

Oneness in Christ **“That They All May Be One”**

Lesson #3 for October 20, 2018

Scriptures: John 5:20-23; 13:18-30; **17:1-26**; 1 John 2:3-6; 5:19; Mark 9:38-41; Revelation 18:4.

1. Almost half of the book of John is dedicated to the last week of Jesus’s earthly life. In John 13-17, he focused on what happened in the upper room and on the way to—and possibly including a part of what happened at—the Garden of Gethsemane. We will be focusing particularly on what is sometimes designated as Christ’s “high-priestly prayer” in John 17.

“It is a fitting designation, for our Lord in this prayer consecrates himself for the sacrifice in which he is simultaneously both priest and victim. At the same time it is a prayer of consecration on behalf of those for whom the sacrifice is offered—the disciples who were present in the upper room and those who would subsequently come to faith through their testimony.”—F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), p. 328.—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*,* Sabbath, October 13].

2. While Jesus prayed for Himself first, it was really a selfless prayer. He went on to focus on His contemporary disciples, and then, spoke about all those who would come to believe in the gospel because of their testimony. Thus, it is very essential that we consider His words on that occasion as we discuss oneness in Christ.
3. Two of the puzzling questions about Jesus’s prayer in John 17 are: (1) What was the immediate context? (2) Where did that prayer actually take place?
4. John 14:31 says that they had left the upper room. John 18:1 says that “he left with his disciples and went across the brook called Kidron.” (*GNB**) Ellen White said: “Before leaving the upper chamber, the Saviour led His disciples in a song of praise.” This comes after her discussion of their future work with the Holy Spirit as presented in John 16. Next she said:

After the hymn, they went out. Through the crowded streets they made their way, passing out of the city gate toward the Mount of Olives.

... The Saviour had been explaining to His disciples His mission to the world, and the spiritual relation to Him which they were to sustain. Now He illustrates the lesson. The moon is shining bright, and reveals to Him a flourishing grapevine. Drawing the attention of the disciples to it, He employs it as a symbol.... [John 15:1-10]

Christ had finished the work that was given Him to do. He had glorified God on the earth. He had manifested the Father’s name. He had gathered out those who were to continue His work among men....

Thus in the language of one who has divine authority, Christ gives His elect church into the Father’s arms. **As a consecrated high priest He intercedes for His people.** As a faithful shepherd He gathers His flock under the shadow of the Almighty, in the strong and sure refuge. For Him there waits the last battle with Satan, and He goes forth to meet it.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages** 673.1, 674.2, 680.3-4. [Content in brackets and bold type are added.]

5. Notice that Ellen White called this prayer a high-priestly prayer long before F. F. Bruce did.
6. As we mentioned above, the prayer recorded in John 17 is divided into three parts: (1)

Jesus's prayer for Himself, (John 17:1-5) (2) His prayer for His disciples, (John 17:6-19) and, then, (3) His incredible words about those who would come to believe in Him through the testimony of the disciples. (John 17:20-26)

7. Read John 17:1-5. What should we learn from these words of Jesus about the most important work He did and what might be the most important work that we should do? Clearly, His goal was to correctly represent the Father by giving Him glory. Jesus recognized clearly that the hour of His trial was then. On several prior occasions, He had stated that His time had not yet come. (See John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20.) However, this time was different.
8. At this time, the critical time and battle in the great controversy had arrived. **Contrary to Satan's claims back in the Garden of Eden, Jesus proved once and for all that sin leads to death. He demonstrated the character of God under the most trying of situations. Thus, He guaranteed the final eradication of sin and sinners, including Satan, thus, eventually restoring peace, harmony, and unity to the entire universe.**
9. The Father and the Son had carefully worked out every detail of Christ's mission to this earth. Nightly, they discussed what needed to be done on the coming day. Jesus was in full harmony with His Father's wishes at each point. **Nothing happened by accident.** His death was not just a martyr's death; it was a planned occasion to prove the truthfulness of His statement back in the Garden of Eden that sin leads to death. (Genesis 2:17)
10. One of the most significant verses in the entire Bible is John 17:3.

John 17:3: And eternal life means knowing you, the only true God, and knowing Jesus Christ, whom you sent.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., John 17:3). New York: American Bible Society.

11. What are the implications of that verse? What does it mean to *know God*? How can we come to know Christ better?

It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination grasp each scene, especially the closing ones. As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit. If we would be saved at last, we must learn the lesson of penitence and humiliation at the foot of the cross.—Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages** 83.4.

12. What would happen if a significant number of Seventh-day Adventists did that on a regular basis? What would happen if we were more deeply imbued with His Spirit?
13. What happens to people who become better and better acquainted with Jesus? Are others attracted to them? Does a better knowledge of Jesus make you want to know Him more?
14. We believe that Jesus came to reveal to us the truth about the Father. But, eternal life will be for the purpose of getting to know God even better. That will be one of our greatest exercises and our highest delight in the heavens above.
15. How well did Jesus represent the Father? Could we do something similar?

Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, humbling Himself, veiling His glory, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed.... In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father.—Ellen

G. White, *Letter 83*,* 1895; *That I May Know Him** 338.4; *21MR** 393.1.

16. What difference is there between knowing about God and knowing God personally? What would be the difference that would cause you to say about some person that you know about him while about another person you might say, "I know him"?
17. Read John 17:9-19. In this central portion of His prayer, He prayed for His contemporary disciples in detail. We need to remember that this prayer followed soon after His disciples were arguing among themselves about who would be the greatest! (Luke 22:24)
18. First of all, He prayed that God would keep them safe while they, of necessity, remained in this world. He knew that the Devil would mount an all-out campaign to destroy them or discredit them as they continued in their work of spreading the gospel. Jesus was fully aware of the dangers that exist in our world. He prayed for the world. He loves the world; but, He knows the prince of this world! He also knew that the spread of the gospel would be largely dependent upon the work of those followers of His together with a few others that would be their close associates such as Barnabas, Paul, Silas, and Timothy, etc.
19. Didn't Jesus already know that the Father would care for His disciples? Why did He need to pray for that? Is this an example of persistence in prayer which we are advised to do?
20. Unfortunately, when this prayer took place, Judas had already left the twelve. He had found the attractions of this world too great a temptation to the point that he was willing to sell his Lord for 30 pieces of silver!

At the Passover supper Jesus proved His divinity by revealing the traitor's purpose. He tenderly included Judas in the ministry to the disciples. But the last appeal of love was unheeded.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 720.3.

21. As Jesus continued to pray for His disciples and later for us, He prayed for some incredible things: "That they may be one as We are." (John 17:11, *NKJV**) We cannot even imagine that kind of unity on a human scale. It can happen only through the miraculous healing grace of divinity. But, it is an indispensable prerequisite for accomplishing what needs to be done.
22. What does it mean to be *not of the world*? Does one need to be "not of this world" in order to die a martyr's death for the cause of God? Remember that, as far as we know, all but one of the disciples ended up dying a martyr's death, and they tried to kill John.

John 17:20-26: ²⁰ "I pray not only for them, but also for those who believe in me because of their message. ²¹I pray that they may all be one. Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. **May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me.** ²²I gave them the same glory you gave me, so that they may be one, just as you and I are one: ²³**I in them and you in me, so that they may be completely one, in order that the world may know that you sent me and that you love them as you love me.**

²⁴ "Father! You have given them to me, and I want them to be with me where I am, so that they may see my glory, the glory you gave me; for you loved me before the world was made. ²⁵Righteous Father! The world does not know you, but I know you, and these know that you sent me. ²⁶I made you known to them, and I will continue to do so, in order that the love you have for me may be in them, and so that I also may be in them."—*Good News Bible** (John 17:20-26). [Bold type is added.]

23. Our oneness is supposed to make the world believe. Is it really possible that our oneness,

our unity, is supposed to make the world believe that God sent Jesus Christ? Did Jesus really mean that? How does that work in actuality? We know that the Father and the Son work so closely together that They are indistinguishable. They were willing to sacrifice Themselves for us. What could we possibly do to convince the world that the Father sent the Son? (See Ephesians 1:7-10; 3:7-10; and Colossians 1:19-20.) Could we as “saints” do that?

24. Read John 5:20-23; 3:16; 10:14-15. What do these verses suggest?
25. Earlier in His time with His disciples on that last Thursday evening, Jesus made the startling statement we read in John 13:34-35:

John 13:34-35: ³⁴ “And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.”—*Good News Bible*.*

26. While the command to love our neighbors was given by Moses back in Leviticus 19:18, the kind of love Christ had for His disciples was something new! See John 13:34-35, above.
27. What do you think? If we truly love as Jesus loved, would it be apparent to those around us? Would they be attracted? Are we to believe that if we learn to love as Jesus loved, it will stand out so obviously that those around us will come to believe in Jesus? See Matthew 5:16. The kind of unity that is demonstrated by our love for one another cannot be invisible. It must be seen by those around us. How do we get people to glorify God?

God is leading out a people to stand in perfect unity upon the platform of eternal truth.... God designs that His people should all come into the unity of the faith. The prayer of Christ just prior to His crucifixion was that His disciples might be one, even as He was one with the Father, that the world might believe that the Father had sent Him. This most touching and wonderful prayer reaches down the ages, even to our day; for His words were: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.”

How earnestly should the professed followers of Christ seek to answer this prayer in their lives.—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 4, 17.1-2.

28. How much self-denial, self-sacrifice, and true Christian love is necessary to demonstrate the kind of love God showed for us? Certainly, Jesus was the perfect Example of that. How can we better reflect Him? Remember that we are not the light; but, we are to reflect the light.
29. In all this talk about oneness and unity, Seventh-day Adventists have been guilty sometimes of thinking that He was talking only about the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the end times. That is not true!

Mark 9:38-41: ³⁸ John said to him, “Teacher, we saw a man who was driving out demons in your name, and we told him to stop, because he doesn’t belong to our group.”

³⁹ “Do not try to stop him,” Jesus told them, “because no one who performs a miracle in my name will be able soon afterwards to say evil things about me.

⁴⁰For whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹I assure you that anyone who gives you a drink of water because you belong to me will certainly receive his reward.”—*Good News Bible*.*

What about Acts 19:11-16?

John 10:16: ¹⁶ “There are other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them, too; they will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock with one shepherd.”—*Good News Bible*.*

30. Let us not forget that many of God’s faithful followers are still members of other churches and perhaps even non-Christians or even no religion. If that were not so, He would not be calling for them to come out of Babylon. (Revelation 14:8; 18:4)
31. There are many ways in which we can cooperate with members and pastors from other churches in pursuit of common goals. This gives us an opportunity to get to know them and helps them to realize that we are not some strange cult.
32. John 17:3 suggests that eternal life means knowing God. How do you understand that in relationship to 1 John 2:3-6?

1 John 2:3-6: ³ If we obey God’s commands, then we are sure that we know him. ⁴Those who say that they know him, but do not obey his commands, are liars and there is no truth in them. ⁵All those who obey his word are people whose love for God has really been made perfect. This is how we can be sure that we are in union with God: ⁶**those who say that they remain in union with God should live just as Jesus Christ did.**—*Good News Bible*.* [Bold type is added.]

33. God expects us to honor His commandments and obey Him; that should be apparent in our daily lives.
34. Revelation 13 makes it clear that the time is coming when those who insist on carefully observing God’s commandments will be sought out, persecuted, and perhaps even killed. What is incredible for those of us living in the United States is that the beast in Revelation 13:11-18 is the United States! Could that really happen here?

“Saying to them that dwell on the earth, that *they* should [443] make an image to the beast.” [Revelation 13:14] Here is clearly presented a form of government in which the legislative power rests with the people, **a most striking evidence that the United States is the nation denoted in the prophecy.**

But what is the “image to the beast”? and how is it to be formed? The image is made by the two-horned beast, and is an image *to* the beast. It is also called an image *of* the beast. Then to learn what the image is like and how it is to be formed we must study the characteristics of the beast itself—the papacy.

When the early church became corrupted by departing from the simplicity of the gospel and accepting heathen rites and customs, she lost the Spirit and power of God; and in order to control the consciences of the people, she sought the support of the secular power. The result was the papacy, a church that controlled the power of the state and employed it to further her own ends, especially for the punishment of “heresy.” In order for the United States to form an image of the beast, the religious power must so control the civil government that the authority of the state will also be employed by the church to accomplish her own ends.—Ellen G. White, *Great Controversy** 442.3-443.2. [Italic type is in the source; bold type and Bible text in brackets are added.]

35. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is unique among major denominations. While many have

joined the World Council of Churches, which, in turn, has divided up the world for evangelistic purposes, we have resisted that idea, feeling that we have a message for every part of the world. That means that we are trying, to the best of our ability, to develop a church that has unity, cooperation, and love on a worldwide basis with all the different languages, races, and cultures involved. No one else is doing that. Is it really possible?

If God's professed people would receive the light as it shines upon them from His word, they would reach that unity for which Christ prayed, that which the apostle describes, "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "There is," he says, "*one* body, and *one* Spirit, even as ye are called in *one* hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Ephesians 4:3-5.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 379.2. [Italic type is in the source.]

36. Jesus is still ready to work with us in every way possible. The Holy Spirit will cooperate with those who are earnestly trying to represent Him.
37. If God is love and if we are to be like Him, that is, loving, we should recognize that love means cooperation and unity, not discord and enmity. Jesus prayed for our safety. He prayed that we might be successful in carrying the gospel to those around us. He knew that Satan would do everything possible to sow discord among the disciples and followers. But, as we know, not all has been unity and harmony in the church, even ours. Why would anyone want to join a church that is fighting within itself. Infighting is absolutely contrary to the idea that God is love.
38. What image of God do your current relationships portray to the world? What prevents you from accurately portraying God's character? What could you do to more accurately reflect God's character?
39. Remember that whether we like it or not, people around us are judging our church, even Christianity, based on what they see in us. If all Seventh-day Adventist Christians were just like you, how soon would the gospel be finished?
40. Every Christian is expected to be an ambassador for God. Do you recognize yourself as an ambassador? If not, why not? If you recognize that you are expected to be an ambassador, does that improve your behavior?
41. In His prayer, Jesus asked that the Father give Him glory. What was He really asking for? What is glory?

Glory. In Biblical literature a term that expresses 2 general concepts: (1) "honor," "praise," "esteem," and those distinctive qualities that bring honor or excite admiration; (2) "brilliance" that emanates from or surrounds a radiant being or object, or "splendor." In the KJV the term appears as the translation of numerous Hebrew and Greek words, though most of these occur rather infrequently. Although these various Biblical words occasionally include certain shades of distinction not precisely delineated by the English word "glory," usually the original meaning is reasonably close to the English term and the context sufficiently clear to guide one to the intended thought.—Horn, S. H. (1979). In *SDA Bible Dictionary** 423. Review and Herald Publishing Association.

42. Does our church bring glory to the name of God? Do we as individuals do so?

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Last Modified: September 16, 2018

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