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## **"And I, If I Be Lifted Up..."**

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"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32).

The wondering temple officers sent to apprehend Jesus, returned to their masters and said, "Never man spake like this man." The great claims He made and the boldness of His assertions at once mark Him as more than man or else a very bad man. He was either the Son of God or an arrogant boaster. Just think of such sayings as these: "I am the light of the world," "I am the bread of life," "I am the door, by me, if any man enter in he shall be saved," "I am the resurrection and the life," "A greater than Solomon is here," "Before Abraham was I am."

We do not usually take boasters seriously and their great claims are usually met with a sneer and scorn. But the claims of Jesus Christ go unchallenged, even by those who have not trusted Him as their Saviour. Napoleon and others have given Him unstinted praise, acknowledging Him as unique in every respect, and yet did not trust Him as Saviour. In this they reveal their lack of straight thinking, for if Jesus of Nazareth is what He claimed to be, He surely is a safe object of trust. I accept Him as my Saviour because I accept the claims He made for Himself. Believing Him to be the light of the world, I turn from all other ideas and ways of salvation to Him as only Saviour. Believing Him to be the bread of life, I let my soul feed on Him as the only hope of living forever before God without dread of divine justice. Believing Him to be the

resurrection and the life, I shall go into the grave in hope of immortality for this body.

Jesus Christ never made a more startling utterance than when He spoke the words of our text: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John says that He made this statement to indicate what kind of death He would die. And the kind of death He died is a very important matter. It is not enough that He died. His death is a historical fact denied by few. And this message has to do primarily with the kind of death He died.

Three times in His short career, He spoke of His death as a being lifted up. Early in His career He said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." About the middle of His career, He said to His cavilling opponents: "When ye have lifted up the Son of Man, then ye shall know that I am he." And here, towards the end, He uttered the words of our text: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

1. Jesus Christ selected the manner of His death. He chose the way He would die, and even the hour He was to die. The time and manner of His death were not left to chance or to the whims of men. He controlled empires and directed kings, and made the wrath of man to praise Him in bringing about His death as He had eternally planned. This is why the Roman method of capital punishment was by crucifixion rather than by

stoning or some other method. This is why Jesus Christ did not live and die here in America in this 20th Century. Had He waited until now to come and had been born and reared in America, He would have been put to death by electrocution or hanging instead of by crucifixion.

2. Jesus Christ chose this way to die because it indicated the curse of God. "And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree; His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God:) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance" (Deut. 21:22,23). For His death to mean anything to sinners, it must represent the curse of God. Sinners are under the curse of God's holy law and whoever saves them must bear the curse. If Jesus had died as an example or if the moral influence theory of the atonement were true, the manner of His death would not have been important. God's Word had declared centuries before that when you see a man hanging on a tree, you can know that man is accursed of God. Jesus Christ redeemed us from the curse by being made a curse.

3. This means that Jesus Christ died as a substitute for sinners. He died instead of sinners. Somebody has to die for sin, for the wages of sin is death. And the only way any sinner can miss condemnation and punishment is to have another bear it for him. If Jesus was punished for me, I will not have to be punished for my sins.

"If Christ has my discharge procured and safely in my place endured the whole of wrath divine; payment God cannot twice demand; first at my bleeding Surety's hand and then again at mine."

4. If Christ died for sinners of all periods of time—if His death had the same value to Abel and Noah and Abraham and David as it does to me—then it could only be substitutionary in its nature. In Hebrews 9:15 we are told that Christ died for the redemption of transgressions that were under the first covenant. This means that He died for those who lived before He came. His death was retroactive. It had the same value to Old Testament saints as it has to us. His death could not be an example to the dead—it could have no moral influence on people who had lived and died hundreds of years before He came.

5. The death of Jesus Christ justifies both God and men. "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:25,26). This

portion of scripture says that the death of Christ was a present revelation of God's justice in passing over the sins of Old Testament believers. God's justice could not be seen in the salvation of Abel and Abraham and David. They were saved before their sins had been atoned for. And the death of Christ was demonstration of His justice. If Christ had not died under the curse of the law they had broken, God would have been unjust in saving them. The death of Christ takes care of the honor of God as well as the safety of men.

6. The results of His death. Our text says that all men will be drawn to Him. At first sight this seems to teach universalism—the salvation of every individual. But this cannot be true for several reasons:

(a) It is contrary to known facts. It is a well-known fact that many individuals have not been drawn to Christ. Nobody could be drawn to Him who have never heard about Him, and millions upon millions have died without ever hearing the name of Jesus.

(b) There is no word for man in the original text. It simply says that He will draw all unto Himself. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37); "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27); "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" (John 10:16); "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (John 17:2).

(c) How does Christ draw men to Himself? It is not a physical drawing. There is no physical approach to Jesus. He does the drawing by working on the minds and hearts of men. It is by the miracle of the new birth. It is by giving men a change of mind towards God, and by working faith in them in Him as their only hope. And this involves our witnessing and preaching and praying.

Conclusion: In this text, we have the way of salvation made plain. Men are saved by being drawn to Christ. When they are drawn to Christ they come to Christ. Have you come to Christ for salvation? Men are not saved by living a good life; they are saved by coming to Christ. They are not saved by coming into the church; they are saved by coming to Christ. To be saved by what we do would be self-salvation. To be saved by faith in Christ is salvation by grace.

