

Into Thy Word Ministries Bible Study www.intothyword.org

General Idea: While Jesus was attending the Passover festivities, some Greeks came along who knew Philip and asked to meet Him. Then, Jesus made an astonishing statement: *The time has come for the Son of Man to enter His Glory. Unless the wheat seed dies, it can't produce a plant to give food. Death is not the end; it is the transformation to a new beginning, a plentiful harvest just as the wheat seed will produce more wheat.* Then, He said: *he who loves his life will lose it and he who hates what the world offers can take what the Kingdom offers and produce as the wheat seed does. If you want to be my disciple, you must deny yourself and follow me and the Father will honor you.* As Jesus made these statements and prayed, He was deeply troubled for the agony to come and demonstrated extreme submission to the Father's will for our benefit. One of three recorded heavenly proclamations of God the Father to Jesus the Son is audibly heard, *I have already brought it glory and I will do it again!* The crowds were astonished. Jesus announced the time for judgment had come as *I will be lifted up on the cross.* Yet, the crowd did not understand that Jesus had to die to save, because they did not expect this to happen. Jesus said, *my light will shine; so walk in it while you can.* The people struggled with unbelief, just as Isaiah predicted concerning this very event. The fear was that if they did believe, they would face great consequences from the Pharisees. Jesus interjected, *if you trust Me, you are trusting God! And you must trust me if you want to move out of darkness and despair; My instructions lead to eternal life.*

Contexts and Background

This passage follows the grand showcase of one of Jesus' great moments of victory, His "Triumphal Entry." The events in this chapter and following to the end of the Gospel of John may have happened on a Sunday, with the Resurrection happening on the following Sunday. The rest of the events in the Gospel of John would take place within this week. Traditionally, Monday is when Jesus cleansed the Temple; Tuesday, He gave the Olivet Discourse; Wednesday, He rested; Thursday was the Last Supper, the betrayal, and the Garden of Gethsemane experience; and on Friday came the Passion of the Scourge, the trials, and the Crucifixion. This passage is also a transition from Jesus' mission to the Jews to the mission that included all people groups. It would culminate at the resurrection, but the Greeks here paved the way to a paradigm shift; the Jew's role as beacons of God's Light to the world transitioned to those in Christ being the beacons, and from the world coming to Jerusalem to the Christians going to the world (Gen. 12:1-3).

Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings

- *Greeks.* These were Jews who did or had lived in Greece; additionally, it could have pointed to an ethnic mix of Greek and Jew who also worshiped at the Temple, honoring their heritage and faith. There is also the possibility that these were God-fearing Gentiles. Here is a contrast between those perceived to deserve the receipt of God's blessings and those who did not, a snub to the Pharisees; the Gentiles responded to Jesus and the religious leaders did not (John 7:35; Acts 6:1; 8:27; 13:26).
- *Philip.* The only Disciple with a Greek name and who had a lot of contacts to Greece for trade. Jesus called him one day after He called Peter and Andrew and he led Nathanael to Jesus. Later, we will see him make a bold request to Jesus, "*Show us the Father*" (John 14:8-9). After the Resurrection, he ministered in Phrygia, and then was scourged, thrown into prison, and crucified (John 1:43-50).
- *Hour has come.* Meaning that the climax of Jesus' main mission of redemption by His sacrifice was soon to come. This is about Jesus' timing, and that mere persons cannot dictate to God their will or expect Him to do as they wish. This is a contrast to the reference earlier in the book of John where Jesus' time had not yet come (Isa. 52:12; John 2:4; 7:6; 13:1; 17:1).
- *Son of Man.* A messianic title for Christ and Jesus' favorite and most used term for Himself. It means "The Christ is Lord and King" —of the eternal realm and will judge the world. This is also a "Semitic" form as an indication for or the identification with humanity, an illustration of Christ's love for humanity and the reason He sacrificed Himself for us (Dan. 7:13-14; Mark 9:9, 12, 31; 10:33-34; 14:21, 41; Matt.

24:30-26:64; John 1:51; Heb. 2:5-11; Rev. 1:13; 14:14).

- *Kernel of wheat.* An illustration from farming, probably a shorten parable that Jesus taught earlier; when a seed is planted, it dies, as in it transforms its function from seed through growth into a plant that bears many, many times more seeds. Jesus' death gives new life to countless people. In context, this is an image of the Suffering Servant named in Isaiah 53, who is the Christ.
- *Loves his life... lose it.* A contrast between the self absorbed and prideful person who chases after what is temporary and fleeting (such as pleasures), and the one who seeks after God and His Truth that is eternal. The question is: *are we more interested in Christ or in ourselves?* Also, it is a stern warning that worldly affairs will destroy us; thus, we must make the effort to focus and reflect on Christ (Matt. 16:24-25; Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-24; 17:33).
- *Heart is troubled.* Meaning stirred up and upset—here, by the anticipation of the magnitude of suffering, both physical and metaphysical that Jesus faced, and bearing the undeserved wrath of God the Father for our sins. So, let us erase those fears for which we have no need (Psalm 6:3; 42:11; John 14:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:21)!
- *Glorify your name.* This is about the Lordship, Supremacy, Sovereign Rulership, and the Holiness of God as a reference to Who He is, requiring our utmost and highest respect and obeying our call to give Him praise for His glory. "To God alone be the glory" was a critical and important slogan for the Reformation that must be held to by any serious believer; the one purpose in life is to give God glory (1 Kings 8:1-11; Matt. 17:1-8; John 17:5; Phil. 2:8-9)
- *I have glorified it.* God the Father's seal of approval to the Son. This is one of three instances of God audibly speaking—at Jesus' Baptism, His transfiguration, and here (Matt. 3:17; 17:5).
- *Thundered...angel had spoken.* Different people may have heard the voice differently as interpreted by their worldview and spiritual condition. *Thundered* brought attention and exclamation as an Angel delivering an stern imperative message, while others heard it as one of gentle instruction; it was also a cultural way to say that God had brought a message (Acts 9:7; 22:9).
- *Judgment.* As Jesus walked the earth in His Humanity, His role was not to bring judgment, but rather salvation. However, after His Resurrection and at the second coming, Judgment will be at hand; if one would not/did not receive Him, then one condemned one's self, and Jesus will judge him (John 3:16-21; 5:22; 12:47-48).
- *Prince / ruler of this world.* A name for Satan who is the father of lies and the greatest liar of all! He is also called the "deceiver" and the "manipulator." This name seems to refer to his influence over the governments and political arenas of this world, that he is the one who is the ruler and he guards his position (Daniel 10:12-11:1; John 12:31; 14:30 16:11; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19).
- *Lifted up* refers to what is just ahead for Jesus—being lifted up on the cross for the payment of our redemption by His crucifixion. It comes from the image of the snake that was lifted by Moses; Christ will also be the payment for our redemption through His atonement. This is the main point of God's plan after the fall of humanity. All of the Old Testament prophecy leads up to this—God's eternal plan to redeem and save us, which Jesus accomplishes (Num. 21:1-8; Isa. 52:12-14; 53:1; John 3:14; 8:12-30; Col. 2:14-15; Heb. 2:14-15).
- *Draw all men to myself.* Meaning salvation will be offered to "all kinds of people." This does not mean that Christ gives universal salvation or that we do not have to receive Christ to be saved, nor does it mean His death will save all people. It means that Christ's sacrifice is powerful enough to save all, but it is each person's responsibility to receive this work as stated later in this passage. All will not believe, but one day all will submit. This makes a major paradigm shift of the Gospel Message; see context notes (Rom. 8:19-22; 14:11; Phil 2:9-11; Col. 1:19-23).
- *Remain forever.* The objection was somewhat correct; the Messiah was to be eternal, but they did not understand or know the other prophecies that spoke of His death or those about Jesus' redemptive

and suffering roles—that He had to physically die to pay our sin debt, and then regain His eternal role (2 Sam. 7:13-16; Psalm 61: 6-7; 89: 3-4, 35-37; Isa. 9:6-7; Dan. 7:13-14)

- *Light.* Meaning what is “good,” never ending, and true versus what is not true or what comes against it, such as the darkness of sin. In context, this refers to the good news of Christ, the Gospel, and the true truth that God so loved the world; He came to save those who do not deserve or merit it (Matt. 11:11; John 3:16; 4:24; 6:32; 8:12; 9:5; 9:4-5; 10:7-14; 11:25; 14:6; Acts 19:1-3; Rom. 1:19-20; 2:12-16).
- *Trust in the light.* Meaning those who pledge to trust and commit completely to Jesus, surrendering to the Lordship of Christ. This is not just an emotional or academic undertaking. It implies that when we follow Jesus, we reflect His light; and thus, we become His ambassadors—being the light “to” the world (Matt. 5:14; 8:18-22; 10:38-39; 2 Cor. 5:20; Gal. 2:20-21; Phil. 2:15; 3:1-14; Col. 1:18).
- *Hid himself.* An example of the coming Judgment to those who refuse His offer of clemency and grace (John 1:18).
- *Word of Isaiah.* Isaiah was one of the main Prophets who saw the vision from God and who then spoke the most about the details of the coming Messiah and His role. Because of Isaiah’s popularity and position, John and the Gospels used these accounts as proof for Jesus’ fulfillment of the prophecies concerning His being the Messiah (Isa. 6:1-10; 53:1; Mark 4:12; John 6:44; Rom. 9:17-18).
- *Believed in him.* Even with unexplained miracles and teaching that was beyond anything they had ever heard, many people placed their faith in pride and fear of conviction and not in the tangible Lord. The lesson here is *ignorance is not an excuse; we all are culpable* (Rom. 1; Eph. 1:11).
- *Not confess their faith.* Their fear was being tossed out of the Synagogue, which would leave a person with no social status or connections with friends, family, or business contacts. Yet, in Christ they would have had so much more! When we realize the truth, we must then act on it, not flee because of fear, conviction, or what others may think.
- *Praise / glory from men.* This means honor, the goal of high society and those who seek power and control. But, in context, it is only God who will receive honor; God’s reputation is at hand and is secure, something God said to Jesus who was being submissive in His role as the Son-Redeemer.
- *Stay in darkness.* Meaning “evil” as in pride and sin that cause us to ignore or fight against God and His provision, sovereignty, and gift of grace. This contrasts the light of God’s blessings to the darkness of Satan. Sin causes us to *stumble*, like walking in a strange place without light or the ability to see, while God offers us the light and the map. Our will says *no! I will do this on my own* and thus, we fall into hurt and ruin as sin destroys (Psalm 27:2; Isa. 59:10; Jer. 13:16; 18:15; 20:11; Mal. 2:8; John 9:4; 11:9).
- *Hear my words.* Where Moses, an ambassador of God, merely reflected God’s wisdom and precepts, Jesus is God and directly brings them to us. In Greek Philosophy, wisdom was believed to be a mere idea; here, Jesus is The Wisdom (John 1:18).
- *Own accord.* Jesus as the Son is in submissive authority to God the Father who has supreme authority, yet He is equal in Divinity and unified; One God with Three Persons, the Trinity.

Devotional Thoughts and Applications

Whoever these Greeks may have been is not important to us now. However, their passion to know Jesus is. They sought Him out; they asked to meet with Him and bore witness to a most incredible event that very few in all of humanity outside the of the Old Testament Prophets ever witnessed: *the audible voice of God!* The character of these Greeks is the prime focus we bring to worship—our desire to know and praise Him. It is a desire to know Him more—not the pretentiousness of the religious leaders who scoffed or of some of the people whose pride and busyness and/or fears got in the way, but a surrendered act of reverence to know Him more. So much can disturb and distract us from worship; the attention of our fears, the thunder of our will, and the messengers of our desires clog our hearts and minds so that what

we bring to worship is the noise of our will and the conceited and congested nature of our hearts. We may be in our churches physically, but are we there in the reality of desire and devotion? We tend to think church is to give to us, when truthfully, we are to come and give to Him. We think it is about us, when it is really about Him. We think we are the audience that needs to be entertained, when in fact it is all about Christ, who is the audience of our praise. We must bring, not take; we bring our hearts and minds and seek after our Lord with sincere, audible praise—to seek more of Him and less of ourselves

The Essential Inductive Questions (for more Inductive questions see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?
10. What does God want me to share with someone?

Additional Questions:

1. Has someone ever asked you to introduce them to Jesus or asked you why you are a Christian? How did you respond? How did you feel about it?
2. What does it mean to you that death is not the end; that it is the transformation to a new beginning? How does this give you hope for tomorrow and purpose for today?
3. What does it mean to you that whoever loves his life will lose it and those who hate what the world offers gain much more?
4. What was the character of these Greeks? How was it like the prime focus we are to bring to worship?
5. What did it take to move you out of darkness and despair? How were God's instructions helpful to you?
6. Why would a person choose what is temporary and fleeting rather than God and His Truth that is eternal?
7. How would you define and evaluate your desire to know and praise Christ? How should it be?
8. Is church about your needs or about His glory? Do you think much about yourself and little about the things of God? How does this influence how your church is run and its influence to the neighborhood?
9. How would you react if you were tossed out of your family, lost your friends, your social status, or your connections/ business contacts because you were a Christian?
10. Why do some Christians tend to think church is to give to them, when in reality, we are to come and give to Him?
11. How can you and your church have a better biblical mindset and accept that it is not about us, it is about Him?
12. What can you do to make sure your will and attitude are more interested in Christ than in yourself? What are some of the things that disturb and distract you from worship? What can you do about it?