

The Impact of the Cross

John 12:27-36

The impending death of Jesus on the cross casts a large shadow over the events described in John 12. Mary anoints Jesus at a dinner party in anticipation of his burial (3, 7). As Jesus enters Jerusalem, he announces that the hour has come for him to be glorified (23) and that the way to life and fruitfulness goes through death (24).

In verses 27-36, we see that the cross has an impact on Jesus, the world, and those who listen to Jesus' words. ***The cross of Christ is the dividing point in the history of the world. It provides salvation for all and signifies the defeat of Satan.***

The impact of the cross upon Jesus (27-30)

“The Johannine Jesus is no docetic actor in a drama, about to play a part which he can contemplate dispassionately because it does not really involve himself.” F. F. Bruce

Jesus is deeply troubled (27) because he knows he is facing betrayal, arrest, binding, striking on the face, scourging, mocking, crucifixion, and death. He will be separated from the Father, and bear God's wrath for the sins of the world.

“What shall I say?” could be a question or a prayer. If a question, then Jesus answers it immediately. If a prayer, it expresses his agony.

Jesus understood his purpose and voiced his commitment to do the Father's will.

More than deliverance from the cross, Jesus wanted God's glory (28a).

The Father answered Jesus' petition with an audible voice (28b). The crowds and Jesus heard the voice, though the crowds did not understand the words clearly (29).

Jesus explained that the voice had sounded more for the people's benefit than for himself (30). The more spiritually sensitive must have sensed that it signaled something important.

The impact of the cross upon the world (31-33)

Jesus' death on the cross brings judgment on unbelievers (31a). While the Jews thought they were judging Jesus, in reality their decisions brought judgment on themselves.

Jesus' death on the cross brought the defeat of Satan (31b). While Jesus' death appeared to be a victory for Satan, it signaled his doom.

Jesus would be lifted up on the cross in his death (32-33). His death would draw all people without distinction. Jesus is not saying that everyone would be saved, but that salvation would be available to all.

The impact of the cross upon those who heard Jesus (34-36)

Jesus' prediction of his death puzzled his listeners (34). They were thinking of the Old Testament passages that said the kingdom of the Messiah would last forever (Daniel 7:13-14). How could Jesus be the Messiah and die? What kind of Son of Man was Jesus talking about?

Rather than answer their intellectual questions, Jesus confronted them with the fact that the real issue was a moral one. They needed to make a choice as to whether or not they would follow the Light (35-36). The time of their opportunity was limited.

Jesus withdrew from them again, giving them a foretaste of what he had just predicted (36b).

Principles to Practice

As believers, we should be willing to embrace the Father's will and desire that he be glorified in our lives—in spite of our conflicting emotions.

We should give thanks for the cross, knowing that it judges the world, defeats Satan, and makes salvation available to all people.

We need to daily choose to follow the Light.