

CHRIST LIFTED UP.

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

There have been various speculations with reference to the Lord's meaning, relative to being "lifted up." It seems to be a peculiarity of human nature, especially until we come to a position where we have learned that *our own thoughts* are frequently stumbling stones to us, and have learned the lesson that we must cast aside our favorite opinions and seek the meaning of the words from the context, to decide that a passage *must be understood* in some way more difficult to understand than the simple narrative itself. And many a Bible student has gotten himself into quite a labyrinth of difficulty from endeavoring to make out of simple statements something more elaborate than the Lord put into them; and yet the simplicity of the truth, – the simplicity which all the children of God should observe, will be to receive the Word as little children, and understand it just as it reads. With the idea of elaborating the thought, many have undertaken to say, and to imagine themselves, that the lifting up of the Son of man, meant his glorification: I, if I be glorified, will draw all men unto my glorified condition, is what they prefer to have it mean, and therefore they so construe it. But that would be a wresting of scripture, for nothing of the kind appears in the passage.

The passage clearly and distinctly says the lifting up referred to was a lifting up at the cross. "These words spake Jesus signifying what death he should die." If we would always let the context tell us just what is meant, how much difficulty it would save ourselves and others. The same Greek words here rendered "lifted up," are elsewhere used, as for instance, in John 8:28, "Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have *lifted up* the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he; and I do nothing of myself, but as the Father hath taught me, I speak these things." Who was to do the lifting up? Not the Father, nor the Lord

Jesus himself, nor the Holy Spirit, but *ye* – When *ye* have lifted up the Son of man. It evidently then does not refer to an exaltation to glory. The same Greek word is used also in John 3:14. "And as Moses ***lifted up*** the serpent in the wilderness." Did Moses glorify the serpent? Not at all. "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.

It is a fact of course, not a fact taught by this passage but taught by other passages, that our Lord Jesus after he was lifted up upon the cross, after he had died for our sins, was highly exalted; and that he is glorified now, and forever. But what we are here noticing is, that this fact is not taught in this passage; nothing in this passage favors any such construction. Some who take the view which we have presented, that the "lifting up" referred to the glorifying of the Lord have an object in view: they wish, as they sometimes say, to do away with the wooden cross. They wish to set aside the importance of the ***death*** of Christ which this text, properly understood, shows. In the very next verse the Jews show that they understood exactly what our Lord meant, when they answered, We have heard that when Christ cometh he will never die, he will live forever; how is it that you say the Son of man will be lifted up. We see that the Jews understood it, the disciples understood it, and our Lord expressly spoke it, with reference to the death he should die, and not with reference to his exaltation to glory.

Now, then, it makes just this difference. Taken in the way the Lord gives it, it makes the cross of Christ the very center of the whole plan of redemption; just as the Lord meant it should be; just as the Scriptures everywhere present it to be, – the very center of the whole plan. For our Lord to be crucified, to be "lifted up," to die, was a necessity which lay at the foundation of the divine plan. The death of Christ, "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," was the only way by which mankind could be brought into harmony with God. Thus we see, that the ***drawing*** of mankind was dependent on the death, the lifting up, of Christ.

Not only is the cross of Christ now a stumbling-block, which very many do not like, and which many are ignorantly stumbling over, but it was a rock of offence to the Jews. They could not understand why the great Messiah who was to be so powerful, and an everlasting deliverer, must die. They could not see how or why the cross was connected with the fulfillment of the Covenants. But, our Heavenly Father's ways, as we have learned, are not man's ways, and His plan was, that the one who should restore Israel and the world, and be the King of glory, should be also the one that would prove and show his worthiness by his obedience even unto death, even the death of the cross, as the Ransomer of all. So, then, we see that the cross of Christ is truly indeed the center of God's plan for blessing all the families of the earth. If I be lifted up I will *draw men*; – if I am not lifted up I can never do so. Whenever, therefore, any attempt to show that the cross of Christ was not a necessity, that the penalty of sin was not death and that it was not necessary for our Lord Jesus to *redeem* mankind from it – by giving his own life as our ransom price, let this, one of the hundreds of passages that point to *the ransom price*, Christ's death, as the *foundation* of all our hope, be the answer to such; and show that sinners were not drawn to God until first the penalty against all had been paid, by our redeemer, who "bought us with his own precious blood" – his death – the sacrifice of his life. Not until all were thus redeemed, at Calvary, was the gospel, the good tidings of great joy, sent forth unto all people, – drawing all by promising everlasting life to all who would obey the great Redeemer. The fact is incontrovertible, that "life [everlasting, for restored human sons of God], and immortality [the grand superlative degree of life, which pertains to the divine nature only, and is offered as the great *prize* to the overcomers of the Gospel age – the church] were brought to light through the *gospel*. And the gospel was never declared (except in a prophetic and typical way to the typical Israelites), until after his resurrection our Lord sent forth his disciples saying "Go ye into all the world and preach this gospel [good tidings – of a hope for life through the ransom given for all] to every creature."

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