

John 16:29 – 17:1

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~ We didn't quite reach the end of chapter sixteen in our last report from our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God; so, we'll finish it up in this report. We are moving rather slowly; even though it seems, upon review, that my reports are desperately hurried and thin. Strangely, I have thoroughly realized my complete incompetence and inadequacy at presenting this Gospel properly, correctly and completely. We concluded our last report at a key verse; one that defined God as being contracted into a span. Many excellent Bible teachers consider John chapter twenty verses thirty and thirty-one, which reads, "... and many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name" to be the overall key to this Gospel. Well, I concur; but with this caveat: I believe verse twenty-eight from chapter sixteen, which reads, "... I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" goes hand-in-hand with it. This widens out and gives tremendous momentum to the fact that God became a man, and the Word was made flesh. There has never been a man on this earth to whom that statement would apply - except for the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse twenty-eight, where we left off in our last report, took us from eternity past into eternity future; documenting the few precious moments Jesus spent here....

XVI

29 His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb.

30 Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.

John 16:29 – 17:1

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~ I wish it were as plain and easy as it should be for our contemporary church to understand and accept that Jesus was God manifest in the flesh of a man; just as you and I exist in our flesh as I type this report and as you read it. The disciples made this statement in response to the tremendous claim Jesus just made in verse twenty-eight. Pray for wisdom, judgment and discernment as we examine the disciples coming to the place where their faith finally turns into actual knowledge of the grace of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ. They now have facts to base their understanding on; so, a whole new avenue of wisdom is opening to their thinking. These men are now convinced, and a heavy conviction is also coming over their hearts....

31 Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?

32 Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

~ Our safari has the privilege of having the future revealed in Scripture, and we know this moment did come; Jesus certainly does lay down His life for them. Well, before that takes place, Simon Peter said he would lay down his life for Jesus. I think the other ten honestly thought they could, too; but none of them laid down their life for Jesus. He died for them - and us. They were scattered, just as He said would happen.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself on the cross - which is a great mystery and deeply profound truth; because when Jesus is on the cross, we will see Him cry out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" We find that passage in the twenty-second Psalm, and we are given the explanation as: "because Thou art Holy!" When Christ was made sin for us, there was a rent in the Godhead - as well as a rent in the veil. However, in all of this, God was reconciling the world unto Himself....

33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

~ This is the last statement Jesus made to His disciples. Jesus declares that the child of God CAN have peace in this life; but that peace is only found in Him. No man, woman, child of God - or anyone else - will ever find peace in any other realm. You will not find peace in Christian service, teaching a Sunday School class, being active in the community, being successful in your chosen profession, having a great marriage, raising your children, being a law-abiding citizen - or in ANY church; because I cannot over-emphasize this point, so I'll repeat: you won't find peace outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. Period.

This world offers nothing but trouble, friends. You can just write that down. Jesus made that more than clear to His disciples. The trouble is not with God - the trouble is of the world. Jesus tells us to be of good cheer anyways, because He knows His victory on the cross will be our victory over this life; and that just happens to be the most remarkable statement ever made.

I hear people talking all the time about a "victorious life." Well, the only One Who ever lived any kind of a "victorious life" was Jesus. You and I have no capacity whatsoever of living the so-called "Christian life;" and God never asked us to, either. God wants to live His life through us. That is the axiom we study with. All we can possibly do is allow the Holy Spirit to move and act through us. Only when we learn to identify ourselves with Him - and only when we get into a close fellowship with Christ - will the things that are but Biblical theories be exposed as false, made real to the average Christian; and only THEN will we ever experience the peace of God in our hearts that passes all understanding. That is the point at which we will find ourselves being of good cheer – having true joy too, by the way. Peace and joy, of course, are the first two of the nine fruits of the Spirit of God. Without this understanding, all we will ever find in life is trouble. There is so much more we could say about this - but we have to move along....

XVII

1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:

~ When John says, "... these words spake Jesus" - that refers to chapters thirteen, fourteen, fifteen and sixteen. This is where Jesus ceases speaking to the disciples and will now speak only to the Father. It's important to note that Jesus speaks to the Father for the benefit of the disciples. We benefit from this prayer because Jesus is our Great Intercessor. This is the Lord's Prayer – not the one from the Sermon on the Mount. THIS is the Lord's Prayer in chapter seventeen of this Gospel; Jesus could never have prayed "our Father" because He is related to God in a different way than you and I are. Jesus has a position in the Trinity, and we have only received a place by being born again and by trusting Him. The other so-called "Lord's Prayer" - when Jesus said, "forgive us our trespasses" – well, Jesus didn't have any sin, so that was definitely NOT the Lord's Prayer, either – chapter seventeen of John IS the only passage that can be even remotely classified as a "Lord's Prayer." By the same token, you and I cannot pray this prayer; this is the prayer to the Father by Jesus.

Two men once argued how much they knew about the Bible. One said to the other, "... I'll bet you don't even know what the Lord's Prayer is." And the other man replied, "I bet I do!" So, they made a bet – which revealed neither one knew very much about the Bible – but I digress. The first man said, "... let's hear it." The other man said, "... now I lay me down to sleep and pray the Lord my soul to keep..." To which the first man replied, "Well, you sure fooled me – I didn't think you knew it." This is what we have today, too – the blind leading the blind. The prayer that begins with, "Our Father Who art in Heaven..." is not the Lord's Prayer, either; although that seems to be how it is almost always classified.

We are considering one of the most remarkable chapters in the entire Word of God in the true "Lord's Prayer" - found only in chapter seventeen of the Gospel of John. This is the longest prayer in the Bible, too. Most people can read this entire prayer in about three minutes. I'm not sure if any prayer should ever exceed three minutes, to be honest. I feel that if we can't say all we need to say to God in three minutes, then we are talking

John 16:29 – 17:1

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too much and not listening enough. It's a likely indicator we never hear God when He does convey a message to us. A well thought out prayer that is direct and to the point is much more effective than a rambling diatribe of demands and complaints. It's no wonder the "prayer meeting" is usually the deadest church function one can engage in.

Let's consider a few statements from some great Bible expositors of the past regarding chapter seventeen of John, which is included in the Upper Room Discourse. In the previous five chapters, we have been ascending higher and higher up the mountain of the government of God - and we have now arrived at the summit. Matthew Henry made this statement, "... this chapter is the most remarkable prayer in the Bible, and it follows the most important and consoling discourse ever uttered on earth." Martin Luther said, "... this chapter is truly beyond measure, a warm and hearty prayer. Jesus opens the depths of His heart both in reference to us and to His Father in Heaven. All is poured out here. This prayer is so honest and, yet, so simple, so deep and so wide that no one can fathom it." Philipp Melanchthon, a German reformer, made this statement, "... no voice has ever been heard in Heaven or on earth that is more exalted or more holy, fruitful or sublime than the prayer offered up by the Son to the Father God Himself."

This is the prayer that John Knox purportedly read several thousands of times; when Knox was on his death bed his wife asked him, "... where do you want me to read from?" John replied, "... read from where I first put my anchor in Christ down." There are many other quotes I could give, but you get the idea: this is a very important section of Scripture. I want to reiterate this at the risk of sounding pious – I feel less than inadequate and inferior to deal with and present this section of the Bible to you. This is the High Priestly Intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ – for us.

I believe this is a specimen of the communications that constantly pass between the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father. The life of Christ was a life of prayer. When Jesus began His ministry in Mark, we learned He arose and went into a solitary place and – prayed! Luke told us that He went up into a mountain and prayed – and continued all night in prayer to God. I guess

John 16:29 – 17:1

+ O + O + O +

that blows my three minute theory? - Well, probably not – because we’re not Jesus! Either way, again and again, we are told about the Lord being in prayer.

Jesus is still our Great Intercessor, praying for you and me at this moment. When you forget to pray – He doesn’t. Jesus prayed for you today. God always hears and answers the prayers of the Lord Jesus, too; and God answers them exactly as He prays them. God always answers my prayers, too – but not always the way I pray it. Jesus said, “Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me, and I know that Thou hearest Me always” in the eleventh chapter of this Gospel.

When you and I go to God in prayer, we need to first have our hearts and lives right before Him. We need to be in tune as you would tune an instrument before the concert begins. Also, before we pray for others, we need to pray for ourselves. That’s not selfishness; it is actually essential. Moreover, I don’t argue the posture of the body in prayer because Jesus prayed this prayer as they were walking along, apparently – and it says He lifted up His eyes to Heaven. Everyone seems to bow their heads in prayers today, but Jesus didn’t. David said, in the twenty-fifth Psalm, “... unto Thee, O, Lord, I do lift up my soul!” Then, again, in Psalm one hundred twenty-three, “... unto Thee I lift up mine eyes, oh, Thou that dwellest in the Heavens.” Psalm one hundred twenty-one, that great pilgrims Psalm, says, “... I will lift up mine eyes to the hills.” Well, that might raise some questions. The heathen was lifting up their eyes to the hills, too. The Psalmist asks, “... from whence cometh MY help?” Of course, the answer to that is: not from the hills! Our help comes from the Lord Who made Heaven and earth! The whole point is that David said he would lift up his eyes to Heaven.

Frankly, I am not on a crusade to change the rituals in the church today. However, instead of bowing our heads and inspecting the shine on our shoes I think we should be looking up. That’s what I do in church when they pray. I get a lot of funny looks when I do, which tells me people aren’t really looking down anyways. I do think we should look UP to the Heavens when we pray. That’s the way Jesus did it. I realize this is revolutionary - and we

John 16:29 – 17:1

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aren't trying to revolt in this safari. I don't run an organized church, so I'll just teach this my way and here it is: I like to emulate Jesus as much as possible.

He said, "the hour is come" and that means the hour that was preset way back in eternities past; that time has now come. Remember, Jesus is the Lamb of God slain before the foundations of the world were laid. At the wedding at Canaan, Jesus said to Mary that His hour had not yet come. The hour we're talking about, of course, is the time when they will nail Christ to the cross; the hour when your sin and my sin was paid for; the hour when all creation saw the love of God on display and lavished upon them. That was a vicarious, substitutionary and redemptive death for you and me.

Our safari ends this leg of our expedition at this point; but this account continues through to the resurrection. All of that is wrapped up in "the hour" that has come. God is not some bully that the liberal makes Him out to be in the Old Testament. God is our Father that so loved the world He gave His only begotten Son to die for their sins. Now, the Son will be crucified, raised from the dead and ascend back into Heaven into the right hand of God. Jesus has a Holy Name that every knee shall bow to. We have a wealth of meaning; but all we will be able to do is stand to the side and listen to the Lord pray. I trust you'll be with us as we observe this wonderful, meaningful prayer in our next report ~

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