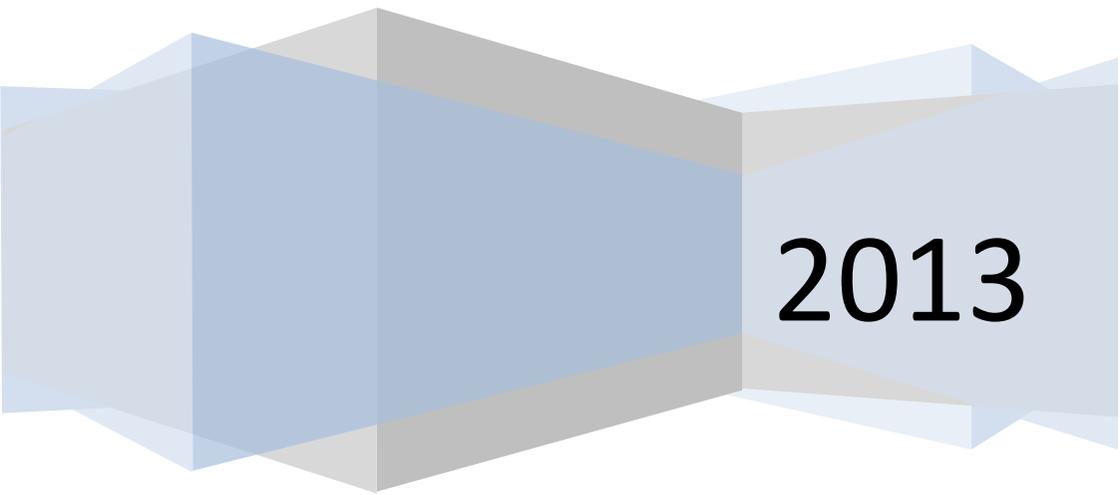


# **Father in John Ch.17**

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# THE 6 OCCASIONS WHEN JESUS SPEAKS TO GOD AS “FATHER” IN JOHN CH.17

## **(1) Jesus simply addresses God as “Father”**

*“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” (Jn.17:1).*

We know God as Father due to Jesus’ teaching in John’s gospel. From the outset Jesus used inclusive and personal language. God was *His* Father but the Lord’s Prayer begins with Jesus using the inclusive pronoun with regard to us: “Our Father who is in heaven.” I am reminded of Paul’s statement about God which introduces his letter to the Ephesians, “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph.1:3), and a few verses down, “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory” (v17). The apostle Peter, similarly begins his first letter with these words, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1Pet.1:3). Paul takes the words of Jesus about God being our Father and puts these words into the mouth of the Holy Spirit, who cries in our heart, “Abba, Father.”

*“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom.8:15-16).*

The Holy Spirit who articulates these words which originate in the depths of our heart demonstrate truly that we are the children of God. Paul describes these words that rise from our heart, “Abba, Father” as the “witness of the Spirit” to our true sonship. It is the instinctive cry of filial identity. God is my Father! Let’s say it together, “God is my Father!” This cry is the witness to sonship; we are truly the

sons of God by spiritual regeneration, by spiritual birth. Father affirms our sonship, just as He affirmed the Sonship of Jesus at His baptism. The gift of the Holy Spirit is Father's gift to us as it was to Jesus. Father also affirms us with similar words He spoke to Jesus, *"You are my son, today I have begotten you"* (Heb.1:5 quoting from Messianic prophecy, Ps.2:7). To be begotten of Father refers to our new birth experience which results in our adoption as a child of God. Adoption in the family of God follows regeneration.

I want you to note the connection between Father and "the hour has come." In the light of this verse we will speak of **"the timings of Father."** We can frustrate or precipitate the timing of Father for our lives, but the child who is living close to Him and listening for His urging or restraining will develop a sense of timing regarding the will of Father. Jesus waited upon His Father for a particularly important moment to arrive. He spoke several times that "My hour has not yet come" (Jn.2:4; 7:6, 30; 8:20). There came a day when Jesus recognized that His hour in the timing of Father had arrived. Two young men came to enquire about Him (they were Greek proselytes). They spoke to Philip saying, *"Sir, we would see Jesus!"* Somehow Jesus knew deep down that this was the sign from Father that His hour had arrived. In response to the enquiry Jesus said, *"The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified"* (Jn.12:23). The following Psalm of David could well be applied to Jesus at this crucial moment in His mission and could also be taken by us as a promise, assuring us of the leading of the Lord in our life, *"My times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me"* (Ps.31:15).

**(2) Jesus exclaims, "O Father!" expressing His desire for Father's glory**

*"And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (v5).*

Jesus exclaims, "O Father!" John for some unknown reason omits Gethsemane from His account of Jesus' life and ministry but this cry of Jesus anticipates the forthcoming ordeal and demonstrates Jesus' deep and loving concern for His disciples and those who were yet to believe through their testimony. All real prayer is characterized by feelings that on occasion erupt with a cry to Father for some

deep felt petition or need. Passionless praying does not count with God because God has feelings akin to our own, only deeper and more passionate.

The second point about this reference to Father could be defined as the glory of the Father's person, so we will entitle this second reference "**the glory of Father.**" Jesus' passion was for Father's glory which is expressed in the Lord's Prayer in the second stanza, "*Our Father in heaven, **hallowed** be Your name*" (Mat.6:9). To "hallow" is to make holy. His name is hallowed in our lives and so honoured among His children who live in the world. Jesus hallowed His Father's name in life and death.

### **(3) Jesus addresses God as "Holy Father"**

*"Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. **Holy Father**, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are" (v11).*

By addressing God as "holy Father" Jesus is worshipping God for who He is. At His core God is holy, He is love and He is truth. Every other attribute of God is the outworking of these core attributes of His inner being or essence. One instinctively revisits the temple vision of Isaiah, who heard the cry of the angelic seraphim as they acclaimed the thrice holy God,

*"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" (Isa.6:3).*

It is the holiness of God that demands sins judgment and is the cause of God's wrath. But Jesus' focus is not on the cross and the sin load He will have to bear for us but the ascension, "*I come to You.*" In these words Jesus expresses His deep longing to be with Father in Person. Paul likewise gives verbal expression to the same heartfelt desire,

*"For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you" (Phil.1:23-24).*

#### **(4) The indwelling Father**

*“that they all may be one, as You, **Father**, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me” (v21).*

This is the pivotal verse of the chapter for us and we will give this reference the title, **“the indwelling Father.”** This chapter in John is for me the key chapter in the New Testament because; as we listen to Jesus’ prayer His vision for us transcends all that has ever been taught us. We have been told that we are forgiven, redeemed, saved and reconciled but here Jesus lifts us into a relationship with Father like His. Fellowship in trinitarian terms means that we are embraced into the Godhead. We may often have wondered how the three persons of the Trinity fellowship together and here Jesus defines it in terms of **mutual indwelling**. Here are Jesus’ exact words, (v21). Father indwells Jesus and He indwells Father and that is why I referred to it as mutual indwelling (see also 14:10, 20). In the same way that the members of the Trinity indwell each other so they indwell us (v21). This truth is clearly understood by Paul who makes it his central paradigm regarding Christian experience by his use of the words “in Christ” or “Christ in you.” You might say that this is impossible! It is, unless a divine miracle takes place that translates you out of the kingdom of darkness and translates you into the kingdom of His dear Son. John in his gospel records the meeting of Jesus with Nicodemus and Jesus’ teaching about the need for spiritual birth. It is this experience of new birth that translates me into God causing me to be a “partaker of the divine nature” (2Pet.1:4) and to fellowship truly with the triune God. In the preceding three chapters Jesus taught about the Holy Spirit and in the course of that teaching He said, *“for He dwells with you, and shall be **in** you” (Jn.14:17).* Jesus explains the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as “abiding with you” (v16), and the word “abiding” is used many times by Paul to describe the indwelling of the Son in the Christian. Referring to the Galatian believers he said, *“They glorified God **in** me” (Gal.1:24).* This is exactly the teaching we identified in the prayer of Jesus to Father in Jn.Ch.17.

#### **(5) Jesus petitions Father for His disciples to be with Him and to behold His glory**

*“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world” (v24).*

This verse is very similar to our previous reference. This request of Jesus for His disciples is answered by Father lifting us into fellowship with Jesus, but Jesus’ request is also that we behold His glory. This same request was made by Moses, *“Please, show me Your glory” (Ex.33:18)* and met with an immediate and strong prohibition from the LORD, *“You **cannot** see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live (v20).”* What has changed from those days of God’s hidden face to the unveiled face of Jesus Christ? Firstly the incarnation has taken place where the glory of God and His fulness are revealed and displayed in the person of the Lord Jesus. The coming of God in the flesh in the Person of the Lord Jesus is the great unveiling. The apostle John said,

*“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and **we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (Jn.1:14).***

The apostle Paul also speaks of our “unveiled face,”

*“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Cor.3:18).*

The greatest power of transformation is to behold the face of Jesus. A few verses on Paul writes thus,

*“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2Cor.4:6).*

#### **(6) Jesus addresses God as “righteous Father”**

*“O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me” (v25).*

The title for this point is simply, **“the righteous Father.”** Often the word “righteousness” is synonymous with “holiness” when applied to God but it is better to define holiness as the outworking of God’s holiness in action or behaviour. It is the doing of holiness and there is absolute consistency between God’s inner essence or nature which is holy and all His acts which are acts of righteousness. We will stick with this simple definition that defines righteousness as the outworking of His holiness. The immediate application of these words in the mouth of Jesus speaks of Father’s integrity and truthfulness. We can trust Him because He is true. Father is faithful to His word and here Jesus is affirming His utter trust in Father to fulfil His word to His disciples. Not one word that Father has spoken will fail in its fulfilment. Jesus’ petitions on behalf of His disciples will be answered due to Father’s faithfulness and the Son’s obedience even unto the death of the cross.

Jesus bears witness to His *“knowing Him”* (Father). We are brought into deity, or as Paul put it so beautifully, *“(to) be found in Him”* (Phil.3:9). With an insatiable heart desire akin to that of our Father we will like Paul press forward, *“to know Him and the power of His resurrection”* (v10). Our knowledge of the inner heart of God may be seemingly small, but Father is committed to us and it hinges on His integrity and fidelity to His word. He has given to us the revealer of divine truth, the Holy Spirit,

*“But as it is written:*

*“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,*

*Nor have entered into the heart of man*

*The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”*

*But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God”* **(1Cor.2:9-10).**

The trinitarian God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit are ours and we are theirs. Together we are the family of God. Father in His righteousness is totally committed to us, we have been received as the prodigal sons we are; He has clothed us and brought us into abiding places we have not known. He has clothed us with royal robes and crowned us with royal diadems and made over to us the vast resources of the Holy Spirit to enable us to live in fellowship with the Father and the Son. We are now seated with Jesus in the heavenlies, sharing the throne life of the risen

Christ. The “beatific vision”<sup>1</sup> once so elusive to mystics is now the transforming vision of Christ’s saints who fellowship with God from the inner sanctum of Father’s heart. From this place of privileged intimacy you take Christ with you into the world. Isaiah saw the glory of the LORD in the temple but he then refocused his eyes and saw the whole earth full of the glory of the LORD. You have the privilege of speaking Father’s name as one who is His child living in the heavenlies but living with your feet firmly placed in the world.

*This written material is the outcome of a message preached at Kitt’s Green Evangelical Church on Sept.22<sup>nd</sup>. 2013. Derrick Harrison*

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1 See C. H. Spurgeon’s sermon (no.61) on “The Beatific vision” delivered on Jan. 20<sup>th</sup>. 1856 at New Park Street Chapel