

October 18, 2015
Sunday Morning Service
Series: John
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
© 2015 David J. Whitcomb

To Ponder . . .

Questions to ponder as we prepare to study John 17:6-16.

1. What does the “name” of God reveal about Him (v.6)?
2. What did Jesus mean by praying that God had given people to Him out of the world (v.6)?
3. What two important doctrines does the born again person know because he or she keeps God’s word (vv.7-8)?
4. How do the people who God has given to Christ glorify Him (vv.9-11)?
5. Why does God leave the people He has given to Christ in the world (vv.9-16)?

OUT OF THIS WORLD John 17:6-16

This past June, Charles Frank Bolden Jr., the Administrator of NASA, confirmed that he and many others believe there is life existing on planets beyond Earth. What is the evidence that causes such devoted scientists to draw this conclusion? Actually, there is no evidence. However, Bolden and company are absolutely convinced that the evidence of extraterrestrial will be found in the future. They are sure that such evidence will be known by 2025. So at this point, all we have is the gut feeling of scientists.

In July, NASA’s spacecraft New Horizons sent to earth pictures of Pluto showing icy mountain ranges larger than the Alps. Granted, the scientists are convinced that temperatures on the planet drop as low as -400° F. But maybe there is life below the surface, they surmise. That takes a leap of faith to accept.

Also in July, famous atheist Stephen Hawkins threw his support behind a massive effort to find intelligent life in the cosmos. He made this bold move because he has feared since 2010 that an advanced alien civilization could easily wipe out our world.

In addition to all that noise, we now have the most popular movie of the season, *The Martian*, raking in millions of dollars at movie theaters all over the world. Though the movie is science fiction, no doubt many people will entertain the notion that human life can survive on Mars. And why shouldn’t it? Explorations there have indicated that its climate is not that much different than earth’s climate. Plus there is evidence of rivers, at least in the past. As one of my relatives proposed, “If there are rivers on Mars, surely there must be the potential for chocolate, which is all human life really needs for survival.”

I, being quite an ordinary and slightly educated person, have great news for all the brilliant atheists and scientists of our day. There is life beyond the earth! But it is not the kind of life they are looking for, and it is not in the places they propose.

God the Son came to this earth from God the Father. God the Father is a real living being who abides in heaven. We do not have any earthly idea where heaven is. However, God is there with millions of His divine beings that He created. When Jesus Christ, God the Son, finished His amazing work of redemption on earth, He returned to that place called heaven. He returned to the presence of God the Father.

While God the Son was in this world He continually taught, declared, shared, the words of God the Father. He especially taught the disciples the very things He heard in heaven in God’s presence. Those truths are, and must be, out of this world. They are other-worldly because they are God’s truths from heaven. So what happens if a mere earthling not only believes heavenly truths but practices those truths in an earthly environment? Right away, folks like that

begin to look a lot like aliens to people who love this world and cannot comprehend any other kind of life.

Those wonderful words from heaven reveal that God has chosen people to believe Him and love Him. They reveal so much about God's person and character that people who really believe those words and practice them actually begin to think and act like God's character. This will cause such a person to be out of step with their world. Other people might even take offense that they are out of touch with their world.

And so it is true. Stephen Hawkins is right. There is intelligent life beyond this earth. But what he feared is also true. Intelligent life from beyond the earth will one day destroy the earth. But it won't be Martians. I am here as a representative of the supreme extra-terrestrial being—God—to tell you that He has a plan that allows you to escape destruction and live the perfect life with Him forever. I guess that makes me somewhat of an alien, because He has chosen me out of this world. John was one of those “out of this world” kind of guys, and he wrote down these truths about Jesus Christ so that people who believe what he wrote can have eternal life through Jesus. Being out of this world is a good thing.

God Separates Privileged People From the World (vv.6-9).

God the Son revealed God to people out of this world. What kind of people is that? Jesus explained that He revealed God's character to who were given to Him. “*I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world*” (v.6a). Notice specifically that Jesus manifested God's name to the disciples. The verb translated *manifested* speaks volumes in its definition. It means to reveal, show forth, or to uncover. The word describes how in eternity God will uncover all secrets (Mark 4:22). We can only imagine how thorough that revelation will be. Likewise, throughout His ministry Jesus uncovered the secret that He, appearing to be a mere man, was actually God the Son (John 3:21).

In this case, we learn that Jesus uncovered, revealed God's name. That was not so much a matter of introducing the name of God to people. They were already very familiar with such things. Jesus ministered to Jews who were very familiar with the name of God whether it was Adonai, Yahweh, or any number of names by which

God revealed Himself in the Old Testament. That is just the point! Throughout the Old Testament, the writers referred to God with many various names because He revealed various characteristics about Himself to His people.

Therefore, the term *name* actually refers to the expression of God's nature, character, work, and person. God's name reveals that He is eternal, all powerful, all knowing, always present, loving, gracious, merciful, perfectly just, and so forth. Now the whole world knows these truths about God because Jesus manifested Him. But particularly the followers of Jesus know God (not just about God) because Jesus uncovered the truth about God for them. No wonder the disciples decided to follow Jesus.

Actually the disciples followed Jesus because that was God's plan for them. It is true that most of these eleven men were waiting for and looking for the Messiah. The fact that at least two disciples (John and Simon) if not three (also Peter?) were hanging out with John the Baptist, Christ's forerunner, indicates a sincere desire to find the “Christ.” But, their concept of Messiah and Christ needed to change. It is doubtful that any of the eleven would have joined the Messiah band if from the outset Jesus would have revealed that He was going to die, rise from the dead, and return to heaven. But these eleven men were with Jesus at the very end because God the Father gave them to Jesus by picking them out of the world.

In fact, the title *people* includes more than eleven apostles. Through His earthly ministry, Jesus unpacked the truth about God to thousands of people, many of whom God had given to Jesus. The news gets even better. Through the Gospel record, the inspired Scripture continues to uncover, unpack the truth about God to people God the Father gives to God the Son.

People who God chooses, people who believe Him, do not fit well in the world from which God takes us. That is why when we embrace the Bible by faith, we are suddenly no longer a comfortable part of our world. We tend to make the people who do not believe what the Bible reveals about God uncomfortable. At the same time, the people who do not believe tend to make us uncomfortable. It is not so much that God's people should not fit or should try not to fit in the world. It is just a fact that because we embrace God, who is out of this world, we will take on “not part of this world” traits.

That brings us to an important question. “How or why did God the Father take me out of the normal world system and give me to God the Son?” The simple answer is that God gives what is His. Jesus prayed, “*Yours they were, and you gave them to me*” (v.6b). How is it that the follower of Christ came to belong to God the Father in the first place? Because He is the Creator, all things and all people rightfully belong to Him. However, because creation is in rebellion against the Creator, no one is willing to belong to Him.

Therefore, in eternity, in order to show His amazing grace and mercy, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit chose individuals to belong to God. Many Scripture passages teach this wonderful truth. A few are, *Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will (Ephesians 1:4-5,11)*. Also, *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified (Romans 8:30)*. Then there is Paul’s introduction to the letter he wrote to Titus. He opened by writing, *Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior (Titus 1:1-3)*. What an amazing doctrine this is.

God, by His own volition, picked out individuals and gave them to Christ. The benefits of being given to Christ are innumerable. God determined that He would give the people chosen in eternity to God the Son. We are His in salvation—He won our redemption with His blood. We are, therefore, His in fellowship. We are His in service. These are mind-numbing truths for human wisdom to attempt to grasp. Human wisdom might conclude that we do indeed sin, God is indeed offended by our sin, and, therefore: “Don’t worry about it because He is a good God who will overlook your faults.” Or human wisdom might conclude, “Worry about it and be diligent to win God’s favor through many works.”

Coming to grips with the reality that I offend God, that He loves me, and that He picked me out of the mass of humanity to give me to Jesus in salvation is beyond human comprehension. How can we know and believe these wonderful things?

The privileged people understand because of God’s Word (vv.7-8). Jesus revealed that people like the disciples and other regenerated people have received and kept Scripture. First, Jesus gave us God’s words. He prayed, “*For I have given them the words that you gave me*” (v.8a). That the words Jesus spoke are often printed in red ink in a Bible is not the important thing. It is important that Jesus spoke eternal words that came directly from the Father and Holy Spirit. Therefore, Jesus’ words are forever settled in heaven. Because that is so, all will be judged by His words. John saw in his vision of the future, *And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done (Revelation 20:12)*. No one can do enough works to warrant salvation. The words Jesus taught bring eternal life. When Jesus asked the disciples one time if they were going to walk away, *Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68)*.

People who God the Father gave to God the Son receive His words. Jesus has given the words, *and they have received them (v.8b)*. It is a picture of the hearer opening his heart and mind to accept the word of Christ. Because it is the heavenly word, an “out of this world” word, it must be received by faith. Try to explain the truth of Christ through human wisdom and you will reject it.

But the people who God has picked out of the world hear Christ’s word and those people keep Christ’s word. He gave God’s word, “*and they have kept your word*” (v.6c). If we truly receive Christ’s word, we will keep it. The word keep means to watch over, to guard, to protect. It is how we regard something that is valuable or important to us. The word also means to continue in or retain. People who keep Christ’s words which they have received DO IT. Or as Jesus put it to the disciples, “*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*” (John 14:15).

Truly receiving Christ's words is very important. When we do, then we know (vv.8-9). Know what? Jesus said quite plainly that we who receive His word understand the doctrine of election. "*Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you*" (v.7). That God would choose someone to believe the truth, embrace the truth, and give them the faith to do both escapes human comprehension. In our pride, we believe we must win God's favor through our own efforts or wise choices. But, people who have heard Christ's word, believed Christ's word, received Christ's word, maintain Christ's word, rest easy in God's choice of them. We delight and rejoice in the reality that the Father gave us to the Son for salvation. We love being out of this world.

Furthermore, when we receive the word Jesus gives, we understand the doctrine of the incarnation. Jesus continued to pray, "*and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me*" (v.8b). We who God has picked out to believe do indeed believe that God is a trinity, a co-equal in the triune Godhead. We believe that God the Father sent God the Son to become a man born to a virgin. To understand or believe this amazing truth is not the same as fully comprehending it. Therefore, every religion that denigrates God the Son, making Him only a prophet, making Him like Moses or a false prophet, give clear and unarguable proof that they do not believe God or belong to God. Therefore also, God is not their Savior, cannot be their Savior because He is the eternal Judge.

Still it would take a miracle for human wisdom to embrace this teaching. It does because God the Son intercedes for the privileged people (vv.9-10). God the Son prays for us. He told the Heavenly Father, "*I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours*" (v.9). How amazing that the member of the trinity who suffered for our sins and won our salvation now talks to God the Father about us? The disciples certainly needed prayer as they were about to face incredibly frightening and unsettling circumstances. You and I are not alone in the battle to "believe and keep" Christ's words. We are not alone in our battle with sin and the flesh. If others fail us, Jesus never does.

As a result, God the Son is glorified in us. "*All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them*" (v.10). It only stands

to reason that if we give evidence by our lives that God has chosen us to belong to Jesus, that God has chosen us to receive the blessing of salvation, that God has picked us out of the world to live out the traits of heaven, that Jesus Christ will be glorified in our lives. Human words can hardly describe the glory of this truth. And yet, everyone who is outside this truth and, therefore, within the world, will neither understand it nor rejoice in it.

God the Son Separated From the World (vv.11-15).

God the Son desired divine care for His followers upon His return to God the Father (vv.11-12). Already He had taught that He would leave this world. Therefore, they should not have been surprised to hear Jesus pray, "*And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you*" (v.11a). Jesus had informed the disciples several times by this point that He was going back to heaven. He would complete His work and return to the Father. In that we rejoice. The difficult part is that we *are in the world*. In that setting we need help to "keep Christ's words."

Our Lord's prayer was for the Father to keep His followers. His desire is for unity. "*Holy Father keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one*" (v.11b). The phrase "keep them in Your name" is equivalent to "keep them in Your character." Jesus prays that God the Father who is almighty, all powerful will keep us, who He has given to Christ, holy. So how then can a person who God is working to keep holy live in sin? Unity (fellowship) with God the Father and God the Son is possible only as God keeps us.

His desire is also our protection. "*While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled*" (v.12). This is more than a request for physical protection. It is true that Jesus protected the disciples from physical harm in the storm on the sea. We, too, have probably experienced God protecting us physically. But here the greater issue is spiritual protection, being guarded against Satan's attacks. We cannot even imagine how awful life would be without this. Judas, being overwhelmed, taken over by Satan simply fulfilled Scripture.

What is it like to “have to sin” to the point of physical destruction? We should be so thankful that Jesus cares and prays for us.

God the Son described our circumstances in the world (vv.13-16). On the one hand, even while we are in the world, His Word gives us joy. Jesus prayed, “*But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves*” (v.13). The world is Satan’s domain and filled with people who do his work. And yet in that very setting Jesus prays that we will have His joy fulfilled in us. He was able to endure the cross and despise the shame because His heart and mind were filled with joy in doing the Father’s will. We are supposed to possess and practice that joy.

On one hand, we are to have joy because of Christ word. On the other hand, His Word causes us pain. “*I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world*” (v.14). Because this is Satan’s world, the people hate evidence of Christ’s word. Christians are living evidence of Christ’s word. Therefore, Christians often suffer anything from shame to death. But we can still have Christ’s joy within.

How can that happen? We have joy because His Word sustains us in the world. God’s plan is protection for us in the world not removal from the world—yet. *I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one* (v.15). We are prone to look for the easy way out. What Christian doesn’t long for the rapture? But as a means of escape? God’s plan is for us to be His representatives as long as He leaves us here.

Jesus’ prayer in our behalf is that we will be protected from Satan and his devices. This includes persecution. This includes temptation to sin. This includes testing that would cause us to distrust God. God allows all these things to mature us, but He limits the amount Satan can do.

But our nature is conflicted with our residence. Jesus acknowledged to the Father, “*They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world*” (v.16). This prayer is necessary because we are living in and serving God in Satan’s backyard. God has graciously taken us out of Satan’s realm spiritually. But we still live here physically. Be thankful for the Savior who intercedes for us.

We really are not part of this world’s system. The more we become like Christ, the more obvious the difference is. Rather than protest or attempt to make the world conform to our knowledge of God’s word or, worse, rather than become acceptable to the world, we must rest in the assurance that Jesus our Savior prays for us to continue to live what we believe with joy.