

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **The Effects of the Cross John 12:31-36**

Among world religions, Islam ranks as the fastest growing religious faith. This growth rate is demographically driven by higher birth rates in the third world rather than by an increase in conversion growth. But even so, this does not change the fact that Islam at the present time is growing faster than Christianity. How fast have they grown? Worldwide, the number of Muslims has doubled since 1970 to 1.2 billion adherents. Religious researchers project that by 2025 there will be approximately 2 billion Muslims and approximately 3 billion so-called Christians out of a world population of 8 billion.

How long will it take Islam to overtake Christianity in respect to its total number of adherents? Long-range statistical analysis seems to indicate that if nothing changes, Islam will overtake Christianity in sheer size by 2200. This should not be particularly exciting for you if you are a Christian. How could it be in light of the fact that we believe that our faith is true and the faith of Islam is false?

So, what can we do to change this present dynamic? It is really very simple. We as children of light should live like children of light. And this should not be simply a hope but our expectation, when we consider Christ's work on the cross. This brings us back to our study of the Gospel of John.

We are presently studying **John 12**. This chapter began with a dinner party in Bethany at the home of Simon the leper. This party and everything that occurred at this party was recorded for us in **John 12:1-11**.

The next incident that is recorded for us in John 12 is the triumphal entry recorded for us in **John 12:12-19**. This entrance by Jesus into the city of Jerusalem took place the day after the dinner party. It was truly an impressive entrance.

As Jesus came down from the city of Bethany, just east of the city of Jerusalem, He and His disciples were met by tens of thousands of Jewish pilgrims waving palm branches and crying out, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel." These tens of thousands of Jewish pilgrims by their words were declaring Him to be the Messiah of Israel, and the waving of the palm branches would have communicated their hope that Jesus as their Messiah would now perhaps, through force if necessary, overthrow their Roman oppressors and seize the throne that was rightfully His.

Jesus, of course, had no intention of doing this, but this very impressive entrance that He Himself actually orchestrated was necessary in order to force the Jewish religious leaders not only to seize Him but also to execute Him during the Passover. It was necessary for Him to be executed during the Passover in order for Him to fulfill many various Old Testament prophecies.

The next incident in **John 12** concerned a certain group of Greeks who asked Phillip, one of the disciples of Christ, if he could arrange a meeting with Jesus. After a slight delay, caused by his consultation with Andrew, another disciple of Christ, they told Jesus of the request. This request

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and the disciples delay in relaying the request apparently acted as a trigger in moving Jesus to talk about His death in a way that He had never done before. We saw this in **John 12:20-26**.

These words that Christ used to speak of His death certainly would not be without effect. And we have begun to see this in the passage that we are now examining, which is **John 12:27-36**. So, what exactly were these various effects associated with Christ's words about His cross?

First of all, there was the effect of Christ's words about the cross upon Himself (John 12:27-30). Let me read these verses for you. **“Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour. (28) Father, glorify Thy name.’ There came there a voice out of heaven: ‘I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.’ (29) The multitude therefore, who stood by and heard it, were saying that it had thundered; others were saying, ‘An angel has spoken to Him.’ (30) Jesus answered and said, ‘This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes.”** So, what was the effect of Christ's words about the cross upon Himself? He was greatly troubled, but even though He was greatly troubled, it did not prevent Him from remaining focused on what was always most important to Him and that was that His Father's name would be glorified and there was no better place for Him to do that than His cross.

Is the cross of Christ glorious? Absolutely! Hopefully the cross will always be glorious to us. Hopefully we will think of the cross when we get up in the morning, during the day, and at night when we are meditating on the Lord during the night watches.

We are now ready to consider the next effect of Christ's words about His cross, the effect of Christ's words about the cross upon the world (John 12:31-33). There are actually three different effects that Christ mentions that are related to the world. I would hope that as we consider these effects that we might be impressed with the urgency that we should feel in terms of responding properly to the message of cross so that we as the sons of light might shine brightly in the midst of this world's darkness.

So, what is the first effect? The first effect of the cross on the world was judgment (John 12:31). Let me read for you the first part of **John 12:31**. **“Now judgment is upon this world.”**

The world thought they were passing judgment on Christ when they nailed Him to the cross, but the truth was they were passing judgment upon themselves. How did they do this?

They judged themselves because the ultimate and climatic rejection of Christ at the cross perpetuated and accentuated the death sentence that God had already pronounced. It was in that sense that Jesus tells His disciples, **“Now judgment is upon this world.”**

It certainly did not have to be this way. Let me read for you **John 3:17-18**. **“For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. (18) He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”**

If you are here this weekend and if you have not yet by faith established a personal relationship with Christ, know this, you have already been judged.

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You have been measured and found wanting and any subsequent rejection of Christ will only perpetuate and accentuate the sentence of death that is resting upon you until that sentence of death is carried out.

Perhaps the sentence of death will not be carried out today. Perhaps it will not be carried out tomorrow. But one day it will be carried out. Let me read for you **Revelation 20:11-15**. “**And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. (12) And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. (13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. (14) And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. (15) And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**” This ultimate and final judgment is not something that may happen; it will happen. It is only a matter of time.

Therefore, people who have not yet by faith received Christ are like dead men walking. They are still eating, breathing, and enjoying certain creature comforts, but their time is running out. And that is the point that Jesus is attempting to communicate to His disciples when He tells them, “**Now judgment is upon this world.**” May God give us the grace to see the lost of this world in this way and may God bless us with a heart of compassion toward them.

But this was not the only effect on the world communicated in the words of Christ about His cross. Let us consider a second effect.

The second effect of the cross on the world was that the ruler of this world would be cast out (John 12:31). Let us continue to read **John 12:31**. “**Now judgment [God’s sentence of death] is upon this world [And then what does Jesus say?]; now the ruler of this world shall be cast out.**”

So, who exactly was this ruler? The ruler of the world that Jesus told His disciples would be cast out was Satan (John 14:30; 16:11).

And what did Jesus tell us would happen to this ruler? He said that the ruler of this world would be cast out. You might think that this is referring to Satan’s ultimate destruction when he is cast from this earth into the Lake of Fire, but I don’t believe that this is so. I believe that Jesus is referring to a different casting out. Perhaps a little background would help us to understand what I mean.

Ever since Satan was kicked out of heaven, he has been roaming about to and fro upon the earth according to **Job 1:7** and **2:2**. But we should not think that he has been roaming about aimlessly. Rather he has been seeking to rule over a kingdom of lost souls, who because of their sin have been cut off and alienated from God. With this in mind I believe that we can now understand what Christ meant when Jesus said, “**Now the ruler of this world [referring to Satan] shall be cast out.**” So, what did He mean?

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When Jesus spoke of Satan being cast out, He was speaking about how His death on the cross would cast Satan out from his seat of power over his kingdom of lost souls (Colossians 2:15). The great dragon, through Christ's death on the cross, in a very real sense, has been defanged. He still has a kingdom, but his ability to rule this kingdom with absolute power has been removed from him.

Though the cross might have seemed like a victory for Satan, it was, in fact, His defeat. In one sense Satan was already loosing his grip over his kingdom during Christ's public ministry. Let me read for you **Luke 10:17-18**. **“And the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ (18) And He said to them, ‘I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.’”**

This experience of the seventy disciples certainly pictures for us an ebbing of Satan's power to control and to dominate his subjects during the earthly ministry of Christ, but the fundamental smashing of his reign of tyranny actually took place where? The actual smashing of Satan's reign of tyranny took place at the cross.

Let me read for you **Colossians 2:13-14**. **“And when you were dead in your transgressions and uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, (14) having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”**

And now listen to **Colossians 2:15**. **“When He [God] had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.”** And who was the “Him?” Christ! And how did He win that victory? He won that victory over Satan at the cross.

If Christ had not died on the cross, the whole world would have forever remained in Satan's kingdom under the Satan's rule.

But Jesus did die and made it possible for people to leave the kingdom of Satan and no longer be controlled by him. Hopefully you and I are some of these people who have by faith in Christ been delivered from the kingdom of Satan and his tyrannical reign.

So, now let me ask you a question. If someone, based on the death of Christ, has chosen, in fact, to leave Satan's kingdom, does this mean that Satan will leave him alone? And what is the answer to that? Absolutely not! Those who have left Satan's kingdom, though they will never return to that kingdom again because of God's grace, are still a clear threat to him. Therefore, because those who have chosen to leave his kingdom may be instrumental in freeing others from his grasp, if they would in the power of the Spirit consistently put Christ and His gospel on display, they will be relentlessly attacked.

But just because he is attacking doesn't mean we will inevitably be defeated. In fact, we should not expect that he would be able to keep us down for long. Why? What does **1 John 4:4** tells us? **“Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.”**

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The second effect of the cross on the world was that Satan would be cast out. What did Jesus tell His disciples? “**Now** [in light of my cross] **the ruler of this world** [or in other words Satan] **shall be cast out.**” But there is still one more effect of His cross on the world.

The third effect of Christ’s cross on the world is that having been raised up, He will draw all men to Himself (John 12:32-33). Let me read for you **John 12:32.** “**And I, if I be lifted up from earth, will draw all men to Myself.**”

What did Jesus mean when He spoke of being lifted up from the earth? “Lifted up” (HUSOO) is so often times used of exaltation that the possibility of misunderstanding could have arisen, so Jesus, in John 12:33, explained that it referred to His crucifixion.

Let me read for you **John 12:33.** “**But He was saying this** [about being lifted up] **to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.**” So, clearly Jesus was talking about His crucifixion when He spoke about Himself being lifted up from the earth rather than His ascension and ultimate glorification. So, what does Jesus tell His disciples would be the effect of His crucifixion?

Jesus told His disciples that when He was lifted up or crucified that He would draw men to Himself. So, what exactly did Christ mean by this?

When Jesus told His disciples if He were lifted up or crucified He would draw men to Himself, He meant that He would draw men to Himself for salvation (John 3:14-15).

How do we know this? We know this because Jesus had already told us this very thing in **John 3:14-15.** Let me read these verses for you. “**And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; (15) that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life.**”

So, what did Jesus mean when He said that if He would be lifted up that He would draw men to Himself? He meant that He would draw men to Himself for salvation. But Jesus did not simply say that He would draw men to Himself, He said that He would draw “all” men to Himself.

So, what exactly did Christ mean by this? Did He mean that every person would be saved? When Jesus said that if He were lifted up He would draw on all men to Himself, He did not mean all men without exception would be saved, but rather all men without distinction. In other words, it would not only be Jews who would be drawn to Him for salvation but Gentiles as well. This fits in nicely with what John had already recorded earlier about the Greeks who had asked Phillip if they could meet with Christ.

So, we have now seen the effect of the cross upon Jesus in **John 12:27-30** and also the effect of the cross on the world in **John 12:28-33.** But we are not yet done. There is one more effect, the effect of the cross on those who heard Him (John 12:34-36). Let us begin by reading **John 12:34.** “**The multitude therefore answered Him, ‘We have heard out of the Law that the Christ is to remain forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?’”**

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I don't know how Christ's disciples understood His earlier statement about being lifted up but it is certainly clear that the Jewish multitude certainly understood it as a reference to His death.

This created a theological problem for them since their understanding of Jewish theology up to that point allowed for the death of the Messiah.

So they asked what could very well be an honest question at the end of **John 12:34**. **“Who is this Son of Man?”** The Jewish multitude in John 12:34 was asking Jesus to help them reconcile what He has said about His death with what they have up to this point believed about the Messiah.

The Lord responded to their question with an ominous sense of urgency. Let me read for you **John 12:35-36**. **“Jesus therefore said to them, ‘For a little while longer the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes. (36) While you have the light, believe in the light, in order that you may become sons of light.’”**

Our Lord, in responding to the multitude, in essence, told them in John 12:35-36, “You have heard my message. Light or darkness, make your choice. If we make the right choice, what will we become? Sons of light.

Hopefully, there is not a single person here this weekend who, in the shadow of Christ's cross and the effects He as detailed for us in **John 12:27-36**, has not yet made this decision to come to Christ and become a son of light.

Will Islam overtake Christianity in the sheer number of its adherents? I don't know. But I do know this that if we as the sons of light display Christ by the way we live and boldly proclaim His gospel, it is far less likely.

May God give us the grace as the sons of light to live like sons of light so that we might display Christ and boldly proclaim the saving power of His cross.