

A Cross Before a Crown

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 12:17-26
Preached on: Sunday, January 18, 2015

If you will, take your Bibles and turn to John's Gospel, chapter 12 as we resume our verse-by-verse study of this amazing book. I've entitled my discourse to you "A Cross Before a Crown" and that will become abundantly clear as we go along. In the Providence of God, we have an amazing passage of Scripture before us that has profound implications for our lives and before I read it, may I say that, once again, we see a progressive disclosure of the person and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you will recall, in John 10, he is depicted as the Good Shepherd that would lay down his life for the sheep, all that the Father had given him. Then in John 11, he is called the resurrection and the life. He is the one that has power over death. Now as we come to John 12, he is the Messiah of Israel but also the Passover lamb, soon to be the grain of wheat that must fall into the earth and die that it might bear much fruit. He is therefore also depicted as the resurrected head of a new creation, the firstborn of many brethren.

So, we come to verse 17 of chapter 12. This is on the heels of him entering into Jerusalem with some 2 million worshipers praising him and here's what happens,

17 So the multitude, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, were bearing Him witness. 18 For this cause also the multitude went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him."

20 Now there were certain Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast; 21 these therefore came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." 22 Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus. 23 And Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. 25 He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal. 26 If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him."

By way of review and to make sure you understand the context, Jesus has just presented himself as the Messiah of Israel on the precise day that was prophesied some 600 years earlier by the prophet Daniel in Daniel 9:24-25. This of course, was a stunning prophecy

Website: otcr.org
Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1068/A_Cross_Before_A_Crown.html

A Cross Before a Crown

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 12:17-26

Preached on: Sunday, January 18, 2015

given to Daniel from God through the messenger, the angel Gabriel, a prophecy that reaches all the way to the end of the Gentile domination of the world. A prophecy that reaches into the time that we are getting very close to, the time of the antichrist, the time of the pre-kingdom judgments just before Christ returns. And consistent with that prophecy, 483 years after Artaxerxes decreed that Nehemiah could go back and restore and rebuild Jerusalem, Messiah the Prince entered into Jerusalem on Nisan 1030 A.D. He was riding on a young donkey that had never been ridden before which in and of itself was a preview of millennial blessing, blessing that will even impact the animal kingdom as God lifts the curse from them. And of course, this was an act consistent with Zechariah's prophecy that was given some 500 years earlier. And it is believed that over 2 million Israelites welcomed their new King shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

But friends, something else happened on that day, something that the multitudes were unaware of. On that particular day, as Jesus enters into Jerusalem, they were unwittingly taking in their Passover lamb to love him until the time of sacrifice which would have been on the 14th, all of this consistent with the Mosaic law. While his auspicious entrance into Jerusalem was his way of formally and officially presenting himself to Israel as their rightful King, we know according to Scripture that he was smitten with grief over their self-serving and superficial attitude toward him. He knew that they rejected him as the Savior from their sin. They didn't understand him to be the Passover lamb. They wanted a Savior from Rome. They wanted a military conqueror who would miraculously meet all of their needs. He knew that their elation would turn to hatred by Friday. Their Hosannas were merely words of the self-deceived, those caught up in a religious, emotional fervor like so many today. Therefore in Luke 19 we read that when he approached Jerusalem he saw the city and he wept over it saying, "If you had known in this day, even you the things which make for peace, but now they have been hidden from your eyes." It is therefore perhaps more accurate to call this "the tearful entry" than is "the triumphal entry."

So as we look at this text this morning, I would like to divide it into 3 categories that I hope will be helpful to you. We're going to see 1. A picture of contrasting hearts. 2. A principle modeled by seed. Thirdly, a prerequisite for salvation. So, you must join me now in your imagination. Let's go to Jerusalem with some 2 million worshipers. The scene would be almost chaotic as they look up on the Mount of Olives and they see the Lord Jesus Christ descending. The crowd is coming with him and the crowds all along the way, waiting to meet him. And as you look, you see a man riding upon a donkey but you must realize that the one on that donkey was the self-existent, pre-existent, uncreated Creator of the universe, the Incarnate Word of the living God, the Son of God. And so you have a sea of exultant worshipers coming out to escort him into the city and consistent with royal processions and military triumphs, they have paved the road with

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1068/A_Cross_Before_A_Crown.html

A Cross Before a Crown

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 12:17-26

Preached on: Sunday, January 18, 2015

their garments. They have cut boughs of the palm trees and laid them on the ground and they are also waving them as emblems of triumph and if you listen carefully in your imagination, you will hear the deafening shouts that reverberate around the mountains from miles. The average size of a football stadium in the United States will hold 70,000 people. Imagine about 30 of those stadiums chanting together at the same time, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"

Well, who were these people? Who are the characters? What are they thinking? What is motivating them? Fair questions. Why don't we go and find out from the Apostle John who was there and who is now some 50 years later reflecting under the inspiration of the Scripture as to what he saw. So 1. What I want to focus on with respect to these people is a picture of contrasting hearts. Here we will witness those with superficial faith, those with sincere faith, those with seeking faith and also those with scornful rejection. First, let's look at those with superficial faith beginning in verse 17, "So the people, who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead, continued to testify about Him. For this reason also the people went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign." Not because they heard that he had the words of eternal life but because they heard that he had performed this sign. Obviously word that he had raised Lazarus from the dead had spread like wildfire, spread primarily by those who had witnessed the miracle. Naturally, everyone wanted to see this miracle worker. Any man able to restore the dead back to life has to be from God so they are thinking, "This must be our long awaited Messiah." But like so many so-called Christians today, their enthusiasm for Jesus was motivated primarily out of a selfish desire for temporal blessing, not for undeserved mercy and grace, not for forgiveness of sins. Like many today, they wanted to use him, not worship him. Their self-righteous pride blinded them to their sin and so they saw no need for a Savior. They wanted a political hero, a military conqueror for a temporal, not an eternal kingdom. Like so many today, they were thrill-seekers, sensationalist's, desperate to witness another miracle, craving to be entertained by something supernatural. We see this all the time today, don't we? Like the millions that bought the lie perpetrated by the boy who claimed in a best-selling book that he had died and visited heaven after a car crash that left him paralyzed. Now maybe you've heard this week that he has recanted that claim saying that he made the whole thing up just to get attention. By the way, any discerning Christian would have known that because when you read his testimony you see that it does not square with Scripture.

So the hearts of the multitude that hailed Jesus as their King were motivated by superficial faith. Of course, this was proven just a few days later when their praise turned to rage as he dashed their hopes by talking about his death and their shouts of "Hosanna!" turned to "Crucify him! We will not have this man reign over us!"

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1068/A_Cross_Before_A_Crown.html

A Cross Before a Crown

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 12:17-26

Preached on: Sunday, January 18, 2015

Well, there were also secondly, those of sincere faith referring to the disciples. They are not mentioned here but along with Jesus there were some men and women who persevered and never stopped believing and trusting in him even in his death. They continued to bear fruit in keeping with repentance. By the way, that's always the mark of genuine saving faith, one of the key marks. In John 8:31, Jesus told those Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine." You know, throughout the New Testament, we see that the litmus test of true discipleship is continued obedience to the word and to the will of God; a determined, decisive, habitual surrender to the Lordship of Christ. True Christians will see him as more than just a Savior of their sin but they will see him as the Lord and the Master of their life. In John 14:15, Jesus says, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." In verse 23, he went on to say, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me."

Dear friends, you show me a Christian who cares nothing about knowing and obeying the word of God and I'll show you a man or a woman who is self-deceived and has no basis for their claim to be a follower of Christ. They have a dead faith that cannot save. In 1 John, beginning in verse 6 of chapter 1, he says this, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." He goes on to say in chapter 2, beginning in verse 3, "By this we know that we have come to know Him," in other words, here is what validates genuine saving faith, "if we keep His commandments." He went on to say, "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Then in verse 6 he says, "the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."

Well, the disciples, the true disciples of Jesus like John who wrote this Gospel, they loved Christ as Savior. They obeyed him as Lord and they manifested the virtues of Christ in their life. They persevered but thirdly, we see a picture of scornful rejection. Those Pharisees, lamps without oil. Those whitewashed sepulchers filled with dead men's bones. In our vernacular, we might say they were all sizzle but no steak. Verse 19, "So the Pharisees said to one another, 'You see that you are not doing any good; look, the world has gone after Him.'" Now, bear in mind, they had already plotted to kill him but they feared the reaction of the multitude. Obviously they hated Jesus, especially now that all of the people are following after him and so what you have here, the more radical Pharisees frantically saying to the milder Sadducees, "You see, you're not doing any good." The idea is: "You're not doing any good by your constant waiting around for the right moment to kill this guy. Look, the whole world is going after him." By the way, this would appear to be another example of irony that John uses a lot in his Gospel because in

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1068/A_Cross_Before_A_Crown.html

A Cross Before a Crown

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 12:17-26

Preached on: Sunday, January 18, 2015

some sense, the whole world would now begin to go after him, beginning with the Greeks who we see even in this text are seeking after him and like so many today, the Pharisees illustrate those that are filled with self-righteous pride. Many times the religious elite unwilling to acknowledge their sin, unwilling to admit their need for a Savior, desperate to cling to power and to prestige and typically all of that is manifested in the ostentatious garb and all of the things that they do to draw attention to themselves.

Of course, the Jewish leaders feared the Romans. They were afraid that the Romans were going to see this and see it as an insurrection and come along and with an iron fist just squash it. By the way, it's a miracle that that didn't happen. But they also knew that if the Romans saw this as an insurrection, they would remove the religious leaders from leadership. They didn't want that to happen. To be sure, Jesus' massive following only fueled the fires of jealousy and murder, wicked attitudes justified by hypocrisy that was so powerful they actually thought they were doing the will of God. We see that today in so-called religious people who will do acts of violence that is nothing short of demonic and do it because they believe they are serving their God.

Finally, we also see some true, genuine, seeking faith. I shouldn't say it's genuine in that it's fully developed but it's seeking, the Spirit of God is at work. Verse 20, it says, "Now there were some Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast." Let me explain what's happening here. Evidence of Israel's utter rejection of her Messiah would be made evident in just a few days when they called for his crucifixion and yet isn't it interesting that while the Jewish leaders are scheming to kill him, Gentiles are beginning to seek after him. Because of Israel's rejection, we can see that God will begin to move more aggressively toward the Gentiles. That was Paul's major calling. In fact, James tells us in Acts 15:14 that he would "concern Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name." Now, John tells us here that these Greeks were "among those who were going up to worship at the feast." The grammar in the original language indicates that this was something that they were routinely doing; they were routinely joining in the pilgrimages with the Jews. It could be translated "they were accustomed to going up with the Jews." Now, whether or not they were full-fledged proselytes of Judaism, we don't know. The text does not say but we do know historically that there were Greeks that were fascinated with the Jewish religion that were fed up with all of the idolatry that they were a part of and many of them would come to these feasts.

So in verse 21, "these," referring to the Greeks, "then came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.'" In this context here, the verb indicates "We wish to have an interview. We wish to speak with Jesus." And given Jesus' reply, it is obvious that they wish to hear from Jesus more about the subject of salvation and it would appear, therefore, that the winds of conviction were beginning to blow in the lives of these Greeks as the Spirit of God caused them to seek

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1068/A_Cross_Before_A_Crown.html

A Cross Before a Crown

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 12:17-26

Preached on: Sunday, January 18, 2015

after Christ. Here friends, we see the seeds of a coming harvest of Gentile souls being planted. We see the beginning of these other sheep that the Good Shepherd talked about that he must gather into the fold. Here we see the Gospel spreading to the whole world as it continues to do today. You know, this is truly remarkable for these Greeks to come out of that pagan idolatry, to even be interested in the God of Israel and it's even more amazing to see them seeking after Jesus. It's an amazing thing, isn't it, to see any sinner seek after Jesus? In fact, Jesus has already said that, "No one can even come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him and I will raise him up on the last day."

Now, it's a fair question to ask: why did they come to Philip and not go directly to Jesus? Well, the text does not tell us but I believe we can make a tenable hypothesis as to what was going on. Bear in mind, by now Jesus has dismounted from the donkey, he has taken possession of the Temple. In fact, as many as 2 days have passed between verse 19 and verse 20. This means Jesus would have, once again, cleansed the temple as he has done before. This is described in Mark 11:15-19. If you read that passage, you will see that he, once again, comes in and he drives out everybody that's buying and selling. He overturns the tables of the money changers. It talks about how he overturns the seats of those who were selling doves and he wouldn't even permit anybody to carry goods through the temple. So he has absolutely taken it over. Then in verse 17 of Mark 11, we read that, "He began to teach and say to them, 'Is it not written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations"? But you have made it a robber's den. The chief priests and the scribes heard this, and began seeking how to destroy Him," but then Mark tells us that, "they were afraid of Him for all the multitude was astonished at His teaching. When evening came, they would go out of the city." In other words, Jesus and his disciples would leave the city. They probably would go back to Bethany up the Mount of Olives to spend the night with Mary, Martha and Lazarus.

Now, you must understand in order to get the full picture of what's happening here that it was the pattern of Jesus' ministry to test the genuineness of the multitudes when they insisted that they were willing to accept him as their Messiah as they are doing here. And that litmus test was always taking possession of the Temple and then seeing how they react. This is what he did here. This happens on the 2 days following his triumphal yet tearful entry into Jerusalem. In fact, Matthew records that when Jesus reached Jerusalem and the temple in chapter 21, verse 15, "The chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' they became indignant and said to Him, 'Do You hear what these children are saying?'" To which he replied, "Yes; have you never read, 'Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself?'" This is the scene.

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1068/A_Cross_Before_A_Crown.html

A Cross Before a Crown

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 12:17-26

Preached on: Sunday, January 18, 2015

So the Greeks probably approached Philip out of a sense of reverent fear and awe of Jesus, perhaps even uncertain if he would receive Gentiles. And perhaps because Philip had a Greek name and we see from the text here that he was from Bethsaida, that's up in northern Galilee and that's in the region of the Decapolis which means "ten cities," ten Greek cities where a lot of Greeks lived and that's probably where these Greeks were from. But it's also important to understand: Jesus was probably in the inner court of the temple. That's where the Jews would go but this was off-limits to the Gentiles. By threat of certain death, Gentiles were forbidden to pass beyond a posted barrier wall that separated the inner court from the outer court of the Gentiles.

So in the Providence of God, they come to Philip. Verse 22 it says, "Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and told Jesus." Now, why did he go to Andrew first? We don't know. Perhaps he was still concerned about Jesus' command in Matthew 10 to avoid going to the Gentiles and the Samaritans. There he says, "But rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Maybe they were thinking that was still in effect somehow here. Moreover, bear in mind that the disciples were still confused as to what was really going on. They had been hearing Jesus talk about his death and yet you have this amazing entry and all these people hailing him as the Messiah. No doubt they were thinking in their minds, "Is Jesus about to establish the earthly kingdom that we so desperately want? Is this request from the Greeks a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy where God said that in the kingdom age, Israel will be made 'A light of the nation so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth'?" Isaiah 49:6. They were unsure. Perhaps these were the kinds of things going through their mind that caused Philip, therefore, to hesitate and to go and talk with Andrew.

Well, they must have discussed it briefly because we see now that the 2 of them come to Jesus on behalf of the Greeks. It's intriguing to me that Jesus does not respond directly to the Greeks. We don't know if he even met with them privately or personally but we do know, according to verse 29, that a multitude were listening to him. They would have probably been in that group, the Greeks. So probably what has happened and again, this is a bit of conjecture but it fits the scene, Jesus probably comes to the edge of the inner court. If you could see how the temple was constructed, there was a small barrier wall not too high, I'm going to say maybe 5 feet, and you could step down to the outer court of the Gentiles but it would give him a nice podium from which to address this larger court of the multitudes so they probably heard his answer. But what is certain is that their request triggered a very solemn pronouncement and, frankly, an unexpected one until you look at it closely. He says in verse 23, "And Jesus answered them, saying, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.'" Here we come to the second point in our little outline: a principle modeled by seed. What he's saying here is, "The climactic time of my death, my resurrection and exaltation that had always been future, it has finally dawned." What we see is that in his shame, he's going to be glorified. As the prophet Isaiah said concerning

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1068/A_Cross_Before_A_Crown.html

A Cross Before a Crown

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 12:17-26

Preached on: Sunday, January 18, 2015

the sin-bearing servant in Isaiah 52:13, "Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. Just as many were astonished at you, My people, So His appearance was marred more than any man And His form more than the sons of men." In other words, Isaiah prophesied many years before that God's servant, the Lord Jesus, would hang upon this tree and that the cruel torture would be so severe that the people would be astonished to look upon him because he would no longer even look human yet by his priestly work of cleansing, Isaiah went on to say, "Thus He will sprinkle many nations, Kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; For what had not been told them they will see, And what they had not heard they will understand."

My friends, I have to pause and tell you that I long for the day of ultimate triumph when the once despised servant, our Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, will ascend his throne. When the pompous human leaders of the world will stand in speechless awe, in paralyzing fear as they witness the unveiling of the power and the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ that is so routinely mocked in our world. I long for that day and as Isaiah tells us, it will be something that the leaders of the world, many of them will have never heard of nor understand.

So Jesus says, the hour for the Son of Man to be glorified has come. Friends, never has Christ been more glorious than when he hung upon the cross. The Greeks wouldn't have understood the profound significance of all this until after his death, after his resurrection and Jesus knew this. Yes, the Greeks wanted to see Jesus, they wanted to know more of his message of salvation but Jesus knew that in order for them to truly see the truth, in fact, the only possible way for the Gospel to become operative in their life was for them to behold the Lamb of God. As he says in verse 32, "lifted up from the earth." This is how he would draw all men to himself. He knew that the Greeks as well as all of the people, must see him not only as the Messiah of Israel but as the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world and only then would they be able to fully understand the truth of the Gospel, the Gospel of Christ that would make a way for both Jew and Gentile to become a part of a new covenant community.

I want you to notice Jesus describes himself here as the "Son of Man," one of his favorite titles to use of himself and certainly as a man, he died for men, enduring perfectly and faithfully to the very end. But we also know that this is a messianic title. It's found, for example, in Daniel's prophecy in connection with the establishment of the kingdom. In Daniel 7, beginning in verse 13, we read, "I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed."

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1068/A_Cross_Before_A_Crown.html

A Cross Before a Crown

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 12:17-26
Preached on: Sunday, January 18, 2015

So you must understand here in this scene in John 12, we see Jesus alluding to this very thing but before the earthly kingdom ruled by Christ can be established where all the peoples, nations and men of every language might serve him, the Son of Man must suffer and he must die for all who would be a part of that kingdom, therefore a cross must come before a crown. Verse 24, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit." Here Jesus is going to explain more fully, more graphically, what he means and here he makes it clear that he has not come to conquer Rome, he has come to conquer sin, Satan and death through his own death. Suffering must proceed glory. Before he could establish his earthly kingdom, he must finish the work that the Father had sent him to do, namely, to reconcile sinners to himself through his substitutionary death for all that the Father had given him as he said in John 6.

Now, the illustration that he uses to describe all of this would have been well understood in that agrarian society. We understand it easily enough in our day. If a seed is not sown in the ground, it will remain alone and produce no fruit. We all understand that. Only when a seed dies and is resurrected in a plant can it release its life and produce many more lives like it and so Jesus' point is simply this: "My death is going to be the germination of a resurrected seed that will yield an abundant harvest of souls and in my humiliation, I will be glorified. In my suffering, all eyes will behold my attributes, my love, my commitment to justice, my faithfulness, my omnipotence." Oh dear Christian, what a marvelous truth. Our Savior is the resurrected head of a new creation and by his grace, we are part of it. If any man is in Christ he is, what? He is a new creature. He is a new creation. What a picture of our union with Christ.

Now, of course, all of this talk about dying shattered the hopes of his disciples and, certainly, the multitudes because they all craved the kingdom. They thought that he was about to destroy Rome and ascend his throne and this would result in escalating hostility toward Jesus by the fickle multitude and eventually it would end in their call for his violent, his ignominious death. But his true disciples would persevere but not without suffering. We all know that, don't we? We must all endure in this fallen world that is opposed to Christ, that is opposed to all who belong to him. Jesus knows this. He knows their hearts are confused, the true disciples; he knows that there are those who are wondering, "How can I be saved? How can I enter the kingdom?" All of these things are going on so Jesus warns them and he warns all of us about the dangers of self-will, the dangers of selfishness and cowardice and the fear of man and our proclivity to love ourselves and to love this world more than him.

So this leads us to our third and final point: here we see a prerequisite for salvation meaning here's the proper attitude of repentance; here is the proper heart attitude required

Website: otcr.org
Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1068/A_Cross_Before_A_Crown.html

A Cross Before a Crown

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 12:17-26

Preached on: Sunday, January 18, 2015

of one who receives the gift of salvation. Verse 25, Jesus says, "He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal." Now, we must understand that the concept of love and hate that is used here and in other passages in the New Testament are Semitic idioms, Jewish idioms that were used to describe fundamental preferences. So for example when he says "to love your life," he's saying "to prefer yourself." To love your life means to prefer yourself over the will of God and the priorities of his kingdom. To put it a little bit more powerfully and certainly this is consistent with the meaning here and in other passages, it means to have an idolatrous obsession with self; a rabid commitment to self-will; an utter disregard for God's sovereign rule and his holy law. Of course, all of this is at the heart of sin and, sadly, this describes many who call themselves Christians and yet it is obvious when you look at their life that they are obsessed with self. They have no appetite for the word of God. They have no real desire to even know, much less do the will of God.

They, as Jesus says "love their life and he who loves his life loses it." We know according to Scripture that the natural man, the unsaved man, is already alienated from God. He is at enmity with God. Because of his love of self, he will therefore lose his life. In other words, he will lose his life to eternal death. By contrast, Jesus says, "he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal." In other words, he who denies himself, he who refuses to pander to the passions of the flesh and self-will, the person who rejects this world system characterized by rebellion and wickedness and death, that person that desperately longs to serve Christ, this person will keep his life. In other words, he will preserve it throughout eternity by God's saving grace.

This is the general heart attitude necessary for salvation and certainly the proof of it. Frankly, as we look at this, here we see an analogous principle that should operate in the life of every disciple of Christ, even as it did in the life of Christ and it's simply this: apart from the death of Christ, there can be no life. Likewise, unless we die to self, we cannot have eternal life. Jesus said in Luke 9:23, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself," literally renounce himself. "Your agenda is out, now I become the center of gravity around which your life orbits and by my grace and my power, I can make that happen in your life." He says, "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it." Likewise, in Luke 14:26 and following, Jesus says, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple." Hate in the sense of somehow preferring them and all of their priorities over worshiping and serving me, "he cannot be My disciple." He goes on to say, "Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1068/A_Cross_Before_A_Crown.html

A Cross Before a Crown

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 12:17-26

Preached on: Sunday, January 18, 2015

man began to build and was not able to finish." He gives another example, "Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So then," Jesus says, "none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions." Not that we must do that but that we must be willing to do that, that the things of this world are no longer a priority, even our own life. What matters is God and his glory.

Well, back to John 12. After giving them this warning in verse 25, he follows up with a precious word of encouragement, verse 26, "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him." In other words, self must be replaced with Christ. Paul talks about a putting off self and putting on Christ. Again, he's saying, "Serve me, not yourself. Follow me, not your own lusts, not the people of the world." 1 John 2:6, "The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked." That's the idea. Are you familiar with a chameleon? They are amazing little animals, aren't they? I'm fascinated to watch them. Dear friends, even as a chameleon changes into the color of that which he looks upon, even so we change into the image of Christ the more we gaze upon him.

And for those who truly manifest these things, he offers these wonderful promises. He first of all gives us the promise of heaven. He says, "Where I am, there shall my servant also be." Dear friends, we cannot even begin to imagine the splendor, the glory, the majesty of being in the presence of our Triune God. By the way, later he will repeat this. In John 14:3 where he tells his disciples, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." This is an amazing picture of the rapture of the church. It's not a picture of Christ coming to the earth with his saints in judgment and in power and in glory to establish his kingdom, that's not what this text is talking about. This speaks of the rapture of the church where he comes to gather his own who are alive and raise the bodies of those who have died and take us all to glory. Remember biblically, that in the rapture of the church, he meets us in the air; we meet him in the air. He comes for his saints. At his Second Coming, he comes with his saints. By the way, this is the next event on the prophetic timetable and I have to tell you that I long for that event every waking moment of my life.

But second, he promises that the Father will honor those who serve the Son. Folks, do you serve the Son? Or are you serving yourself? Only you can answer that. Beloved, the cost of discipleship – you must understand this – the cost of discipleship, of truly following Christ, is extremely high but the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1068/A_Cross_Before_A_Crown.html

A Cross Before a Crown

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 12:17-26

Preached on: Sunday, January 18, 2015

So let me paraphrase all of this to make it abundantly clear. As we look at this text and many others like it, we see that if you are truly a disciple of Christ, here's what your heart will reveal: the person of Christ will astound you. The love of Christ will humble you. The grace of Christ will amaze you. And the power of Christ will encourage you. The authority of Christ will control you. And the word of Christ will captivate you. And the coming of Christ will consume you because you know that when he comes, you will see him in all of his glory and you also know according to what Jesus says here, that the Father will honor you because you have served the Son.

Well, within a few days after Jesus spoke these words, he would give his life for all that the Father had given him in eternity past. The dividing wall of hostility between the Jews and the Gentiles would be torn down. Ephesians 2:14, we read that, "For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity." Soon these Greeks that wanted to see him would understand that through his death they would become fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel, Ephesians 3:6. Wonderful, wonderful truths, things that awaited them. This was Jesus' answer all modeled in this picture of a seed.

Folks, may I challenge you in closing to examine your life. You must ask yourself the hard question: am I kind of the typical phony Christian that plays church, that is obsessed with self or do I truly love and serve Christ? Because you must know this: you will never enter into the glories of heaven unless you die to your shameless obsession with self and displace that fixation with the person and the work of Christ, the one who endured physical, mental and spiritual pain beyond the experience of any other man. The one who bore in his body the sins of all who would believe in him, bearing specifically and literally those sins as if they were his own. The one who suffered the wrath of God in our place so that every man for whom he died will never have anyone say to him that you owe for this sin, that you must be punished. That will never happen. It was all paid in full by a substitute.

Oh dear friend, are you trusting in him? Are you living for him? Only a fool would do otherwise. Know this: his sacrifice still avails for all who trust in him. Let's pray together.

Website: otcr.org

Online Sermons: otcr.org/content/sermon/1068/A_Cross_Before_A_Crown.html

A Cross Before a Crown

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 12:17-26
Preached on: Sunday, January 18, 2015

Father, we thank you for these words of truth that are so compelling, so life-changing and yet such utter folly to those who have never been born again. Lord, we pray that if there are those within the sound of my voice that by your grace you will do your work, that you will draw them unto yourself and give them the gift of faith. I pray that the Spirit of God will cause these truths to penetrate every one of our hearts so that we can bear much fruit for your glory. In Jesus' name. Amen.

We pray you have been edified by this presentation. You have been listening to Pastor, Bible Teacher and Author, Dr. David Harrell. For more information or for other messages from Dr. Harrell, please visit the Olive Tree Christian Resources website at otcr.org.