

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

Ch. 17

We're investigating the New Testament's fourth book, written by John, one of Jesus' original twelve disciples. He and his brother James were northern Palestine's "sons of thunder." But hanging with Jesus for three years transformed them from brawling fishermen into wise, loving, godly men who braved persecution and martyrdom to spread the new Christian faith.

After Jesus' return to heaven, John becomes a church leader in Jerusalem and western Turkey. Exiled by Rome in his 90's to mountainous Patmos in the Aegean for his bold Jesus-talk, John writes the Bible's last book, Revelation. Earlier he penned this Gospel plus 1st, 2nd and 3rd John.

By this time Peter, Paul and Mary are dead (breaking up the act for centuries!), all apostles except John were dead -- most martyred, and Roman legions had razed Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

Now, 60 years after Christ was back in heaven, false teachers are denying that Jesus is God's Son. Having witnessed Jesus' miracles, including his jailbreak from the tomb, John writes, powered by God's Holy Spirit, to verify that Jesus *was* indeed the prophesied Son of God, that *only* He can save us from our sin, that it's n "yes/no" choice about Christ, determining our eternal destiny.

No Time-Outs Left

Mark Burdett is a successful, 30-something entrepreneur in Wheaton, a quiet, leafy western suburb of Chicago. He's married to a doll named Amy who's given him four beautiful babies.

Mark and Amy attended high school there with a three-sport jock whom the world now knows. He and Mark double-dated together and were teammates for three years.

Mark's chum was a "quality guy who always thought of others, never left anyone out." He "always made the right choices" -- like dating Lisa in college. He brought her over to meet Mark and Amy. Later, they married, moved to the East Coast and started a family.

Last September 11th we first learned that United #93 out of D.C. was being harassed by a hijacker. When Mark heard that his high school pal was on that flight, he figured his pal was in the thick of it.

Most people would've been frozen by fear, Mark said, but, having a solid faith in God, and sure of his ultimate destination, Mark's buddy, **Todd Beamer**, stepped into eternity saying, "**Are you guys ready? Let's roll!**"

Mark and Amy are my nephew and niece. The high school is Wheaton Academy where my wife and I graduated.

You and I don't know when our time will come. Some weirdo in Seat 17D may set his shoe on fire, and suddenly it's not the *origin*, but the *destination* of the species that has you on full alert!

DISCUSS:

The Bleeding Edge

We each live on the edge of eternity. How do you prep for when "your hour has come?" That's where we pick up our discussion now.

It's a Thursday in about A.D. 30, the night before the Creator-God of the universe will go to the cross in His earthsuit. Jesus gathers His spooked disciples for their "Last Supper." They know religious authorities are out to kill their Leader. Aware that His time on earth is short, Jesus is the Lamb of God, about to be sacrificed for your sin and mine during Passover.

Soon He'd be nailed on a cross. Yet He's focused on the men He's poured Himself into these past three years. As He turns to pray to His Father in the bright Passover moonlight, the disciples (Judas having split already) hear His "farewell speech" -- a prayer reaching forward twenty centuries, a prayer for Himself, His disciples and all future believers, including us! With all adrenalin cylinders firing, Jesus' crew senses that He's ready to roll. **Let's read John 17:1-26.**

God Prays for Himself!

Jesus' "hour" is the final countdown to the Cross. In His death, predicted by God's OT prophets, Jesus would be "glorified," meaning displayed, honored, spotlighted. Jesus asks His Father to display Him on the cross so that the world will honor His Father's great love that would send His only Son to die so that the Father can forgive *all* the world's sins (Philippians 2:9-11).

Jesus has been clear about who He is, saying if you want to know God the Father, you must get to know God the Son and embrace His teachings. Anything else you may hear, John writes (I John 2:21-23), is a lie. Jesus *is* *The* Truth, and no lie comes from the Truth.

John puts it politically incorrectly by saying, "If you don't accept Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, God's Son, you'll have no part of God the Father." That won't get you booked on Oprah, or invited to many inter-faith barbecues, unless you want to *be* the barbecue!

Jesus says, forget feel-good religion and happy-face harmony. What's at stake is eternal life, or eternal suffering. John wants to be sure we aren't deceived or lulled into a no-decision about Jesus.

DISCUSS:

Holy Huddle

Jesus now prays for His comrades nearby. His eleven have been slow to *comprende* His unique relationship with His Dad. Jesus says these ordinary guys, given Him by His Father to take God's love to the world, these ex-fishermen and tax collectors have at last "got it!" They're true believers, for in their lives Christ is on display. In your wildest dreams can you conceive of hearing Jesus tell His Dad that about *you!!!*

Homeland Security

Remember taking your oldest to their first summer camp? We drove away from Lake Samish unsure if we'd done the right thing. After all, wasn't she too young at 19!

Jesus implores His Father to keep His friends safe (Matthew 10:28) and faithful to His message. Only the traitor Judas had dropped out, opting to do it "his way," that old fatal attraction that still keeps men from trusting Jesus.

Jesus could've spared His disciples the atrocities to come from those who will hate them for standing on God's Word. Stan wants us to resist Truth, to rely on our own smarts, to believe that the Bible's out of touch with today's pluralistic society. But God wants people of Truth to engage the world, to demonstrate His love.

Sitting On Your Satisfaction

Jesus asks His Father to "sanctify," or "set apart for a specific purpose," these special friends. At this moment you're sanctifying your chair, i.e., using it for why it was built. Our Lord is praying that these men will be totally committed to His plan. And here it is: The one true God of the universe is sinless. He created us. We, through our ancestors Adam and Eve, freely chose to sin, and are born sinners. So, sinful man could no longer approach sinless God. Being just, God demands that sin deserves the death penalty. Rather than let us live with no hope of ever shaking the chains of sin and death, God sent His Son Jesus to pay that penalty for each of us.

Now Jesus prays for His disciples, as He dispatches them to tell the nations that either you and I must pay for our sins *forever*, or we can draft in behind Christ's payment *for* us. We choose. Since we never know when our time will come, it's fairly urgent. Jesus asks His Father to protect these men until they've told everyone He'd planned for them to tell. He prays the same for us, wanting us to share this awesome news with family, friends and co-workers who have the same life-or-death choice to make.

Just minutes now before He's arrested, Jesus wraps up by praying for those whose lives would be changed because His disciples took His message to the world. If you belong to Him, His prayer was for you. My father died in 1980. I have none of his writing. But what we have here is far better; it's God's love note to us.

Christ didn't pray that we'd all attend the same church, but that all who are committed to Him would be unified by His teachings, since the *same* Christ empowers *all* His believers worldwide.

Jesus calls His Dad "Holy Father." Surely only God the Father, above Whom there is no other, owns this title. Jesus reaffirms His own heavenly origin, confirms that He's represented His Father on earth and that, with God's Holy Spirit coming to live in His followers, He'll be with them 'til He returns to take them to heaven where He'll forever be "on display" (1st Thessalonians 4:16-17).

DISCUSS:

Spiritual Anthrax

Our culture is infected by two deadly viruses. First, **Relativism**, the belief that there's no absolute Truth, just a blank page on which we inscribe our own convictions. So, let's be "tolerant." Forget that "fanatical bunk" about a final judgment in which God will hold us accountable for our decision about accepting, or rejecting, Jesus.

Second, **Deconstructionism** which says, "Words are meaningless and fungible, and the Bible is not God's infallible Word to us."

Why do we blissfully think life will go on always as is, when God warns otherwise? Final judgment *is* coming. The O.T. says the entire world was destroyed by a flood in Noah's time, 2,000 years before Christ. And it promises that *next* time God will destroy the earth by *fire*. Then He'll create a *new* heavens and earth for His children of faith to enjoy with Him forever.

God doesn't want any of us to face final judgment with nothing but our own good deeds to get us through "security." He doesn't want a single soul to spend eternity in a fiery pit the Bible calls hell. But the Bible says it takes more than just believing that Jesus is God, that He came to earth, lived as a man, died on a cross, rose from the dead, and returned to heaven.

About 700 B.C. God spoke to the Jews through the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "Let not the wise man bask in his wisdom, nor the mighty man in his might, nor the rich man in his riches. Let them boast in this alone: That they truly know me and understand that I am the Lord of justice and of righteousness whose love is steadfast...." (Jeremiah 9:23-24).

Writing in Revelation (20:13-15), John describes the vision God gave him of the final judgment. God the Father is on His throne. Before Him is the Lamb's book of life. In it are the names of those who've placed their faith in Christ. John says (v. 15), "If anyone's name was *not* found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." The old hymn asks, "Is your name written there?"

A century ago Oswald Chambers wrote, "Trust God and take the next step." If you sense that God has given you just enough faith to believe that He loves you, that Jesus died for your sins, and that you want to spend forever with Him, please take that next step.

Just say silently right now something like this: "Father, I'm ready. I agree with you that I'm a sinner. I have no hope of saving myself. I gratefully accept your forgiveness of all my sin. Here's my heart, here's my life. Please take them, and let's roll! Because of Jesus I can approach You like this. Amen."

His Deal

www.HisDeal.org

george@HisDeal.org

Copyright © 2019. George Toles. All Rights Reserved.