

Gospel of John Chapter 17 - John Karmelich

One of the things I learned a long time ago about the bible is there is no key chapter. That is because if a chapter or a few pages are missing, it doesn't affect the whole thing. If I asked where's the chapter on salvation, baptism, or the Second Coming, none exists. It protects the integrity of the whole book. With that understood, if I was on my death bed, I'd love to be read Romans 8, Psalm 22 and yes, John 17. I'd consider those my favorite bible passages. Chapter 17 is a prayer from God the Son to God the Father. When we think of the Lord's prayer, most of us think of what's in Luke 7. That's a prayer for us to pray. For example that prayer asks God to forgive our sins. Any prayer from Jesus to the Father would never include a line about asking God to forgive Jesus's sins, as well, He is sinless! So why is there a prayer from God the Son to God the Father included in the bible? That's a key question to ponder.

I realize John wrote this book about 60 years after this event occurred. I realize the Holy Spirit helped John recall it. I'm positive John wrote it just as God wanted him to write it in the original Greek. John wanted us to know this prayer so we could grasp the relationship between God the Father and His Son (Jesus), as well as the fact Jesus prays for all believers. Remember, this prayer was a few hours before "show time" with the whole saga of Jesus trial, death and resurrection. In effect this prayer is the end of His ministry as He'll now focus on the big event itself. The prayer reminds us the big picture ideas we should be aware of, as believers in Him!

The prayer in effect is divided into three parts. Part 1 is Jesus praying about His relationship with God the Father. In effect it's "Hey God, I did all that You asked Me to do! I did it successfully and now it's time for Me to come home!" Obviously He's saying this in advance so the disciples would know that it is "Showtime" for a lack of a better word. Part 2's Jesus praying for His disciples. It's for them to know that the last three years wasn't wasted, even though Jesus is leaving He'll still be praying for them to be good witnesses for Him. Part 3 extends in the future to state that Jesus is praying for all believers to be a good witness for Him. Obviously there's more to it and that's why multitudes of sermons do exist on this chapter.

That leads to the big question. If I write these lessons for believers and we're believers, why should we study them? What's in it for us? To me, this chapter shows what the big picture aspects of Christianity are. It answers the classic question, "Why did God bother?" (God wanted someone to express His love upon and picked people. God paid the price for our sins so we can be with Him forever.) We also get in effect the answer to the question "What's in it for Jesus?" (He gets us as a "wedding gift" for paying for our sins). Then it explains what's in it for us? (It's about using our lives as a witness for Jesus, but this prayer explains how He helps us to do that, by using our lives as a witness for Him and the eternal benefit of all that.) So much for the big questions, yet there's more to this prayer than that!

In other words if Jesus is God and we've read of many miracles to prove that, and then we get the Spirit of God to convict us, that leads us to my favorite question, "Now what?" To state the obvious, the first use of this prayer is it reminds us of the big picture of why we're bothering in the first place! If Jesus is not God, then obviously all of this is a big waste of time. If Jesus is God, then this prayer in effect tells us our "marching orders" of what Jesus is doing, what God the Father is doing and what we're to do for being part of the "winning team". Obviously this is "big picture" stuff. As I go through the chapter, I'll spend some time on practical applications. With all that out of my system, I'll go through what many of us consider one of the most important chapters in the Bible! Enough stalling, time for the details:

It opens with the Jesus declaring it's time for God the Father to glorify Jesus since He glorified Him on earth! Jesus is saying it's time for what is the key moment in all of history, and Jesus wants us to know it, so He said this out loud for us to realize that. The next key point is us accepting He (Jesus) is God as well as believing He's Lord of our lives is all that's required for salvation! It implies we are not perfect and can never be perfect enough for God as it, just perfectly forgiven! I know that's "Christianity 101" but we're only in the first part of the prayer. Jesus ends this first part of the prayer stating in effect, "I'm all done as I did all You (The Father) told Me to do, so now I'll be coming back to You so that the two of us will be united as we were before the world was created!" That reminds us Jesus always existed!

From Verse 6 to 19 the focus is on the "11" and would include all others who got saved through belief in Jesus. Jesus is making the point to God the Father that everything He wanted Jesus to tell them. He did it, so "Mission Accomplished". (Even though He prayed it hours before the Cross, Jesus knew that it's a "done deal" so He prayed accordingly.) Jesus makes the point that He only prays for believers. So if that's true and we're already saved, what is He praying for (for us)? I suspect it is so we use our lives as a good witness for Him and do the Father's will. Obviously we have free choice and still must fight our desire to sin, let alone demonic and the world's influences. (To state the classic joke, "Lead me not into temptation, I can find it all by myself!") Jesus even makes the point that none of them is lost other than Judas.

I have to admit the story of Judas endlessly fascinates me. He obviously watched Jesus do many great things right in front of him that defy explanation! He went out with the other disciples to preach about Him. Peter still denied knowing Jesus in a matter of hours, so why is Judas singled out? The issue for us to learn is to accept the fact that God's in charge and works on His timing. Peter didn't deny the fact Jesus was crucified and rose again, while Judas thought Jesus' death and His ministry were a big waste of his time! I'd conclude that the issue is not just believing Jesus was a great man or could do miracles. One must believe He is God and paid the full price for our sins. Peter never denied that and Judas did! Meanwhile I left Jesus praying! The prayer includes the fact that Jesus is not "of this world" and we are not for believing in Him. Jesus says He's not of this world (i.e., He's from heaven) and we're no longer a part of this world as we've been purchased by God and are a part of His kingdom! If one believes He (Jesus) is God and died for your sins, then you've been purchased whether you feel any different or not.

The prayer includes asking God to "Sanctify us" (which just means we're set apart for His use). We are set apart simply by the fact we know and accept the truth about who Jesus is and what Jesus did for us! Then comes the really good part (in my opinion): Jesus doesn't just pray for the "11" etc., but all those who will believe in Him (that's where we come in the picture)! Here's the amazing part all the glory of God the Father is not only given to Jesus but to us as well (Verse 22). I'm not positive what that entails but I doubt whatever suffering we go through in this life is anyway going to deny us the joy of what we will receive for all of eternity. I've always argued that whatever heaven is like, it'll never be boring.

That thought continues to finish the prayer. The main idea is that God the Father and God the Son have an intimate relationship. Those of us who have committed our lives to serving Him also will be part of that intimacy for all eternity. Think about all the Christians around the world martyred because they're convinced that that is true! Stop and think of any suffering we have or might receive just for believing in Jesus is in charge of our lives, and asking what is that compared to an eternal close relationship with the God who created the world in the first place. Yes, I'm well aware all of this sounds like a fairy tale, but the evidence that Jesus is God is overwhelming when one studies it. If that doesn't convince us that Jesus is God then pray to God to guide you closer to Him. It's a prayer He'll answer every time because what He desires is a personal and close relationship with each of us. Now if that doesn't get us excited,

then there's no hope! Hopefully that gives you a good flavor why this prayer means so much to me, as I hope it does to you as well. Yes there's more to it, but hope this gives you a good sense of His prayer!

If you liked this little study, I wrote a more detailed account about twenty years ago! To read the other one, click on one of the two links on this page. Thanks again for reading this. John