

SONS OF DARKNESS, SONS OF LIGHT

JOHN 12:31-36

John 12:31-36 ³¹ "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." ³³ But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die. ³⁴ 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?" ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ "While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

The context of this section of God's word is the continuation of the prayer Jesus prayed to the Father in his sober understanding of what he is about to accomplish through his death on the cross.

John 12:27-30 ²⁷ "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. ²⁸ "Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came out of heaven: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." ²⁹ 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." ³⁰ Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.

Jesus was not saying that he did not desire to accomplish the Father's will, but rather that his entire reason for coming into this world was to glorify the Father. Remember, why Jesus was sent from the Father.

John 6:39 ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

The Father has given a people to the Son to redeem so as to bring those people into the presence of the Father as they are clothed in the righteousness of the Son. These people are referred to as the elect.

Matthew 24:30-31 ³⁰ "And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. ³¹ "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

This is a picture of the last day when Christ returns to gather the elect. It is this last day that Jesus refers to as the resurrection.

John 6:39-40 ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

And so, when we come to our text today Jesus is referencing his mission to accomplish the Father's will in such a way that he brings glory to the Father. The Father in return promises to glorify the Son in this process of redemption. But in this process of salvation, judgment is also brought to bear.

John 12:31 ³¹ "Now judgment is upon this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

Remember the judgment that God poured out on both man and Satan, after Adam's rebellion?

Genesis 3:15 ¹⁵ And I will put enmity Between you [Satan] and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

The bruising or crushing of the head of Satan identifies Christ's mission given to him by the Father to break the reign of the enemy in deceiving the nations. Christ is the light of the world and he will now open the eyes of men from every tribe, tongue and nation to fulfill the promise to Abraham's descendants that all nations will be blessed in him.

In accomplishing this task Christ must first bind the strong man and then plunder his house.

Matthew 12:28-29 ²⁸ "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ "Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong *man*? And then he will plunder his house.

Two kingdoms are described here. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of the strong man. When Christ came into this world it was with the objective to carry off the plunder of the strong man. But the strong man had to be bound in order to accomplish this as the Kingdom of God was now set in place. This is the same binding that the apostle John refers to when the serpent is bound.

Revelation 20:1-3 ^{NAU} Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. ² And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

The vision given to John recounts the reality of the cross as the serpent is bound and the Kingdom of Christ moves forward where not even the gates of hell can deter it.

Matthew 16:18 ¹⁸ "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

Christ is building his church today and nothing will deter that. But the promise given to the church comes with a caveat. The binding of Satan in his inability to deceive the nations, will one day be lifted as he is again given the ability to deceive the nations in such a way that even the visible church will succumb to his deception.

This is referred to as the apostasy of the church in the last days.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 ^{NAU} Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, ² that you not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. ⁵ Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things? ⁶ And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed. ⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way. ⁸ Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; ⁹ *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, ¹⁰ and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. ¹¹ For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false, ¹² in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

Part of that group, who took pleasure in wickedness, are those whom Christ identifies as hangers-on of the blessings of the true church, but who did not embrace a saving faith in Christ.

Matthew 7:22-23 ²² "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' ²³ "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'

The saving work of Jesus Christ on the cross will not be stopped, but only the elect will have eyes to see and ears to hear as he gives them life.

Ephesians 2:4-6 ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ *even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ* (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

In our text in John 12, Jesus goes on to explain how the ruler of this world will be cast out, or bound, from deceiving the nations, as the Kingdom of God has entered our midst in our Savior.

John 12:32-33 ³² "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." ³³ But He was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.

Notice that John comments on the words of Jesus by saying, "this was to indicate the kind of death by which he was to die."

Our Lord's reference in this statement takes us back to Moses as Jesus had previously taught this truth much earlier in his ministry.

^{NAU} **John 3:14** "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up;

^{NAU} **John 8:28** So Jesus said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.

But then our Lord adds the phrase in our text in John 12, [I] "will draw all men to myself."

How is the word "all" to be treated in this context? Would this be similar to the phrase found in John 3:16 that would seem to agree with all men in a way that includes the whole world?

John 3:16 ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

You can go back to my previous study on this text to get a fuller explanation. But the short answer is that when Scripture uses such inclusive words as "all" and "world" these must still be placed within the context in which they are found.

For example, when the Pharisees, back in verse 18 of this same chapter in John, comment on the extent of the people who were agreeable to the ministry of Jesus Christ, as it related to raising Lazarus from the dead, this is what we read.

John 12:19 ¹⁹ So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him."

Are we to assume that the aboriginal peoples of Australia were going after Jesus Christ? Are we to arrive at the conclusion that representatives from China were going after Jesus because of the resurrection of Lazarus?

No, the word "world" in that context assumes that the reader would have understood this to mean great throngs of people in and around the hinterlands of Palestine who were marveling at the miracles Jesus had performed.

In like manner, when Jesus says, “that God so loved the world,” it did not mean every individual who has ever existed at any place on planet earth. The love that is being described in that text is a redemptive love that results in eternal life, only for those who believe.

John 3:18 ¹⁸ "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

The very next verse in John 3 then makes clear that the very nature of man does not and will not seek this Savior.

John 3:19 ¹⁹ "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.

This is the same judgment Jesus addresses in our text when he says, “now judgment is upon this world.”

Only those given to the Son by the Father are able to respond to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ by faith. Therefore, when Jesus states that when he is lifted up from the earth he will then draw all men to himself, it cannot mean every individual on planet earth, as “all” are not given to the Son, and all obviously do not believe.

John 6:39-40 ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. ⁴⁰ "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

Who are the one's who behold the Son, and believe in him for eternal life? All that the Father gives to the Son.

John 6:37 ³⁷ "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

When we come to John chapter 17, Jesus will reiterate these words as it relates to the ministry given to the Son by the Father to accomplish that which the Father desires.

John 17:1-2 ^{NAU} Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, ² even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.

The “all” given to the Son, are the same one's Paul identifies as those chosen and predestined before the foundations of the world in his letter to the Ephesians.

Ephesians 1:3-6 ³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, ⁴ just as *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world*, that we would be

holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ ***He predestined us to adoption*** as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

These are the same chosen one's who were dead in their trespasses and sins and yet they were made alive, (resurrected in the spirit) in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:5-6 ⁵ even when ***we were dead in our transgressions***, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and ***raised us up with Him***, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

Therefore, when Jesus declares that he will draw all men to himself, he is speaking a truth related to all that the Father gave him before the foundations of the world who are chosen in Christ from all eternity, out of all of the world.

Back to our text. John makes the comment about Jesus being lifted up as referring to Christ's death, which would be crucifixion. The Jews also understood this language which is why they react the way they do.

John 12:34 ³⁴ 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?"

This is a fair question. Jesus just got through saying that the Son of man had to die. But the crowd correctly identifies the eternal aspect of the Son of Man's rule. The problem is that the Jews did not take into account the means by which this was to happen, which is also clearly seen in Scripture that points to a Savior as far back as Genesis 3:15.

Genesis 3:15 ¹⁵ And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."

It would be the seed of the woman who would necessarily need to be born so as to reverse the curse on those who would embrace this promise of a savior by faith. This was subsequently seen in the atoning sacrifice of Abel's acceptable animal offering to God.

Genesis 4:3-4 ³ So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. ⁴ Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering;

This offering pointed to the seed of the woman whose seed is ultimately found in Christ.

Galatians 3:16 ¹⁶ Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as *referring* to many, but *rather* to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.

It was this seed that must be sacrificed to make atonement for the sins of God's people, as Isaiah the prophet points out.

Isaiah 53:6-8 ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. ⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. ⁸ By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke *was due*?

The Jews who confronted Jesus with the words, "how can you say, 'the Son of Man must be lifted up'" just did not see the elephant in the room as their entire Levitical law of sacrifice screamed of their sinless Messiah needing to be slaughtered for their sin.

Yes, they were correct that the Son of Man would sit on David's throne forever, but he must first die to secure this eternal Kingdom with the understanding that he would be raised to life to accomplish the Father's will. This too, Isaiah addressed.

Isaiah 53:9-10 ⁹ His grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. ¹⁰ But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting *Him* to grief; If He would render Himself *as* a guilt offering, He will see *His* offspring, He will prolong *His* days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

Though the Messiah would be rendered as a guilt offering, "He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in his hand." None of this could happen if he were still in the grave.

The Messiah must die to atone for the sins of his people, but he must also defeat sin and death in his resurrection. This is precisely what Jesus was addressing when comforting Lazarus's sister Martha, as her brother lay dead in the tomb.

John 11:25-26 ²⁵ Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

And as we come back to our text Jesus reminds these doubting Jews that despite their ignorance of what the prophets clearly taught, he would go forward in his mission to gather all that the Father gave him as the day approached for his final mission in this world as he had a date with the cross in only a few days.

John 12:35-36 ³⁵ 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. ³⁶ "While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

In the beginning of John's gospel, we have this same language regarding the light of the world.

John 1:1-5 ^{NAU} In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. ⁵ The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Right up to the end of our Lord's ministry the darkness of men's hearts did not comprehend the light as revealed in Jesus Christ. And as Jesus reminds this crowd of Jews, there will be a time when the light will no longer be present in this world, as in a short time he will be taken from them. Therefore, today is the day of salvation.

2 Corinthians 6:2 ² ... behold, now is "THE DAY OF SALVATION"—

Don't put it off another day as the Lord offers this gift today. Tomorrow may not come for you and then it will be too late.

Hebrews 9:27 ²⁷ And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment,

John 12:36 ³⁶ "While you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light." These things Jesus spoke, and He went away and hid Himself from them.

Jesus did not continue to debate with the doubters. He simply gave them the truth. And then those words; "he went away and hid himself from them."

From this point our Lord hides himself from the crowds as he awaits that day when the Father will glorify Himself through his Son's obedience to redeem those for whom Christ was sent; later to be glorified again when Jesus breaks forth from the grave defeating sin and death.

We'll pick up in verse 37 next time. Until then be those lights in the world who reflect the light of life found in our Lord and Savior and be thankful. I'll end with this.

Colossians 3:15-17 ¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ Whatever you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.