

Same Cross – Different Perspectives

John 12:32 (Christ speaking) *And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.*" While some believe and teach that "lifted up" here refers to Christ's resurrection, as in being lifted up from the earth, still others hold the view that this speaks to His accension, as in being lifted up from the earth to heaven. If they would just read the next verse they would see that Scripture makes clear that the expression "lifted up" as used here, speaks to death by crucifixion.

John 12:33 *This He said, signifying by what death He would die. He was about to die by way of crucifixion. In this verse that expression "lifted up" refers exclusively to the cross, which is significant because the very same Greek word meaning *crucifixion* here... is translated elsewhere in Scripture as *exaltation*. Turn to Act 2. Peter is describing to the men gathered in the city for feast of Pentecost, a prophecy that King David had spoken concerning the resurrection of the Christ. **Act 2:32 - 33a** *This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. 33 Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God.* **Act 5:30 - 31a** Peter is speaking to the high priest who is questioning him about why he insists on continuing to teach and preach in the name of Jesus after being told explicitly not to. *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior.**

Our Lord uses the same Greek word to describe that awful cross, that all at once seemingly transfigures from the cruellest form of torturous death, to that which places Christ in the highest position of glory ever! The same word, but two drastically different meanings – which can drastically change one's perspective.

So, in **John 12:32** was it a cross of crucifixion or a cross of glory and exaltation? I think this is one of those rare times in Scripture where we would do well to focus somewhat less on context, and more on perspective – because the context doesn't change, but our perspective can have a great impact on our understanding of what is happening. So we can see how one interprets the scene at Calvary truly does depend on one's perspective.

In one word - the very same word, Christ looks beyond the revolting external, and apparently obvious intention of the cross, to the inner glory and ultimate triumph of it.

Little did His murderers expect it, but in crucifying Him, they were actually glorifying Him. He was being “lifted up” indeed, but not the way they intended. His crucifixion was really a coronation. He was crowned there as the King of Love. We’ll get back to that in just a moment.

Gen 50:20 *But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive.* The word “meant” as used here carries with it the idea of to develop a plan, or weave a rug. The cross wasn't the first time anyone had meant to kill Jesus – had tried to kill Jesus, and thwart God's plans for mankind. Surely Satan has had a plan to kill Jesus from the beginning. Right after the fall in the garden of Eden, because Satan had deceived Eve, God said in **Gen 3:15** *And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”* After Christ had just performed a healing on the Sabbath, we read in **John 5:18** *Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.* After raising Lazarus from the dead, even more Jews were coming to believe that He was the Messiah. **John 11:53** *Then, from that day on, they plotted to put Him to death.* Then finally, at the cross, Satan must have been thinking that he had pulled off the greatest feat ever in getting Christ killed (by His own people no less), and thereby finally putting an end to any more threats of him losing his lofty position as ‘Ruler of this world.’

But God had other plans. Indeed, the cross was part of His well-developed plan. **Eph 1:11** *In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.* **2 Tim 1:9** *who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.*

Act 2:22 - 23 *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know— 23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death. Now let’s compare that to*

Ga 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Talk about testing the things that differ! That passage we just read in Acts 2 basically shouts “You killed Him!! Indeed, look at **Act 5:30** *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree.* To drive home the point of the same cross, but different perspectives, **Ga 2:20** calmly and confidently states “*He died for me.*”

From one perspective, the scene at Calvary is one of an utterly helpless sufferer expiring in agony and weakness. We see the bruised face, the brow scarred by the crown of thorns, the blood dripping from the ugly and festering wounds. We hear His heart rending gasp, "I thirst!" coming from the burning throat of His pain-racked body. The sufferer is surrounded by a handful of sympathizers who are powerless to do anything by weep brokenheartedly. There are also those shouting mocking taunts "He saved others - let Him save Himself." That's one perspective.

From another perspective however, the scene at the cross is transfigured, for we know the Sufferer could have summoned legions of angels to annihilate His murderers. One release of His concealed power, and the one who calmed the raging sea, cast out demons, healed the sick, and raised the dead, could have swept down from that cross and obliterated His Satan-inspired enemies. But He didn't do that.

Let me ask you a trick question. What kind of nails or spikes do you think were used to hold Christ on the cross? Like their length and width. Did they have special barbs, etc.?

Whatever the answers, they really don't matter, because it wasn't the nails they used which held Him to that cross, it was His love. **John 10:17 - 18** *"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. 18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."*

Again, thinking about perspective, we know now that that which outwardly appeared like weakness in its most pitiful form, was actually love of the highest degree - a love even stronger than death, that not even the most vehement of hatreds could squash. Through His dying, He showed His undying love. How great was this undying love? Even after sin had done its worst, Christ dies saying "Father, forgive them." **John 15:13** *Greater love has no one than this, than to*

lay down one's life for his friends.

While from the outward perspective we may see the deepest tragedy of human sin: from the inward perspective we see the highest triumph of divine grace. Outwardly we see a hideous crime, but inwardly we see an expression of the Son's perfect obedience to the Father. Outwardly we see a shocking miscarriage of justice; inwardly we see the overruling sovereignty of the divine purpose. Outwardly we see frustration, for He is prematurely "cut off from the land of the living;" inwardly we see completion, for He dies exclaiming "It is finished." thus providing an eternal salvation.

When Christ is lifted up, Satan is cast down. In Christ's own words He says he will be lifted up, for knowing all things, He used those words specifically. The same cross that showed how much He was hated, is the very same cross for which He is now most loved. Same Cross – Different Perspectives