

JOHN — WEEK 16

TIME FOR GLORY



F. Michael Slay
A DEEP Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

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Some Greeks show up and Jesus takes this as His cue that the crucifixion is at hand. John calls the Jesus being glorified. So does He. Meanwhile, no one understands what's going on, especially because Jesus describes what's coming as the Son of Man being lifted up.

Meanwhile, the Pharisees are divided over what to do next.

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1 John 12:16

His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.

This one little verse, even one little word in this one little verse, overturns the thinking of most American Christians. It's a sea change is what it means to be a Christian.

Notice what John does not say. He does not say, "after *Jesus was crucified and resurrected, then they remembered.*" He also doesn't say, "after *Jesus died for our sins, then they remembered.*"

Instead, John says, "*when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered.*" Why does he say it that way?

Because John wants us to understand the full truth about what's going on.

We tend to think of the gospel in human terms—Jesus died for our sins. That's not wrong; it just misses the greater reality. Saving us was only part of what He did on the cross. By leaving out the glorification aspect of Jesus's death and resurrection, we leave out the core of what it is.

It's understandable that, being human, we take the human perspective on things. When we think about the cross, we think about how it relates to us.

But John's gospel doesn't take the human perspective. John is more like a prophet; he sees things from the heavenly perspective.

This heavenly perspective makes John's gospel different, and incredibly important. The three synoptic gospels were already out when John wrote this one. The play-by-play description was published. John wanted to fill a gap in the accounts by writing in eternal, heavenly terms.

The entire gospel of John could be titled, "The Glorification of Jesus."

So, if Jesus's death and resurrection isn't all about us, what is?

Nothing. John has it right. God's glory is the purpose of everything. It's why He created the world.

We benefit greatly from His plan of salvation. PTL! But we should never forget that this is all part of a higher agenda. It's not all about us; it's all about Him.

This changes how we should behave. If God's glory is the purpose of everything, then, for example, it's the purpose of charity.

Some people want all acts of charity to include some evangelism—preaching or giving out gospel tracts. They feel that this is essential. Their thinking is, "Otherwise, what's the point?" They see the gospel as all about getting people into heaven, but that's only part of it.

Charity for charity's sake is good. Sometimes we just glorify God by obeying His commands.

2 John 12:17–19

Therefore the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness. For this reason the people also met Him, because they heard that He had done this sign. The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, “You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!”

Notice that it doesn’t say, “*See that we are accomplishing nothing.*” It says, “*You see that you are accomplishing nothing.*” The verb (*oh-phel-eite*) is clearly second person plural.

In other words, some Pharisees are saying to other Pharisees, that they are *accomplishing nothing*. This is sharp criticism. There is great dissension within the Pharisees.

But do the ones making this criticism believe the other Pharisees should give up their opposition to Jesus or do they think they should step it up? Three related passages shed light on this.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” — John 3:1–2

Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, “Are we blind also?” — John 9:40

When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them. Then one in the council stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. And he said to them: “Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men.” — Acts 5:33–35

We noted in week twelve that 9:40 implies that some Pharisees didn’t agree with the persecution strategy. The actions of Nicodemus and Gamaliel show that they were in that group.

So, some of the Pharisees strongly disagree with their associates’ opposition to Jesus. As we’ll see, they fail to convince the others to let up. Of course, that’s all part of the Lord’s plan to get to the cross.

Still, it’s an interesting failure.

“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world: the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.” — George Bernard Shaw

Shaw’s cheeky use of the word “reasonable” gives this quote its pop. He’s referring to the “go along, get along” attitude that keeps most people from ever having any impact. That’s how the dissenting Pharisees failed; they caved to peer pressure from the angry ones.

This is also what the first century Christians did right—and what we do wrong. Their refusal to “adapt” is how they turned the world upside down. We can have the courage of our convictions without being rude.

3 John 12:20–26

Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

But Jesus answered them, saying, “The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.”

The word “Greeks” here doesn’t mean people from Greece; it’s just how Jews referred to gentiles. Greek was the mother tongue of most non-Jews in that region, while Hebrew and Aramaic were familiar to Jews.

Jesus is in the news and some of the Greeks want to see what the hubbub is all about. No surprise there.

But Jesus’s reaction to hearing that they want to see Him is anything but. Their interest seems to be His cue. He acts like He has literally been waiting for them to show up. Now it’s His time.

So, He blurts out a blunt prophesy. “*The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.*”

The rest of His quote is a chilling explanation of the spiritual importance of His death—and of total devotion to Him.

There is no clearer statement of the cost of being a Christian.

Saint Augustine gave a sermon on this passage, in which he had this to say (translation from the Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture):

Only a human would ask, “How can someone who loves himself deny himself?” God ... says to such a person, “Let him deny himself, if he loves himself.” By loving himself, you see, he loses himself; by denying himself, he finds himself. “Whoever loves his soul,” he says, “let him lose it.” ...

It is a painful thing to lose the one you love, especially if that person is yourself.

The main problem with today’s church is partial commitment to Christ as Lord of the universe and Lord of our lives.

Christianity isn’t supposed to be a hobby; it’s a way of life.

As this passage shows, it isn’t just a way of life; it is life.

4 John 12:27–30 (ESV)

“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine.”

This is perfect prayer. Jesus knows what’s coming, and He shrinks from it. Still, He recognizes that He can’t pray, *“Father, save Me from this hour.”* Instead, He prays, *“Father, glorify Your name.”*

Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”

Imagine the confusion among the people who were there. Some Greeks wanted to see Him, and when Jesus learns this, He delivers this soliloquy. We aren’t told if the Greeks are in the audience by this point, but even Jesus’s own disciples aren’t up to speed.

So they’re surely puzzled by Jesus’s prayer. The thunderous response must have really set their teeth on fire. John reports their reaction straight up. Some thought it thundered, others thought it was an angel speaking. They don’t even know what the voice was, much less what it meant.

And Jesus, for the millionth time, responds with something oblique. He doesn’t resolve their confusion; He just says that the voice was speaking to them,

and to us.

Don’t miss the full meaning of this. Jesus didn’t pray, *“Father, glorify Me.”* He also didn’t say, *“Father, glorify Yourself.”* He said, *“Father, glorify your name.”* Why His name?

God’s name is so important that the third commandment is all about respecting it.

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.” — Exodus 20:7 (ESV)

Notice that you can read that passage and end up wondering, “OK, but what is His name?” Bible translators are so sensitive to the third commandment that they don’t even print God’s name, instead using *“the LORD”* in its place every time His name (יהוה) occurs in Hebrew.

This makes sense, even if the full importance of God’s name is beyond human understanding. We can’t have direct interaction with His full presence.

“Man shall not see me and live.” — Exodus 33:20b (ESV)

Thus, His name is what we know directly.

Respecting God’s name is important in ways we may never fully understand—in this life anyway.

5 John 12:31–36

“Now is the judgment of 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 peoples to Myself.” This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

The people answered Him, “We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

Then Jesus said to them, “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

At first glance, their questions don’t make sense. This conversation began when Jesus said, back in verse 23, *“The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.”*

Now He says, *“And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”* He doesn’t specifically say, *“The Son of Man must be lifted up.”* So what do they mean when they ask, *“How can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”*

This all tracks back to what Jesus said earlier.

Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. — John 8:28

Note two points of historical context. In the language of the day, “the Son of Man” is a messianic title, and “lifted up” doesn’t mean exalted; it means executed. Their methods of execution are hanging and crucifixion. They both involve lifting people up.

But being “lifted up” is the last thing anyone can imagine happening to the messiah.

So, they’re wondering if Jesus means someone else by “Son of Man.”

Jesus ends up being lifted up in more ways than one: first in crucifixion, then in resurrection, then in ascension—exalted to the right hand of God the Father. Now we lift Him up in praise and prayer. One of the messianic references to the son of man ties this all together.

*Let Your hand be upon the man of Your right hand,
Upon the son of man whom You made strong for Yourself.
Then we will not turn back from You;
Revive us, and we will call upon Your name.*

*Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
Cause Your face to shine,
And we shall be saved! — Psalm 80:17–19*

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What's your favorite charity or mission?
2. Where has Christianity lost its spine?
3. Does being a Christian cost anything nowadays?
4. How do you honor God's name?
5. How do we worship Jesus outside of Sunday worship?

Items for prayer: