



**“SIR, WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE JESUS!”
(Sermon)**

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Bible text: “Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. ‘Sir,’ they said, ‘we would like to see Jesus’” (John 12:20-21, NIV).

It happened on a Sabbath morning, just before the minister got up from his chair and walked over to the pulpit to preach. A friend climbed the steps of the platform, handed him a note, and returned to his chair next to the family. The minister opened the piece of paper and read the short message, “Sir, we would like to see Jesus!” (John 12:21). The minister understood the message, smiled, and stood up to preach. He hoped he could facilitate the meeting they wanted with Jesus!

It’s been a while since then, but the message on that piece of paper is still relevant ...

When these words were spoken – “Sir, we would like to see Jesus!” – the preparations for the Passover feast were intense. The courtyards of the Temple, the houses, and the narrow streets of Jerusalem were crowded with guests from all over the country and the surrounding areas. The city was like a huge anthill of people, coming and going all the time. Anyone looking down from above could see rivers of human beings flowing to and from the Temple, the place where not only all the devout nations under heaven met (Acts 2:5), but also where all their aspirations and prayers were brought to the God of Israel. Yes, in those days, Jerusalem was the “chest” from which rose the cry of mankind to the heaven that had been silent for four hundred years, from the voice of the last prophet to be heard, to John the Baptist, through which this silence had been broken. But no one could have foreseen that on that day the voice of God would be heard echoing from heaven and rolling over Jerusalem, over the courts of the Temple, and over all who were there.

As they slipped through the diverse crowd, the disciples heard people talking about Him. Some spoke with admiration, while others voiced confusion. His words and deeds could only be from God, but the Pharisees, scribes, and elders of the people did not believe in Him.

Therefore, some were confused, not knowing what to believe. Hearing the words of the people as they passed through, the disciples were feeling a tense expectation: Will He present Himself to the people as the Son of David, or will something bad happen to Him?

Every evening, while they were retreating with Him to Bethany, the news brought by those who came from Jerusalem to see Jesus and the resurrected Lazarus was not so good. His triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the acclamations of the crowd, the expulsion of the merchants from the Temple, the woe and rebukes spoken against the Pharisees, and the controversies with them had initially given the disciples a kind of inner satisfaction. But now, reflecting on all this, their feelings had changed. They were excited then, but now, after what has happened in recent days and rumors about the talks in the Sanhedrin, they were worried. They too had heard the reproaches of the Pharisees as Jesus passed under the gate of Jerusalem on the back of a donkey; they had seen the frowns on Pharisees faces as Jesus spoke woe after woe to them and the scribes; they had felt the harshness in the tone of the priests, whose merchant sellers Jesus had driven out of the Temple. But the disciples were most troubled by the memory of His tears shed for Jerusalem.

Philip thought about these things as he made his way through the crowd, following the group. Right before he entered the Jewish court of the Temple, a few people stopped in front of him. Because of their garments, they looked like Greeks, but who could know for sure when so many Jews, especially the rich, imitated both the dress and the way of life of the Greeks? He himself – Philip – had a Greek name and was from Bethsaida in Galilee, a city populated mostly by Greeks. And then, as in every year, many Greeks came to Jerusalem in those days. Some were proselytes, who came to participate in the Passover feast; others just came to worship and possibly watch.

“Sir, we would like to see Jesus!” said one of them. Philip, who had been left behind by the group, was confused by their request. A wave of questions rushed through his mind. Why are they asking me? Why didn’t they ask Nathanael, who was walking right in front of me? Why do they want to see Jesus? What if they are spies of the Sanhedrin, sent to catch Him? What if they are assassins of the zealot’s party, wanting to hurt him, and then get lost in the crowd, which is what they usually do? Or maybe they are Roman soldiers, disguised and sent by the governor to arrest Him? But what if they are honest...?

If you didn’t know the sequel and were in Philip’s place, what would you do? Or, if you had asked those Greeks, “Why do you want to see Jesus?” what answer do you think you would have received? You may be thinking of several options, but here is the most plausible answer: “Sir, we heard that yesterday Jesus made order right here where we are, in the court

of the Gentiles, and He would have said that the Temple must be a house of prayer for all nations. We want to see Him because we like what we hear about Him.”

So how would you have proceeded? There are at least two possibilities, two scenarios that would continue the story:

The first scenario:

You would have said: “I am sorry, He has just entered the court of the Jews, where you are not allowed! And, you see, in this rush, it’s very difficult...” Then you would have left those Greeks, striving to catch up to the group of disciples. Perhaps you would have told the others the story, when you thought there was no danger (possibly when you returned with the group to Bethany in the evening). Or you would have told them much later, regretting that you did not tell Jesus when it happened. But could you have hidden something from Jesus, even with the good intention of protecting Him?

The second scenario:

You would have said, “Let me see what I can do... Wait here until I return!” Then you would have gone after Jesus and the disciples in the Jewish court, trying to tell them about those people’s request. But how could you do it? Directly to Jesus? You don’t dare. It would be better to consult with someone in the group, maybe with Andrew, asking for his opinion. Or you would all go together and tell Jesus about the Greeks’ request. And with all the effort to get back through the crowds, you would have accompanied Him to the court of the Gentiles, to the discussion with those Greeks.

One of these scenarios is repeated frequently today in our church. There are people interested in Jesus, who come to church and, through their presence, through their attitude, *not necessarily through words*, they request: “We would like to see Jesus!”

Today, in the Adventist churches around the world, it is a special day – Visitor’s Day – the day we invite new friends to church, as well as those who have become our friends over time. Yes, in the calendar of our church, today is not the day of any saint who has lived in the past ages, but it is the day for those whom the Lord Jesus honors for their interest in Him!

Therefore, in the following minutes, we would like to show our appreciation by offering a token to remember this visit to our church and by praying for friends of Jesus and friends of ours.*

[* *Festive moment: a memory—maybe a book or a card with a Bible text, etc.—is given to each visitor and a special prayer is offered for them.*]

CONCLUSION

It is intriguing that the Gospel author does not tell us if Jesus spoke to those Greeks. Maybe He did. And the words recorded by John in the Gospel could be a summary of that conversation. But what would it have been like to be there, to see that Jesus, impressed by what He heard, says, “*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified!*” (John 12:23)? What would it have been like to see Him return to the court of the Gentiles and speak to the Greeks, praying there, in their presence, and God answering Him immediately, making His voice heard from heaven; a voice that strikes in the cobblestones of the streets, in the roofs of houses, in the stones of the Temple and in the ears of all present? You would probably have been surprised that the crowd had already begun to interpret God’s voice—some saying it was just thunder, and others believing that an angel spoke to Him (John 12:28). But would you have known that it was the voice of God? Would you have understood what He said: “*I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again!*” (John 12:28)?

This has always been and always will be, even in the church today: some only hear noises, while others think that something special is happening, but they cannot explain it. Few are those who clearly distinguish God’s voice, in the Sabbath School lesson, or in the sermon of the divine service. But, regardless of people’s different perceptions, the reality is the same: Jesus is glorified!

Yes, two thousand years ago, the interest of those Greeks led Jesus to say that the hour had come for Him to be glorified. He knew that not long after, in that generation and those that follow, the Gentiles would receive the gospel and glorify God for the salvation offered to all people.

But in the end-time, when “this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world” (Matthew 24:14), the growing interest of the people will put us in front of the same demand, on a global scale: “*We would like to see Jesus!*”

How will we show Him to them?