

“If Christ be Lifted Up!”

John 12:20-33

Intro. – In the Gospel of John, Jesus is quoted using the expression “*lifted up*” on three separate occasions:

John 3:14-15 is the first of these. Here Jesus said, “*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even, so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.*” The reference being made here is to that incident recorded in Numbers 21:8-9 in which Moses is described as lifting up a brazen serpent in the wilderness that all who looked upon it might be saved from the death of the fiery serpents. Thus, as the bronze serpent, when lifted up, was a means of deliverance to those in the wilderness, so Christ speaks of Himself as a means of salvation to all men.

John 8:28 is the second of these passages. Here Jesus said, “*When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He...*” I.e. at the cross they would know He was the Christ!

Finally, our text is the third of these passages. Here immediately following the triumphal entry and just prior to the death of Christ, certain Greeks seek to see Him. Going through Philip and eventually Andrew, these Greeks hoped to see this One Whom so much talk concerned. Philip and Andrew came telling Jesus of this unusual request. What was Jesus’ response? “*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*” Then, likening Himself to a grain of wheat, Jesus begins to once again say He must die, in order to bear fruit. In other words, His death was going to make “the end,” as well as, “the beginning.” The end of Satan’s rule over all and the beginning of hope extended to all. All of which will be made possible “*If He (Christ) be lifted up!*”

Purpose: to show the uplifted Christ will draw men to Himself

Like a powerful magnet, the uplifted Christ draws men to Himself. But HOW and WHY? Let’s look/see:

I CHRIST WAS LIFTED UP

- this answers the question WHY – why does Christ draw men to Himself? Speaking in the past tense, we clearly see Christ was lifted up in the following ways:

A. Lifted Up on the Cross

- this is the central theme to this text and of man’s redemption. It demands/deserves our attention!
- 1. Forsaken by His disciples... Christ faced the Cross alone...
- 2. Forced through three illegal trials in one night... Christ opened NOT his mouth.
 - Illus. – like what happened in Boonville, Missouri. State police stopped Larry and Ruth Sheldon of Greenville, KY. While the officer is telling them he stopped them because their taillight was broken, the officer’s dog jumped into the car and sniffed out 105lbs of marijuana. The Sheldons got off scot free. The judge said the marijuana was inadmissible as evidence. Why? “The police dog did not have a warrant to search the car.”
- 3. Sentenced to a criminal’s death... He bore His own Cross
- 4. Yes, Christ was then lifted up on a cross and what resulted upon that Cross far exceeds what our finite minds can comprehend:
 - a. the sum total of punishment for man’s sins (yours/mine) was placed upon Him there
 - b. He in turn became the *propitiation* (perfect substitute/sacrifice) for those sins; thus, on Him the wrath of God the Father was directed.
 - c. it was here, while lifted up on the Cross that “Jesus paid it all” by dying for all!
- 5. This, however, is not the end of the Gospel – there is more; so much more!

B. Lifted Up from the Grave

- our Lord in speaking about His glorification looked beyond the Cross; thus, it behooves you and me to go and do likewise!
- 1. Three days after the cross – the tomb... was empty!
- 2. Eyewitnesses testify to the bodily resurrection of Christ – death had been conquered
- 3. Though buried in a tomb, Christ was lifted up from the grave – “Up From the Grave He Arose!”

C. Lifted Up Into Heaven

1. Leaving the splendors of Heaven, Christ came "...come to save that which was lost" (Mt 18:11).
2. The bride had been gaped, His mission completed, He then was lifted back into Heaven
3. Acts 1:11 "...*This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.*"

D. Lifted Up by His People

1. Those who had known the Christ and had seen Him die were convinced He had bodily risen.
2. They ate with Him, talked/walked with Him... They knew He was alive forever!
3. What resulted in this "resurrection faith"?
 - a. Peter, a denier, became a "ball of fire"...
 - b. other apostles became champions of the faith...
 - c. the *up lifted* Christ was now being lifted up by His people; thus, more and more being added...
 - d. the world was turned right side up by a bold, courageous, and thankful people because His people were lifting Him up before the world!

History, however did not end here, as we well know. Turning from past tense to present, may we now see:

II CHRIST IS LIFTED UP

- this will deal with the HOW Christ draws men to Himself – i.e. this is the application to the fact that Christ WAS lifted up. Just as He WAS lifted up, we believe He IS lifted up today! For example:

A. Lifted Up in the Church

- must qualify this statement because not every church is lifting up Christ – Scriptures identifies the Church who is lifting up Christ.
 1. This is the church that faithfully/unapologetically preaches and teaches the whole council of God...
 2. This is the church that places Christ as her Head...
 3. This is the church that has an ever growing, maturing, qualified and zealous leadership...
 4. This is the church intent upon seeking the lost and edifying/building the saints...
 5. This is the church that gives of its best to the Master... We could go on, but for now suffice it to say the church that is lifting up Christ is the church that recognizes Christ WAS lifted for them!

B. Lifted Up in the Home

- again, not every home is lifting up Christ... but the homes doing the following:
 1. This is the home where husband/wife love Christ first, then each other, then their kids...
 - Illus. – unlike what Diana Young of Waymouth, MA experienced with her husband. He had just come home from a five day hunting trip. Diana had prepared a romantic dinner, just for the two of them. As he was unpacking his bags, Diana heard her husband behind her say, "O baby, did I ever miss you!" Diana blushed and turned around to hug him only to discover he was caressing and kissing the TV remote...
 2. This is the home where the kids look at dad/mom and see the example directing them to Christ...
 3. This is the home where dad/mom set the priorities making matters of the Lord and His church more important than ball games, school functions, or family reunions...
 4. This is the home that takes/makes time to worship/serve the Lord together...

We could go on, but suffice it to say Christ IS lifted up in the home that recognizes He WAS lifted up!

C. Lifted Up in Individual Lives

1. This is the life that has died to sin and lives now for righteousness...
2. This is the life that crucifies SELF each and every day...
3. This is the life that depends on His strength alone...
4. This is the life that thankfully and accurately wears but one name – *Christian*
5. This is the life that never gives up, that keeps pressing on toward the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus the Lord!

Conclusion: Each and every passing day the world proves just how twisted it really is. For instance, remember Ike Turner. In October of 1996 (age 65) he attempted a comeback as a performer. He found it a little difficult to outlive his reputation as the abusive husband of Tina Turner. Ike insists, “I didn’t beat her anymore than the average guy beats his wife.” Listen to this. Britain’s Queen Elizabeth made a deal with the Duchess of York (you will remember her better as Fergie, divorced from Prince Andrew). The Queen offered to pay off Fergie’s debts (7.2 million dollars) if she, Fergie would give up custody of her two daughters.

We really do live in a twisted, perverted world don’t we? Yet, its in this type of world that if Christ be lifted up He attracts men/women/young people to Him. Let me conclude with an illustration of what I mean. Guess who said the following: “If Socrates would enter the room we should rise and do him honor. But if Jesus Christ came into the room we should fall down on our knees and worship Him.” Napoleon Bonaparte said this. In the later years of his life history tells us Napoleon gave tribute to the attracting power of Christ. When isolated on the island of St. Helena, Napoleon looked back over his own years of influence and power and began comparing them to the influence of Jesus Christ. Napoleon wrote after making this comparison the above quote and more. He said the power of Christ who ruled in the hearts and lives of men was infinitely superior to the influence of the sword which he, Napoleon had exerted over his life. Napoleon went on to confess that his influence had been an external influence that lasted but for a few short years, while the influence of Jesus had been an internal influence on the hearts of men and that it had lasted through the centuries.

Yes, even dictators and military men of the world experienced the power with which Christ has drawn men to Himself. But why, why does Christ draw men unto Himself? He WAS lifted up! And How, how does Christ draw men unto Himself? He IS lifted up!

May God help us to spur each other on to His cause knowing the certainty of His promises – If Christ be lifted up I will draw men unto Me!