

167. The Gospel of John—17:1-3

“With Jesus Behind the Veil” Pt.1

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As we look at the four Gospels, we can see that three of them (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are *similar*. Because of that, they are known as the *synoptic* Gospels (from a Greek word meaning “to see together” or “to share a common point of view”).

The synoptic Gospels focus primarily on Jesus’ *Galilean* ministry and *public* teachings.

Whereas John’s Gospel is unique in that it focuses mainly on Jesus’ *Judean* ministry and His *private* teachings to His disciples. Almost one-half of John’s entire Gospel deals with the last week of Jesus’ life before His crucifixion—and half of that focuses on the last twelve hours of His life before the cross.

This gives us a detailed look into the final hours of Jesus’ life before His death in a way we just don’t see in the synoptic Gospels—including and especially the time He spent with His closest men in the final hours before He went to the cross.

However, as we come to John 17, we also get an intimate look at Jesus spending some time with His Father in prayer before His crucifixion that the other Gospels don’t give us.

John 17 is known as ‘the High Priestly prayer of Jesus.’

Some have called John 17 the “*Holy of Holies*” of the Gospels because it gives us an intimate glimpse of the Son communing with the Father—which is why I’m calling this series in John 17, “*With Jesus Behind the Veil*.”

As one author put it—

“In the 17th chapter of John’s Gospel, the veil is drawn back, and we are admitted into the Holy of Holies. We are allowed to witness face to face communion between the Father and the Son—inter-Trinitarian communion! We are permitted to approach, hand in hand with Jesus, into the very throne-room of God. In John 17 we enter into the inner chamber of the Trinity, into the very sanctuary of heaven and as such the secret place of the Most High is opened to us. In this holy place we must ‘put off our shoes’ as it were, for we stand on holy ground, and tune our ears to listen with humility, eagerness, reverence and awe—for this is perhaps the holiest ground in all the Bible!”

Now to set the stage—Jesus and His disciples had finished the Passover Meal and after singing the traditional Passover hymn (Matthew 26:30) had left the upper room and were making their way through the streets of Jerusalem and the Temple precincts toward the Mt. of Olives (John 14:31).

Along the way He continued to teach them one last time before His crucifixion.

As we come to John 17, the Lord stops teaching His disciples and starts praying to His Father.

This is truly the “*Lord’s Prayer*”—unlike the prayer Jesus gave to His disciples to pray which we typically call the “*Lord’s Prayer*” in Matthew 6:9-13.

That was a prayer Jesus could never have prayed—“*Father forgive Me My sins as I forgive those who have sinned against Me?!*”

No folks, John 17 contains the real “*Lord’s prayer*” in all of its glory and majesty—and as such we must approach this chapter in a spirit of humility and worship.

I mean, to think that we are privileged to listen in as God the Son converses with God the Father (His Father!) just as He is about to give His life as a ransom for sinners—is an incredible thing to ponder!

This prayer is divided up into 3 main parts.

1. *Jesus first prayed for Himself and told the Father that His work on earth had been finished (John 17:1–5).*
2. *Then He prayed for His disciples, that the Father would keep them and sanctify them (John 17:6–19).*
3. *He closed His prayer by praying for you and me and the whole church down through history, that we might be unified in Him and one day share His glory (John 17:20–26).*

To fill in the context—Jesus had ended His farewell teaching to His disciples with a shout of victory: “**I have overcome the world!**” (John 16:33).

This, of course, was in anticipation of His death on the cross and His resurrection 3 days later when He would exit the tomb having conquered over the fallen world system of the devil—and over death itself! But here in John 17 in anticipation of His coming victory—He is asking the Father to give His disciples, then and now, victory so that we might overcome the world even as He had overcome the world.

In this context ‘**the world**’ (*kosmos* in the Greek) refers to the ‘*fallen world system*’ that is controlled by the devil, and which is in rebellion against God.

One commentator said concerning this—

“No matter what events occurred later that evening, this prayer makes it clear that Jesus was and is the Overcomer. He was not a “*victim*”; He was and is the Victor! ‘*Be of good cheer,*’ He had encouraged His disciples; ‘*I have overcome the world*’ (John 16:33). The word ‘world’ is used nineteen times in this prayer, so it is easy to see the connection between this prayer and John 16:33—where Jesus cried out, “**I have overcome the world!**” If you and I will understand and apply the truths revealed in this profound prayer, it will enable us to be overcomers too.”

I. Jesus Prays for Himself—verses 1-5

John 17:1 (NKJV)

¹ Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You...

“Jesus spoke these words”—What words?

This is a reference to everything He had spoken in this final teaching to His disciples before the cross—a teaching that encompassed Chapters 14 through 16.

"Father, the hour has come."

In other words, the hour has *finally* come—the hour that all of human history has been waiting for—the crucial hour in the redemptive plan of God for the human race!

The hour has finally come for Jesus to bear the sins of mankind—that is what I believe the Lord is saying—*“It’s here! It’s finally come! Father from before time began—through all of human history—to My birth and the 33 years since then—it’s finally arrived, it’s finally here at last!”*

Folks, this would be the climax of all human history—the ‘glory hour!’

Jesus is saying, *“The time had come to blot out the curse, to reconcile man to God, to destroy the power of sin, Satan and death—to disposes the usurper and take the world back to God and begin the process of bringing the Kingdom of God to the earth—the hour has come!”*

“Glorify Your Son”

In saying this, Jesus was referring to the *Cross*.

We must understand that for all of the pain, anguish, suffering, and sin-bearing that Jesus was about to go through on the cross—it was glory for the Son and would bring glory to the Father as well!

So, for all those who know God through Jesus Christ—the cross was the most glorious thing that has ever happened for mankind in the history of the world—primarily because it allowed for a new day to be made possible for mankind in the history of the world.

Malachi 4:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ "For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up," Says the LORD of hosts... ² But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves. ³ You shall trample the wicked, For they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet On the day that I do *this*," Says the LORD of hosts.

This is speaking of the coming Kingdom of God that Jesus will rule over—a Kingdom made possible by the Cross.

But listen, this Kingdom is costly—Someone had to pay for it:

John 19:30 (NKJV)

³⁰ So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" ["paid in full"]. And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

Skeptics believe that the cross was the downfall of Jesus—something that caught the Lord off guard—something unexpected and bad.

That it was the result of Jesus shooting His mouth off too many times which finally provoked His enemies into killing Him—nothing could be farther from the truth!

Jesus said concerning the suffering of the cross—*“For this cause I came into the world”* (John 18:37)—and *“How else could the Scriptures be fulfilled?”* (Matthew 26:54) and Psalm 16 and 22

But once again—the death of Jesus Christ actually brought glory to Himself and to His Father.

The world's concept of glory has nothing to do with suffering—although, that wasn't all that was involved in the glory Jesus had in mind that would be brought to Him and His Father by the events that were about to be set in motion in just a few hours.

First of all, the glory that Jesus had in mind would come from His death, resurrection, ascension, His coronation and His eventual reign from Jerusalem over the whole world during the Kingdom Age.

Secondly, the cross brought glory to God because God's *glory* involves or encompasses—His intrinsic, eternal attributes—the qualities that are only found in His divine nature.

These would involve things like—the love of God, the mercy of God, the grace of God, and let's forget the justice of God (that sin had to be paid for and couldn't just be 'overlooked' or 'swept under the proverbial rug!').

Furthermore, through the cross and resurrection of Christ—other attributes of God's were put on display for the world to see—things like God's power (to defeat His enemies), holiness, righteousness, judgment (against sin), goodness, wisdom etc.

So, when God's attributes were put on display when Jesus was crucified and subsequently when He rose from the dead—God was glorified!

As someone said, *"The cross was like a beautiful, multifaceted diamond—it shone and radiated with the attributes of God which brought Him glory!"*

But listen, the greatest glory of the Cross was the redemption it purchased for mankind—

John 12:27-28, 31-33 (NKJV)

²⁷ "Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven, *saying*, "I have both glorified *it* and will glorify *it* again."... ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. ³² And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself." ³³ This He said, signifying by what death He would die.

If you are a Christian here this morning, then you are the Father's love gift (Bride) to His Son—

John 6:37-40 (NLT2)

³⁷ However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do my own will. ³⁹ And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰ For it is my Father's will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life. I will raise them up at the last day."

What is eternal life?

1 John 5:20 (NLT2)

²⁰ And we know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us understanding so that we can know the true God. And now we live in fellowship with the true God because we live in fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the only true God, and He is eternal life.

Eternal life is first and foremost a Person—and not just living forever.

To some people, that thought alone is agonizingly horrible because their lives are miserable and depressing and so, in their mind—death will bring a welcomed release.

Listen, just because life goes on forever doesn't mean it's a good life (hell will go on forever but it obviously won't be a good existence either!).

One night as I went into my boy's bedroom to pray with them, my son Bob (who was around 5 at the time) was wrestling with something that was obviously making him very anxious. When I asked him what was troubling him—I was taken back by his response—he was worried and felt *'trapped'* by the concept of living eternally.

You see, the thought he was wrestling with, in his little mind, was the problem of the never ending, never changing nature of eternal life—that it's going to be existence stretched out into infinity—with no end or escape!

That's a concept that I'm sure troubles many people when it comes to us sharing with them the idea of accepting Jesus as Savior and living forever.

We need to communicate to people that the eternal life the Bible talks about isn't just a prolonged never-ending existence. We need to first of all share with them that eternal life is a Person—the Lord Jesus Christ. But not only is eternal life a Person—it is also something that that Person can give.

Look, I have given 3 children life (my wife helped a little)—but for me to give life I had to have life—in other words, I had to be alive myself. In that regard, I am life and it's the characteristic of everything that has life to reproduce life.

Even for those people who are childless—every cell in their body and in all of our bodies reproduce themselves every 7 years—in other words—life begets life!

When God's Word says that Jesus Christ is eternal life it means that in Him resides life that never ends—and while that's true we need to understand that—eternal life isn't so much a *quantity* of life as much as it is a *quality* of life! (Hold on to that for a minute)

Getting back to the idea that Jesus Himself is eternal life—when we talk about this life, the exciting thing about it is that—He can reproduce it in anyone who desires to have it.

I can give physical life—but I can't impart spiritual life because that life only resides in and flows from God Who is (not just has) eternal or spiritual life.

You can't take a Christian mom and a Christian dad and get a Christian baby. Together they can produce physical life—but spiritual life comes from one Person alone—Jesus Christ!

Jesus didn't say, *"I am one of many ways, many truths and many lives."*

He said, *"I [alone] am the Way, the Truth and the Life,
no one comes to the Father except through Me."* (John 14:6)

So, eternal life is a Person Who can reproduce that life in others—as Jesus went on to say:

John 17:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, ² **as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.**

You say, "*I want that!*"—that's good because you need that! Verse 3 gives the essence of how to receive it—

John 17:3 (NKJV)

³ **And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.**

Eternal life is passed from the Father to the Son to those who receive Jesus by faith and are made one with Him through the new birth (John 3). As we just said, eternal life is not really a *length* of time—as time won't even exist in eternity.

In eternity there won't be past or future—everything will exist in the eternal present tense (just like God Who is the Great 'I AM'—not the Great 'I Was' or the Great 'I Will Be'). Again, eternal life is not really a *quantity* of life but a quality of life.

Our life in eternity (heaven) will be a new kind of existence and experience—probably lived in a new dimensionality of some kind.

But actually, eternal life doesn't start in heaven—it starts right here on earth the moment a person receives Jesus into their heart as their Savior—

John 3:36 (NKJV)

³⁶ He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

1 John 5:11-13 (NKJV)

¹¹ And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹² He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. ¹³ These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to believe* in the name of the Son of God.

So, whatever this life is that Jesus is and imparts to those who believe in Him—it is given the moment a person opens their heart to Him and receives Him by faith. In other words, we're not waiting to enter into eternal life as Christians—we're living it right now!

Since eternal life is essentially God living His life in us—that means that when I received Jesus into my heart the Holy Spirit moved in and filled me with the life of God which I'm enjoying right now—not waiting for someday.

All physical death does for the Christian is to release me from all of the negatives of this fallen, failing, sinful physical body I was born with—releasing my spirit to live with Jesus in a new body in the visible presence of God—Who is the source of all the positives (like joy unspeakable and full of glory!).

Physical death for the Christian is simply moving out of an old worn out 'tent' into a glorious new mansion in heaven—

2 Corinthians 5:1 (NKJV)

¹ For we know that if our earthly house, *this* tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Romans 8:23 (NKJV)

²³ Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

So then, eternal life is Christ-life, it's Jesus-life—it's an existence that only belongs to God and to those who receive Him (Jesus) into their heart and are made one with Him. Again, eternal life isn't so much a *quantity* of life as much as it is a *quality* of life.

Look, this subject was so important to John that he tells us it was the whole purpose for which he wrote his Gospel—so that people could have eternal life—

John 20:31 (NKJV)

³¹ ...these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

Fifty-four times in his Gospel John talks about the *life* that Jesus gives.

But what exactly is this life? We have it as Christians the moment we receive Jesus into our hearts—but what does it look like practically speaking in the lives of Christians.

Come back next week and we'll look at it!

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

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