

The Character of Jesus 76
Greeks Seek Jesus
(John 12:20 - 50)

- Characteristic: Prepared for an unexpected audience
 - The location, most likely, is in the Court of the Gentiles. The previous scene took place in the Court of the Women (the widow's two mites, Mark 12:41 – 44 and Luke 21:1 – 4) where donations were made. But, as non-Jews, these Greeks would not be permitted beyond the Court of the Gentiles.
 - (20) These Gentiles came to the Temple to worship, so they very likely had a good knowledge of the God of Israel. Perhaps they were proselytes or were in the process. Whether they had traveled some distance or lived in Jerusalem is not given.
 - (21 – 22) No explanation of why Philip was their contact, or why Andrew got involved, is given. Perhaps they remembered that Jesus had said that He came only to the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 10:5 – 6, 15:24). But, He had dealt with non-Jews before (Samaritans, the Syrophenician woman, and the town of Legion).
 - I presume that Jesus' response in verses 23 – 50 was directed to those Gentiles. If that assumption were not made, then verse 22 would just end with no resolution of that story. Since Jesus did not interact with Gentiles routinely, the explanation that follows should be taken as a summary of the work of the Messiah, a compact but complete message.
 - (23 – 27) Message: despite the Triumphal Entry and the crowds listening to His teaching, "glory" (His parade of what made Him important: His character) would be His death, because "fruit" would be the result. Followers must be the same. Jesus admitted to being troubled by this path (therefore, the followers, too), but giving into the fear would defeat His purpose.
 - (28 – 30) Words from above may also be found in Matthew 3:17 (His baptism) and Matthew 17:5 (Transfiguration). A similar lack of understanding by others is also in Acts 22:9 (Saul on the road to Damascus). Jesus acknowledged that the voice was not for Him, but for "them," which I assume to be the Greeks who came to see Him.
 - (31) "Judgment here is "crisis," not as in Judgment Day but that, as the parallelism made with the next sentence reveals, this is the crisis point between Satan and God concerning control over the world. Satan will be cast down from his "ruler of this world" status and be replaced by Jesus.
 - (32 – 33) "Lifted up" was a euphemism for crucifixion. Jesus' execution, rather than being the end of His movement, would be His drawing card for the type of followers He seeks (as described in verses 23 – 27).
 - (34) The audience could not reconcile execution with a victorious and eternal leader.
 - (35 – 41) Rather than trying to explain how this execution would be a stimulus rather than a hindrance, Jesus appealed to the fact that He was the "light." He had presented sufficient evidence in satisfying predictions and performing miracles to earn a little trust. See verses 37 – 41. He was appealing to the crowd to just go with it based on what they have seen. His warning was that failing to make a choice very soon could quite likely cause them to miss the point. Note the passages that say that unbelievers cannot understand much of this spiritual kingdom (1 Corinthians 2:14, 2 Corinthians 3:15, John 1:5, Hebrews 10:22).

- Application: Prepared for an unexpected audience
 - Do we have a paragraph-sized response to summarize Jesus for interested parties we did not expect to encounter?
 - What are the most important points to make?
 - What can an outsider understand?
 - Should we mention difficulties or commitment right away?
 - Do we tell people that Jesus is in control of this world despite the brokenness of it?
 - Are we afraid they will blame Jesus for the brokenness?
 - Is it easier to blame it on Satan, even though Jesus deposed him?
 - How do we explain, for example, governments being set up and torn down by Jesus (Romans 13:1 – 7). How do we explain terrible accidents and the results of the actions of evil people?
 - How many reasons are there for the unjust death of Jesus?
 - Payment of the debts of all people to justice
 - Walking by faith into obvious pain because it needs to be done.
 - Preferring to move on and be in heaven.
 - Serving others without regard to the effect on me (love).
 - More?
 - What evidence can we relate?
 - Predictions made and satisfied (only the ones confirmed by inspired writers).
 - Accuracy of the text of the Bible: transmission, geography, archeology, confirmation from other civilizations.
 - Should we include the objective of God in creation?