

Our 40 Day Journey to the Cross
March 24-29

Day 20 Thursday
John 12:31-36

31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out.

32 And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.”

33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

34 The people answered Him, “We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

35 Then Jesus said to them, “A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.

36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” These things Jesus spoke, and departed, and was hidden from them.

Now is the Judgment of this World

The world system was judged by its treatment of Jesus at the cross. The cross not only judged the world it also defeated Satan (*now the ruler of this world will be cast out*). The defeat of the world and Satan was God's victory and the victory of the people of God. Colossians 2:14-15 vividly describes the defeat of Jesus at the cross:

Colossians 2:14-15

14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

If I am lifted up from the Earth

The verb used for lifted up (the ancient Greek word *hypsothenai*) has a deliberate double meaning. It means both a literal elevation (as in being raised up on a cross) and exaltation (being raised in rank or honor).

We don't "lift up" Jesus with our praises in the sense He means here. He was lifted up on the cross, and we proclaim that fact to the world. We lift Jesus up by preaching Christ (1 Corinthians 1:23).

We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever: The people had been taught only the passages from the law (the Old Testament) which speak of the triumph of the Messiah. They were virtually unaware of the passages that speak of His suffering (such as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53). This crowd who greeted a political conqueror with such enthusiasm didn't want to consider His sacrificial death. It didn't fit in with their idea of what a Messiah should be.

Walk While You Have the Light

In a very literal sense, Jesus is telling people that His earthly ministry is coming to a close. Their opportunity to hear and respond to Him is slipping away (John 12:23). Those who reject His words and His message are risking being left in the dark (John 12:35). More generally, He is speaking to anyone who hears the gospel (Luke 7:22–23) or sees the myriad evidence available for truths about God (Psalm 19:1).

He's warning mankind that only those who become "sons of light" (1 John 3:1) can avoid being overtaken by darkness (Matthew 25:30). At some point, it will be "too late," and those who have ignored God up to then will have no excuse (Romans 1:18–20). We must believe on Jesus while the light is there, because it won't last forever. God's Spirit will not always strive with man (Genesis 6:3), and we must answer His call while it rings to us.

The last public words spoken by Jesus

The end of this verse is something of a literal application of those ideas. Jesus leaves the crowd and is "hidden" from them. Whether that simply means He went somewhere private, or was supernaturally covered, Scripture does not say. Either way, this encounter is now closed.

Jesus' statement starting in verse 44 is not tied to a particular time or place; it might be a general summary of His words. That means that what's contained here in verse 36 may be, literally, the last words Jesus "preached" in a public setting prior to His arrest.