

Olivet Baptist Church

3500 Edmondson Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21229

Wednesday Night Bible Study (7:00 pm)

Book of John – Facilitator: Rev. Alex O. Stone

Overall Theme: Jesus' Preparation of His Disciples (13:1–17:26)

- I. Christ Prays for Himself (John 17:1-17:5)
- II. Christ Prays for His Disciples (John 17:6-17:19)
- III. Christ Prays for All Believers (John 17:20-17:26)

Chapter Review:

- **Chapters 13–17** concentrate on His teachings on that fateful night in which He was arrested. Before the instruction, Jesus washed His disciples' feet and predicted His betrayal.
- **The disciples are given two divine assignments: spread the gospel and build the Church.**
- **John 13:34–35.** The 11 disciples would survive in His absence by obeying His example of **love**. The command is **new** in that it is a special **love** for other believers based on the sacrificial love of Jesus: **As I have loved you, so you must love one another**
- **John 14:25–26.** Three things were needed for the apostles to understand Jesus' person and mission:
 - (1) His death had to occur - So He could defeat Satan by conquering death
 - (2) He had to rise again to vindicate His claim and demonstrate His victory. (Resurrection - irrefutable proof of eternal life)
 - (3) **The Spirit had to come** (He would be sent by **the Father ... in My name**, i.e., in Jesus' place and for Him) **and interpret the meanings of Jesus' words and deeds.**
- **The Holy Spirit is unnoticed by the unsaved who have no spiritual life.**
- Jesus "shed blood" was needed for our redemption. Our "Atonement"
- **The Holy Spirit has now replaced Jesus' physical presence;** and He mediates God to believers.
- **The Spirit is in a believer forever** (cf. Rom. 8:9).
- **The Spirit worked in their minds, reminding them of His teaching and giving them insight into its meaning** (cf. 2:22; 7:39; 20:9).

CURRENT FOCUS: "HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER" (17:1-17:17)

Christ Prays for Himself

17 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. ³ And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ⁴ I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵ And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

Christ Prays for His Disciples

⁶ "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. ⁷ Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. ⁸ For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.

⁹ "I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. ¹⁰ And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. ¹¹ Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as *We are*. ¹² While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of

them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. ¹³ But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves. ¹⁴ I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁵ I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. ¹⁸ As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.

Christ Prays for All Believers

²⁰ “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: ²³ I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

²⁴ “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵ O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. ²⁶ And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare *it*, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

Commentary: JESUS INTERCESSORY PRAYER (CHAP. 17:1-17:26)

1. JESUS' REQUESTS FOR HIMSELF (17:1–5)

Following the symbolic washing of the disciples' feet (13:1–30) and His private instruction of the apostles (14–16), Jesus prayed. This prayer in John 17 has been called “the Lord’s high-priestly prayer,” and “the Lord’s prayer.”

Jesus had ended His teaching of the disciples with a shout of victory: “I have overcome the world” (16:33). This was in anticipation of His work on the cross. Throughout His ministry Jesus’ work was done in obedience to the Father’s will (cf. Luke 4:42; 6:12; 11:1; Matt. 26:36). As He turned again to His Father, He prayed first for Himself (John 17:1–5), then for His apostles (vv. 6–19), and finally for future believers (vv. 20–26).

John 17:1. Jesus could approach God in prayer because of Their Father-Son relationship. He began His prayer with the word **Father** (cf. Matt. 6:9) and used that word three other times in this prayer (John 17:5, 21, 24) as well as “Holy Father” (v. 11) and “Righteous Father” (v. 25). **The time**, Jesus said, **has come**. The divine plan of redemption was at God’s appointment. Several times before this Jesus’ time had *not* come (2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20). But now it had arrived (cf. 12:23; 13:1).

Jesus then prayed, **Glorify Your Son** (cf. 17:5). This request for glorification included sustaining Jesus in suffering, accepting His sacrifice, resurrecting Him, and restoring Him to His pristine glory. The purpose of the request was **that** the Father would be glorified by the **Son**, that God’s wisdom, power, and love might be known through Jesus. Believers too are to glorify God (v. 10); in fact, this is the chief end of man

(Rom. 11:36; 16:27; 1 Cor. 10:31; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14; cf. *Westminster Larger Catechism*, Question 1).

John 17:2. The words, **You granted Him authority over all people**, indicate that Jesus' prayer request was in accordance with the Father's plan. The Father has ordained the rule of the Son over the earth (cf. Ps. 2).¹

So the Son has the authority to judge (John 5:27), to take up His life (10:18), and to **give eternal life to all those** whom the Father gave Him. Five times in this prayer Jesus referred to His own as those the Father gave Him (17:2, 6 [twice], 9, 24).

John 17:3. **Eternal life**, as defined here by **Jesus**, involves the experience of knowing **the only true God** through His Son (cf. Matt. 11:27). It is a personal relationship of intimacy which is continuous and dynamic. The word **know** (*ginōskōsin*) here in the present tense, is often used in the Septuagint and sometimes in the Greek New Testament to describe the intimacy of a sexual relationship (e.g., Gen 4:1, "lay"; Matt. 1:25, "had ... union"). Thus a person who knows God has an intimate personal relationship with Him. And that relationship is eternal, not temporal. Eternal life is not simply endless existence. Everyone will exist somewhere forever (cf. Matt. 25:46), but the question is, In what condition or in what relationship will they spend eternity?

John 17:4–5. Jesus' prayer for Himself was based on His completed **work** (cf. 4:34)—**I have brought You glory** (cf. 17:1)—which assumed His obedience to death

¹ Blum, E. A. (1985). [John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 330–331). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

(Phil. 2:8). Even though the Cross was future, it was a certainty. He repeated His request for a return to His pristine **glory** with the Father (cf. John 17:1) based on the certainty of the finished work on the cross.

This “work” the Father **gave Him to do** is **one of five things in Jesus’ prayer** which the Father “gave” the Son:

(a) work (v. 4),

(b) believers (vv. 2, 6, 9, 24),

(c) glory (vv. 5, 24),

(d) words (v. 8), and

(e) a name (vv. 11–12). The Son, in turn, gave believers God’s words (vv. 8, 14) and God’s glory (vv. 22, 24).

2. JESUS’ INTERCESSION FOR THE APOSTLES (17:6–19)

Jesus prayed for His disciples before He chose them (Luke 6:12), during His ministry (John 6:15), at the end of His ministry (Luke 22:32), here (John 17:6–19), and later in heaven (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25). This prayer of intercession reveals Jesus’ concern and love for His apostles.

John 17:6–8. The little flock of disciples was given by the Father to the Son (cf. vv. 2, 9, 24). They had been separated **out of the world** (“world” occurs 18 times in this chap.: vv. 5–6, 9, 11 [twice], 13, 14 [thrice], 15, 16 [twice in the Gr.], 18 [twice], 21, 23–25). This separation was by the electing work of the Father, in which the apostles had been given as a gift to Jesus Christ (cf. 6:37). With the words, **They have obeyed Your Word**, Jesus praised His disciples for responding to the message

of God in Jesus Christ. The disciples were not perfect, but they had the right commitment. Their faith in Jesus was a trust in His union with the Father (17:8). This faith in Jesus was manifested in their obedience to His words because **they believed** in His divine mission (cf. 16:27).

John 17:9–10. Christ's prayer (in vv. 6–19) was particularly for the Eleven, though it applies to all believers (cf. v. 20). At this point He was **not praying for the world** in its hostility and unbelief. **This prayer is for two things:**

- (a) **the disciples' preservation** ("protect them," v. 11) and
- (b) **their sanctification** ("sanctify them," v. 17).

The world is not to be preserved in its rebellion or sanctified in its unbelief. Jesus prayed this request because of God's ownership of them by creation and election (**they are Yours**). Jesus' words, **All I have is Yours, and all You have is Mine**, reveal His claim to unity, intimacy, and equality with the Father.

In the old economy, God dwelt among people and showed His glory. In Jesus, God's glory was displayed (cf. 1:14). Then Christ's disciples glorified Him: **Glory has come to Me through them**. And now in the Church Age the Holy Spirit glorifies the Son (16:14) and believers are also to glorify the Son (Eph. 1:12). ²

John 17:11. Jesus would soon depart to the Father and leave His disciples **in the world**. **They** had to stay in the world to carry out God's plan in spreading the good news of redemption and in planting the church. With the formation of the church,

² Blum, E. A. (1985). [John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 331–332). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

the history of the world has become, in a sense, “a tale of two cities”: the city of God and the city of man.

Since the disciples would be **in the world**, Jesus prayed for their protection. The hostility against God which fell on Jesus would now fall on the tiny band of apostles, and subsequently on many of Jesus’ followers. Jesus, in calling on His **Holy Father**, pointed up God’s distinction from sinful creatures. This holiness is the basis for believers’ separation from the world. He would **protect them** from the sin and enmity of the world **by the power of His name** (cf. Prov. 18:10). In Bible times a person’s name stood for the person. (In John 17:6, 26 the NIV translates the Gr. “Your name” by the word “You.”)

Why did Jesus pray for their preservation? It was to promote the unity of the believers, patterned after the unity of the Father and the Son: **so that they may be one as We are One** (cf. vv. 21–22). The unity here seems to be that of will and purpose. By being protected from the world they would be unified in their desires to serve and glorify the Son.

John 17:12. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus took care of the flock entrusted to Him by the Father. But Judas was an exception. He is here called **the one doomed to destruction** (lit., “the son of perdition”). Judas was never a sheep and his true character was finally manifested (cf. 13:11; 1 John 2:19). He was a “dead branch” (cf. comments on John 15:2, 6). Judas did what he wanted (he sold Jesus). Yet he was an unwitting tool of Satan (13:2, 27). Even people’s volitionally free acts fit into God’s sovereign plan (cf. Acts 2:23; 4:28). Thus, Judas’ betrayal of Jesus **fulfilled**

(i.e. filled up in a larger sense) the words in Psalm 41:9 about David's betrayal by his friend.

John 17:13. The words of comfort spoken by Jesus (**I say these things**) to His disciples were of great benefit to them. Following His Passion, **they** would recall His words and experience **the full measure of His joy**. Joy came to them because they knew from His words that He had conquered the evil one and brought eternal life to them.

John 17:14. Jesus' intercession for the disciples continued with a reminder of
(a) their value and
(b) their coming danger.

They were valuable because they had received the Word of God: I have given them Your Word (cf. "I gave them the words You gave Me," v. 8). They were in danger because the satanic **world** system **hated them**. It hated them because **they are not** a part **of** it. As believers share Jesus Christ, "Everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes, and the boasting of what he has and does" (1 John 2:16) loses its attractiveness. A believer's commitment shows the world's values to be trash or dung (cf. Phil. 3:8). Therefore, **the world** hates the exposure of its sham values (cf. John 3:20).

John 17:15. God's plan was **not** to remove the disciples from danger and opposition (**take them out of the world**) **but** to preserve them in the midst of conflict. Though Jesus would soon be taken out of the world (v. 11), His followers are to remain in it. Like Daniel in Babylon (Dan. 1–2; 4–6) and the saints in Caesar's household (Phil.

4:22), God intends for His followers to be witnesses to truth in the midst of satanic falsehood. Satan, **the evil one** (cf. Matt. 5:37; 1 John 5:19), as head of the world system, seeks to do everything possible to destroy believers (cf. Rev. 2:10; 12:10) but God's plan will prevail. Christians must not take themselves out of the world but remain in meaningful contact with it, trusting in God's protection while they witness for Jesus.

John 17:16–17. Just as Jesus did not belong to ³ the satanic world system (**I am not of it**; cf. v. 14), so believers do not. They belong to the heavenly kingdom (Col. 1:13) because of their new births (cf. John 3:3). Jesus had prayed for protection for His disciples (17:11). Now His second petition for them was for their sanctification. **Sanctify** means “set apart for special use.” A believer is to be distinct from the world's sin, its values, and its goals.

The means of this sanctifying work is God's **truth**. **The truth** is communicated in the **Word**, which is both personal and propositional. As the message about Jesus was heard, believed, and understood, the disciples' hearts and minds were captured. This change in their thinking resulted in changes in their living. The same is true of believers today. As they appropriate God's Word to their lives, they are sanctified—set apart for God and changed in their living in order to honor God (cf. 15:3). God's message set the apostles apart from **the world** so that they would do His will, not Satan's.

³ Blum, E. A. (1985). [John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 332–333). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

John 17:18. Jesus is the model for every believer. He was in the world, but He was not of the world (vv. 14b, 16b). He was **sent ... into the world** on a mission by His Father. So, believers are **sent ... into the world** on a mission by the Son, to make the Father known (cf. 20:21). Inasmuch as Jesus' prayer for the disciples was not limited to the immediate apostles (cf. 17:20), this passage is similar to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18–20). Each Christian should view himself as a missionary whose task is to communicate God's truth to others.

John 17:19. For the benefit of the disciples, Jesus sanctified Himself. In what sense did Jesus need to **sanctify** Himself? Was He not already set apart to God and distinct from the world? Yes, but *this* sanctification refers to His being separated and dedicated to His *death*. And the purpose of His death was **that they too may be truly sanctified**. The words "truly sanctified" are literally "sanctified in truth." This probably means that ⁴ God's truth is the means of sanctification (cf. comments on v. 17). The purpose of the death of Christ is to dedicate or separate believers to God and His program.

3. JESUS' INTERCESSION FOR FUTURE BELIEVERS (17:20–26).

John 17:20. The final portion of Jesus' **prayer** (vv. 20–26) was for future believers who would come to Him **through** the **message** of the apostles. In the Church Age all Christians have come to Christ directly or indirectly through the apostles' witness. Jesus knew His mission would succeed. He would die and be raised, He

⁴ Blum, E. A. (1985). [John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 333). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

would send forth the Spirit, the apostles would preach, people would be converted, and the church would be formed. As each high priest of Israel bore the names of the tribes before the presence of God in the tabernacle and the temple (cf. Ex. 28:9–12, 21–29), so now Jesus, the great High Priest, carried future believers into the holy presence of His heavenly Father (cf. Heb. 4:14–5:12; 7:24–8:2).

John 17:21. Jesus requested unity for future believers (cf. vv. 11, 22). This verse is a favorite of promoters of the present ecumenical movement. Admittedly the divided church is in many ways a scandal. The cure, however, is not institutional union. Jesus was not praying for the unity of a single, worldwide, ecumenical church in which doctrinal heresy would be maintained along with orthodoxy. Instead, He was praying for a unity of love, a unity of obedience to God and His Word, and a united commitment to His will. There are great differences between uniformity, union, and unity.

All believers belong to the **one** body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13) and their spiritual unity is to be manifest in the way they live. The unity Christ desires for His church is the same kind of unity the Son has with the Father: **just as You are in Me and I am in You** (cf. John 10:38; 17:11, 23). The Father did His works through the Son and the Son always did what pleased the Father (5:30; 8:29). This spiritual unity is to be patterned in the church. Without union with Jesus and the Father (**they ... in Us**), Christians can do nothing (15:5). The goal of their lives is to do the Father's will.

The disciples' union with Jesus as His body will result in people in **the world** believing in the Father: **that You have sent Me** (cf. 17:23).

John 17:22–23. The **glory** which Christ **gave** the church may refer to the glory of the Cross (cf. vv. 1–5). As the church received and pondered the significance of Jesus' atoning work, it would be united in God's purposes and redemptive plan. Again the union of Christians (**that they may be one**) is likened to the unity the Son has with the Father (**as We are One**; cf. vv. 11, 21). This union is further linked by Christ's indwelling of believers (**I in them**).

The goal of the **unity** of believers with each other and with God is twofold: (a) that the world will believe in the Son's divine mission (**know that You sent Me**), and (b) that the world will sense that God's love for believers is deep, intimate, and lasting as is His love for His unique Son (cf. v. 26).

John 17:24. The communion and fellowship which disciples have with Jesus in this life will increase in eternity. The goal of a believer's salvation is future glorification which includes being with Jesus (cf. 14:3; Col. 3:4; 1 Thes. 4:17). **Jesus' last testament and will (I want, *thelō*) is that His disciples enter into (see) His glory (Heb. 2:10).** This **glory** was what Jesus had from the **Father** and would again have (John 17:5). **His testament was sealed by His death and resurrection.** Since His will is identical to the Father's (4:34; 5:30; 6:38), it will certainly come to pass.

John 17:25–26. Jesus’ prayer for believers ends with a call to the **Righteous Father**. The word translated “righteous” here does not ⁵ occur often in John’s Gospel (cf. 5:30; 7:24). Its significance here seems to be in Jesus’ praise of the Father for His work of revelation (cf. Matt. 11:25–26). The Father is right (righteous) and the world is in the wrong (**the world does not know You**). Jesus has known, revealed (John 17:6), and glorified (v. 4) the Father, and so should Christians. The essence of God is love (1 John 4:8). Jesus made the Father and His love **known to** the world by His death. And the Father made known His love for the Son by raising Him to glory. Jesus’ purpose in revealing the Father was that Christians would continue to grow in that love (**that the Father’s love for the Son may be in them**) and to enjoy the personal presence of Jesus in their lives (**that I Myself may be in them**).

Jesus’ petitions for believers are four: preservation (John 17:11), sanctification (v. 17), unity (vv. 11, 21–22), and participation in Jesus’ glory (v. 24). This prayer is sure to be answered (cf. 11:42; 1 John 5:14).

⁵ Blum, E. A. (1985). [John](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 333–334). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.