

# Connecting Minds

"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31)

## The Gospel of John

### Chapter 17:1

**"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.'"**

This week we start our study of John 17, the Lord's Prayer. I say that because this is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus that we find in the Scriptures. The prayer that we commonly call the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) would better be described as the Disciples' Prayer because Jesus was teaching His disciples how to pray.

This prayer is most commonly called Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer". This designation dates back to the 5th century when Cyril of Alexander termed it that.<sup>1</sup> It is a beloved prayer. John Knox, the Scottish Reformer and early man of the Presbyterian Church had this prayer read to him every day in his final sickness and was listening to it as he passed from this life to his Lord.<sup>2</sup>

Before we begin to look at the prayer in detail let's look at some preliminary thoughts. First is the relationship between this prayer and the teaching that has gone before. John Calvin writes "He therefore shows teachers an example, that they should not only occupy themselves in sowing the word, but by mixing their prayers with it should implore God's help, that His blessing should make their work fruitful. In short, this prayer of Christ is, as it were, the seal of the preceding teaching."<sup>3</sup>

Many of us are teachers - some preach from the pulpit, some teach in Discipleship Groups, most teach in their own homes. We can never underestimate how important prayer is with regard to teaching. Our prayers

<sup>1</sup> The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of John, Bruce Milne, pg. 236

<sup>2</sup> An Expositional Commentary: The Gospel of John, vol. 4, James Montgomery Boice, pg. 1247

<sup>3</sup> Calvin's New Testament Commentaries, vol. 5, John 11-21, John Calvin, pg.

should be mingled with our teaching. You see, our teaching only hits the ears of our hearers. What we need is to pray that God will cause His teaching to hit the hearts of His people.

We can also learn a great deal about the importance of prayer by the amount of time Jesus spent in prayer and by the times when He prayed. Specifically, He prays at length just before His crucifixion – His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane was not a 5 second prayer (Luke 22:41-44). “Being in agony He prayed more earnestly...” We learn in Mark’s gospel (Mark 14:32-42) that Jesus prayed 3 times that night before He was arrested.

We might ask the question, “Why does Jesus pray so much when He is God Himself?” The answer is because Jesus was also fully a Man. He never did anything without communicating with the Father - He submitted Himself to the Father’s plan. But also it shows the great love within the Godhead that they communicated about everything, even as Jesus had shed the glory of His divinity.

“Then Jesus *spoke* these words...” The prayer was prayed audibly and in such a manner that some of the disciples (at least John) could hear it. Jesus wanted His disciples to hear these words because they were further instruction toward their great comfort. Jesus wanted them to hear His prayer for *them*. Even our prayers can be instruction.

Jesus “lifted up His eyes to heaven...” By this outward gesture, we are taught the focus of our prayers. Where is our attention to be directed? Toward the heavens above where our great God and Father is seated. Our prayers should be such that as we close our eyes we completely forget that we are on this earth.

## TableTalk

Read these further examples of Jesus’ prayers on earth. At what times and why did Jesus pray?

- John 6:15; Matthew 14:23
- Luke 6:12,13