

Now - This Hour

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- [0 : 00] So we're picking up where we left off last Sunday, as usual, in the Gospel of John. We're in John chapter 12. The passages will be on the screen, but also if you have your Bible, you're welcome to open it up and follow along.
- There's also Bibles in front of you in the seats there, the black books, which you can use if you'd like to do that. We've heard about how Jesus came into Jerusalem, the triumphal entry.
- Then there were those Greeks who wanted to see Jesus and meet with him. Then we heard how Jesus was deeply troubled. In his words, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
- Jesus talked a little bit about how he must die. And then he prayed out loud to God the Father. And amazingly, God answered from heaven in an audible voice.
- Some of the people denied that it was a voice, claiming instead that it was thunder. And now we pick up the conversation in John chapter 12, verse 30. John chapter 12, verse 30.
- [1 : 03] Jesus said, This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world.
- Now the prince of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself. He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.
- So Jesus makes it clear that God chose in this moment to speak in an audible voice from heaven for the benefit of the people who were standing there.
- It was a sign, a confirmation, a testimony from God. If these people walk away from this moment and do not believe in Jesus, it's not because of a lack of evidence.
- God's not expecting them to, in the words of our world, just take a blind leap of faith. They heard with their own ears God answering Jesus from heaven.
- [2 : 09] And so if they do not believe Jesus is the Messiah or the Son of God, it's because they don't want to believe it. It's because they're choosing not to believe it.
- And as Jesus speaks about how these words were for them, he goes on to make three very serious statements about the significance of this hour, this moment that he is about to go through.
- He says, Now is the time for judgment on this world. Now the prince of this world will be driven out, and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.
- I think we know as we hear these words that they're very important. And yet, what does Jesus mean by them? Let's consider the first statement. Now is the time for judgment on this world.
- Literally, now is the judgment of this world. What does that mean? I spent quite a few hours this week just mulling on this and thinking about it.
- [3 : 17] And to be honest, I have an idea, maybe, but I'm not totally sure. I don't have complete certainty what Jesus means by this.

There's a couple things that we can rule out pretty easily. Obviously, Jesus doesn't mean that now is the final judgment. Jesus said earlier in John chapter 5 that the Father has entrusted all judgment to him.

And we learn from other places in the Bible that there is coming a day of final judgment where Jesus himself will sit on the judge's seat and judge the world according to what they have done, each person what they have done.

This hour that Jesus is about to go through is obviously not that. Another way that this word judgment is sometimes used is specifically to refer to punishment.

But now is the punishment of this world? That doesn't seem to fit either. Here too, the Bible is clear that there is a final day of punishment coming for the world.

[4 : 23] A day in which all who are guilty in our world will receive what they deserve for their wickedness and sin. But this hour of Jesus is obviously not that either.

The book of Revelation, which comes much later in the New Testament, describes a little bit of what it will look like when that final day of global punishment comes.

So what does Jesus mean? Now is the judgment of the world. Commentaries and Bible scholars have made all kinds of statements about this.

Many of those don't really have me convinced. One of those statements is that the judgment of this world and the driving out of the prince of this world is basically the same thing.

In the words of J. Ramsey Michaels, the second sentence explains the first. He says, the world is now judged in that its ruler is now to be driven out.

[5 : 22] The language, he says, can easily be read as the language of exorcism, especially with the ruler of this world as its object. And he kind of goes on to explain how judgment of this world is basically the exorcism of the world.

How just like Jesus cast demons out of people, he is now about to cast out the prince of demons out of the whole world. Well, that certainly has some logic and reason in it, but is that what Jesus meant when he said, now is the judgment of this world?

Another similar statement is that now is the judgment of this world means that the kingdom of this world is about to fall. In the words of Robert Mounts, Satan may have been the prince of this world, but his kingdom is about to come tumbling down.

Is that what Jesus means? By now is the judgment of this world? That Satan's kingdom is about to come tumbling down? Well, as I've already said, I don't know for sure what Jesus means.

Here's my best guess though. There's a few commentators and scholars out there who I found out later this week were thinking along the same lines as I was. Here's my thought, and I hold it with a very open hand, and you're welcome to do that too.

[6 : 39] Maybe the world is the world, and there are two statements here. One about the world, and one about the devil. And maybe the judgment of the world means the identifying or the differentiation of the people of this world.

Because it does kind of seem like it's here in this hour that it becomes clear who are the wheat, and who are the weeds. Who are the true sheep, and who are the imposters.

Who loves what is right and good, and who loves what is wicked and evil. And the parable of the wheat and the weeds that Jesus told, I think is a helpful analogy.

You'll remember in that parable that it was the enemy of the field owner who snuck in at night and went and planted, scattered weed seeds. Not like weed, but like the seeds of weeds in the field.

Some of you are still awake. And not just any weeds, but actually dandel, false wheat. So, I won't tell the whole parable, but for a time, these dandel seeds sprouted up together with the wheat seeds.

[8 : 00] And it was not obvious which was which. They look very much alike. But eventually, there comes this moment when it is obvious, where the plant reaches that stage of development in which it comes out, uh-oh, we've got two different things here in the field.

The physical differences emerge. Could it be that this hour that Jesus is about to go through, the cross, is that stage of development in the plan of God which will make it crystal clear who are the wheat and who are the imposters, who are the true sons of the kingdom and who are not.

This seems to fit with other places where Jesus has told us that he has to come to, that he's told us that he's come to judge.

And I think he means that in the sense of identify or expose or clarify. Let's reflect back to what we've heard earlier in the gospel, John 3, verse 17.

For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. So this is a rescue mission that Jesus is on. And God's chief intention is not for Jesus at this coming to sit on the judgment seat and take up the gavel.

[9 : 18] He will do that at the end. But there are all these little hints along the way that even as Jesus does what he does and says what he says, it's having this kind of judging effect, this exposing effect, this revealing, identifying, who's who effect.

John 3, verse 19, just a couple verses down in chapter 3. This is the verdict or the judgment. Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.

Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

So John tells us here that Jesus came as the light of the world and his light in all its goodness also exposes what's being done in the darkness, the evil deeds of people.

As Jesus speaks, it's like the light is shining on people. The truth is coming to them. It's becoming evident in response to Jesus' words where people stand or where they are choosing to stand.

[10 : 42] Some are coming to him. They are coming into the light. They are confessing their sins. They are being reconciled with God and yet others are turning away from the light.

They want to keep it at a distance. They hate the light. They are choosing instead to cherish and cling to their wicked ways. They want the light to go away.

They are even plotting to extinguish the light. John chapter 9 verse 39 Jesus says here for judgment I have come into this world but notice the kind of judgment so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.

Again here Jesus almost seems to describe himself as light as the one who enables those who are blind to see and the one who blinds those who think they can see.

As we just heard they think they can see but they really don't like the light. They prefer to be in darkness. Their blindness is something that they are choosing for themselves.

[11 : 59] Do you remember what Simeon prophesied over the child Jesus when Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem?

Back in Luke chapter 2 verse 34 he said to Mary this child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be spoken against here's the key line so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.

So there is a kind of judgment a kind of verdict about people that's being arrived at simply by Jesus being here and doing his ministry.

He is exposing he's bringing to light the thoughts of many hearts and for some it's exposing a soft and repentant heart and for others it's exposing a hard and unrepentant heart and Jesus seems to be fully aware that his coming his speaking is having this effect on people as we just heard in John 9 39 for judgment I have come into this world we hear the same thing in Matthew chapter 10 verse 34 where Jesus says do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth I did not come to bring peace but a sword for I have come to turn a man against his father a daughter against her mother a daughter in law against her mother in law a man's enemies will be the members of his own household and similarly in Luke 12 verse 51 Jesus says do you think

I came to bring peace on earth no I tell you but division from now on there will be five in one family divided against each other three against two and two against three they will be divided father against son and son against father and it goes on you know we've seen in our own times how divisive some of these current issues can be probably many of you have at least one relative or two that you don't see eye to eye with on the issues of our day whether it's covid or convoy or whatever sadly it's it's had this effect it's turned people against one another even members of people's own family Jesus knows that his being here and the things that he is saying and doing is having the same effect also he states it pretty strongly

[14 : 48] I have come to bring a sword division to turn members of people's family against each other but listen the difference is it's not as though Jesus wants in his heart of hearts for this to happen in families it's not as though Jesus wants people to reject the truth that he's speaking and to oppose him as some of them are he would far rather that they repent that they acknowledge the truth of his words and come into the light I mean we've heard this so many times in the gospel of John already how Jesus patiently pleads with people but at the same time he knows how this is going to go there is a kind of judgment an exposing an identifying a differentiating that's inherently bound up in his mission it was Jesus who reminded his opponents of what the scriptures said long ago haven't you read the passage of scripture he said the stone the builders rejected has become the corner stone two totally different responses to Jesus the apostle

Peter picked up on this in his letter as well he describes Jesus there as the corner stone of the spiritual house that God is building and yet at the same time a stone that causes some to stumble and to fall and again it's not that Jesus desires for people to respond negatively to his message and his ministry think of what happened as he rode into Jerusalem Luke tells us that Jesus wept as he approached the city if you even you had only known on this day what would bring you peace he said and another time Jerusalem Jerusalem you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings and you were not willing do you hear Jesus heart for the very people who will reject him so maybe this gives light to what Jesus means when he says now is the time for judgment on this world it's kind of already been happening with

Jesus ministry perhaps here at the cross all of this comes to its ultimate head the hearts of Jesus enemies will be most deeply exposed and we will see the hatred the jealousy the rage that's been boiling beneath the surface in so many of them it's going to erupt as they capture him treat him terribly and put him to death the deeds which expose their unbelieving and unrepentant wicked hearts are about to be done the deeds which tell who they really are not true sons of the kingdom but rather children of their father the devil so this hour that Jesus is about to go through it's not the final judgment day but maybe what Jesus means is that the final judgment day will point back to this hour the hour that most clearly proves that the condemnation of the world of those who rejected

Jesus is deserved that's my best guess at what Jesus means when he says now is the time for judgment on this world maybe maybe it's that this hour what he's about to go through right now it's this that will show who is who who are the wheat who are the weeds who are the true sons of the kingdom and who are the imposters so Jesus makes this first statement now is the time for judgment on this world but then he makes a second statement he says now the prince of this world will be driven out what does Jesus mean by this I think everybody who reads this recognizes that who the prince of this world is the devil Satan let's consider these words carefully too the prince of this world does it chill you to think that

Jesus referred to the devil as the prince of this world you know if the devil up until this point in the story had no real power or authority at all I think Jesus would have just said so but no Jesus doesn't say that in fact the opposite by calling the devil the prince of this world he acknowledges that yes he has had some real authority and power in this world he has ruled but also notice that Jesus calls him prince or ruler and not king Jesus doesn't deny that the devil has real authority and power but he also by this title implies that there is a higher authority a higher power still this earthly throne on which the devil sits doesn't belong to him he sat on it only as a prince

[20 : 44] I can't help but think of the last time I've been reading through the Old Testament and I'm not sure I can't remember exactly where this shift occurs sometime after the return from exile but at some point in the Old Testament prophets Jesus sorry the father stops referring to the ruler in Israel as the king and instead is calling them princes I can't help but see a bit of a message there these men who are now governing in Israel after the exile are not the king they are not kings as David was a king they were not kings as someday the Messiah would be king that's what I think about here the devil has been the prince of this world but the true king of this world to whom the throne belongs he's about to unseat him and

I love this now the prince of this world will be driven out in this hour something is about to happen with Jesus which will push the devil off of his throne again it's difficult to know for certain exactly what Jesus means here it doesn't seem to mean that the devil will be completely powerless after this nor does it seem to mean that Satan will be kicked right off of planet earth and not allowed to be here anymore or that he will lose all semblance of authority here on earth here's why years later Peter wrote to the churches be alert and of sober mind your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour so even after this hour of Jesus the devil is still here on earth he's still on the prowl or revelation chapter 2 verses 12 and 13 this is

Jesus dictating the contents of a letter to the apostle John for the church in Pergamum he says to the angel of the church in Pergamum write these are the words of him who has the sharp double edged sword I know where you live where Satan has his throne yet you remain true to my name you did not renounce your faith in me not even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness who was put to death in your city where Satan lives I don't know just what Pergamum but it suggests at the least that Satan's power and influence and control are still present in some measure even 60 years after Jesus died rose and ascended so what does it mean then that now the prince of this world will be driven out my best guess is that it means this hour that

Jesus is about to go through is the beginning of the end for the devil's rule in this world just like for the judgment of this world it's not the final judgment it's perhaps the foundation and the basis for the final judgment that Jesus is about to lay here in the same way neither is this the final doom for Satan but perhaps the basis and the foundation for it this verse comes to mind in Hebrews chapter 2 verse 14 and 15 since the children have flesh and blood he too that's Jesus shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death that is the devil and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death now that's a whole nother passage and discussion there but at least one thing is clear

Jesus by his death broke the power of him who holds the power of death the devil there was a kind of slavery that all humanity was inevitably born into and the devil seems to have had us in his sway but what will happen in this hour for Jesus at the cross will forever change that and strip that power from the devil the devil had legitimate grounds to accuse us because of our sins but he will have those grounds removed forever through Jesus death on the cross justice will be done and we through faith in him can be set free forever in the courts of heaven I love to think about this the devil has had his time on the throne of this world but what

[25 : 50] Jesus is about to go through will change that forever what did Jesus say again and again he said the kingdom of heaven is near I was reading in Daniel again this week the vision that Nebuchadnezzar had of the statue with the head of gold representing his great kingdom of Babylon and then comes the large stone cut without human hands and smashes the whole statue to pieces and all the kingdoms that it represents in our world story and then this stone grows into a mountain and fills the whole earth representing the kingdom of God and of Christ the cross was the beginning of the end for the devil and the devil will have a last stand or two depending on your interpretation of revelation but his grounds for an accusation against God's people against us who believe are now gone because of

Jesus' death on our behalf finally we come to Jesus' third statement he says and I when I am lifted up from the earth will draw all people to myself he said this to show the kind of death he was going to die when we hear these words lifted up from the earth we might be tempted to think about Jesus' ascension lifted up from the earth but John makes it clear no when Jesus said that he meant to show the kind of death he was going to die as in literally lifted up from the ground on the cross to die and what will this death achieve Jesus says when I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself I will draw all people to myself what does that mean well there's one translation of the

Bible that picks up on some subtle details in the original language the new king james version all peoples all peoples it says in fact the word people or peoples isn't even there in the original language but it is implied the word all is plural which requires a plural object so all peoples is actually a very good way of saying it in English it's a little blurred we now finally come to Jesus acknowledging the Greeks this is where it all started this is what triggered all of this the coming of the Greeks they're seeking after Jesus you remember the hesitation of Philip and Andrew about whether Jesus should meet with the Greeks whether he can be their Messiah too and here now Jesus makes it clear yes of

Gentiles too in this hour I will be lifted up I will die and I will draw all peoples to myself Jew and Gentile as Revelation makes clear from every tribe nation tongue and people not every individual as we've already heard will appreciate the death of Jesus the cross of Christ as we heard earlier there will be this judging this exposing effect there will be some who see the cross as foolishness or even a sign that he was not the Messiah but there will be others who see it as the very power of God as that which displays the mercy and grace and love of God so for following what Jesus is saying this is the most important hour of

Jesus story what's about to happen with Jesus here will set the future it will pave the foundation for the very end of the story the final judgment the final kingdom and the final people of God and so I want to encourage us not to be too quick to move on from this hour as I was thinking about this I couldn't help but think you know these pages in our Bibles Jesus suffering his death should be the most well worn pages in the whole book I mean I don't want to pit them against the rest of the Bible it's all important how can we understand it without all that's been said before and after but it's here that the greatest realities in our universe are set with what Jesus is about to go through the final judgment the final kingdom and the final people of

[31 : 11] God let's pray father in heaven we tremble at the thought of what Jesus went through in that hour because we know the rest of the story we thank you that many of us in this room love Jesus have come into the light have been made right with you but we can't help but think of all those people out there who have not and told us that this is how it will go that some will not accept but we look to you in hope and we pray for those who do not know you we think of all the people in turmoil in our world today we think of the people in this community

Lord and we pray and ask that you would yet soften their hearts and draw them in that they would be saved that they would put their trust in you and that they too would be included in your family we ask this in Jesus name amen