



# Believe

JOHN

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## John's Paradox: Jesus Glorified, Exalted on the Cross

Bible Reading: John 12:23-43

[Watch LIVESTREAM at 10am](#)

**SUMMARY:** In John's Gospel, the crucifixion paradoxically symbolizes Jesus' glorification. The cross is a means of exalting Jesus, despite being an instrument of capital punishment; that claim is akin to someone 'enthroned' on an electric chair. John's distinctive concept of glory provides the key to unlocking this enigma; glory is not a deity's visible splendor but a profound manifestation of God's character. That's why John differs from the Synoptic Gospels, omitting the transfiguration and apocalyptic prophecies. Instead, John emphasizes the cross as the ultimate revelation of God's boundless love for humanity. This revelation glorifies God the Father and exalts Jesus, God's Son. Can we become a 'Johannine Church'? Embracing John's view means valuing insights into God's nature over sensational heavenly visions, and abiding in Christ rather than obsessing over global events and end-time prophecies. John encourages us to see beyond the agony and shame of Christ's Passion, grasping its profound unveiling of divine love. Thus, we experience the transformative power of God's love in our daily lives and gain a fresh perspective on Christ's crucifixion.

### The Paradox

- "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified," says Jesus. How can this be? Being glorified on a cross? Is that like being enthroned on an electric chair? Is it like being honored by a firing squad? – Cornelius Plantinga

### John's 'Glory'—what is it?

#### 'Glory' in John's Gospel

A. John has no record of the Transfiguration

## B. John redefines 'glory,' 'glorification'

- What is 'Glory' in John's Gospel? — "Glory is the manifestation of God's character" —Richard Bauckham

## C. Glorification – humiliation plus exaltation (12:23-24)

- "Early Christian writers thought of [Jesus'] death & exaltation...as a [2 stage] sequence: *suffering followed by glory...John ...collapsed this sequence into a single event of Jesus' exaltation ('lifting up') or glorification.*" —Richard Bauckham

## The Son of Man 'Lifted Up' (exalted) (12:31-34; 3:14-16)

## A. Jesus' Sayings about 'Glorify' &amp; 'Lifted Up' Make the same Point

- "On the cross, Jesus is ...*lifted up in the place of shame*... But at another level this '*lifting up*' refers ...to glory; it carries the meaning of '*exaltation*' & '*glory*'." —N. T. Wright

## B. As Moses lifted up the Snake, Jesus must be lifted up (3:14)

## C. Jesus' Cross – the Greatest Revelation of who God is (Love)

- Jesus' "death is not...a sad accident cutting short a promising career, but *the climax & purpose of his whole work. In this act God will glorify his name*... In being ...'*lifted up*' —glorified, crucified —Jesus will draw all people to himself ...[because] *his cross is the true revelation of the true God, & what's...in that revelation is the face of love [the face of God]*" —N. T. Wright

## No place for Theophanies or End-time Prophecies in John's Gospel

## A. No theophanies — heavenly visions of God

- "*Heavenly visions of God are not what is on offer in the 4th Gospel...*" — Christopher Rowland

## B. Apocalyptic expressions (e.g., 'the final hour,' 'Antichrist') are absent

## C. John omits the Synoptics' end-of-the world prophecies Vs. the current frenzy of End-Time Prophetic speculation John omits Apocalyptic End-Time prophecies

- Mark's "*Predictions of the signs of the end' is missing* [from John]. It lies *outside the Evangelist's interests.*" —C. H. Dodd
- Vs. current frenzy of End-Time Prophetic speculation — "Israel, Hamas, WW3 & the End-Times," "Israel, Russia, End-Times"D.

## D. Jesus' 'Farewell Discourses' (Jn. 13-17) displace the Synoptics' Apocalyptic End-time Prophecies

## E. Can we be a "Johannine Church"?

## QUESTIONS:

## A. A few days before his crucifixion, Jesus declared "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified' (12:23) Why is this statement a 'paradox' – an apparent contradiction? Discuss.

B. 2 Peter's transfiguration account says: Jesus "received honor & *glory* from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I'm well-pleased!'" (2 Pet. 1:17-18). Is the concept of 'glory' here the same as that of John? What (if any) are the differences? Discuss.C. Consider this saying: "*Through Jesus' death on the cross, God's glory is supremely revealed.*" Do you agree/disagree?

## D. In several places Jesus talks about the "Son of Man" being "lifted up" (3:14; 8:28; 12:32) Does Jesus mean

1. Lifted up on (onto) the cross?
2. Lifted up (exalted) to the heavens?
3. both a. & b. above. Discuss.
4. Is the phrase "lifted up" (as used by John) a paradox (puzzle)? In what sense? Discuss.

E. Apostle Paul uses the (Greek) verb '*exalt (lift up)*' to describe Jesus' exaltation (resurrection, ascension) following his death (Phil. 2:9 '*highly exalted*'). How does John's use of this term '*exalt/lifted up*' differ from Paul's use?

## F. John's Gospel differs from the other 3 Gospels in that it omits Jesus' transfiguration &amp; lacks the Synoptics' end-time signs/prophecies (e.g., Mk. 13). What factors might explain John's omissions? What implications might we draw?

- G. The question was posed: "Can we be a 'Johannine Church'?"
1. What would a "Johannine Church" look like?
  2. What would be *emphasized* by a "Johannine Church"?
  3. What would be *de-emphasized*?