

One With The Word, John 17:20-24

I. Those Who Will Believe

- A. This is traditionally called the “High Priestly Prayer”
- B. Jesus is praying for His apostles starting in 17:1
- C. Here in verse 20 he switches targets to all who believe in Him
- D. John 17:20 (ESV); “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word,
- E. “These only” are His apostles and “those who believe... through their word” are the ones they preached to in the 1st century as well as us who read their words in Scripture
- F. But what is the message that Jesus is beseeching the Father for?
- G. That we all be one — with the end goal that the “world may believe”

II. Division

- A. For some reason we have taken this call to be one and gone the complete opposite way
- B. 1 Corinthians 1:10–12 (ESV); ¹⁰ I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. ¹¹ For it has been reported to me by Chloe’s people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. ¹² What I mean is that each one of you says, “I follow Paul,” or “I follow Apollos,” or “I follow Cephas,” or “I follow Christ.”
- C. As far as I can tell from my studies, the beginning of the division of the eastern and western churches occurred over arguments about the trinity of God
 1. Arianism — the position that Jesus, as the Son of God, was created by God ¹
 2. This gave rise to several creeds — The Nicene Creed, the Apostle’s Creed, and the Athanasian Creed
 3. The Nicene Creed states, “We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church”
 4. This is not the Catholic Church you are thinking of
 5. Catholic
 - a) of, relating to, or forming the church universal
 - b) of, relating to, or forming the ancient undivided Christian church or a church claiming historical continuity from it ²
- D. Then language and politics played a role in the splitting of the churches of the west (Rome) and the east (Jerusalem and Constantinople)
 1. “First, when Pepin made his donation of land in central Italy to the papacy in 756, he caused the pope to fix his attention more to the West and basically ignore the East.
 2. The pope was now the largest landholder in Italy, with an annual income of over one million dollars, and a recognized secular as well as religious leader.
 3. Second, Pepin’s son, Charlemagne, came to Rome and on Christmas Day, 800, was formally crowned Holy Roman Emperor by Pope Leo III. This act symbolized the division of East and West.” ³

¹ "Arianism." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 20 July 1998. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

² Inc Merriam-Webster, Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

³ Eckman, Jim. "The Split between Western Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy - Issues In Perspective." *The Split between Western Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy*. Grace University, 20 Aug. 2011. Web. 29 Mar. 2017.

- E. The two heads of the churches (east and west) ended up excommunicating each other which scholars view as the event that created the divide
- F. Over the course of almost 1000 years we have not done much to bridge that divide.
- G. We have further divided along theological, doctrinal, social, economical, political, and cultural ideologies.
 - 1. There are many denominations that have divided over these issues
 - 2. There are many denominations that have arisen based on these issues
 - 3. Yet Jesus' prayer is, "that they (us) may be one even as we (Jesus and the Father) are one."

III. One

- A. John 10:25–30 (ESV); ²⁵ Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."
- B. "Begotten, not made; of the same essence as the Father." Part of the Nicene Creed
- C. Isaiah 43:11 (ESV); I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no savior.
- D. Hosea 13:4 (ESV); But I am the Lord your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior.
- E. Jesus' prayer is that we become one just like He and the Father
 - 1. "perfectly one" (ESV); "brought to complete unity" (NIV)
 - 2. "The perfect unity flows out of perfect submission to the total will of God in Christ, resulting in..." ⁴
 - 3. Ephesians 4:1–6 (ESV); ¹ I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.
 - 4. The more I study unity in Christ (as it pertains to all Christians), the more I am convinced that submission to this principle (Ephesians 4) is the unity among humans so desired by Christ!
 - 5. Remember Jesus said He is praying for those who will believe based on the words of His apostles
- F. Paul does write some things that are hard to understand, but this is not one of them
 - 1. We often take those things that are difficult and make doctrine (teaching) out of them
 - 2. Yet, we have a hard time grasping what they mean
 - 3. We follow a person (their understanding of a difficult text) instead of Christ

IV. Where I am

- A. John 17:24 (ESV); Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.
- B. This is Jesus' end goal
- C. That through our evangelism and unity we end up with Him

⁴ Coffman, James Burton. "Commentary on John 17:4". "Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament". <http://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/bcc/john-17.html>. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.

- D. We cannot let denominationalism (lack of unity, oneness) get in our way of evangelism and Heaven
- E. Jesus used His apostles and prophets to bring us the Gospel
- F. God used the Holy Spirit to capture and write it down
- G. Now, we use the Scriptures to bring people to the unity of Christ
- H. "Believers should always yearn for peace, but never for peace at the expense of truth; for 'unity' which has been gained by means of such a sacrifice is not worthy of the name."⁵

⁵ William Hendriksen, Exposition of the Gospel according to John (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1961), II, p. 365.