

# The Gospel of John

## Unity in Heaven

### John 17:24-26

#### INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing in the High Priestly prayer found in the 17th chapter of the gospel of John. We come this morning to our final look at this marvelous seventeenth chapter of John. In verses 23-24 Jesus prayed for our unity on earth. In the final three verses He will pray for our unity in heaven.

#### Stand and Read Scripture

##### **John 17:24-26 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> “Righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; <sup>26</sup> 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.”

#### Prayer

The final request in Christ's prayer is found in verse 24.

##### **John 17:24a (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, **be with Me where I am,**

That is the promise to everyone who is redeemed, that we will one day be in heaven with Him. This is the end to which all of us look and for which we long. But in reality, we live our lives so earthbound, that it is very difficult for us to experience a real anticipation for heaven.

The disciples were having a very difficult time understanding why Jesus was leaving them. Jesus, knowing this, tried to console them with a verse many of us know very well.

##### **John 14:1-2 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> “Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup> In My Father's house are many rooms; if *that* were not so, I would have told you, because I am going *there* to prepare a place for you.

John frequently calls himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved” in his gospel to make clear what a close and personal role he had with Jesus. That was so that his eyewitness testimony would be seen for what it is. What John wants us to know when we read these passages is: **I was there. I know what I am talking about. These things really happened!**

We are not dealing here with myth or fiction.

### **John 19:32-35 (NASB)**

<sup>32</sup> So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other who was crucified with Him; <sup>33</sup> but after they came to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. <sup>34</sup> Yet one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. <sup>35</sup> And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.

Consider John's testimony as you listen to this message.

## **BODY:**

### **I. YOU CANNOT FOLLOW ME NOW.**

Jesus was leaving the eleven disciples to return to His Father in heaven.

### **John 13:33 (NASB)**

<sup>33</sup> Little children, I am *still* with you a little longer. You will look for Me; and just as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you: ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’

This was very troubling to them. If Jesus is leaving why can't we go with Him?

### **John 13:36-38 (NASB)**

<sup>36</sup> Simon Peter \*said to Him, “Lord, where are You going?” Jesus answered, “Where I am going, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later.” <sup>37</sup> Peter \*said to Him, “Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You.” <sup>38</sup> Jesus \*replied, “Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times.

There are two reasons why the disciples could not follow Jesus this night. One was **bad news** and one was **very good news**. The bad news was this: they couldn't follow because they were morally unable to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow him. **You think you can follow me, Peter? You won't even make it through the night!** Peter would deny Jesus three times and immediately the rooster would crow twice. And it wasn't just Peter who failed. They all failed.

### **John 16:32 (NASB)**

<sup>32</sup> Behold, an hour is coming, and has *already* come, for you to be scattered, each to his own *home*, and to leave Me alone; and *yet* I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.

### **Mark 14:27 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup> And Jesus \*said to them, “You will all fall away, because it is written: ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’

This had been prophesied over 500 years earlier in the book of Zechariah around 520 BC. These prophecies were written so that when they happened we would know that the Messiah had arrived.

### **Zechariah 13:7b (NASB)**

...“Strike the Shepherd and the sheep will be scattered;...

Then we read of the prophecy being fulfilled.

### **Mark 14:48-50 (NASB)**

<sup>48</sup> And Jesus said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as *you would* against a man inciting a revolt? <sup>49</sup> Every day I was with you within the temple grounds teaching, and you did not arrest Me; but *this has taken place* so that the Scriptures will be fulfilled.” <sup>50</sup> And His disciples all left Him and fled.

That’s the bad news. They were not ready to make the sacrifices necessary to follow a crucified Messiah. They needed a greater power from the Holy Spirit.

## **II. I WILL PAVE THE WAY.**

But there was another reason why they could not follow Jesus that night, and this was very good news. Jesus was about to do what only he could do. And what he would do is die not mainly as an **example** to inspire them, but as a **substitute** to save them. We can see this if we keep reading in John 14:2b–6.

**Where** is Jesus going that they cannot follow?

### **John 14:2b-5 (NASB)**

... because I am going *there* (to heaven) to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, **I am coming again and will take you to Myself, so that where I am, there you also will be.**

There is the fulfillment of the prayer " I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, **be with Me where I am,**".

### **Ephesians 1:3-6 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup> Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, <sup>4</sup> just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless **before Him**. In love <sup>5</sup> He predestined us to adoption as sons *and daughters* through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He favored us in the Beloved.

What gives true believers value to Christ is that we have been chosen by His Father, and we are a love gift from the Father to the Son.

So our Lord has a desire that all whom You have **given** Me, be with Me where I am.

And by the way, He is certainly not talking about Jerusalem where this prayer is being prayed. He is not talking about Gethsemane where He will be in just a few hours. **He is talking about heaven!** He is already anticipating heaven. It is heavy on His mind.

Remember back in verse 11 He prays:

### **John 17:11a (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> I am no longer *going to be* in the world; and *yet* they themselves are in the world, **and I am coming to You...**

Jesus is already anticipating heaven, and His desire is for eternal fellowship with us, the chosen sons of God in the future.

Then Jesus continues...

### **John 14:4-5 (NASB)**

<sup>4</sup> And you know the way where I am going.” <sup>5</sup> Thomas \*said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going; how do we know the way?”

And how did Jesus answer Thomas?

### **John 14:6 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup> Jesus \*said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.

In other words, we do not go to the Father in heaven **beside** Jesus, assisting him; or **behind** Jesus, imitating him. We go to the Father **through** Jesus, trusting in him.

But Jesus was also going to another place where they could not follow.

Where was He going **this night** that they could not follow?

He was going to the cross. I am going to die for you, and thus become the way to God. You cannot follow now. Only I can do this. This is my work and my work alone.

We will go to the Father through Jesus, because he paved the way. He provided justification for our sins. In order for us to become righteous and have our relationship with God restored, our sins had to be accounted for because God is a fair judge. Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sins that we could not pay by dying on the cross as the sinless lamb of God.

That is why all who have been sanctified (made holy and set apart) will be able to follow afterward, because Jesus will pave the way. He will pay for your sins — all your failures — and He will sanctify you with His righteousness. Your sins will be wiped away and they will be replaced by His sinlessness.

### **1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor *the* greedy, nor those habitually drunk, nor verbal abusers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> Such were some of you; **but you were**

**washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Then you will come — through me. "**No one comes to the Father except through me.**" That is what I am doing tonight. I am making a way for sinners to come to the Father. And only I can do it. You cannot follow me now. **And that is very good news for us!**

### **III. YOU WILL EXPERIENCE PURE GLORY AND LOVE.**

#### **John 17:24b (NASB)**

...so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

God's purpose in salvation was to bring us to heaven so we could experience His full glory and love.

This is how John described the glory of heaven in Revelation.

#### **Revelation 22:3-5 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup> There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bond-servants will serve Him; <sup>4</sup> they will see His face, and His name *will be* on their foreheads. <sup>5</sup> And there will no longer be *any* night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illuminate them; and they will reign forever and ever.

It is extremely hard for us to fully appreciate the glory and love that we will experience in heaven. Living under the curse of sin puts a real damper on it. We must put our hope and trust in the word and try to live as closely as we can to Christ's teachings.

#### **1 Corinthians 13:9-12 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> For we know in part and prophesy in part; <sup>10</sup> but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away with. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. <sup>12</sup> **For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face;** now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I also have been fully known.

I fear that we really don't grasp the reality of what heaven is. Yes, it is a real place, but it is not so much defined as a place as it is as a person.

Paul said,

#### **Philippians 1:23-24 (NASB)**

<sup>23</sup> But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and **be with Christ**, for *that* is very much better; <sup>24</sup> yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sakes.

We all know something about heaven. We all know what the Bible says about heaven to one degree or another, but it is easy for us to get caught up in descriptions of a place and not understand that the heart of heaven is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We as believers are headed to heaven. We will see Him in His full glory there and we will share

His glory. We will enter into love and joy and satisfaction and fulfillment that is beyond comprehension.

We actually should be living all the time in a full anticipation of heaven.

Can you imagine what it will be like to be in an environment without sin? To experience true complete glory and love? To not have to deal with unbelievers, hunger, thirst, sickness, greed, backbiting, lies, anger, or the curse of sin in general? Where everyone will be your true friend and have the same beliefs as you?

We will experience eternal true perfection.

So, first of all, the Lord wants us into heaven to see His glory; and, **secondly, to experience His love.** Look at **verses 25 and 26:**

### **John 17:25-26 (NASB)**

**25** "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."

Christ says, "I am going to continue to make Your name known, and I am going to fill out the whole history of redemption by gathering in all your beloved sons. I will continue to make it known." And He does that through His Spirit and through His Word.

Why? "So that the love with which You loved Me may be" - **Where?** - "**in them, and I in them.**" I want them **with Me to see My glory** and I want them **with Me to experience My love.** The depth of love that you have for Me.

That is why I try to help you to imagine how much the Father loves the Son. If there is no light in heaven but Him and if He is the only lamp in the infinite glory of heaven and if He is the sole source of glory in all of heaven then He must be greatly loved by the Father.

And now, He says, "I want them here, not only to see My glory, but I want them here to also experience My love from the Father.

So if you want to **define heaven**, you just got the definition. **It is all glory and all love.**

We will see the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ. It will be so glorious that it will light the entire eternal heaven. We will be swept up in that glory. We will become reflectors of that glory. That glory will shine on us and off of us. We will radiate that glory throughout all of heaven. We will be loved by the Father the same way He loves His eternal Son.

### **CONCLUSION:**

How often do you actually think about heaven? How often do you think about being free from sin? How often do you think about being perfectly holy? Beyond that, how often do you actually think about being in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Heaven is a promise of God. God always keeps His promises.

**Family of God.**