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Jesus lifted up and glorified

He explains the reasons for His death

'But Jesus answered them, saying, The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but

if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name. Then a voice came from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it and will glorify it again'.

John 12:23-28

The lesson of the grain of wheat

Jesus begins His words about the consequences of His death and resurrection with a parable: that of the grain of wheat. The path of multiplication and fullness of blessing leads through death, for the grain of wheat can only bear fruit by falling into the ground and dying. Otherwise it remains alone. Thus the Savior would have to die and be buried, in order to bear much fruit in His resurrection. There was going to be a rich harvest of wheat, namely His own who would possess His own resurrection life by the Spirit.

Whoever loves his life in this world and clings to it will eventually lose it. But he who follows Christ along the path of death and resurrection – through faith in His name – will inherit eternal life and heavenly glory. For wherever He is, there will

also be His servant (vs. 26). For He would go to the heavenly place where He was before: the presence of the Father and the glory of the Father (John 3:13; 6:62).

Actually, His speech continues until verse 33, where the Lord speaks again of His death and its far-reaching consequences. These involve the Father and the Son, the world and its ruler, as well as all those who would be united with the crucified One in His death, resurrection and glorification by drawing them to Himself.

The Father and the Son are glorified

The reason for these words about His death was the wish of some Greeks to see the One who had called Lazarus out of the tomb and who, as the King of Israel, had made His entry into the city of Jerusalem (John 12:9-19).

Jesus did not grant this wish, but announced that the hour had come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Then follows the important announcement of His death as the grain of wheat, which is introduced by a solemn 'Verily, verily' (Amen, amen). We find this in verses 23 and 24. What then is the nature of His glorification? The connection with John 13:31-32 and John 17:1 makes this further clear. It is not yet His coming as the Son of Man, to accept His rightful dominion over all peoples, nations and languages (cf. Dan. 7:13-14). This will not happen until His return with the clouds of heaven.

Christ's glorification involves both His moral honor and glory, and the moral honor and glory of the Father. On the cross both the Father and the Son were glorified, and this glorification was followed by Christ's exaltation into heaven. His lifting up on the cross was followed by His glorification at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He is now exalted and glorified. His work on the cross revealed His obedience unto death, and by this the Father was glorified. He manifested both God's righteousness towards sin and God's rich love towards mankind (John 3:16). Although the Lord's soul was deeply moved in this hour of sorrow and suffering, He did not pray for the direct intervention of the Father. His wish was for the Father's name to be glorified through His sufferings on the tree (vs. 27-28).

However, the Father's name has also been glorified through His *resurrection*. That is the meaning of the prophetic words that it would be glorified again in verse 28. The resurrection of Lazarus from the dead had already manifested the glory of the Son of God, as well as the glory of the Father, who had sent His Son into the world as the Conqueror of sin and death (see John 11:4). Now God's name would be glorified again through the resurrection of Christ Himself from the dead, for He was

raised from the dead by the glory of the Father (Rom. 6:4). The glory and honor of the Father came to light when He did not leave His Son in the tomb, but raised Him as the Firstfruits from the dead (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

The judgment of the world and its ruler

However, the voice from heaven, announcing this triumph over death and the grave, also announced the judgment of this world and its ruler (vs. 28-31). The power of the prince of darkness would be nullified and the world would be judged. At the cross of Christ this happened in a moral sense (vs. 31), but it is not yet the judgment of the end time, which we find in the book of Revelation (Rev. 4-20).

The Apostle Paul explains the decisive role of the cross in Colossians 2. He speaks first of the triumph of the cross over the law and its death sentence, and then of the powers of darkness (Col. 2:14-15). Christ erased the guilt that was against us by nailing it to the cross. But He also disarmed and openly exhibited the authorities and powers and triumphed over them by the cross. Satan, sin and death are really conquered by the despicable cross of the Son of Man. Thus Christ through death destroyed the devil, who had the power of death, and redeemed his former slaves from sin and death (Heb. 2:14-15).

At the cross, the world has been condemned as a corrupt and violent system and the ruler of the world has been cast out as a usurper (vs. 31). An illustration from the Second World War may clarify this. The decisive phase of the battle began with the invasion of Normandy in June 1944, but it was not until May 1945 that the final victory of the allied forces over the opponent was achieved. That is the difference between D-day (the day of decision) and V-day (the day of victory). Thus, the final victory over Satan and his powers will only be achieved at the Second Coming of Christ. Satan will first be ejected from the heavenly realms (Rev. 12), then he will be thrown into the abyss – at the beginning of the Kingdom of Peace – and finally he will be thrown into the pool of fire and brimstone to be tormented there forever (Rev. 20).

I will draw all to Myself

The elevated Son of Man is the great center of everything. We as believers are united with Him in His death, burial and resurrection, and we even share His heavenly glory (Rom. 6:3-4; 8:30). The letter to the Galatians speaks at length about

the significance of the cross in the life of the Christian. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ is living in me (Gal. 2:20; 3:1; 5:24; 6:14). See also Ephesians 2 and Colossians 2, where our intimate union with Christ is shown in detail by the apostle Paul.

On the one hand there is the drawing of the *Father*, who leads us to Christ in faith (John 6:44, 65). On the other hand, there is the drawing of the *Son*, who gave Himself for our sins, so that He might draw us out of the present evil age, i.e. the world in its present form (Gal. 1:4). The exalted Son of Man is the center of attraction, the center of our faith and our security.

There is life by looking at the cross

Through a glance at the cross there is life and salvation for all who put their trust in Him. The Son of man draws us to Himself and unites us to Himself in His death and resurrection, but also in His heavenly glory. The exaltation on the cross was, so to speak, the preliminary phase of His glorification in heaven. Where He is, there will also be His servant (cf. John 3:13; 6:62).

That is how we are drawn out of this evil world, which is facing its judgment, and partake in the new world that is the result of His exaltation and glorification. We are a new creation in Him, and He is the object of our worship, both now and when we will be with Him forever.

*By looking at the cross
there is life and salvation,
there is life for you and for me.*

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