

JOHN

Stories Related To The Last Days Of Christ

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I. Introduction

- A. John 17:1-26 . . . Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You, [2] even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life. [3] This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. [4] I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do. [5] Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. [6] I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. [7] Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; [8] for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me. [9] I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours; [10] and all things that are Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. [11] I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are. [12] While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. [13] But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves. [14] I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. [15] I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. [16] They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. [17] Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. [18] As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. [19] For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth. [20] I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; [21] that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

[22] The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; [23] I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. [24] Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. [25] O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; [26] and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."

B. Three primary lessons from Jesus' prayer.

1. The essence of eternal life is not a place or an endless amount of time, but a deeply personal, genuinely intimate, mutually satisfying relationship with God and His son, Jesus Christ.
2. Jesus' prayer provides examples of what we could/should pray for.
3. One significant purpose of Christian unity is to encourage the world to believe that God sent Jesus and that God loves those who repent and come to faith in Jesus just as He loved Jesus.

C. Prayer

II. Three primary lessons from Jesus' prayer.

A. **First Lesson:** The essence of eternal life is not a place or an endless amount of time, but a deeply personal, genuinely intimate, mutually satisfying relationship with God and His son, Jesus Christ.

1. **John 17:3 . . . This is eternal life, that they may know You**, the only true God, **and Jesus Christ** whom You have sent.
2. We often think and speak of eternal life in terms of time and place.
 - a. For example, eternal life is most often talked about as a never ending span of time that we enter after we die.
 - b. And as for it's place, most speak of eternal life as being in heaven, even though the Bible says that eternal life will be lived in the new heavens and the new earth – which God will create at the end of this world as we know it now.
3. However, eternal life is not limited to time and place, for it's most important part is an eternal, reconciled relationship with God that begins when we repent and come to faith in Jesus Christ.
4. Therefore, though time and place are a part of eternal life, the essence of eternal life is a life of faith in God and in Jesus Christ that produces a mutually loving and mutually satisfying relationship with God and

Jesus Christ – a relationship that begins in this life and continues throughout eternity in the new heavens and new earth.

5. It is this essence that Jesus speaks of when He says that **eternal life is knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent**.
 - a. Now when Jesus says “eternal life is **knowing** God and Jesus Christ,” He is not talking about information – such as one learns in the classroom, but knowledge gained from putting into practice what one has learned in the classroom.
 - (1) In other words, this **knowing** that Jesus speaks of is a knowledge that grows out of an ever deepening, meaningful, and personal relationship with God and Christ.
 - (2) And for such a relationship to last forever, it must be deeply personal, mutually loving, genuinely intimate, and mutually satisfying.
 - b. Therefore, the true essence of eternal life is knowing God and Jesus Christ through a never ending, deeply personal, mutually loving and mutually satisfying relationship with them.
6. As to this relationship being mutually satisfying, I cannot tell you in what ways it is satisfying to God, but I can tell you that this kind of relationship produces in us a deeply felt joy, a settled peace, a genuine contentment, a humble reverence, and an assured sense of well-being and security that is so satisfying that they make riches, fame, and power seem worthless by comparison.
7. And though – in this life – we may never come to know God and Jesus as fully as we were created to know them, most of us can make enough progress in experiencing the essence of eternal life that we come to think of eternal life in terms of an ever deepening, meaningful, and personal relationship instead of a future time and place.

B. Second Lesson: Jesus’ prayer provides examples of what we could/should pray for.

1. As God’s children, we have the privilege to bring many concerns, sorrows, needs, issues, and wants to God in prayer. And what we are going to talk about today in no way diminishes this truth.
 - a. However, in light of Jesus’ prayer here in **John 17**, I want to point out four focuses that can and sometimes ought to be part of our prayers.
 - b. And as we talk about these four focuses I urge you to keep in mind that this is not just about praying, but also about nurturing an

established mindset, attitudes, and perspectives that are part of our lives all the time, even when we are not praying.

2. Though the **first example** of what to pray for is scattered throughout His prayer, Jesus begins with this focus. And so in **John 17:1**, Jesus said, “Father, the hour has come; **glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.**”
 - a. Jesus went on to say, “**I glorified You on the earth**, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do” (**vs4**).
 - (1) What I hope you can see is that the importance to Jesus of bringing glory to God was an established mindset, attitude, and perspective that He manifested in how He lived as well as in what He prayed.
 - (2) The same ought to be true of us, and Jesus said as much when He exhorted us to have this same mindset, attitude, and way of life in **Matthew 5:16**, “Let your light shine (***or live your life***) before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”
 - b. Now admittedly, this is easier said than done, especially when facing trials, injustice, severe disappointments, sorrows, or sicknesses that seem to push us to the limits of our faith or require a dying to self that we aren’t always so willing to do.
 - c. And yet, just as Jesus made glorifying God one of His primary focuses in life and prayer, so ought we. And we can, because we are empowered and helped by Him who in His darkest hour and worst moments on the earth still made the glory of God one of His supreme focuses in how He lived and what He prayed.
3. The **second example** of what and how to pray is found more often than the first, and this is a focus that gives recognition to God, His purposes, and His role for what He has done and will do.
 - a. In this prayer, Jesus uses the word “**You**” 29 times, and the word “**Your**” 8 times. In all 37 cases, He is referring to God, to what God had done, was currently doing, and would do in relation to Jesus’ disciples, Jesus’ ministry, His death, and those who will come to faith in the future.
 - (1) Now it is true, Jesus uses the word “**Me**” 22 times and the word “**Mine**” twice.
 - (2) However, 16 of those 24 time, Jesus uses the word “Me” or “Mine” in acknowledging what or whom God has **given Him** and in recognition of God having **sent Him** – which means the focus, in those 16 cases, was God and not Himself.

- b. My point is that Jesus made God, and God's doings, a primary focus in His prayer.
 - (1) Now it is true that Matthew, Mark, and Luke record Jesus praying in the garden of Gethsemane, and in those accounts, Jesus' prayer is focused on Himself. So I am not suggesting that it is somehow wrong or less godly to make ourselves the focus of some of our prayers.
 - (2) However, let us nurture a mindset, a set of attitudes, and a perspective that thinks of, speaks of, and treats God as the most important being in our lives, even when life is at its worst – for this is not only the position God deserves, it is also a good way to bring glory to His name.
- 4. The **third example** of how or what to pray is not as numerous in this prayer, but in my opinion just as important – though we must be careful when using it that we are being honest and humble before God, because we are in no position to bargain with God or act as if He owes us something because of something we have done.
 - a. Several times, Jesus described what He had done for God and then asked God to do something for Him. The first example of this appears in **vs 4-5**, and the second example is found in **vs 6-11**.
 - b. However, a clearer example is found in **vs 14-17**, where Jesus says, "I have given them (*the disciples*) Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world...I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one...[and to] Sanctify them in the truth."
 - c. The point here is that based on what Jesus had done for God, He comes to God and tells Him what He has done as a way of explaining **why** He is asking God to do something in return.
 - d. And we can learn from Jesus' example that it is reasonable, and maybe even wise to tell God what we have done **for Him** as an explanation of **why** we asking Him to do something in return.
- 5. The **fourth example** is scattered here and there in Jesus prayer, but it stands out when seen against the backdrop of what Jesus was facing in the hours just ahead.
 - a. What we see in this fourth focus is Jesus' concern for the present and future spiritual well-being of both His disciples and those who would come to faith as a result of His disciples going into the world and preaching the gospel. And by the way, this means Jesus was praying for our spiritual well-being as well when He prayed this prayer.

- b. Now imagine, Jesus is facing the most brutal and challenging time of His life on the earth, and yet He is still concerned for and praying about the spiritual well-being of those He will leave behind.
- c. This is not a mindset or set of attitudes or a perspective that commonly rises to the top when we are facing the difficulties and challenges of life. **But why not?**
- d. The most likely answer is, we have not and do not purposefully pursue and nurture such a mindset, and set of attitudes, and perspective when life is easy and times are good. But we can pursue and nurture this kind of mindset, these attitudes, and this perspective, if we will.
- e. For example, we can feed and nurture the belief that it is more blessed to give than to receive. And if we do this until this is our common or even normal way of thinking and living, then it is likely our thoughts and attitudes will continue to express concern for the good of others when we are facing trials and tribulation.
- f. My point is simple. We will not come to the place where our concern for others transcends, or is at least equal to our concern for self if we do not pursue and nurture the mindset, attitudes, and perspectives that make thinking and living this way natural.

C. **Third Lesson:** One significant purpose of Christian unity is to encourage the world to believe that God sent Jesus and that God loves those who repent and come to faith in Jesus just as He loved Jesus.

- 1. In **John 17:21-23**, Jesus prayed that “they (*that is, believers everywhere*) may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. [22] **The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;** [23] I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”
- 2. For most of us, this is a noble ideal, yet Jesus prayed that it would be a reality. Yet sadly, the Body of Christ has splintered into numerous groups and factions over the years.
- 3. Sadder still is the fact that some of these groups and factions hold beliefs, theological positions, and religious practices that cannot be reconciled with the beliefs, theological positions, and religious practices of other groups and factions. And the result is a divide that

cannot be overcome without one side forsaking some of their foundational beliefs, theological positions, and practices.

4. Yet saddest of all is the fact that many of these irreconcilable differences are built on selected parts of God's word to the exclusion of other parts – whether those other parts are being rejected outright, explained away, or ignored. In other words, God's word is being misused to not only separate Christians, but keep them apart – which is why this is saddest of all.
5. I don't doubt that there will always be some differences of opinion and practice within the Body of Christ. And I am reasonably confident Jesus knew this would be the case. And yet, He prayed for unity because He saw unity as a primary way to show the world the truth about God, and about Jesus, and about the universal church, and about God's love for Jesus and the Church.
6. Paul addressed this issue when he urged Christians to preserve the unity that ought to exist among them. And in doing so, Paul began by addressing the behavior Christians are to have toward one another. And this is found in **Ephesians 4:1-6**.
 - a. Now we can teach and write books about this portion of God's word, but the solution to the disunity that exists in the church today is to live according to what Paul wrote.
 - b. And given the condition of the church today, I don't see this happening anytime soon, or even in my life-time – even though numerous efforts are being made to promote Christian unity.
7. But what I am certain of is that this mattered to Jesus, and it ought to matter to us. And though we may never get past the praying part, let us at least make the unity of believers part of our prayers – for the sake of the Church's spiritual health, and the glory of God, and the clear message to sinners that God sent Jesus and that God loves those who repent and come to faith in Jesus, just as He loved Jesus.

III. Conclusion

- A. There is more than can be said and taught from **John 17**, but this is enough for today.