

“When I am Lifted Up”

Thomas Robinson, January 31, 2010

John 12:26-50

²⁷ “Now **my soul is troubled**, and what shall I say? **‘Father, save me from this hour’?** No, it was **for this very reason I came to this hour.** ²⁸ **‘Father, glorify your name!’**”

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

²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had **thundered**; others said **an angel** had spoken to him.

³⁰ Jesus said, **“This voice was for your benefit, not mine.** ³¹ **Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.** ³² **And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.**” ³³ He said this to show the kind of **death** he was going **to die.**

³⁴ The crowd spoke up, **“We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever,** so how can you say, **‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’?** Who is this **‘Son of Man’?**”

³⁵ Then Jesus told them, **“You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Those who walk in the dark do not know where they are going.** ³⁶ **Put your trust in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light.**” When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

³⁷ Even after Jesus had performed so **many signs** in their presence, they still **would not believe in him.** ³⁸ This was to fulfill the word of **Isaiah** the prophet:

**“Lord, who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”** [Isa 53:1]

³⁹ For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere:

⁴⁰ **“He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts,
so they can neither see with their eyes,
nor understand with their hearts,
nor turn – and I would heal them.”** [Isa 6:10]

⁴¹ Isaiah said this because he saw **Jesus’ glory** and spoke about him.

⁴² Yet at the same time **many even among the leaders believed in him.** But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; ⁴³ for they loved **human glory** more than **the glory of God.**

⁴⁴ Then Jesus cried out, **“Those who believe in me do not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.** ⁴⁵ **When they look at me, they see the one who sent me.** ⁴⁶ **I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.**

⁴⁷ **“As for those who hear my words but do not keep them, I do not judge them. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.** ⁴⁸ **There is a judge for those who reject me and do not accept my words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.**

⁴⁹ **For I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken.** ⁵⁰ **I know that his command leads to (is) eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”**

John 3:14-15

¹⁴ “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so **the Son of Man must be lifted up,** ¹⁵ that everyone who **believes** may have **eternal life in him.**”

John 8:28

²⁸ So Jesus said, "When you have **lifted up the Son of Man**, then you will know that **I am**, and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me."

The Heavy Weight of Glory

John leads us through the last scene of Jesus' public ministry. Jesus comes to Jerusalem.

Greeks inquire. "*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*" (12:23).

Jesus knows the hard meaning of glory. The crowds struggle to understand. (27-36)

Jesus goes into hiding (36). John uses Isaiah to interpret the faith struggle (37-43).

Jesus speaks from off stage: the challenge of seeing Jesus, hearing his word (44-50).

"Glory" - a difficult concept for us. In the Bible it is not fame, praise, celebrity.

The Hebrew word *Kavodh* "glory" means weight, massive substance, significance.

"Glorify your name" does not call for flattery, but says that who God is must be recognized in his true centrality and meaning - sun around which all revolves.

God is glorified, his true reality is revealed, when Jesus is glorified/exalted/lifted up

(*hypsoun*) from the earth - on the cross. When God the Logos/Son of Man/Lamb of God/Messiah gives himself/is exalted on the cross, the gravity of God's glory rises.

The new sun rises and all are drawn to it, can believe in it, come alive in the light.

Jesus' soul is troubled. He anticipates the horror of the creator of life descending into death. He steels himself not to escape but to fulfill the final action that gives weight/meaning/glory/completion to all that he has done. The ultimate revelation.

But the people just see a man Jesus. They see neither glory nor the cross. What they see is ordinary and doesn't fit with what they think they know about the messiah.

From Signs to Believing

As the curtain falls on Jesus' public ministry, John reflects from scripture on the mixed response: so many signs, so little real faith. An ancient, perennial problem.

Isaiah had seen a vision of God's glory in the temple filling all the earth. This is the very glory Jesus brought among us. But Isaiah had the thankless task of confronting blind eyes and hard hearts. It was difficult for people to see "the arm of the Lord" in a Suffering Servant, but in just such a one, God's glory/strength was revealed.

But some were beginning to believe. They still revolved around human glory. But Jesus was showing the prince of this world to be hollow, weightless. Only when we center our lives on God's glory, do we find our own life/weight/significance.

Jesus – The Ultimate Sign

Jesus' final cry to the people and to us prepares us to know what we are seeing when we look at the unfolding of his arrest, trial, suffering and death. "*When they look at me, they see the one who sent me.*" Here is the revelation of God. It is the dawn of new light, a new sun arising in the world. No need to stay in darkness.

The cross and all Jesus' words that unfold its meaning has only one purpose, to save us and the whole world, to bring the reality of God's glory back into his world/people.

Only when our lives give God his true glory/gravitas, do we have significance, weight.

We cease to revolve around human glory, a momentary triviality that blows away.

That significance is eternal life, receiving the light and becoming children of light.