

Jesus Predicts His Death

John 12: 20-50

Monday the eleventh of Nisan

DIG: In this example, who is the **kernel of wheat**? How is this related to the **Greeks' request**? What is Jesus calling His talmidim to do in verses 25-26? What promise do they receive? What are some of the miraculous signs that Yeshua performed in His ministry? How do the prophecies from Jeremiah 5:21 and Isaiah 6:10 account for the people's disbelief in spite of these signs? Do you think the prophecy from Isaiah 6:10 is a statement of irony, or of God's intent? Why? How do verses 44-46 here, relate to John 1:1-5? How is Messiah like **the light**?

REFLECT: Where is Yeshua calling you to die so that you might live? What do you tend to hold on to rather than follow Christ? Do you feel like you are walking in **darkness**? **The Light**? Or in the shadows right now? Where do you find it most difficult to live your faith? At home or at work? Why? When have you felt pressured by fear to keep quiet about your faith? What happened? What have you found most helpful in letting people know where you stand with ADONAI?

After the cleansing of the Temple on **Monday the eleventh of Nisan** (see **Ix - The Examination of the Lamb**), the apostles encountered some **Greeks** in the Court of the Gentiles among those who went up to worship at the festival of Pesach. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir," they said, "we would like to see Jesus" (John 12:20-21). It is significant that these men approached Philip, but Philip took them to Andrew and let Andrew introduce them to the Master. These were either **God-fearing Gentiles** who attended Jewish synagogues or full-fledged proselytes to Judaism who were coming to Yerushalayim to worship ADONAI at Pesach. Their coming was symbolic of the coming of the Gentiles to worship God through Christ.

These **Greeks** were very interested in Yeshua. They sought out Philip in particular. Perhaps because of his **Greek** name, they thought he was the best contact. Or maybe they had learned that he was more or less the administrator of the **Twelve**, the one who made all the arrangements on behalf of the **talmidim**. Again we see that whether Philip held that position officially or by default, he seems to have been the one in charge of operations. Being the typical administrative type, he probably carried around in his head a full manual of protocols and procedures. He was a by-the-book kind of guy. Somehow these **Greeks** knew he was the policy person, so they asked him to arrange a meeting with the Lord.

So Philip took the Greeks to Andrew. Andrew would bring anyone to Jesus. So Philip went to tell Andrew; and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus (Yochanan 12:22). Obviously, Philip was not a decisive man. There was no precedent for introducing Gentiles to Yeshua, so he recruited Andrew to help him before doing anything. That way no one could fault Philip for not going by-the-book. After all, Andrew was always bringing people to the Master. Andrew would get the blame if anyone objected. We may safely assume that the Savior of sinners received the Greeks gladly. Just as He Himself had said: **Whoever comes to Me I will never drive away** (Yochanan 6:37). Here in John 12 nothing is recorded about Christ's meeting with the Greeks except His response.

Messiah responded with a storm of emotion. He recognized in these Greeks the forerunners of the vast throng of Gentiles that would come to Him from every nation and tribe and people and language (Revelation 7:9). It was a foreshadowing of the greater things of the Kingdom. But the hour of crisis had arrived. The immeasurable price of the Kingdom must first be paid and the Lord's answer must have puzzled those listening.

The coming of the Greeks confirmed that **the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified**. For most people death is their humiliation. But for Yeshua, death was His means of glory. His willingness to die for others' sins in obedience to the Father (Isaiah 53:10 and 12) brought Him this glory. **Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Death** was necessary for a harvest, and the Lord's death would produce a great harvest for the kingdom of God. **Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Death** is the way to life. **Whoever serves me must follow Me; and where I AM, My servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves Me** (John 12:23-26). In Messiah's case, His death led to glory and life not only for Himself but also for others.

The realization that nothing stood between Jesus and the cross led to an emotional glimpse of His humanity. In a particularly transparent moment, we see the Lord overcome by dread. He knew that He would face agony on a cosmic scale, far more than the physical pain of the crucifixion. **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. Father, glorify your name!** Then a voice came from heaven. **I have glorified it, and will glorify it again** (Yochanan 12:27-28). Nevertheless, Jesus came to earth for this agony, a fact the Father verified in a voice heard from heaven. **The rabbis taught that when God speaks from heaven, "the daughter of His voice" the bat-kol, or an echo, is heard on earth. After**

the last of the prophets, it was considered that YHVH provided the *bat-kol* to continue to give guidance to the people (Tractate Yoma 9b).

The *bat-kol* was heard on earth but not everyone understood. The crowd that was there and heard it, said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to Him (John 12:29). Messiah said: **This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the Adversary, the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I AM lifted up from the earth onto the cross, will draw all people to Myself.** Jesus did not mean here that everyone would be saved for He made it clear that some would be lost (Yochanan 5:28-29). He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die (John 12:31-33).¹²⁶⁸

The pious Greeks were puzzled and spoke up: **We have heard from the Torah 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" (John 12:34)?** The crowd immediately understood the literal portion of Jesus' claim that He, the Meshiach, would be lifted up. Their confusion reflected their theological problem concerning the **Expected One**, which persists among the Jews even to this day. The **Anointed One** described in the TaNaKh is a warrior king, who will vanquish Israel's foes, lead her into prosperity, and rule from the throne of David forever. Yet He is also a **suffering Servant** (see my commentary on **Isaiah Iz - See, My Servant Will Act Wisely and Be Lifted Up and Exalted**), who will die on behalf of His people. How can a dead man vanquish any foe and rule from any throne? To solve this problem the Jews developed a theology of two **Messiahs** (see **Mv - The Jewish Concept of Two Messiah's**).

When the Greeks brought up theological difficulties, Jesus did not answer their question directly. His reply directs them to the urgent necessity for acting on **the light** during the brief time that they have it. He told them: **You are going to have the light just a little while longer. The Son of Righteousness was about to be taken from the earth. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The darkness would soon overtake them like the sudden nightfall of the Near East, if they did not listen to Him. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going. Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light (Yochanan 12:35).** The way they were to make use of **the messianic Light** was by believing in the **Messiah Himself**. By doing so, **they** would be **children of light**, or spiritually enlightened men.

When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid Himself from the crowd (John 12:36). After the **Lamb of God** completed His revelation, He retreated to the seclusion of Bethany for the evening. Tomorrow would be a day of withering cross-examination coming

from all those who wanted to see **Him** dead: The Pharisees, Sadducees, Torah-Teachers, and Herodians. What a day it will be.

The remaining verses are a postscript in two parts. The First part, in verses 36-43, contains John's editorial comments regarding the state of unbelief among the Israelites.

Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in Him. 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" (John 12:37-38)? Yochanan said this unbelief was anticipated in Isaiah 53:1. Their spiritual blindness and unbelief were part of **God's** sovereign plan predetermined before **Christ** came so that through their rejection salvation might come to all the nations of the world.

For this reason they could not believe, because, as Isaiah says elsewhere: 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. Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about Him (John 12:39-41). John quoted Isaiah 6:10 to show that **YHVH** sovereignly intended to blind the Jewish people to the truth of Yeshua's message. These verses demonstrate that **God's** sovereign purposes have not been frustrated through the unbelief and opposition, but rather **His** purposes have succeeded.

This raises all sorts of theological questions such as, "How can **Ha'Shem** hold people responsible for their unbelief when it has been sovereignly determined by divine election?" Many of these mysteries will be cleared up when we get to heaven. But **God's** sovereignty never does away with personal responsibility.¹²⁶⁹ We can say "no" to **God** and make it stick. This is antimony. Two things that seem to be in opposition to each other, but both are true. For example, the Trinity is antimony. How can **ADONAI** be three distinct and different personalities, yet **One** (Deuteronomy 6:4)? It doesn't make sense to our finite minds. But that's what the Bible teaches. The same is true with **God's** sovereign choice and our free will.

Although the nation of Isra'el was spiritually blinded, there were many of the leaders, like Nicodemus (see Bv - **Jesus Teaches Nicodemus**), that believed in **the Light**. 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; for they loved human praise more than praise from God (John 12:42-43). But these closet believers were afraid to confess their faith publicly like Nicodemus (John 19:39-40) for fear of being put out of the synagogue and losing their wealth and being shunned by their families. They were not going to identify with someone the Pharisees

were determined to execute. Their desire to retain their influence among the people silenced any profession of faith in Christ as the Anointed One.

The second part, in verses 44-50, is a summary of our Great Rabbis' teaching throughout His public ministry.

Christ now spoke what were to be His last words to the multitude. Jesus' statement here was an invitation to place their faith in Him in view of the coming judgment. Then Jesus cried out: **Whoever believes in Me does not believe in Me only, but in the One who sent Me. The one who looks at Me is seeing the one who sent Me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in Me should stay in darkness (John 12:44-46).** The Prophet of Nazareth declared that whoever believed in Him also believed in **the Father** because He and **the Father** are **one**. Antimony. No one needs to stay in spiritual **darkness** any longer.

Messiah's primary purpose in coming into **the world** was to provide salvation **for the world**. But if people rejected that salvation, He then became their **Judge** because they rejected His message: **If anyone hears My words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. There is a judge for the one who rejects Me and does not accept My words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day.** That specific generation of Yeshua's day had heard Jesus' words and would be judged by those very same words. **For I did not speak on My own, but the Father who sent Me commanded me to say all that I have spoken. I know that His command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told Me to say (John 12:47-50).** But in any generation, people who hear the truth are held responsible for that truth. Christ's words are able to **judge** people because His **words** did not originate with Him but originated with **the Father** who sent Him. **The Lord's words lead to eternal life.**

The purpose of **ADONAI's** revelation in Jesus is positive: **He came to save and not to judge.** But the rejection of **God's** revelation inevitably brings a hardening in sin and ultimately in **HaShem's** judgment. In speaking of Jewish national unbelief, **Yochanan** balanced his theological explanation with **the Messiah's** serious exhortation to the nation to repent. In the words of Moshe: **For this is not a trivial matter for you; on the contrary, it is your life (Deuteronomy 32:47a).**¹²⁷⁰