



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Gospel According to St. John

Chapter 17

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Introduction

- Some commentators speak of this chapter as the simplest in word and profoundest in thought, in the whole Holy Bible
- It contains the words uttered by our Lord, with eyes lifted up to heaven, in prayer to the Father
- It is often spoken of as the High Priest's Prayer
- St. Clement of Alexandria says, in this prayer Jesus is the High Priest who acts on behalf of His people
- In this deeply moving intercessory prayer, which is prayed aloud before the disciples, we become even more aware of His love to His Church and concern for those who have followed Him



Introduction

Chapter Outline

- Jesus Prays for Himself 17:1-5
- Jesus Prays for His Disciples 17:6-19
- Jesus Prays for All Believers 17:20-26



Jesus Prays for Himself 17:1-5

- The farewell speeches to the disciples are finished with words giving assurance of victory, *I have overcome the world*, 16:33
- And now Jesus Christ, the everlasting high Priest, being ready to immediately offer Himself up, by fervent prayers consecrates Himself to God the Father as a sacrifice, and us together with Himself
- *lifted up His eyes to heaven*, To the seat of the divine majesty, the throne of His Father
- This is a prayer gesture



Jesus Prays for Himself 17:1-5

- *the hour has come*, He often repeated that His hour had not come, but now and here surely refers to the time of His death, He knew it was coming
- The hour which has so often presented itself as inevitable
- The hour of the conflict with the prince of this world, and of complete acceptance of the Father's will, has come
- It was a time of great trouble, distress and darkness, and so a fit time for prayer

Jesus Prays for Himself 17:1-5



- *Glorify Your Son, As man and Mediator*
- For as God, He needed no glory, nor could any be added to Him
- The glory is in Jesus' sacrificial death, resurrection and ascension
- He was crowned with glory in order that He might taste death for every man
- The conflict, the victorious combat with death, was the beginning of His glory



Jesus Prays for Himself 17:1-5

- “If the Son had died in the flesh and did not rise again, He would without doubt have not been glorified by the Father, nor would He have glorified the Father. Now that He is glorified in His resurrection through the Father, He glorifies the Father through the preaching of His resurrection., This is revealed in the very arrangement of the words: “Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You.” This means, ‘Raise Me up so that through Me the entire world may know You’.” **St. Augustine**

Jesus Prays for Himself 17:1-5



- Jesus had authority over all flesh, Matthew 28:18
- He had possessed Deity from the beginning, as the Creator of all, John 1:1-3, 20:28; Philippians 2:5
- That would give Him inherent power over all
- All people everywhere must obey Jesus' word
- He is Lord of all, Acts 10:36; Romans 10:12
- He is King of kings and Lord of lords
- He possessed glory with the Father before the world began
- Note that He would have authority over all flesh: not just one nation (the Jews), but all people of all nations



Jesus Prays for Himself 17:1-5

- If you say, ‘What does the Lord mean by “You have given Him authority over all flesh”?’ I answer, ‘He has shown from the beginning that preaching Him is not limited to the Jews alone, but extends to the entire world. Here, He announces beforehand the first call to the nations (after the Jews reject Him). For He had said previously, “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles” (Matt 10:5), but the time came when He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations” (Matt 28:19). He has shown that the Father desired that.’” **St. John Chrysostom**

Jesus Prays for Himself 17:1-5



- It is through the Son's glorification that God gives man the opportunity to receive eternal life through "knowing" God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Son
- Having mentioned eternal life (verse 2), Jesus proceeds to describe in verse 3 how men may receive it
- He shows in what its accomplishment consist; that is in revealing to men the only true God through Jesus Christ
- Our Savior says, it is life eternal to know Him who is the only true God, that is, it is the way to eternal life



Jesus Prays for Himself 17:1-5

- Eternal life consists in the knowledge of the Father as the only Being answering to the ideal thought of God
- And in this knowledge manifested in Him, whom God anointed and sent into the world to declare His attributes and character
- Only in the Word made flesh can we hear the voice of mercy, forgiveness, love, fatherhood; which comes to men as the breath of life, so that they become living souls
- Knowing, in this verse, signifies not the mere comprehending of God and of Christ in men's notions; but the receiving Christ, believing in Him, loving and obeying Him

Jesus Prays for Himself 17:1-5



- God could not be glorified by Christ, by the addition of any thing to His essential glory
- Only by manifesting to the world His Father's goodness, justice, mercy, truth, wisdom, and other of His attributes
- One way by which He had glorified His Father by finishing the work which He had given Him in commission
- But how could Christ say this, who had not yet died for the sins of men, which was the principal piece of His work?
- He speaks of what He was fully resolved to do, as if it were already done



Jesus Prays for Himself 17:1-5

- In confident anticipation, Christ looks back from the point when all shall be accomplished, and speaks of the whole work of redemption as one act
- The following great truths are contained in these two verses
 - (1) that the Son is in Person distinct from the Father
 - (2) that the Son, existing in glory with the Father from all eternity, working in obedience to the Father on earth, existing in glory with the Father now, is one and the same

Jesus Prays for Himself 17:1-5



- Jesus claimed for Himself the possession of the divine glory in His pre-existent state before the world was
- He claimed this in personality distinct from, but in one essence with God, John 1:1, 1:18

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- Here the Divine Intercessor turns from Himself, and from the approaching glory of His own Person, to meditate, for the advantage of His disciples, on what had already been done for them, in them, to them
- He clothes these meditations in the form of a direct address to the eternal God, and makes the series of facts on which He dwells the groundwork of the prayer which follows for His disciples, as representative of all who, like them, have come into relations with the Father through Him

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- Nature manifests the existence of God in some limited ways
- The Law of Moses declares God more, but the incarnation of the Word is a perfect manifestation of God in His love for men and in His characteristics
- In Scripture the "name" indicates the entire person
- It was part of Jesus' mission to mankind, as prophesized in Jeremiah 31:31-34, to reveal "the name", the entire person of God the Father through His words, His works, and His sacrifice, 3:11-13, 12:28, 14:7-11, 17:3-6,26

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- One way Jesus "revealed" the divine name of God was by identifying repeatedly Himself with the divine name "I AM", 6:35, 8:12,24,28,58, 10:7,11, 11:25, 13:19, 14:6, 15:1
- *to the men whom You have given Me*, He means primarily the disciples who followed Him
- But these words extend also to include all those who accept Him throughout the ages, those who listen and respond to Him
- He says, "You have given Me" referring to those who through faith belong to Christ

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- He says they also belong to the Father who presents them as a gift to be heirs of Christ
- Through the Cross, the Lord Jesus Christ offers them to the Father justified and qualified for reconciliation with the Father
- The Father in turn offers them to the Son as members of His body having the right to eternal inheritance
- *they have kept Your word*, This means they were steadfast in Him and continued in Him working through Him

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- *Now they have known*, As the result of this keeping of God's truth and His word
- This is the result of their spiritual training—in its fullness, indeed, still future, but regarded as in the immediate present
- The lesson He had been teaching them, and which they were about fully to know, was that the whole life of Christ—the words He had spoken, John 12:49, the works He had done, John 5:36—was a manifestation of the Father

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- Our Lord explains in this verse how the disciples attained to the knowledge He had spoken of in verse 7, and lays stress in the first place on His own work in teaching them
- They on their part received them
- Others had been taught, and did not receive
- The teaching was the same; the varying effect was in the heart of the hearer, John 1:12,18
- *they have believed that You sent Me*, They have known that He came to seek and to save lost sinners, to redeem all and perform everything necessary to their salvation

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- *I pray for them*, In view of their dangers and trials, He sought the protection and blessing of God on them
- *I do not pray for the world*, Surely this is not an assertion that He would never pray, or that He had not already prayed, for the world
- His entire ministry is the expression of the Father's love to the whole world, John 3:16
- He came as the Lamb of God to take away its sin, John 1:29
- He commanded His disciples, Matthew 5:44 to pray for their enemies

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- And He cried at the last for a blessing on His murderers
- He "came to seek and save the lost," to "call sinners to repentance," "not to condemn, but to save the world."
- Moreover, in this prayer (verse 21) He does pray for those who should ultimately, believe in Him through the word of the disciples
- Therefore it is inconceivable that He should here dogmatically limit the range of His gracious desire
- His point is only that, at this particular point, His prayer is for the disciples, not for the world

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- Once again in verse 10 Jesus expresses His unity with the Father
- *I am glorified in them*, Once more the Divine Savior rejoices in the victory He has won in securing the faith of the disciples
- He anticipates the glorifying of His name by the successful preaching of the apostles
- How much He loved and trusted them!

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- *I am no longer in the world*, The immediate future is still regarded as present; Jesus was leaving the world (He was actually still in the world, but He spoke as if He has already left)
- The earthly ministry is over; for a while He must leave them in the merciless storm, feeling a sense of loss of His care and counsel, exposed to temptation
- Knowing the temptations the disciples will face to reject Him in favor of the world, Jesus prays that the disciples will be kept safe from those temptations

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- He prays that they will persevere, that they will remain true to the Father's commandments, and that their bond to each other will be a unity that is a reflection of the oneness of the Most Holy Trinity
- There is a special fitness in the word “Holy” here, as in opposition to the world
- These were spiritually God’s children, separated from the world, John 17:6, and He commits them to the Holy Father, that He may keep them from the evil of the world

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- They had so far realized the revelation of God that they had known Christ's whole life to be the utterance of God to their spirits, John 17:6-8
- He prays that they may be kept in this knowledge in order that they may so know the Father through Him, as to become themselves one with the Father
- *While I was with them in the world,* Again in verse 12 He speaks of the earthly ministry as completed, and reviews the whole of His influence over them

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- The Good Shepherd watched His flock, and such was His care that none perished but *the son of perdition*
- For him there was the same preservation and the same guardianship as for those who remained in the flock
- The sheep wandered from the flock, and was lost by his own act
- That man obtained the blessing of discipleship but willingly and wickedly corrupted that gift because of his love of money
- Christ calls Judas “*son of perdition*” because he withdrew from the membership of the divine family

Jesus Prays for His Disciples 17:6-19



- He refused to be a child of God and insisted on being a son of Satan
- The term, “*son of perdition*,” is a well-known Hebrew idiom
- The phrase is used in Isaiah 57:4 to express the apostasy of the Israelites
- It occurs once again in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, of the “man of sin.”
- Thus the scripture is fulfilled, Psalm 41:9, 109:8; compared with Acts 1:20

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- As He Himself goes to the Father, He utters this petition aloud, and while yet with the disciples that they might recognize that the power of God was engaged for their protection, and might thus have repeated and perfected in themselves the same joy with which Christ had overcome all the trials and fears of life
- He prays that the joy of His people may not be diminished by His going from them, but that when they can no longer rejoice in His bodily presence with them, they may yet rejoice that He is ascended to His Father, that they stand commended to His care

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- He prays that they would find the higher joy also of the return of their Lord to the bosom of the Father
- Christ has taught His disciples to desire such joy and peace as He found on the night of the Passion
- The joy here thought of is that which supported Him in all the sorrow and loneliness of His work on earth, and came from the never-failing source of the Father's presence with Him
- He would have them fulfilled with the abundance of this joy

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- *I am not of the world*, This constant contrast between the mind of Christ and the spirit of the world pervades the New Testament
- Christ had exposed its hypocrisies, and denounced its idols, and reversed its standards, and condemned its prince, and was now indifferent to its curse
- His disciples, as far as they shared His sentiments, came in also for its malediction and hatred
- Jesus has repeatedly made the distinction between belonging to God or to the world; there can be no compromise between the two

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- The thought may naturally have come to their minds that they would be most effectually kept from the hatred and danger of which He had spoken if they were to be with Him taken out of the world
- But there is for them a work in the world, John 17:18,24
- He has finished the work His Father gave Him to do; He has glorified the Father on the earth, John 17:4
- There is a work for them to glorify Him, John 17:10, and He prays not that they should be taken out of the world before their work is done

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- The Christian ideal is not freedom from work, but strength to do it
- Not freedom from temptation, but power to overcome it
- Not freedom from suffering, but joy in an abiding sense of the Father's love
- Not absence from the world, but grace to make the world better for our presence
- Not holy lives driven from the world, and living apart from it, but holy lives spent in the world and leavening it

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- The thought of their being still in the world leads on to their mission in the world, and the prayer passes from the thought of preservation to that of their sanctification for their work
- Already they are not of the world, even as He is not of the world

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- They had through Christ received the Father's word, which was truth, and had passed into a new region of life, separate from the world, 17:6-8, 14-16
- He has prayed that the Father would preserve them in this, and now He prays further that the Father would in this new region of life set them apart for the work to which He had sent them, 17:18
- "Sanctify" means to be made holy or set apart
- It is constantly used in the Greek of the Old Testament for the consecration of persons and things to the service of God

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- Jesus repeated that He was sending the apostles into the world as the Father sent Him into the world
- But though they must be in the world, they should be sanctified by God's word, the truth, just as Jesus had sanctified Himself by the truth
- Why does He link His mission from the Father to His own mission?
- He wanted to affirm to them that He supports them
- He works with, through, and in them, for their work is a continuation of His work

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

17:6-19



- *I sanctify Myself*, As He willingly gives Himself up to death so that He may save humanity, He says He thus sanctifies Himself or consecrates all His life to achieve our salvation
- The consecration here is the work which was immediately before Him the offering Himself as a sacrifice
- Just as the Son devoted His mission to the salvation of humanity, likewise the disciples must be sanctified and consecrates for Christ who is “the truth”
- They are sanctified or set apart to God’s service, dedicated to live obediently to God, different from the world
- God’s word is the truth that produces this sanctification

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- Jesus had prayed for Himself, then for the apostles
- Now He prays, not just for them, but also for all who believe in Him through the teaching of the apostles
- His farewell prayer extends to include all those who are ready to accept salvation across the generations and to the end of time
- For, He is the Intercessor by His blood for all those who accept His redemptive act so that all may become one
- He had manifested the nature of God to them; and they who had received His word and witnessed His work would become, by the indwelling of the Spirit in them, the means of extending this revelation of God to others

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- They would do this by means of the word which, in His name, they would preach
- *they all may be one*, This is the purpose of the prayer
- Christ prays for blessings for His Church with this end in view,— that all may be one
- His prayer is that the many may become one, form one living glorious unity; every part of which spiritual organism, while living a separate and differentiated life, is yet a part of a whole
- The members of a body, being many, are one body and members of one another

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- The union of the Church may be of the same essential nature as that between the Father and the Son
- Unity is based on the action of God in the life of the servants, the apostles, disciples, and priests
- The Lord Jesus Christ repeats the clause “that they may be” seven times (verses 11,19,21 twice, 22,23,24)
- Four of the seven times He prays that His followers may be one
- Thus was Jesus the Lord of glory concerned in particular with unity
- It is for the spiritual perfection of the Church indwelled by God the Holy Spirit that Jesus prays

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- The union of the Church may result from the union of individual members with the Father through the Son
- As a result of our unity with God, the glory we receive will include an acknowledgement by the world that God sent Jesus and that God loves us just as surely as He loved Jesus
- And He repeats that this unity would help the world believe in Him
- It is sad, but true, that by causing division among those who claim to follow Jesus, Satan has significantly hindered the world's acceptance of Jesus as God's Son

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- The result of the union of believers with God, and therefore with each other, will be that the world will see in it a proof of the divine origin of Christianity, and will believe that the Father sent the Son into the world
- The divisions of Christians have ever been the weakness of the Church and the proof to the world that, in that they are divided, they cannot be of God, John 13:35

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- Again, the future is regarded as present
- The fullness of the glory which awaits Him at His Father's right hand is thought of as already given to Him
- Numerous interpretations of this "glory" have been suggested
- One meaning is that the believers who have become, and will become, one with Him, to whom He has given eternal life, 17:2, are thought of as sharers in it
- It is the thought which is expanded by St. Paul when he speaks of the children being *"heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if indeed we suffer with Him that we may also be glorified together."* Romans 8:17

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- Jesus' glorification gives humanity the opportunity to receive God's gift of eternal life, to enter into an intimate relationship with God the Father and God the Son, and this in turn reflects the glorification of the Father and the Son while also inviting humanity's participation in that divine glory
- Another meaning by the “glory” is that the Word incarnate obtains by performing the miracles and attracting the lost souls to their salvation and He grants His disciples this ability in His Holy name
- Some also say that the glory here is explained to be the glory of being one with them and having them in us

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- As Jesus received glory for His sacrifice to save us, so He gives us glory if we serve Him, Hebrews 2:9,10
- What is the final consequence of the giving of His glory to the disciples?
- That the disciples and all who believe in Him would, through grace, become partakers of the divine nature in unity with Him, and that through their transformed lives the world would recognize and be assured of His divine mission from the Father, 2 Peter 1:4
- The union between the Father and Son is once more made the type of the union among men who have received as His gift the eternal life and glory of a supernatural love

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- He distinctly regards Himself as the mediating link of relation between the Father and the disciples
- “I in them, and You in Me” meaning ‘I am with those You have sent Me to and You are in Me, I who reconcile the world with You through Me.’ St. Augustine
- They are perfected by being wrought to a Divine unity
- The work of Christ is accomplished when men are one by Christ dwelling in them
- God is in Him, He is in each believer, and thus a true and final unity is formed

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- One result is the conviction wrought in the world
- The mission of Christ and its results prove not only the Father's love of the Son but His love for men
- He repeats that this unity would help the world believe in Him

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- *I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am,* He does not merely wish it but the Son prays for the eternal life to His own, all who believed in Him
- The design of Christ is, that all who believe should love and obey, persevere unto the end, and be eternally united to Himself, and the ever blessed God, in the kingdom of glory
- This surely appears to discuss the eternal reward of the faithful disciples

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- Not the glory of the Word, the Eternal Son, which was His in His equality with the Father, but the glory of Christ, the Incarnate Son, with which the risen and ascended Jesus was endowed
- In sure confidence Christ speaks of this as already given, and wills that all believers may behold and share it
- Thus two gifts of the Father to the Son meet and complete one another: those whom He has given behold the glory that He has given
- He repeated that the Father loved Him before the foundation of the world

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- *O righteous Father*, Conclusion of the prayer: Appeal to the justice of God
- This thought follows upon the prayer that those whom the Father had given Him may be where He is, and behold the divine glory; and the connection seems to be in the thought that sinful humanity cannot see God and live
- The world, indeed, did not know God, John 15:21, 16:3, but the Son knew God, and the disciples had recognized that He had been sent by God, and in their knowledge of Him had passed through a moral' change, by which they were no longer of the world, but were sons of God, John 1:12

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- His whole teaching had been a making known of the name, character, will of God, to them
- In part this had been received, but in part only
- The first steps in the spiritual lessons had been taken, but in His Presence in the Paraklete He will guide them into all truth, and make known to hearts quickened to receive it, the love of God which passes knowledge
- It is more than that God may love the disciples, even as He loved the Son; it is that they may so know the nature of God that this love may be in them, dwelling in them as the principle of their life

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- And then the thought passes on to that fullness which has been present all through this last discourse and prayer, “and I in them.”, John 17:23
- Going from them, to be yet with them; not to be with them only as a Person without, but as a power within. “I in them” are the last words of the Intercessory Prayer
- The words remain in all their comfort for them in whom “Christ is formed;” in all their encouragement for doubting hearts seeking to know God; in all their warning for hearts that do not seek His presence

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- *and will declare it,* By the conversations He had with His disciples after His resurrection, during the space of forty days
- And by the Holy Spirit which was poured out upon them on the day of Pentecost
- And all these declarations Jesus Christ made, that the love of God, and Christ Jesus Himself, might dwell in them; and thus they were to become a habitation for God

Jesus Prays for All Believers

17:20-26



- Our Lord's sermon, which He concluded by the prayer recorded in this chapter, begins at John 13:13, and is one of the most excellent than can be conceived
- In this, man sees all things are possible to him who believes; for that very God who made him shall dwell in his heart, and enable him to do all that He pleases to employ him in
- No man can properly understand the nature and design of the teaching of Christ who does not enter into the spirit of this discourse

Discussion



- What has God, the Father, given to Jesus? How does this gift from God help us answer the question of who Jesus is?
- What is the "hour" that has come? What is the "glory" Christ is talking about?
- How does Jesus define eternal life in verse 3?
- What is the work that Jesus has accomplished? How does this glorify God?



Discussion

- What does this glory demonstrate about Jesus' nature?
- In verses 8-11 Who is Christ directly referring to? Who else?
- Who is the "son of perdition"?
- What did Jesus mean by "the world," and what had He earlier taught the disciples about how the world would treat them?



Discussion

- In what sense are Christians in the world but not of the world? What can we learn?
- Define “sanctify” and list 2 other places where it is used.
- How important is unity within the Christian church? Explain your answer