

Transitioning to the Cross

Scripture: John 12:17–26

Code: 43-63

We're very close to the cross of Christ now in our study of the gospel of John. Open your Bible to John's gospel chapter 12. As you know, we are studying John's biography of Jesus, his history of the life of our Lord. We have come to the last week of His life in Jerusalem, in the temple surroundings headed for the cross on Friday. We have already begun this twelfth chapter, and looked at the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. We saw that starting in verse 12, how Jesus came in actually on Monday. The day before He had been with His friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead at a supper at a home of a leper He had cleansed by the name of Simon.

So He arrived on the weekend. He had a wonderful time on that Sunday spending hours with those He loved, those who were followers of His, and those who had experienced His miracle power; deliverance from leprosy in the case of Simon and deliverance from death in the case of Lazarus. Then on Monday as you remember, He left Bethany, that little village two miles east of the eastern gate of Jerusalem. And He headed toward the city riding on the foal of a donkey.

There was huge crowd already gathered in Bethany. They had come to see Him on that Sunday, and there was a massive crowd of hundreds of thousands in the city of Jerusalem ready for the week events leading up to Passover. The crowds converge on Him as He comes into the city on that Monday. The year is A.D. 30. It is His final Passover. It is the time that God has designed for Him to die. He will be killed as the true Passover Lamb who takes away the sins of the world.

On Friday, He will literally be crucified and die when the other Passover lambs are being slaughtered in the temple. But He alone is the Passover Lamb that God has chosen. All of the lambs, the countless lambs that had died since sacrificial institution way back in the early chapters of the laws of Moses; all the sacrifices that have ever died through those years could not take away sin. They only pictured the one true sacrifice.

So He enters the city as God's chosen sacrifice to be offered on the Passover for the sins of all who have believed throughout all of human history. His is the only atonement that takes away sin. It is His sacrifice that allows God's mercy, compassion, loving-kindness, and grace to reach the sinner and provide eternal life. So on Monday looking back starting at verse 12 you remember we welcomed Jesus along with the crowd into the city of Jerusalem.

Now, just a little bit of background. The Jews had been waiting for their Messiah for centuries. They had been hoping for their Messiah and hope grew brighter in some ways every year. They grew more desperate every year. They had had a succession of conquerors. They had been mistreated throughout their history, this because of the pagan work of nations around them motivated by Satan. But also because they were continually under the judgment of God for their unbelief and apostasy, which had gone on for generations.

Because they had experienced the hostility of the people around them, they had grown to hate the people around them. They were narrow. They were prejudiced. You could even say they were racist. They were so pro-Israel, they had nothing but disdain for the nations around them. If they traveled out of Israel and came back, they shook the Gentile dust off their garments and their shoes so they wouldn't bring Gentile dust into their country. They couldn't eat with Gentile utensils. They couldn't enter a Gentile home. All of this had developed as a way to insulate themselves from the nations around them. You might think this is good because it preserved them, but actually it developed a kind of theology that was an aberration.

When God originally called Israel, He didn't call Israel to be the end and the goal of His purposes of salvation, but to be the means. God had always determined that He would save people from every tongue, tribe, nation in the world. Throughout all of human history, that was God's purpose. In fact, in Genesis 12, when God established His Israel because He established Abraham as the father of that nation; He said to Abraham in Genesis 12:3, "In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Through you, through those that come from your loins, through that nation that I will give you that will be as great as the sand of the sea, as the stars of heaven, through that nation the world will be reached. He repeated that in Genesis 22, repeated it in Genesis 26. God repeated it again in Genesis 28. It isn't an obscure truth.

Yet as you follow the history of Israel, instead of a witness nation to the world, which they were designed to be, to declare the one true God to the world as Deuteronomy 6 says, "When you stand up, lie down, walk in the way, and sit, declare the one true God." I am the Lord. I am One. That is to be your testimony of the true God to the pagan world.

Instead of doing that, they became isolated, isolated, more isolated, more prejudice, more narrow. And they turned to hate the very people they were to reach. You see this, for example, in the case of Jonah, the reluctant missionary, who when told to go to Nineveh and preach, ran the other way. This is a sort of symbolic reflection of how the nation felt about Gentiles coming to know their God. They hated the idea of that.

Jonah, you remember, was severely dealt with by being swallowed down the mouth of a great fish and languishing in that place until he was vomited on the ground. Eventually goes to Nineveh, preaches. The whole of the Gentile city of Nineveh repents, and Jonah is upset about it. He is not happy about that because now there are Gentiles who have come into the place of blessing with his God.

This kind of narrow prejudice has petrified into the national mindset. They had no interest in going beyond themselves. They were the people, and the blessings stopped with them. So, when they were thinking about the arrival of their Messiah, He was distinctly their Messiah. They viewed Him as their king, their leader, their redeemer, their conqueror. And the other nations would participate only insofar as He would establish His kingdom in Israel and judge all those who had rejected the true God so they would feel His judgment and Israel would reign over all the nations of the earth in that kingdom. That is what they believed was promised to Abraham and reiterated many times in the Abrahamic covenant. Promised again to David that the Messiah would be a son of David, and He would have that rule over the whole world.

They hated nations around them. They even hated half-breed Samaritans who basically were a people that developed out of Jews who intermarried with Gentiles. They did allow for – because the

Scripture had to command them to do it, 1 Kings 8 – they allowed for Gentiles to become proselytes to Judaism, to join Jewish religion. There were ceremonies they could go through, and there was even a court of the Gentiles that God prescribed in the temple. You could see it in 1 Kings 8. They had to have a place for Gentiles who came to believe in the true God.

They didn't see themselves as a nation as missionaries, but there were individual Jews, of course, who reached out and brought gentiles into belief in the one true God. But by the time you get to the life of our Lord Jesus, the hope is that the Messiah will come and they can't see beyond their own nation, their own people. Now, they have seen somebody who fits the kind of power that it would take to set up a kingdom and rule not only over their nation, but rule over all other nations. The power display that Jesus put on qualifies Him like no other person. They've never seen anything like it.

Jesus has sort of put the exclamation point on His three years of miracle power by raising Lazarus from the dead in a village two miles away from the temple in Jerusalem. Everybody knows about it. It is in a very public place. It's His last great public miracle. The word is everywhere that He raised this man who had been dead for four days. Again, this is just the capstone on conversations that have been going on for three years about the amazing power of Jesus, power over demons, power over death, power over disease, power over nature. Surely, this can be the one who will be our King.

So when He comes into the city of Jerusalem on this occasion with great word going everywhere about raising Lazarus from the dead, an unmistakable power display of giving life to a dead man. Everybody knew he was dead four days in the grave. This could be it for them. He arrives to their, "Hosannas, hail the Son of David," Messianic title. They are thrilled. They are hopeful, but they have missed the whole point of their very existence. God never chose them to be the end, only the means to the end.

Paul in Romans says they were given the covenants, the promises. They were given the prophets. They were given the law, the Scripture. They were even given the Messiah, but all of that was not the end. They were to be the means to the end. They were to take all that that God had given them and share it with the world. They were to be a missionary nation, a witness nation. They were to make the name of God glorious all over the world. They should have been going everywhere declaring the truth of the one true God. They were to spread that truth to the world because the salvation of God always was to extend to the world. That was His purpose from the beginning.

As I said, they were to be a people through whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed, but Israel had long departed from that if they ever even approached obedience to it. They had become petrified in their national prejudice, and they had nothing but disdain for other nations. National pride, national isolation, national disobedience literally defined them. When our Lord comes into the world then, He has to come to them first and call on them to repent because they have turned from God. They have rejected God. They have rejected the true way of salvation through repentance and faith. They have developed a works system to earn their own salvation.

There, first of all, must be a national repentance on the part of Israel. There must be a repentance on the part of the leaders of Israel if they are truly to receive the Messiah and the kingdom. Well, you know the story. They did not repent. They would not give up their works righteousness religion. They would not turn from their apostasy. By the time Jesus comes to the end of His ministry of three years to hundreds of thousands of people all over Galilee, there are 120 believers in Jerusalem and

500 in Galilee. And that's the total number that are counted up in the book of Acts.

He had come to offer Himself in a kind of final way. This is God's final offer, and He even said, "Salvation is of the Jews," as Paul said, "To the Jews first and then to the gentiles." He even told them early on, don't go into the way of the gentiles. Don't go into the way of the gentiles. A gentile woman was hopeful she could even get some of the crumbs dripping off the table that was intended to be set for Israel. Yes, He did come to the Jew first, but to call the people who had been chosen to repentance and true faith and true obedience and to become that witness nation. But as we come into this twelfth chapter, we see Jesus coming into Jerusalem. All the accolades, one final offer, and it's a call for repentance. It's a call for obedience. It's a call for embracing Him as God's Savior, God in human flesh. This is the final offer.

Now we all know how they responded to it. They rejected it. It looked like they were in a position to accept it in chapter 12 with all the, "Hosannas." By the way, that's recorded in the other three gospels as well. But the truth of the matter is by Friday, John 19:14–15 they're screaming, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" We don't want this man to reign over us. "We have no king but Caesar." The fickle crowd turns to call for His death. This is a huge turning point. This is God's final offer to national Israel.

Do you remember the parable in Mark 12? He sent the prophets depicted there as the servants back to the vineyard and finally, He sent His Son. They killed the prophets. He sent His Son. They killed His Son. This is the final thing, the Son, and what do they do? They kill the Son. This is a critical transition. The question is who will be God's new people? Who will be God's witness nation? Who will take the truth about God and now about Christ and the gospel to the world? Who will it be?

In the words of the apostle Paul in Acts 13. "The next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming. Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, 'It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; but since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, - "and he quotes from Isaiah, "I have placed you as a light for the nations, that you may bring salvation to the end of the earth.'" When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed."

The Jews wouldn't believe. The Gentiles did. God's witness people shifts from the nation Israel to non-Jews. This is a stark transformation. This prejudice is so deeply ingrained in the Jewish mindset that even when Jews became believers and there were Jewish believers, as you know. There were Jewish believers in Christ. There were 3,000 on the Day of Pentecost, thousands more in the early chapters of Acts. The church grows, and it's Jewish believers coming to Christ in faith.

It was such a mindset to be anti-Gentile that even Jewish Christians struggled to comprehend this, no less than Peter the apostle was infected by this kind of prejudice. In the tenth chapter of Acts and verse 28, Peter says this, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him." You know that. Now, that's not a biblical law. That was a rabbinical law. "You know that. I know that. We grew up that way, and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean." What a great statement. God had to show Peter in a vision. You remember the vision of the sheet that you can't be partial. "So that is why I came into

the house of Cornelius, the Gentile centurion without even raising any objection when I was sent for. I came because the Lord showed me that I couldn't call any man unholy or unclean."

Now, this is God's plan. Verse 34, "Opening his mouth, Peter said, 'I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.'" That was a tough thing for Peter to learn. We're in the tenth chapter of Acts before he – he has to have his own personal vision to get this right. That was a very challenging thing for the Jewish believers, and it continued to be challenging as well. You can read even more about it in subsequent chapters. Chapter 11, for example, verse 1, "The apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. And when Peter came to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised, the Jews took issue with him, saying, 'You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them.'"

They're fighting against Peter preaching the gospel to Gentiles. That's how profoundly ingrained this prejudice was. Now, they recognized the paganism of the Gentile world, of course. Ephesians 2 says, "They are without God in the world. They are alienated from the life of God. They're ignorant. They're in the darkness." All of that is true, but they were to become God's people. They were to become God's people. Even the early Jewish believers in the church of Jerusalem had a very difficult time accepting Gentile converts to the gospel and accepting them into the church.

From the beginning, as I said, the Abrahamic covenant, God had intended to reach the world through the Jewish people, to have a witness nation to take His message of truth to the world. They had failed to do that. God is going to carve out a new channel. God is going to identify a new people and that new people is going to be non-Jewish. Now, there will be Jews included in the church because, "In Christ," Galatians 3:28, "there is neither Jew nor Gentile." But it's no longer a nation. It's all nations blended together in the church. This is such a foundational truth. The apostle Paul makes much of it.

Romans 15:8, "I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision, to Jews on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy." He came first to the circumcision in order to reach the Gentiles. Then Paul immediately quotes from the law, the prophets, and the writings. He quotes Deuteronomy 32, which is the law, Isaiah 11, the prophets, Psalm 18 and 117, which is the other writings, the three sections of the Old Testament. He quotes all about saving Gentiles. "I'll give praise to you among the Gentiles. Rejoice, O Gentiles. Praise the Lord all you Gentiles. In Him shall all Gentiles hope." Always. That's in the Old Testament. That's in the law, the prophets, and the writings.

God always had the world in mind. Now all of that transition from Israel to the church doesn't happen in John 12 where we are, but it's anticipated here. It is anticipated here. Let me read starting in verse 17, John 12.

"So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him. For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, 'You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him.' Now there were some Gentiles 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.'"

Now, this is just an amazing portion of Scripture. See if I can sort of unfold it for you. It's a transition. It's a preview of the shift from Israel to the world, from Israel to the Gentiles, from Jews to non-Jews as the people of God, the witnessing people of God in the world. Now, the whole week is full of transitions.

There's a transition from, "Hail Him, hosanna!" to "Crucify Him!" That's a pretty big transition. They were ready to crown Him King. They ended up crowning Him with thorns. They were ready to give Him a scepter. They ended up giving Him a reed. They were ready to put a royal robe on Him. He ended up with a faded robe. They were ready to hail Him. They ended up sneering at Him. They were ready to lift Him up on a throne. They ended up lifting Him up on a cross. There are all kinds of transitions. "Hosannas!" to "Crucify!"

But the big transition that I want you to see is the transition from Israel to the Gentiles. We are part of that. We are the people of God who are the witness people in the world and we are made up of all nations, Jew and Gentile, without partiality, without discrimination. But before we see the full thing, we've got to break this passage down just a little bit.

So, first of all, let's be aware of point 1, final rejection, final rejection. Israel was given a final offer. They made a final rejection. It is a national rejection and it is an official rejection. Verse 17 tells us the people were talking about the resurrection of Lazarus. They were speaking about it. The people who had been with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb, spread the word. This had a tremendous effect, verse 18. The people went and met Him because they heard that He'd performed that sign. So there's this crowd that have come to Bethany. They are there on Sunday, the day before.

They come into the city with Him from Bethany on Monday morning when He enters the city. There are hundreds of thousands of people in the city who have heard the word about this. The two crowds come together, crushing Him in the middle, and that's the triumphal entry event. But what you have to understand is, this is all shallow, superficial, transitory, going absolutely nowhere. It reminds us that this is a pattern through Jesus's ministry. Were people attracted to Him? Absolutely. Were they stunned by Him? Of course they were. Had they ever seen anything like it? Not at all.

A man who raises dead people, a man who heals diseased people, gives new limbs to people, creates new organs, controls nature, controls the systems of darkness, the demonic world. There was never a person like this, and He did it for three years on a daily basis all over the land of Israel in public. This is the most attractive human being that ever drew a crowd on the planet, but their interest was superficial.

It starts out early in John 2 when He began His ministry. It says, "Many believed on Him, but He didn't commit Himself to them," because He knew what was in their hearts, and He knew it was superficial. It was surface. It wasn't genuine. We see it in chapter 6 when there are disciples who follow Him and then turn their back on Him and leave Him permanently. We saw that when Jesus says to Peter, "Are you going to go away?" and he said, "Where would we go? You have the words of eternal life," and the true disciples stayed, the little group. But the mass of disciples, mass defection in 6, superficial.

Go to chapter 12, verse 42 coming up. "Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God." Take your choice. These are leaders. These are religious leaders who loved the approval of men more than the approval of God. They believe in Jesus. They will not commit to Him. It's one thing to believe. It's something else to commit your life to Him, and we'll see what that means in the very words of Jesus in a few minutes. That's why in John 8 Jesus said, "If you continue in My word, you're My real disciple." If you continue in My word. If you hear and obey and follow, you're a real disciple.

So there were thrill seekers all throughout His life and ministry who defected. They were those Hebrews 10:38-39 says, "Who turned back," who turned back and they are still a part of Christianity. Superficial people. In the end, they in John 19:14-15 cry, "Crucify Him! We will not have this man to reign over us." They are led by chief priests who orchestrate the whole thing, but their faith is so superficial, it caves in, and they join the shouts. Surface interest in Jesus; never saving faith. So this is a national rejection.

Verse 19 tells us that it's an official rejection. The Pharisees said to one another, and they were the religious gatekeepers, "You see that you are not doing any good." Everything we've tried to do, every effort we've tried to make – and you remember now during the week. We don't know which day this is, but during the week Monday He comes in. Tuesday, He attacks the system. Wednesday, He takes His place in the temple that He Himself has cleared out. It becomes His place, and He teaches all day. The process of them coming at Him during that week, asking question after question after question trying to trap Him, trying to catch Him, trying to embarrass Him, trying to indict Him. All their traps fail. All week long, whatever they tried to do failed.

This is the sum of it: you're not doing any good. Whatever your strategies are, and the Herodians were in on it. The Sadducees were in on it. The Pharisees were in on it. It wasn't going anywhere, and then they make an amazing statement. "Look, the world has gone after Him." Hmm. The world has gone after Him. That's the perfect thing. That's what He wants. He's the Savior of the world. This is a witless, ignorant prophecy of what is about to happen. This is the Pharisees who have just given the official national rejection. This is the Pharisees like Caiaphas who unwittingly prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation. This is the Pharisees saying, "Look, the world has gone after Him." A prophesy of the church, amazing statement. The world has gone after Him.

It's hyperbole on their part because the world didn't even know about Him outside of Israel. But from their viewpoint, speaking in hyperbole, the whole world has gone after Him, certainly their world. They didn't know what they were saying, but that is the whole point. Yes, the world is about to go after Him. He's going to have a witnessing people, and they are going to take the gospel to the world. Remember the Great Commission? Go into all the world and preach the gospel, and it will happen.

They couldn't deter Jesus. They couldn't stop the plan of God. No matter what strategy, no matter what questions, no matter what confrontations, no matter what they did. They tried to arrest Him.

They couldn't do it. They were either restrained by something they didn't understand or He disappeared until now. Now it is His time, and now He will move, God will move through their rejection to take the gospel to the world and to bring the world to Christ. God will move through their rejection. God didn't reach the world through the Jews obedience. God reached the world through the Jews disobedience, and He is in charge.

Had they obeyed, they would have been blessed. They did not. They forfeited blessing. They forfeited usefulness, and now the world will go after Him, but not through them. It'll be through Gentiles. To seal that transition, notice what happens immediately in verse 20. "Now there were some Greeks." Do you understand the importance of that transition? There were some Gentiles." *Hellnai*, the Greek word for Hellen. We use sometimes translated Hellen. It means non-Jews. There were some non-Jews among those who were going up to worship at the feast, proselytes. They were called God-fearers.

So we've just gone from final rejection by Israel, point two, initial reception by Gentiles. Here's the first fruits of the church. Here's the first fruits of the Gentiles, the prelude to the transition from Israel to the nations. The rejection of Christ by Israel is soon to be public. How public? They reject Him so publicly, they give Him to the Romans to nail on a cross in full view of everybody. That's how public the rejection is. It's a national rejection. It's an official rejection, and it is a public rejection. As Daniel prophesied, they will cut Messiah off. They will execute Messiah, and God will turn from the Jews to take out a people for His name from the Gentiles.

Look at Romans 9 for just a minute. There's so much on this that I want to edit myself a little bit, but not completely. Romans 9:25, and this of course in that great section of Romans 9-11 where he shows the relationship between Israel and the church. But in Romans 9:25, we'll start in verse 25, "God has called us not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles." And this, by the way, fulfills the prophesy of Hosea. "I will call those who were not My people, My people, and her who was not beloved, 'Beloved.'"

Did God know Israel would fail? Yes. Did God know Israel would be apostate and disobedient and not be a mission nation? Of course. That's why God prophesied the time would come when He would call a new people who were not His people, who were not His beloved nation Israel. "And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' there they shall be called sons of the living God. Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, 'Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved.'" Isaiah even prophesied it would only be a small part that would believe. "'For the Lord will execute His word on the Earth, thoroughly and quickly.'" And just as Isaiah foretold, 'Unless the Lord of Sabaoth had left us to a posterity, we would have become like Sodom, and would have resembled Gomorrah.'"

In other words, there were so few Jews who were faithful, they would have been disappearing like Sodom and Gomorrah unless the Lord had left the posterity, a remnant.

Verse 30, "What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness,

did not arrive at that law.” Trying to save themselves through works. The Messiah verse 33, “Became a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. Israel is set aside, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.” He who? Mark that. He who? Universal, unlimited, without regard to nationality. God has turned from rejecting Israel, apostate Israel, disobedient, unbelieving Israel, but His plan always was the world.

In fact, in John 4, Jesus first revealed His Messiahship to a Samaritan woman, not even to a Jew. In John 10 when He was talking about being the Good Shepherd, He said, “I have sheep of another fold,” talking about the Gentiles. In chapter 11, look at verse 52. Jesus is going to die for the nation, yes, verse 51, but not for the national of Israel only, “But in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad.” It was always His plan that He would gather His elect from every tongue, tribe, and nation.

So we come to verse 20, the initial reception. The final rejection of Israel. The initial reception as these Greeks, these Gentiles – we don’t know anything about them – are among those who go up to worship at the feast. They’re like the Ethiopian eunuch. Remember him? The Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 who came to worship because he was a proselyte to Judaism. They may have come from Galilee. That would be a good guess because they came to Philip. Now, why would they go to Philip? We don’t know. I can only tell you what’s there, not what’s not there, but there might be some reasons.

Philip was from Bethsaida of Galilee. There were more Gentiles in Galilee, a lot more than in Judea. Between Judea and Galilee was the area called Decapolis of ten cities, which were Gentile populations. So there were a lot of interactions with Gentiles in Galilee. It may well have been that they knew Philip from business, from activity in Galilee. By the way, Philip and Andrew are both Greek names, not Hebrew names, and so maybe there was some familiarity there. We don’t really know.

But here we have a new day, the dawning of a new era: Gentiles seeking Jesus. They come to Philip and they began to ask him saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus. We wish to see Jesus.” What does that tell you? Well, there was at the temple area a court of the Gentiles. The court of the Gentiles was the outside court. Then it was the court of the women; then it was the inner court. Gentiles couldn’t go past the outer court. It’s a reasonable thing to think that Jesus might have been in the inner court, and since they couldn’t get in there by fiat, they needed somebody to arrange a meeting with Jesus.

Whatever they’d heard, they were fascinated to find out more. Maybe they knew Haggai 2:7. You know what that verse speaks of? The desire of all nations shall come. It’s Messianic. When the Messiah comes, He will be the desire of all nations. So here are some non-Jews who desire to meet Him. They want an interview. This is a hint of the awakening consciousness that Jesus was about to become known as the Savior of the Gentiles. The world is beginning to go after Him, and here are some non-Jews who illustrate it.

It’s more than curiosity. They want to find out about Jesus, and so they go to Philip. As I said, I don’t know any more than what I’ve told you about why they picked him out. It doesn’t really matter. They went to him. “Philip then came,” verse 22, “and told Andrew.” Now, why does he tell Andrew? I don’t know that either. I only know what’s written here. But he may have been a little conflicted in his mind because maybe he was thinking, I don’t know how this is going to go over if I drag some

Gentiles in here to see Jesus, and He's in a certain place where they're not to go. Or, I don't know how it's going to go over with the Jewish authorities who will recognize that these are not Jews if I create this kind of event, which is going to be public because we're in a very public place.

Maybe he thought Jesus is very busy. He's got some pretty big things going right now having done what He did in the temple. Maybe they saw that. Maybe these Gentiles saw what Jesus did on Tuesday in the temple when He attacked it. Remember Jesus' words? They might have thought, "Do not go to the Gentiles," Matthew 10. Matthew 15, "I am come for the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "Salvation is of the Jews." But he also knew Jesus said, "I have sheep of another fold."

He would have known Matthew 8. I don't know if he remembered it, but if he did, this is what it says, "Jesus entered Capernaum and a centurion came to Him – " that's a Roman " - and he asked Him to heal his servant, who was paralyzed. And Jesus said, 'I'll come and heal him.' The centurion said, 'I'm not worthy for you to come under my roof.'" That, again, is reflective of that Jewish isolationism. He says, "I'm a man under authority. I get authority. Just say something, and that'll be enough." "He marveled – " Jesus did " – and said, 'Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel.'" Hmm. So maybe since Jesus commended that man as having a greater faith than anybody in Israel and he was a Roman, maybe we ought to take these Greeks because maybe their faith is in that category.

Oh, by the way, Jesus also said, "I say to you that many will come from east and west and recline at the table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." Whoa. Back in Matthew 8 He said, "There will be Gentiles in the kingdom and the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Jesus had said on that occasion, the sons of the kingdom Israel, they're going to end up in outer darkness. And people from the east and west are going to come at the kingdom and sit at the table with the patriarchs.

So he's got all this in his mind. What do I do? So he gets a little advice from Andrew. Good thing to do, and they come to Jesus. Verse 22, "Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus." We can assume Andrew is there, Philip is there. Probably these Gentiles are there, and the rest of the disciples would have been there, and the other people, the crowd would have been there. This is so wonderful because this is the beginning. This is the beginning of what we are. One day we came to Jesus. One day we said, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." We came in faith.

Well, this is where all of that really began. You say, "Well, did He receive them?" We can assume that because in John 6:37, He said, "Him that comes to me, I will never turn away," right? Never cast out. There would be no reason to assume He didn't receive them. We can also conclude that what He said here, He said to them and to the disciples and to everybody else. Their question was, "Well, what are your plans? Who are you? What are your plans? Are you the Messiah? Is this it?"

So we go from the rejection, the final rejection to the initial reception. The third thing I want you to see here is the universal provision, the universal provision. These Gentiles become a kind of first fruits of the global harvest to come. They are the world going after Him, but I want you to see what our Lord says. It's so powerful. The universal provision. I just have a few minutes to do this.

"And Jesus answered them saying, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.'" Stop there. If He had a pause after that, the place would have erupted. It would have erupted. I don't

know if He did, but that's what they wanted to hear. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Why would that ignite a firestorm? Because "Son of Man" is a Messianic term found in Daniel 7. In Daniel 7 – and they are familiar with that passage – you have the opening verses of Daniel 7 identify all the powers of the world, all the great nations: Babylon, Medo-Persia, all of the great powers of the world. It shows how corrupt they are, how beastly they are. They are represented in beastly image. All of the sudden, onto the scene in this vision in Daniel 7 comes the Son of Man, and He has power and dominion and authority, and He crushes all His enemies, and He sets up His kingdom.

So when He said, "Son of Man" and by the way, it even says, "The Son of Man will be glorified in His kingdom and establish it forever and ever," that's Daniel 7. So when they hear that, I suppose there would have been some kind of cheer coming from somewhere. But He then gives them an analogy. "Truly, Truly I say to you." He has to say, "Truly, truly," because this just can't really be true. This is too shocking.

"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." What? There can't be a kingdom unless I die. There can't be a kingdom unless I die. There can't be anybody in a kingdom unless I die. There can't be any conquering unless I die. The divine table has come, timetable has come, the hour has come for Him to be glorified, the Son of Man to be glorified, but He will be glorified not in triumphant conquering, but in substitutionary death.

He didn't come to smash His way to an earthly kingdom or earthly empire. He turned their conquest dreams into visions of death, and He did it with an analogy. He explains it such a graphic way. As long as a seed remains in the granary, it is preserved by its outside shell. Only when the seed is put in the soil does it begin to decompose and rot away, and when the shell decomposes and rots away, the life inside begins to flourish. It gives life to a huge plant, which produces more seeds and more seeds and on and on it goes.

Grain remains alone bearing no fruit, producing nothing unless it dies. If I don't die, I remain alone. If Jesus didn't die, heaven would be empty of human beings. There would be none there. Apart from His death, there is no spiritual harvest. That's why in Luke 24:25-27, He told those disciples on the Road to Emmaus, the Messiah must suffer and die. His life-giving power is made possible only through His death. He can only put sin away by the sacrifice of Himself. Cross? Yes. It's been a stumbling block to those who refuse to acknowledge sin and how profound sin is and how impossible it is for us to remedy judgment, to remove judgment, to escape punishment on our own.

We may not think that the cross idea is intellectual or sensible or reasonable, but it is the truth and Jesus says it. I must die. The history of Christianity by the way is the history of one long, miraculous harvest that has all been produced out of one seed dying. Calvary's cross. Only by the sacrifice of Himself could He impact this life to others. Without death, nothing happens. His example could found no kingdom. His transfiguration could found no kingdom. His wisdom could found no kingdom. His knowledge could found no kingdom. His kindness could found no kingdom. There's a spiritual harvest only through death, and that was the joy that was set before Him and why He endured the cross, the spiritual harvest that His death would produce.

Then there's a final point. Following this universal provision of His death, He closes with a general invitation, a general invitation. Our time is gone, so let me just make it quick. Notice verse 25, "He

who and he who.” “He who loves his life loses it. He who hates his life.” Then in verse 26, “If anyone,” and then again toward the end, “If anyone.” This is a new day, folks. “He who,” general, to anyone. “If anyone, if anyone.” We’re no longer talking to Jews. We’re no longer talking to Israel. This is a transition. “He who and he who.” And “he who” will be the word of the gospel from here on out through all history. “Whoever, whosoever, if anyone.” This is the general principle, the general invitation. “He who loves his life loses it. He who hates his life keeps it to life eternal.” “If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me.” “Where I am, there my servant will be also.” “If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.”

This is a wide open, general invitation, but I want you to notice this. It’s an invitation to die. It is an invitation to die. If you love your life, you what? You lose it. If you love the life you have, you lose your life forever. If you hate the life in this world, if you hate what your life is, full of its sin and self-centeredness and godlessness and hopelessness – but if you hate that and you want to abandon that, you will receive eternal life. It isn’t simply believing that Jesus is or that Jesus is who He said He was and did what He did. It is how you look at yourself that makes the difference, and this is why there were so many false converts. They loved the life they had in this world, and they weren’t going to abandon it.

Whoever loves this life, loses it. You keep it now, you’ll lose it forever. Whoever hates this life in this world, in other words, you see it for what it is. This particular principle is all through the gospels, isn’t it? If any man will come after Me, let him do what? Deny himself, take up his cross, follow Me, hate his father, hate his mother, hate his own life also, count the cost. You know all those passages all through our Lord’s teaching.

Salvation comes not only to people who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, but people who turn from their sin, repent of all that they have done but more than that, of all that they are and call out to God to save them from sin and self.

Count the cost, count the cost. It involves hating your life in this world, giving up your life, and following Christ, verse 26. What do you get out of that? What is the benefit of this? End of verse 25, life eternal, life in all its fullness eternally forever. Where? Verse 26, “Where I am, there My servant will be.” Where is He? He ascended into heaven at the right hand of the Father in the eternal glories that God has prepared in the kinds of things that we can’t even comprehend. All blessed, all glorious. And one more thing: the Father will honor him. Did you get that? The Father will honor him. This is the general invitation. You hate your life. You abandon your life with all your sin and self-righteousness, all your personal ambitions, goals, objectives.

Follow Christ, deny yourself. If need be, face death because the value is so vast that no price would be too high. What is the value? Eternal life, eternal life in the place where Christ is and God spending forever honoring you. What an amazing thing. God honoring me? God forever honoring you? Unimaginable, absolutely incomprehensible. What fool would say no to that to cling to the ashes of this life?

So, this is an incredible transition here. We’ve gone from a final rejection by Israel to an initial reception or openness by a little group of Gentiles, which is symbolic of what is to come. The world has begun to go after Him. There has been a universal provision. His death provides life for all who will believe to a general invitation. The invitation is whoever hates this life and longs for all that God has prepared in the life to come can come and follow Me and My Father will spend forever and ever

honoring him.

A footnote. God is not through with Israel. Jews are still around because the plan is not done. He will graft them back in to blessing in the future time of tribulation. That's Romans 11, for another time.

Father, we thank you for our time in your Word this morning. We covered an awful lot. We thank you, Lord, that your Word is life and light. It is more than we can even contain to grasp these truths, the consistency of it, shouts of divine authorship. We thank you for the living, abiding Word of God. I pray, Lord, that you will save sinners here, that you will cause people to hate their lives in this world and receive eternal life through faith in Christ. Not just to believe about Jesus, but to put their lives in His hands, to come to Him for the only salvation, to come to Him with repentance and seek forgiveness for sin knowing that you will grant forgiveness and our transgressions will be removed as far as the east is from the west. What amazing grace this is. I ask that you would save sinners for your glory. Amen.

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