharp relief the choice and consequence involved in personal reaction to Jesus. Loving and hating are here relative terms, standing in opposition to each other.

Application:

1. There is a time to ignore personal requests that people ask of us. Having good personal boundaries means that I can say no, feeling no guilt, and not give a reason for saying no.

2. Many times when we ask God questions it appears that:

- He doesn't hear us or is ignoring us.
- That His answer is puzzling and confusing; because it doesn't seem to relate to our questions.

3. To avoid being a middleman in a relationship conflict, find a brother (another person) to help us solve the problem.

4. Death (to self) is the only way we can be fruitful.

5. Self-preservation leads to frustration and being unfruitful in life.

6. Self-denial leads to fruitfulness in this life and in the life to come
7. The Christian life can only be lived through following the leadership and example of Jesus.
8. The benefits of serving and following Jesus are:
 - fruitfulness
 - eternal life
 - the presence of God with us at all times
 - receiving honor from the Father

B. Jesus foretells His death and the people hear the voice of God the Father.

John 12:27-36 "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I 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 of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him." Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. 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 men to Myself." But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can 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; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. "While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light."

Notes:

1. Jesus foretells His death

a. John 12:27-28a "Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ' Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. "Father, glorify Your name."

b. John 12:31-35a "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 men to Myself." But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. The crowd then answered Him, "We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can 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.

c. The request (12:27-28a):
Jesus asks the Father to "bring glory to your name!"

d. For this reason (12:27). Jesus was determined to fulfill the purpose for which He had been born. Let's not ask for release from the suffering which all too often gives our life unique meaning.

- The emphasis on (the total mission of Jesus, or a prayer that the Father's name would be glorified) is wholly in line with John's use of the glorification theme to describe the triumphant outcome of the mission of Jesus on the cross. So crucial is this that it is underlined by a heavenly voice. The content of the divine message is both past and present-glorification is set out as the essence of the divine program for Jesus (28).
- It is at this point that John records Jesus' awareness of the arrival of the hour to which his gospel has been leading. There is a clear connection between the soul-trouble of Jesus here (27) and the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane as recorded in the synoptic gospels (Mt. 26:38; Mk. 14:34).

- In answer to the question What shall I say? two possibilities are given—a prayer to be saved from the hour, which is natural but unthinkable in the light of the total mission of Jesus, or a prayer that the Father's name would be glorified.

e. The emotions of Jesus (12:27-28a):

- Jesus instructed His disciples on the cost of commitment to the Father's will by disclosing His emotions. (12:27 "Now My soul has become troubled")
- He was in turmoil (tetaraktai, "stirred, agitated"; (11:33; 14:1) because of the prospect of being made sin (2 Cor. 5:21) in His death.
- In view of His turmoil, should He shrink back and ask for deliverance from this hour? Certainly not, for His Incarnation was for the very purpose of bringing Him to this hour (cf. John 12:23; 13:1; 17:1).
- Jesus willingly expressed His submission to the will of the Father in the words, Father, glorify Your name! So also believers in difficulty should stand and embrace His will—desiring that His name be glorified—in spite of conflicting emotions.

f. "When I am lifted up" (12:30-33).

- The phrase "lifted up" speaks first of the Cross, but also of the Resurrection. It is the Resurrection which infuses the Cross with meaning, even as Christ's glorification puts His suffering in perspective.
- "Lifted up from the earth;" refer not to His ascension but to His crucifixion (3:14; 8:28). He knew how He would die—by being "lifted up" on a cross. Jews, however, normally stoned those they considered worthy of death (Acts 7:58-60).
- Jesus said that at the cross He would draw all men to Himself (12:32). Jesus does not suggest all will be saved, but that all humanity is invited to look to the Cross and live. Perhaps this is His answer to the Greeks who approached Philip. The Cross was His message to them, as it is to all.
- He did not mean everybody will be saved for He made it clear that some will be lost (John 5:28-29). If the drawing by the Son is the same as that of the Father (6:44), it means He will draw indiscriminately. Those saved will include not only Jews, but also those from every tribe, language, people, and nation (Rev. 5:9; cf. John 10:16; 11:52).

2. The people hear the voice of God the Father:

John 12:28-30 "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." So the crowd of people who stood by and heard it were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, "An angel has spoken to Him." Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.

Notes:

a. The response (12:28b-29):

- The Father reassures the Son with a loud voice from heaven that is heard by the crowd that this indeed will be done.
- 12:28b-29. The Father then spoke from heaven in a thunderous voice, confirming His working in Jesus both in the past and in the future. The voice was audible but not all understood it (cf. v 30; Acts 9:7; 22:9).

- The emphasis on the mission of Jesus (the cross) was so crucial that it is underlined by a heavenly voice. The content of the divine message is both past and present-glorification is set out as the essence of the divine program for Jesus (28).
- b. There were three reactions to the heavenly voice.
- Some merely heard a noise like thunder (29). These were in no position to receive any kind of revelation.
 - Others distinguished some kind of supernatural communication but got no higher than an angelic voice.
 - It was Jesus alone who recognized that the voice was for the sake of others. But because they had not heard the message, Jesus explained for their benefit the meaning of it (31-32).

Application:

1. Doing the will of God in times can be troublesome. Some believers embraced the error that God's will should always make you feel good or happy. Other believers embraced the error that God's will is always sorrowful.
2. We need to hear the Father's voice of affirmation in our life.
3. Failure to know God's voice is unacceptable to the believer.
4. Jesus has defeated the powers of darkness. However, as believers we appropriate the finished work of Christ through faith.
5. Saving faith results in a changed life (from darkness to light).
6. Believers must take seriously our position of being sons of Light; failure to do so will lead to being passive towards unbelievers.

C. Jesus and the Gentile Visitors (John 12:20-36)

Notes:

1. Jesus tells them that the world and Satan will soon be judged (12:30-31).
 - Jesus' death on the cross was a judgment on the world. Evil was atoned for.
 - The world's goals, standards, and religions were shown to be folly.
 - The Cross was also the means of Satan's defeat (Rev. 12:10).
 - The now in v 31 points more precisely to the commencement of the 'hour'. It is immediately identified as a time for judgment. It would seem that the judgment in mind was a general condemnation of the present world order through the cross.
 - The prince of this world (Satan; John 14:30; 16:11), Jesus said, will be driven out.
 - His power over people by sin and death was defeated and they can now be delivered out of his domain of spiritual darkness and slavery to sin (Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 2:14-15).
2. He will save men by way of the cross (12:32-34).
 - The crowd was puzzled. If the Messiah is the Son of Man, then He should be here forever, they reasoned.

- For those who come to faith through the cross, judgment has already taken place at the cross through which they will gain deliverance.
- The double result is seen clearly in the driving out of the prince of this world and in the magnetic power of Jesus to draw people to himself. The instrument by which Satan designed the defeat of Jesus became the means for the overthrow of his own power.
- Note that the word But (32) tends to distinguish the uplifting from the driving out, although the two results follow from the same action. We need to ask in what sense the 'drawing' is here intended? The same word occurs in 6:44 of the drawing by the Father of people to Christ. But here it is the Christ to be crucified who acts as a magnet. The statement leaves open the result of the drawing. Some implication of drawing to judgment may be in mind but the predominant feature is a drawing to Christ himself in the more intimate sense of faith.
- Daniel 7:13-14 spoke of the Son of Man's everlasting dominion. Perhaps the people wondered if He was making a distinction between the Messiah (Christ) and the Son of Man. Did He use the term "Son of Man" differently than its sense in Daniel 7:13? They seemed to understand that Jesus was predicting His death, but they could not see how that was possible, if He was the Messiah.

3. They need to accept him before it is too late (12:35-36).

- Their time of opportunity was limited. He is the Light for the world (1:4, 9; 8:12; 12:46), but the day of His public ministry was almost over (v. 23).
- The darkness of night was coming in which evil powers would hold sway over people. The man who walks in the dark means an unbeliever who stumbles through life without knowing what life is all about and where it is headed (3:19; 8:12; 1 John 1:6).
- Their privilege was to trust in the Light (i.e., in Jesus) and become sons of Light (i.e., His disciples; Rom. 13:12; Eph. 5:8, 14; Col. 1:13-14; 1 Thes. 5:5; 1 John 1:7; 2:10).

Summary:

- The reaction of the crowd (34) showed that what they understood by the uplifting was incompatible with the eternal character of the Messiah. The question Who is this 'Son of Man'? exercised the minds not only of the hearers in Jesus' day, but of the readers in John's day and has been a matter of debate ever since.
- Jesus in answer used the same imagery as was used of him in the prologue, i.e. that he was the light (35, 36). Once again, we have the characteristic contrast between light and darkness. The darkness represents the world without God. Walking in the light means following the light.
- Jesus spoke of his followers becoming sons of light, but this comes only through trust. Such trust will be necessary after the cross as well as before it. That Jesus left and hid himself from them (36) suggests that he was light not so much in his presence as in his teaching.

Reference Sources: (The following sources were used in some of my notes; taken from the Libronix Digital Library System)

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