

Biblical Notes – John 12:32

32 – And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself. (32. καγὼ ἐάν ὑψωθῶ ἐκ τῆς γῆς, πάντας ἐλκύσω πρὸς ἑμαυτόν)

“John 12:32, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” This might mean that the death of Christ, when preached with clarity, has a general drawing effect on all people. That is the way it seems to be usually taken or that it draws all kinds of people. I doubt that it means that. I think it means that when Christ died —when he was lifted up on the cross — he actually secured — obtained, guaranteed — the home-coming of his sheep, the ingathering of his children. In other words his death not only makes it possible to offer salvation freely and truly to everyone, so that “whoever believes on him might have eternal life” (John 3:16), but his death also secures with certainty the bringing in of all his sheep (John 10:16), the ingathering of “the children of God who are scattered abroad” (John 11:52).

Here are the reasons I think this is what Jesus means.

The word “people” is not a necessary part of the Greek word for “all” in verse 32. It simply says, “When I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to myself.” I am suggesting it is all his sheep, all his children, all the elect.

The word “draw” is used in John 6:44, where Jesus says, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.” If the sense is similar, it’s a real, effective drawing. It’s not an attempt to draw which fails. It’s a successful bringing to Christ.

This is what Jesus said he would do for his sheep in John 10:16 when he dies for them: “I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also.” His death has a certain effect on his sheep. They come. All of them.

The death of Jesus does not draw all people this way. Judas, for example, knows the cross and the Savior, and is not drawn by the lifting up of Christ. He rejects Christ and perishes. In fact it’s Judas’ unbelief that is in view in John 6:65 when Jesus says, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”

Jesus uses the term “all” for his elect the way he does here when he says, “When I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to myself.” For example, “All that the Father gives me will come to me” (John 6:37). And the Son gives “eternal life to all whom you have given him” (John 17:2). This is the “all” of John 12:32, “When I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all — all whom you have given to me, all my sheep — to myself.”

Therefore, God multiplies the ways he gets glory in the death of his Son. He glorifies himself in the death of Christ not only by making salvation available to all, so that whoever believes may have eternal life (John 3:16), but also by securing with absolute certainty the ingathering of all those whom he has appointed to eternal life (Acts 13:48) — all his own, all the sheep, all the children of God, all the elect who were chosen in Jesus before the foundation of the world. “When I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all of them to myself.” And my Father will get great glory for this triumphant salvation.”

Website Reference:

<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/for-this-purpose-i-have-come-to-this-hour>