

THE
Greatest Prayer of
All Time



by
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Two Jerusalem Prayers

Two notable prayers which have ascended to Heaven from Jerusalem are in my mind at this moment, the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple, and the prayer of the Lord Jesus with eleven of His disciples around Him. The contrast is startling between the magnificent surroundings in which Solomon prayed and the humble surroundings when the Lord Jesus "lifted up His eyes to Heaven." Solomon was Israel's rightful King, selected by Jehovah from amongst David's sons to fill his father's throne (1 Chron. 29: 1); the Lord Jesus was also Israel's rightful King. He was the chosen of God to be King of kings and Lord of lords.

Jerusalem was thronged with people from every quarter when the Temple was dedicated. The most wonderful Sovereign the world has yet known "spread forth his hands towards Heaven" and knelt down upon a brazen platform specially erected for the occasion, and led the whole vast congregation in prayer. How happy it would be if all rulers followed his example! Jehovah had been very good to Israel; He had delivered the people from the bondage of Egypt, and had given them the choicest of all lands. The King of His own selection was on the throne, and in their midst stood the new

Sanctuary which the High and Lofty One Who inhabits Eternity had now graciously filled with His glory. Israel's sky was, as it were, without a cloud. Blessing and prosperity would have been their portion from that day forward if only they had been willing to listen to the voice of their God and obey His commandments. But the "if" was fatal! It is always fatal when applied to poor flesh!

Solomon's prayer was lengthy, quite double the length of our Lord's prayer in John 17, and it was full of forebodings of disaster. He spoke of famine, pestilence, war, and other evils, and he appealed to Jehovah to show mercy to His people should any of these things come upon them. The sequel is well known. What is Jerusalem to-day? Where is the Sanctuary of God with its glory cloud? Where are the people? And what is their standing amongst the nations of the earth? A more terrible story of sin and sorrow has never been told. Alas, Solomon himself led the way in transgressions! In less than thirty years after his memorable prayer he was worshipping all the false gods he could hear of, and was even building shrines for them in and about the Holy City.

A thousand years have passed away, and David's true Heir is in Jerusalem. In His circumstances such a contrast to the magnificent Sovereign of long before, but who could say with truth, "a greater than Solomon is here." And again, "In this place is One greater than the Temple" (Matt.

12: 6, 42). Jerusalem was no longer the metropolis of the preeminent people of Israel; it was now only a provincial city of the Roman Empire. Rome was the fourth of the successive world-powers which were sanctioned by the God of Heaven. All these held Israel's land in turn, and the sons of Jacob were but bondsmen therein (Neh. 9: 37). They had been under Gentile domination for six hundred years, but there was no true sense of the sin which had brought about such a condition of things. Into their midst He came Who was the "root and the offspring of David" (Rev. 22: 16). In the prophecy of the "seventy weeks," Jehovah made known to the people when they might expect Him (Dan. 9: 24, 25), and in addition He sent a herald before Him to announce that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand (Matt. 3: 2). John even pointed Him out to the people as the promised One (John 1: 29-31). But "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1: 10, 11).

In John 17 we hear Him in prayer amongst a few of those who loved Him. He was going away, and had just given them four chapters full of precious things that would be for their joy and and sustainment after His departure. Having spoken these things "He lifted up His eyes to heaven" (John 17: 1). Our Lord delighted in

private prayer (so should we), and sometimes spent whole nights in prayer to God (Luke 6 : 12). Nothing of what He said in those sacred hours has been recorded. He has bidden us to enter into the closet and shut the door. He has also warned us against parade in prayer as was the habit of the hypocritical Pharisees (Matt. 6: 5-8). Yet our Lord's prayer in John 17—the **greatest prayer of all time**—was not designed for the ear of the Father alone; He wished His disciples to hear every word of it. *What grace!*

When Solomon prayed in public the sun was high in the heavens, suitable to the character of his reign. When the Greater than Solomon prayed in the same city in the hearing of His disciples, the shades of night had fallen, so suggestive of all that lay before Him!

The contrasts are many! Solomon in all his glory praying in the midst of a united and prosperous nation, and He Who was infinitely greater praying in the same city amongst a few fishermen and others, the nation at large rejecting Him with hatred and scorn. That night He was roughly arrested and next morning the multitude was clamouring for His blood. Nothing but the fearful sentence of crucifixion would satisfy them, despite the remonstrances of the heathen Governor. Solemn thought, Solomon's own evil course led the way to the unparalleled crime of Calvary's tree! Jerusalem was probably as full of people as in

Solomon's day, but they had not come to see Jesus as their fathers came to see Solomon. It was Passover time, and the religious festival itself was more to them than the One to Whom its types pointed (John 1: 29; 1 Peter 1: 19, 20). The roast lamb upon the supper table satisfied their carnal appetites, but they had no taste for the Lamb of God's providing. Thus we have the Man of God's good pleasure, but Israel's rejected One, praying in semi-privacy in His beloved Zion. Just where the Lord prayed we are not told. He appears to have risen from the supper table at the close of chap. 14 ("arise, let us go hence"). The teaching of chaps. 15 and 16 was spoken outside. There was suitability in this. The subject of chaps. 13 and 14 is spiritual communion; and the theme of chaps. 15 and 16 is fruitfulness and testimony in the outside world. Then in chap. 17 the blessed Lord took His place in spirit in heaven, and graciously permitted His disciples to hear Him speak to the Father. He would have them understand His true relation to the Father, concerning which they were far from clear (proved by Philip's question in chap. 14: 8), and also their own true relation to the Father, to Himself, and to the world which knew not, and wanted not, the Father and the Son. The prayer so graciously preserved for us in John 17 thus constitutes a mine of exceptional spiritual wealth.

The Son Prays

“Men ought always to pray” (Luke 18: 1). “Pray without ceasing,” says the Apostle (1 Thess. 5: 17). “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Col. 4: 2). “Praying in the Holy Spirit” (Jude 20). Salutary words from three inspired writers which should be laid to heart by us all. If we had a truer conception of our weakness, and also of the willingness and power of God to meet our every need, surely we should all pray more. As the dispensation runs out, and difficulties increase we should be much upon our knees; for ourselves personally, for all saints, for all men, and particularly for their rulers, whose responsibilities become more burdensome and perplexing as the days pass. The Christian who neglects prayer is in constant peril from the assaults and seductions of the evil one, and is powerless to help others.

The prayer-life of the Man Christ Jesus, Son of the Father's love, is a sacred mystery beyond our understanding. The same Evangelist who records His prayer (John 17) opens his Gospel by telling us of the greatness of His Person: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made” (John 1: 1-3). That One of

whom all this is true should be found on earth with bended knee is wonderful to contemplate, yet no one ever lived in such complete dependence as He. When the time came to choose twelve Apostles He spent all night in prayer to God (Luke 6: 12). When Calvary's Cross became imminent He withdrew into the recesses of Gethsemane, and prayed three times, with such intensity that "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 23: 44). His daily habit during His years of service is suggested in Mark 1: 35: "In the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." He spoke to God, and God spoke to Him: "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the instructed" (Isa. 50: 4,—J.N.D.). Perfect Servant! What an example for us to follow!

"The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1: 14). This means more than the assumption of a human body. He entered into all the reality of a true manhood. There was no surrender of His Deity (a thing impossible really); in Him when on earth, as in His eternal glory, all fulness was pleased to dwell (Col. 1: 19). Omnipotence and omniscience were His, yet He did nothing apart from the Father's word. When the Jews sought to kill Him because He said "that God was His own Father, making Himself equal

with God," He did not tell them that they had misunderstood Him; instead He affirmed that He could see and do all that the Father did, but that He acted only as it was given Him from above. He is the quickener of the dead, and the final Judge of men, but all as appointed by the Father (John 5: 17-29). In Matt. 12: 28, He speaks of the energy of the Holy Spirit as operating in His mighty works. Who can comprehend this union of the human and the Divine? When He fed the five thousand men, and also a multitude of women and children, it is expressly recorded that He gave thanks for the loaves (John 6: 11, 23). Perfect dependence combined with Divine power! When about to perform His most stupendous miracle, the raising of Lazarus after being four days in the tomb, He waited until He received a word from the Father. The message of the anxious sisters did not hasten His steps, and the warnings of His disciples did not hinder Him when the Father's word came. Arrived at the tomb He prayed before He uttered the resurrection word (John 11). Truly man while truly God! -Satan found himself powerless in the presence of One to whom the Word of God was more than bread (Matt. 4: 4).

Man was meant to be a dependent creature from the first. It would have been his blessedness to continue daily looking up trustfully to his bene-

ficient Creator. But proud flesh refuses such a position. Satan, who brought himself down by his insolent "I will," urged the first man (making use of the woman for his purpose) to take up the same attitude towards God. Need we wonder that the world, full of self-will, is overwhelmed with sorrow and drenched with blood? The chief human rebel of the ages will not merely seek to be "*as God*" (Gen. 3: 1-5), he will seat himself in the Temple, and assert that he "*is God*" (2 Thess. 2: 4). But Divine power will hurl him down to perdition.

Psalm 16 presents to us prophetically the Man Christ Jesus, the Second Man, in every way a contrast to the first. In v. 1 He uses the language of dependence: "Preserve Me, O God: for in Thee have I put My trust." In v. 2, He takes the place of obedience: "O my soul, Thou hast said unto Jehovah, Thou art my Lord." Dependence is perfect in One Who refused to do anything save as instructed by His Father and God, Whose will He came into the world to do, and in Whose will He found delight (Psa. 40: 8). The Father could do no less than publicly express His pleasure in Him during His service, and then glorify Him at His own right hand above. Meantime, He was the pre-eminent **Man of Prayer**.

“The Hour is Come”

When Jacob called his twelve sons together that he might give them his final blessing, he felt in himself that he was dying. His earthly tabernacle house was coming down. He was sick, and his eyes were dim (Gen. 48: 1, 10). But it was otherwise with the Lord Jesus. He was in the full energy of a mature manhood when He spoke to His disciples in the upper room—alas, not twelve, but eleven! The time had come for His departure “out of this world unto the Father” (John 13: 1). It is important to observe that throughout His conversation with His disciples as given in John chaps. 13-16, the Lord never once spoke of His *death*. Instead, with a quiet dignity that was impressive, He spoke of *departure*. John 16: 28, states the position in a few words: “I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.” A Divine Person had come to earth of His own volition; having now accomplished the purpose for which He came, He was returning to the glory which He had before, but He was returning in a new character.

What a sacred privilege for a few humble men to be allowed to stand by while He spoke familiarly to the Father with whom He was eternally one! Moses' privilege as he entered

into the Sanctuary and heard the Voice of Jehovah speaking to him will not compare with this (Num. 7: 89). Calmly and clearly the incarnate Son spoke, and the disciples learned to their joy that His prayer was principally about them. Very soon the blessed Lord was in Gethsemane "offering up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him out of death" (Heb. 5: 7), but those prayers were for the Father's ears alone. They related to His own circumstances, not to the need of those He was about to leave behind Him in the world.

"Father, the hour is come." When speaking of the disciples, and their need of being preserved from the evil of the world, He said: "*Holy Father*"; when speaking of the world and its appalling wickedness against the Father and Himself, He said: "*Righteous Father*"; but when nothing of this was before Him He said simply, "Father."

"The hour is come." The word "hour" is characteristic of John's writings. It occurs frequently in his Gospel, Epistles, and in the Apocalypse. Here it is the hour of Man glorified in heaven. The first man was created for the earth. This he forfeited for himself and for his race. Man cannot now hold the earth, however earnestly he may desire to do so. The Second Man has gone up into heaven. He is personally

entitled to the highest place there. Not only is it His proper home, but He has glorified the Father on the earth, and finished the work which He gave Him to do. Now He is in heaven, not only as the Eternal Son, but as the Second Man and Last Adam, Head of a Heavenly Race. It is there that we know Him for grace has linked us with Him indissolubly. In the Lord's prayer for His disciples He puts us in His own place when on earth, and that in a twofold way. (1) The Father loves us as He loves Him, and makes us the recipients of His Divine revelations; and (2) we are as definitely not of the world as He was not of the world. The heavenly life of the Son in manhood should be reproduced in us now by the power of the Holy Spirit. It was once said of a servant of Christ now at rest, "he looked as from heaven down upon earth, rather than from earth up to heaven." This should be true of every one of us.

In vv. 1-5 of His prayer the Lord speaks of Himself; His desires and requests for His disciples follow. He asks to be reinstated in the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. Phil. 2 tells us that He emptied Himself and humbled Himself; but He did not exalt Himself. The Father both exalted and glorified Him, blessed proof of the place of subjection which He had taken for the accomplish-

ment of the Father's counsels of love. Those who listened to His prayer on that memorable night beheld a Man in flesh and blood, clad in lowly garb, yet He spoke of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was! One cannot imagine any created servant using such language in the Divine presence. Shame on those who speak of our Lord as Divine, yet refuse to acknowledge Him as truly and eternally God! Dr. Moule has well said: "A Saviour who is not quite God is a bridge broken at the further end." Such a doubtful being as Modernists profanely imagine could be no Saviour for ruined men.

Authority over all flesh has been committed to God's glorified Man. "The head of every man is the Christ" (1 Cor. 11: 3). In His day He will call every man from His tomb, and pronounce sentence of judgment according to righteousness. Meanwhile, in this day of grace He receives all whom the Father draws to Him, and He gives them eternal life. This is not merely eternal existence (all have that, even Satan himself); it is the ineffable blessedness of knowing the Father, the one true God, and Jesus Christ Whom He has sent.

He glorified the Father in all His words and ways during the years of His humiliation; He glorifies Him now in exaltation in all that He does for the objects of His favour and love.

“The Men which Thou Gavest Me”

From verse 6 the Lord prays for His disciples, and also for all who would believe on Him through their word. This includes the believers of to-day. The past, present, and future of His own passed before His mind as He prayed. The *past* is found in the words, five times repeated, “those whom Thou gavest Me.” This was before time began. Elsewhere we read that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ “chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph. 1: 4). The chosen ones were predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8: 28). We value gifts according to our appreciation of those who bestow them. How precious, then, are the saints to Jesus, being the love-gift of the Father to Him! This is our past. We read the *present* in vv. 6-13, and the *future* in vv. 14-21. Our future is glory, and this in a two-fold way as we shall see. As regards the *present*, the disciples were now in the world in the same position as the Son Himself. They knew the Father; they had welcomed into their souls the communications of His love; and this distinguished them from the world out of which grace had called them. Henceforward they were heavenly ones walking amongst men; no longer in touch with the Son

physically, but knowing Him by faith as Man glorified above (John 20: 17). This is the force of the Apostle's words in 2 Corinthians 5: 16: "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh, yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." The knowledge of the Father is the essential feature of Christianity. The patriarchs of old knew God as the Almighty (Ex. 6: 3), precious assurance that the One who made promises to them was well able to fulfil them; Israel knew God as Jehovah, pledge of His faithfulness and truth, however fickle His poor people might be (Mal. 3: 6). But the coming into the world of the Son has brought to us the full revelation of God. *We know Him as Father.* There is nothing more to be revealed; no, not even in Eternity. It is noticeable that the Lord Jesus never once used the name Jehovah during His ministry, although serving amongst a people who had always known Him by that name. His mission was to make known the Father. Christendom has fallen back from this. The difference between one divine name and another is but feebly understood. But this is only part of a general retrogression from the full grace of God. Christendom mixes law with grace; copies the earthly sanctuary and its priesthood; and has surrendered the heavenly hope for a vague notion of a general resurrection and judgment at the last

day. Hence the importance of our Lord's request for His own (not for merely religious masses) in verse 11 : "Holy Father, keep them in Thy Name whom Thou hast given Me" (see R.V.). He longed that the disciples after His departure should not slip back into the distance and obscurity out of which His grace had called them. Even the babes in the spiritual family know the Father (1 John 2 : 13). If the first generation of believers continued in the enjoyment of the Father's Name, those who followed them quickly lost it.

Our Lord's Messianic claims have no place in John 17. In due course these will be publicly acknowledged by Jehovah ; and to the Son at His right hand He will say, "Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession" (Psa. 2 : 8). But this is not yet. Meanwhile, the interest of the Father and Son centred in the disciples. For them the Son made request, not yet for the world. The proclamation of Divine grace to men everywhere, according to John 3 : 14-16, does not come within the scope of our Lord's prayer. The world as a system was before His mind (not the individuals ensnared in it), and His disciples He regarded as quite distinct from it, although living and witnessing in the midst of it.

The Lord prayed in the hearing of His disciples in order that they might realize their new position

in relationship with the Father as His own words defined it. They would no longer have the comfort and joy of His personal presence, but they would be the special objects of the Father's love and care. They heard their Lord state two reasons why the Father should thus care for them: (1) "They are Thine"; and (2) "I am glorified in them." Although they were the Father's gift to the Son, they did not thereby cease to belong to the Father. Parenthetically He says: "All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine." The oneness of the Father and Son is thus simply expressed. Neither could possess anything that did not also belong to the Other (vv. 9, 10). This takes in, not only the disciples, but everything throughout the Universe. But what security for the disciples! In chapter 10: 27-30 the Lord taught them that they were in His hand, and also in the hand of the Father, and that no one could pluck them thence. But in the prayer He goes beyond this. Not merely protection is suggested by His words, there is also the supreme joy of knowing that the humblest believers are objects of loving interest to these divine Persons, and all made good in our souls by the Holy-Spirit. The fact, too, that the Son was glorified in these men, as sinners saved by grace, was an additional reason why the Father should care for them, for He loves the Son, and everything that concerns Him.

The chief point in this part of the Lord's prayer (vv. 6-13) is that the disciples might be *one* as the Father and Son are one. They were already born of the Spirit and partakers of the divine nature, and they would soon be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, even as Jesus Himself was. It would therefore be natural that their aims and desires should be in divine harmony, a wonderful testimony to the world, in so far as the world might behold it. In the days that followed Pentecost this was blessedly seen in the apostolic group. Men who had frequently distressed their Lord by their petty strife and ambition for the chief place now moved forward in happy concord as witnesses for the absent One.

Here we must pause, and challenge our hearts. How far have we entered into the blessedness of what the Lord Jesus said to the Father concerning us in John 17: 6-13? He contemplates us as outside the world (separated from it by His grace), standing in His own wonderful relationship to the Father, loved by the Father as He loves Him, objects of the affectionate solicitude of both the Father and the Son, and recipients of the precious communications from above which sustained His heart and guided His steps in this world of evil. Amazing that all this should be true of us according to His thought; but how far have we really entered into it? Note His longing for the

disciples “ that they might have My joy fulfilled in themselves ” (v. 13). He had already said to them : “ these things have I spoken unto you that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full ” (John 15 : 11). We are so accustomed to think of our Lord as the Man of Sorrows, that we are apt to overlook the fact that no human heart was ever so full of joy as His, even in the midst of the world’s hostility. Unclouded communion with the Father lifted Him completely above all earthly circumstances. So should it be with us.

Let us beware of the persistent efforts of Satan to rob us of all this blessedness. Human priesthods, with countless saints and angels, have been thrust by the subtle deceiver between men and God. All these are set forth as aids to trembling souls. But they are instead cruel intrusions, depriving those who heed them of true peace and joy. Our access to the Father is *direct*, needing no creature intermediaries.

“Not of the World”

In vv. 14-21, the Lord speaks of the disciples' place and mission in the world from which he was departing. He had already prayed that they might be as happy as He had been in the enjoyment of the Father's love; now His words would warn His listeners that the world would hate them as it had hated Him—indeed, the world hated them already. Love and hatred! Strange contrast in experience until He comes to take us all up into His glory. The disciples' place was one of entire separation from the world. “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” They were already separated men in two senses: (1) As Jews they were distinct from Gentiles (note Peter's words to Cornelius in Acts 10: 28); and (2) as believers in Jesus they were morally apart from their own nation which rejected Him. But now that Jesus was going up on high, and the Holy Spirit was coming forth to unite them to Him there, they would be strangers indeed wherever their work and testimony might lead them. Never again could they rightly speak of any country as “the Homeland.” They belonged to Christ and to heaven, “and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly” (1 Cor. 15: 48). They had a great work to do for their Lord, and they must keep themselves free from the entanglements

of the world in order to get on with it. Our Lord's own conduct amongst men must be their pattern. When crafty men sought to draw Him into political controversy by raising the question of the chosen people paying tribute to Caesar, He refused to be drawn into it. His reply: "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's"—was a sharp thrust at their consciences. Had they rendered to God His due from Moses' day downward, they would never have been in subjection to a foreign Power (Matt. 22: 21). On another occasion His opinion was sought concerning Pilate's cruel slaughter of some Galileans. He expressed no opinion whatever about the matter, but addressed their consciences with the words: "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13: 2). When He heard of the murder of John the Baptist He took no action (Matt. 14: 12), yet how easily He could have consigned both Herod and Pilate to instant perdition!

A property dispute was once submitted to our Lord. "One of the company said unto Him, Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me." He knew perfectly, as no one else could, which of the contending parties was at fault, but His reply was: "Man, who made Me a judge or divider over you?" And He proceeded to warn all around Him against covet-

ousness (Luke 12: 13-15). Does all this seem strange to us? The Son of God silent and inactive in the presence of cruelty and injustice? The explanation is very simple. He had not come into the world at that time either to reform it or to judge it; He had come to seek and to save the lost. An awful day is near when this gracious One will come forth from the heavens in majesty and power, in righteousness "to judge and make war" (Rev. 19: 11). Then every form of evil will be dealt with according to the demands of the throne of God.

The Lord twice says of His own: "they are not of the world even as I am not of the world." Do not let us miss the implications of this for ourselves. The poor blind world, of course, refuses to recognize the special position of Christians in its midst, and so invites us into its politics, its schemes for "a new and better world," and into its armed conflicts. To all these things the believer taught of God will say firmly NO. We have a great and important work to do. Our business is to evangelize the world; hence national prejudices must have no place in our minds. Hundreds of millions have not to this hour heard the Gospel of God's grace. Shame on us for our lethargy! Large numbers of labourers are needed for the harvest of God, and we have no "manpower" to spare wherewith to help the world in

its enterprises, not one of which can have any hope of success, for "the end of all things is at hand." Whatever reproach we may have to bear, from the ungodly, or from carnally-minded fellow-believers, and whatever stripes may be laid upon us by those who have power to inflict them, let us be true to our separation. It is an unspeakable honour, really, to be identified with the rejected Christ, and He will publicly acknowledge His faithful and tried ones in the day of His Kingdom. Prayerful perusal of 1 Cor. 4: 8-14, may help us all in this important matter.

"I have given them *Thy Word*" (v. 14). We must distinguish between this and "the words" of v. 8. These latter were the communications in detail which reached the Son from the Father, and which were His delight day by day. He had passed them on to His disciples that they also might find delight in them, and thus be sustained in their walk and testimony. By means of the Father's *words* (to be learned by us now from the Scriptures) their hearts would be lifted above all the circumstances of the way. But "*Thy Word*" means the whole mind of God as the subject-matter of their testimony. He had already said, "they have kept *Thy Word*" (v. 6). This very fact would bring down upon them the world's hatred. In the midst of a seething mass of self-will, the very presence of men who sought to be

obedient in all things to the will of God would be intolerable. Their testimony to the whole world would bring persecution, and possibly martyrdom. The world necessarily hates men who testify to it that its works are evil (John 7: 7), that its doom is fixed and certain, and that all its schemes are in vain. The Gospel does not merely transform sinners into respectable citizens, it calls them right out of the world for Christ. Men cannot bear this. A separative ministry, such as Paul's, is abomination in their eyes. Let us beware of giving forth what has been called "a well-watered Gospel"—a character of preaching which offers men a cheap and easy way to Heaven, but which leaves them meanwhile still in the world, in collaboration with the ungodly in what they are doing. Such preaching may not involve the preachers in serious trouble, but the Lord is not glorified thereby, nor are the believers led on into the understanding and enjoyment of the exceeding riches of God's grace. Paul said to the Ephesian elders: "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20: 27). Can we truthfully say the same?

“Sanctify Them”

The position of the disciples (and of all Christians) in relation to the world, is illustrated in the history of Elisha. In 2 Kings 2 we see him passing out of the land of Israel with Elijah. They crossed the Jordan, typical of the death and resurrection of Christ, and of our death and resurrection with Him. From the other side Elisha beheld his master taken up into heaven; then, with the fallen mantle in his hand (suggestive of the power of the Holy Spirit) he smote the river, and recrossed into the land to commence amongst the people his ministry of grace. The Lord says in John 17: 18: “As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.” These words should be carefully noted. It is obvious that if we have been Divinely called out of the world, and then sent back into it for testimony, that we do not belong to it. We are henceforward “strangers and pilgrims” where once we had a home and citizenship. The world is evil—the Lord Jesus says so, and He desires that all His own may be preserved from its unholy influence. There is that in us which responds readily to the world’s seductions, and in so far as we yield to them we are hindered in our testimony for Him Who is holy and true (Rev. 3: 7).

The Lord says in v. 15: “I pray not that Thou

shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." It would be quite easy for Him to take us individually out of the world into His glory at the moment of our conversion, but His ways do not permit of this. He will certainly take us all out of the world at His descent into the air, but meantime we remain here to witness for Him. This is our only business in the world. Self-aggrandizement, and the amassing of wealth should be far from our thoughts. Our only aim and object should be so to testify for our absent Lord that He may be glorified in us, and sinners attracted to Him for their eternal blessing.

"Sanctify them," prayed our blessed Lord. Self-effort will not maintain us in separation from everything around us and make us holy unto the Lord. "Sanctify them by Thy truth." This means *the Father's* truth—all that has come out in the Person and ministry of His beloved Son, and now enshrined for us in the New Testament Scriptures. Some important distinctions must be noted here. The Old Testament is precious in every part, and necessary for our instruction, but it is not *the Father's* truth. The Old Testament is occupied in the main with *Jehovah's* dealings with an earthly people, and we are not earthly. A concentrated study of the Old Testament to the neglect of the New would not suffice to make us

what Christians should be. Indeed, the spiritual value of those ancient writings cannot be perceived apart from the light which the New Testament—the Father's truth—sheds upon them. Thus we need all that has been Divinely given to us for the formation of our life and character.

And what shall we say of the "prophetic word"? (2 Peter 1: 19). It is a lamp shining in a dark place, revealing to us God's thoughts concerning the world, its evil, its judgment, and its ultimate subjection to Christ. No one can neglect the prophetic word without serious spiritual loss; still, it is not *the Father's* truth. The New Testament revelations of the One Who came from Heaven, and Who has returned thither, with whom we are in present union by the power of the Holy Spirit, are the prime necessity of heavenly ones. *Truths* were taught and acknowledged before Christ came; Heb. 6: 1-2 mentions several of them; but His coming has brought to us *the truth*. All is now out; nothing remains to be told; and in the light of the latest revelations from heaven we must walk, if we would be truly separated ones, as heavenly men and women in the midst of a very unheavenly world. The Lord Jesus did not merely preach the truth, He said: *I am the truth*" (John 14: 6).

The Lord proceeded to speak of something even beyond the truth as necessary for our

sanctification. “ For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified by the truth ” (John 17 : 19). He thus refers to the new place that He was about to take in the glory of God. He would take that place for us, in order that we might have a personal Object with which to engage our hearts. As we contemplate Him there, the Man of the Father’s supreme delight, and as we remind ourselves that we are destined to be like Him for ever, we become filled with longing to become increasingly like Him day by day. “ Everyone that hath this hope on Him, purifieth himself even as He is pure ” (1 John 3 : 3).

“One in Us”

It is delightful to observe that we latter-day believers have a definite place in our Lord's prayer. With Divine omniscience He looked around and ahead at the great work which would be wrought by His humble disciples in the power of the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven. Men of every nation would hear and believe in Him throughout the Gospel day, however long that day might be. Accordingly He says: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word ; that they all may be one ; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (vv. 20, 21). Oneness in communion is the thought here—“that they may be one in Us.” The Father finds delight in the Son, and the Son finds delight in the Father. These Divine joys were made known to the disciples, and they have communicated them to us; hence the Apostle's words in 1 John 1: 3, “that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full.” Thus we have a sacred circle of joy and blessedness—the Father, the Son, the Apostles, and believers

everywhere all participating. All this wealth of unspeakable and eternal bliss is foreign to the benighted multitudes around us. Folly, vanity, and sin absorb their minds under the terrible influence of the arch-deceiver of souls. Yet all that men love and pursue so earnestly will soon be exchanged for blackness and darkness for ever!

We find three unities in our Lord's prayer. In v. 11 He says, with pointed reference to the men then standing around Him, "that they may be one as we are." In the words of another, "the oneness of the Father and the Son showed itself in fixed purpose, object, love, work, everything. Therefore the disciples were to have that kind of unity" (J. N. DARBY). In v. 22 the Lord speaks of oneness in manifested glory, which is not yet; but in v. 21, it is present oneness in communion which the world should behold, and which should lead to the eternal blessing of many. It is unquestionably a powerful testimony when persons of many nationalities, with diverse carnal prejudices, high and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, all walk, worship and witness together of the one Lord to Whom all are indebted for their every blessing. In His Name they find salvation, and His Name is upon every tongue. When writing to the Assembly in Corinth, the Apostle Paul, embracing in his thoughts "all that in every place call upon the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both

theirs and ours," says "God is faithful, by Whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:2). Some years ago two commercial travellers, one a Christian and the other a man of the world, were waiting together at an English railway station. When the train drew in and they both got into it, the Christian observed a man sitting in the compartment reading his Bible. He at once opened conversation with him and for a good while they enjoyed chatting together about the One they both loved. When the man with the Bible left the train, the unconverted commercial traveller said to his companion: "How remarkable that you should so unexpectedly run up against an old friend!" The other replied: "I have never met the man before, and even now I do not know his name." What a testimony to the power of the Spirit of God, whereby men are attracted to one another by their common interest in the Saviour Who loved them and gave Himself for them!

Glory!

We have seen already that our Lord in His prayer speaks of the past, present, and future of His own. Our past lies back in the counsels of Eternity when the Father gave us as a love-gift to His Son; our present is in this world of evil, divinely loved, but hated amongst men for our witness to Christ; our future is expressed in one word—*Glory!* How wonderful that we who once were evil as others have now nothing before us but glory! Fearful judgments will sweep the earth when the Son of man comes forth to judge the quick (*i.e.* the living); and the lake of fire looms ahead as the terrible portion of all who will be summoned from their graves to stand before the Great White Throne. But nothing of all this concerns believers in the Lord Jesus. We have His own word—“shall not come into judgment” (John 5: 24), and we have also the word of the Holy Spirit: “there is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8: 1). The glory of God is our destiny and we rejoice in hope of it (Rom. 5: 2). “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him” (1 Thess. 5: 9, 10).

The Lord's words to the Father concerning this

blessed subject are very sweet and full: "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them, that they may be one even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected into one, that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me" (John 17: 22, 23). This is the glory of the Kingdom, manifested before all creature eyes, and producing a solemn effect upon the world of the ungodly. When the heavens open, and the King comes forth in majesty, accompanied by myriads of saints all bearing His image, and attended by hosts of mighty angels, it can no longer be disputed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Father's sent One; nor can it be doubted that His companions, scorned and hated when in testimony upon earth, are loved by the Father as He loves His Son. It will then be too late to "believe" (v. 21), for the day of grace will be over; but the world will "know" (v. 23) to its amazement and ruin. The oneness seen in the day of glory will not have responsibility connected with it, hence there can be no failure. "That they may be perfected into one" (the correct rendering). We have failed through the centuries to display the oneness in communion spoken of in verse 21; but in the day of glory there will be perfect unity of heart and mind wrought in us by the Holy Spirit. "Flesh and sense deceive no more." Christ displayed in

all believers ("I in them"), and the Father manifested in the Son ("Thou in Me").

Three of the Lord's disciples had a brief vision of the glory of the Kingdom when with Him on the Holy Mount. While still in mortal bodies themselves they beheld His face shining as the sun, "and His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them" (Mark 9 : 3). Two men appeared in glory, and conversed with Him—Moses and Elias ; the one representing the saints who have fallen asleep, and the other those who will be translated without seeing death. Peter's mistaken suggestion to make three tabernacles (thus apparently putting the Lord Jesus on a level with Moses and Elias) drew forth the Father's voice from out of the cloud : "this is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him" (Matt. 7 : 5). The principal elements of the coming Kingdom-glory were all present at that moment. The rejected Jesus shining in majesty, men seen in glory with Him, and the Father expressing His deep pleasure in the only One to whom He can entrust the reins of power and government. -

But the glory of the Millennial Kingdom is not all. Wonderful as it will be to share with the Father's well-beloved in the day of His vindication, and wonderful also to be seen in the glory by the millions of earth who have so long held the saints

of God in contempt, there is still more in the heart of Christ for us. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17: 24). This is the inside glory of the Father's house where divine affections are fully known and enjoyed. This is more intimate and blessed than the manifested glory of the Kingdom. It is remarkable that John who is the only one of the four Evangelists who was with the Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration says nothing about it. We have the records of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, not one of whom witnessed what they record. Peter in his Second Epistle refers to that wonderful vision as a confirmation of faith in the prophetic word, but John is altogether silent about it. Here we have a striking illustration of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Who guided each writer as to what he should insert, and also what he should omit, His object being to present the Lord Jesus to us in various characters. John in his Gospel presents Him to us as the Son of the Father's bosom, to Whom belong higher glories than will be displayed in the Kingdom. Heavenly things rather than earthly come before us in the fourth Gospel. There only do we read of the Father's house (chap. 14: 3), and there only amongst the Gospels

do we *not* read of the Millennial Kingdom.

To be like the Son, and thus reflectors of His glory, will be a very blessed thing, but to be *with Him*—*His* suited companions in heavenly light, is bliss supreme! There we shall behold, what the world can never behold, and in which even we cannot share. It is His “given” glory that is before us in verses 22 and 24, not His personal glory which must be eternally inscrutable to the creatures of His hand. It will always be true in the deepest sense that “no man knoweth the Son but the Father” (Matt. 11 : 27). But we shall see established in the highest place the One whom the Father loved before the world was, but Who endured the greatest indignities at the hands of men for our salvation and blessing. Our affections will flow out to Him in adoring gratitude for ever. Verse 24 of our Lord’s prayer is connected with verse 3: “And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.” He asked to be welcomed back into the glory which He left for the blessing of men, and He is now and for ever established there in a new character, Man in the glory of God, having restored to God in His life of perfect obedience that which He took not away (Psalm 69 : 4). The Queen of Sheba was overwhelmed by what she saw of the splendour and wisdom of Solomon, but there was that

which she did not see, the sacred glory of the inner shrine where Jehovah dwelt (1 Kings 10). We, on the contrary, as the favoured objects of infinite grace, will behold all that could possibly be manifested to creature eyes and apprehended by creature minds. Sir E. DENNY has in a hymn well spoken of

*“Those glories which eternal years
Will never all unfold.”*

Contrasts

Having expressed so fully to the Father His loving desires for His disciples, the Lord concluded His prayer with some solemn contrasts. The world and the Father were estranged from each other, so also were the world and the disciples. In this connection He makes use of a new title—"Righteous Father." When requesting that His own might be preserved from all evil, He said: "Holy Father." He changes the title now. Terrible to say, the only perfect Man who ever trod the earth had to go out of the world to get righteousness, for there was none for Him here. The people amongst whom He had laboured, and whom He had benefited by His gracious works, demanded with one consent that He should be crucified (Matt. 27: 22); Pilate acknowledged His innocence, yet condemned Him to death (John 19: 16); Herod made sport of Him (Luke 23: 11); and the High Priest who should have been the very expression of the compassion of God towards offenders took the lead in securing the expulsion of the Lord Jesus from the world (Heb. 5: 2; Mark 14: 53-65). A last opportunity was given to the people when Pilate mentioned Barabbas, but they deliberately preferred a robber and murderer to the Holy One of God (Acts 3: 14). Acts 4: 27 charges the whole world (not the Jews only) with

the rejection of Christ. Impossible that all this should continue indefinitely unavenged. There is righteousness in the universe, but it is with God, not with men. Thus the Son appeals to the Father in John 17: 25. His eye has seen all that men have done to His beloved Son, and His ear has heard all that men have said to and about Him. "Thou blasphemest" (John 10: 36); "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a demon" (John 8: 48); "a malefactor" (John 18: 30)! Fearful words upon human lips when standing face to face with the Divine Heir of all things Who had condescended to dwell amongst them for their blessing!

The founder of the world-system was Cain, "who was of the wicked one and slew his brother" (1 John 3: 12). And why did he slay him? Because by his presentation to God of a lamb for a burnt-offering Abel rebuked the proud, self-righteous man who was unwilling to own that he was a sinner. The attempt to have to do with God on utterly false ground was *wicked*. The Holy Spirit says so in 1 John 3: 12. This wickedness was fully seen in the religious leaders of our Lord's day. Full of religion, but utterly lacking the broken and contrite heart which is becoming in us all, they hated the Holy and Righteous One Who so vividly brought God before them in all His words and ways. The God Who once said to Cain, "Where is Abel, thy brother"? (Gen. 4: 9)

will yet challenge the world concerning its treatment of His beloved Son. The blood of Abel cried out for vengeance, so will it be with the blood of Christ, when the day of grace is past. Meanwhile,

*That pure and cleansing flood,
Speaks peace to every heart that knows
The virtues of His blood.*—(Sir E. Denny).

The world and the Father are at variance concerning the Son. "O Righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me" (John 17: 25). One of those who heard the Lord Jesus thus speak wrote later: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him. For all that is in the world the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father" (1 John 2: 15, 16). Another Apostle has written "the world by wisdom knew not God" (1 Cor. 1: 21). The world is founded upon enmity against God, and rejection of His grace, presented typically in Abel's lamb, and fully in the Person and work of Christ. How can any who profess to know God and appreciate His Son, walk with the world and engage with it in its various schemes for ameliorating its condition? We recall the indignant words of James: "Adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a

friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jas. 4: 4).

The world and the saints are as absolutely opposed as the world and the Father. The saints have welcomed into their hearts the Son’s revelation of the Father, and they sincerely believe that the Father sent Him, but the world wants nothing to do with the One they love. The breach is serious, and friendship with the world is treachery to Christ. Peter in his first Epistle prepares us for slander and persecution after the pattern of what the Lord Jesus experienced ; “ but,” says he, “ rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s suffering, that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy ” (1 Peter 4: 13). To the Thessalonian converts Paul wrote : “ Verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation ” (1 Thess. 3: 4). The Lord Jesus immediately before He commenced His great prayer, said to the disciples : “ in the world you shall have tribulation : but be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world ” (John 16: 33). The false Church, which is really the world in its worst form, has been the fiercest persecutor of the Lord’s true saints. In her presumptuous pretension to weed the Divine wheatfield, she has destroyed much of God’s best wheat, while sparing, and even holding in honour, the tares (Matt. 13: 24-30). But the true saints of God will receive their vindication from the Righteous Father when the Lord Jesus receives His, and when the false Church

is destroyed there will be found in her "the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth" (Rev. 18: 24).

Meantime, for our comfort and joy we have the Lord's words at the conclusion of His prayer: "I have declared unto them Thy Name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." Thus He was leaving with His disciples the sweetness of the Father's Name (so far beyond in its meaning the name of Jehovah) and the assurance that the Father loved them as He loves Him, and also the blessed suggestion that although He was about to depart from them He would still be "in them." This is what the Apostle Paul calls "Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith" (Eph. 3: 17). We have not yet been brought into the Father's house, but we have already been introduced into the innermost circle of Divine affections. What a wonderful thing it is to be a Christian!

The greatest prayer of all time had been uttered; the greatest crime of all ages, was now to be perpetrated. Men were about to stain their hands with the blood of the Son of God, but the true Burnt Offering was willing for the great sacrifice. In no other way could the counsels of the Father's love be effectuated, and in no other way could the need of sinners be met. "Therefore

doth My Father love Me because I lay down My life that I might take it again. No one taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. This commandment have I received of My Father” (John 10: 17, 18). Our Lord accordingly pursued His allotted path. “He went forth with His disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden into which He entered and His disciples. And Judas also, which betrayed Him, knew the place” (John 18: 1, 2). The end followed quickly.

*Bearing shame and scoffing rude,
In my place condemned He stood;
Sealed my pardon with His blood;
Hallelujah! What a Saviour!—P. P. Bliss.*