

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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John 12:27-50 -- The Conclusion of Jesus' Public Ministry

by Dan Trygg

“Now My soul has become troubled” (12:27). The word for “has become troubled” emphasizes the ongoing agitation or unsettledness He feels. It is not just a brief, passing discomfort. **“...and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour?’”** That would be a natural reaction to the pain. Jesus will wrestle with this again in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36-44; Lk. 22:41-44). **“But for this purpose I came to this hour.”** The Greek makes the *contrast* even more distinct, “Rather...” **His very presence in this world was ultimately to lead to His atoning death.**

“Father, glorify Your name” (vss. 28-30). The word, “glorify”, means to “bring honor, praise, good reputation, or exaltation to someone” by *revealing* or *clearly demonstrating* their true character. **Jesus is saying to the Father, “Make known who You are.”** **“There came therefore a voice out from heaven...”** God responded to Jesus’ petition with a loud, thunderous verbal response. John is the only reporter of this incident, though there was a similar incident that had occurred at Jesus’ baptism, recorded by the other gospel writers (e.g., Matt. 3:16,17). Even though the voice was loud and clear enough for *many* to hear and understand, *others* could not make out what was being said, or were unable to process what they were hearing. To them it sounded like thunder. **“Jesus... said, ‘This voice did not come for My sake, but for your sakes.’”** Further evidence to support John’s thesis (20:30,31).

“Now judgment is upon this world...” (vs. 31). The word, “world,” can refer not only to the planet Earth, but also to an “organized system of things”. It means “the spiritual/political structure and propaganda that is directed or influenced by Satan”, whom the apostle Paul called “the god of this age” (II Cor. 4:4; cf. Eph. 2:1,2). John uses the same Greek word, *kosmos*, in this way in I Jn. 2:15-17. **“...now the ruler of this world shall be cast out...”** The Greek is more emphatic, “he will be thrown-out outside”. The verb is the same as used for the casting out of a demon.

“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth...” (vs. 31). The “and I” is a single word in Greek, meant to tie this statement to the previous verse to establish a contrast, or a simultaneous action (“also I”). The “if” indicates that whenever *the condition* of “being lifted up from the earth” might take place, then *the consequent* in the next phrase will also take place. (Jesus had spoken about “being lifted up” twice before in this gospel -- 3:14; 8:28). He was referring to His death on the cross, as John explains in vs. 33. **“...will draw all people to Myself.”** The word for “draw” is the same as in 6:44. It means to “draw, attract, drag, or haul-in”. We know from II Cor. 5:14-17 that **somehow Jesus took all people into Himself in His death. In doing so, He not only paid for their sins, ...but somehow they themselves also were put to death with Him.** This was an *objective, historical event* that Jesus did, which Paul encourages those who respond in faith to come to grips with for their progress in spiritual understanding (Rom. 5-7; Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:8-15).

The crowd responds to Jesus’ words, “We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever” (vs. 34). Passages such as Psa. 89:3,4,36; 110:4; Isa. 9:6,7; and Dan. 7:13,14 clearly teach that the Christ would have an everlasting kingdom. **“...and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”** Jesus *seemed* to be teaching something different than what they thought. They asked for clarification.

In response, **Jesus does not answer their question, but rather encourages them to, in effect, “keep their eyes open”**, so that they will be able *to see* and *believe* the truth when the opportunity comes. **“For a little while longer the light is among you”** (vs. 34). *At that time*, there was a revelation of Truth *among them* which would soon change, and be gone. **“Walk while you have the light...”** The word translated as “while” can also mean “as”. **Jesus may not only refer to the time that the light is available, but also may encourage them to walk in the amount of light they have.** The command to “walk” means that they are to *actively pursue* truth while they have the chance, ...and *live it out* in the regular activities of life. (The same word is used in Gal. 5:16 for walking in the Spirit.) **“...that darkness may not overtake you...”** To be passive *guarantees* that darkness will overtake them, having accomplished nothing. The word, “that”, indicates a purpose clause, “in order that ...not”. **Jesus instructs them to walk about as they have the light in order to avoid the darkness.** The word “overtake” occurred in 1:5, and means to “seize you”, or “hold you down”. The word picture certainly implies that **it is a negative experience to be captured or overcome by the darkness.** **“...he who walks in the darkness does not know where he is goes.”** If you can’t *see* clearly, then your observations and understanding will be inaccurate as well. **Missteps, pitfalls, bumps, bruises, and assorted dangers plague those who travel in the dark** (Isa. 59:9,10). **“While you have the light, believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light”** (vs. 36). -- **The goal is to be transformed, to “become”, or “come-to-be”, something that they are not.** Cf. Ephesians 5:6-14. **“These things Jesus spoke, and He departed and hid Himself from them.”** He did not bask in the popularity of the multitude. It was a dangerous place to be for a number of reasons. (Cf. Jn. 2:23-25; 6:15; 11:47-57.)

Vss. 37-43 -- **The effect of Jesus' ministry.** “**Though He had performed so many signs before them, they were not believing in Him.**” *A ministry of miracles will not necessarily produce real faith. They were not perceiving the message that the “signs” were pointing to.* This resistance had been foretold centuries before by Isaiah the prophet (53:1). “**For this cause they could not believe...**” John goes on to quote another passage from Isaiah 6:10 to explain what appears to say that God Himself was interfering with their ability to clearly perceive the truth. At first blush, this is a difficult and awkward concept to have to deal with, “**Does God really keep people from seeing the truth? Does He harden their hearts?**” **This does not seem to square with a God who is “not wishing for anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance”** (II Pet. 3:9) or, “**Who desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth**” (I Tim. 2:4). There is an *apparent contradiction* between these conflicting statements concerning God’s actions and motives. This difficulty can be explained, if we carefully examine some other passages that will add some light to our dilemma. **First of all, an important principle of interpretation is that we should rely on the *clear passages* of Scripture to help us interpret the *more difficult passages*.** The passages from II Pet. and I Timothy, and many others like them, clearly teach that God *does* want everyone to turn from the darkness and vanity of sin and idolatry to an honest, real relationship with Him. Whatever this difficult verse from Isaiah is meant to teach, it is not meant to contradict that clear teaching about God. **Secondly, Jesus gives us a clue in Matt. 13:10-17. Here, He explains to the disciples that He could not speak clearly to the people because they did not want to see the truth.** The same passage from Isaiah is quoted, only it is expressed entirely as though the people have done this *to themselves*, e.g., *they* have closed their eyes and ears so as not to perceive truth. **Third, throughout the gospels we see Jesus speaking in figurative language, ...answering direct questions about who He was with somewhat indirect or obscure answers** (if He answered them at all), ...telling people who were healed to *not publicize what He had done*, ...slipping away from boisterous crowds who wanted to make Him king, etc. There seems to have been two things going on at the same time. On the one hand, He was demonstrating and teaching that He was the Messiah. On the other hand, He would not allow Himself to be misunderstood and pinned down by His words. He kept speaking in parables and avoiding the misguided popularity of the crowds. As He Himself said in Matt. 7:6, “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample you under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”

Almost as an example of these latter two points, John mentions that “**many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees... were not confessing Him**, lest they should be put out of the synagogue, for **they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God**” (vs. 42). These rulers could *see* the truth, but by their reticence to acknowledge it, they were acting like the people in Isaiah’s prophecy. Jesus had correctly identified this stumbling block to their faith two Passovers previously. **They were more concerned about what people thought of them than what God did** (5:44). The Pharisees had taken such a negative stand against Jesus that they had made it quite clear that they would use anything He said against Him. They were like the swine or dogs in Jesus’ word picture.

Vss. 44-50 - **The final words of Jesus’ public ministry.** Vss. 44,45 emphasize Jesus’ unity with the Father. To believe in Him is to believe in the One who sent Him (vs. 44). **To identify with Jesus is to identify with God.** “And he who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me” (vs. 45). Jesus is so fully identified with God that He expresses the character of God. **To see Him is to see God who sent Him.**

“I have come as light into the world...” (vs. 46). Finally, **He clearly states that He Himself was the light.** Think about what He had said in 35,36. The light was only going to be with them for a short time. He had encouraged the people to believe in Him in order to become “sons of light”. How strange all of this must have sounded! “**...that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in the darkness.**” **The darkness was already in place.** He came to reveal truth and to become a guiding light for those who would choose to walk with Him.

Vss. 47-48 - **There is accountability that accompanies the presentation of truth.** “**And if anyone hears My sayings, and does not keep them, I do not judge him...**” Jesus is saying that those who reject His words won’t have to answer to Him. “**...for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.**” Cf. 3:17; 8:15. **His present mission was not to judge, but to be the sin-bearer and revealer of God’s heart.** There *will* come a time, however, when it *will* be His responsibility to judge (Jn. 5:22-29; Acts 10:42; 17:30,31). “**...the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.**” Jesus will not take personal revenge, rather the person will be accountable for the truth he heard.

“For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me direction, what to say, and what to speak” (vs. 49). **The authority of Jesus’ words come from God.** It is for that reason that His words are so important. We have another glimpse here of Jesus’ *modus operandi* (cf. 5:19,30,36; 7:16,17; 8:28; 10:37,38).

“And I know that His commandment is eternal life...” (vs. 50). The word for “know” here is knowledge-by-observation, I-know-because-I-have-seen. **God’s consistent communication to and through Jesus has been to bring about age-type life, life of the coming Kingdom of God into people’s lives in this world.** “**Therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.**” Jesus faithfully presents the message of the Father.