

Exegesis

Vs. 25 – As we'll see, though there is no clear break between this and what's preceded it, the content of the last two verses suggests that the *focus* of the prayer has shifted.¹ The Lord's final words in his prayer demonstrate a sensitivity to *two* groups. He doesn't just address the first disciples, as in vs. 6-19, nor only future believers, as in vs. 20-24. Instead, he brings these two groups together, speaking about the apostles in vs. 25 and then, with the introduction of a future verb in vs. 26, referencing all believers, past and present.²

The Lord says, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me."

As mentioned, Jesus referred to God as "Father" *six* times throughout his parting prayer. In two instances, the Lord added an adjective to his address. In verse 11, he calls his Father "holy," and here, in verse 25, he calls him "righteous." Though we may use these terms interchangeably, scripturally, they are *distinct*.

In our discussion of verse 11, we learned that when the Scriptures say that God is "holy," it refers to his "uniqueness." In other words, the Lord is *wholly separate* from what we know and experience. And as such, he is worthy of worship for, though he is entirely above us, unlike us in every way, and the only true God, he chose to create and care for *us* (cf. Deut. 10:17; 1 Chron. 16:25; Psa. 136:4; Isa. 6:3; 29:16; Ac. 17:24-25; Rev. 4:8, 11). Furthermore, though objects ought not to be worshipped (cf. Ex. 20:4), they can be consecrated ("made holy") and used in the worship of God (cf. Ex. 29:37), and the same applies to people (cf. 1 Pet. 1:15-17). Thus, when the Bible uses the term "holy," it refers to something or someone's "otherness."

But when the Bible talks about "righteousness," it talks about "rightness," not "otherness." In other words, it is not a term that describes the *nature* of something; it portrays *virtue*. To call God "righteous" is to call him "right," "just," "correct," "truthful," and so on.³ The Greek word used here for "righteousness" is **δίκαιος** (*dikaïos*), and it is used eighty-one times throughout the N.T. Coincidentally, it was first employed in Matt. 1:19, where it describes Jesus' earthly

¹ Morris (1995), p. 652.

² Admittedly, even using the future tense, Jesus could still be referring to the apostles since much of what he prayed about had yet occurred. However, the things the Lord says at the end could be said to any believer in any age. They are not specific to the historical context of John 17.

³ Kruse (2017), p. 403, "God is frequently described as righteous/just in his person (1 Jn. 2:29; 3:7), his ways (Rev. 15:3), his judgments (2 Thess. 1:5-6; Rev. 16:5, 7; 19:2) and when he forgives (1 Jn. 1:9)."

father, Joseph, who was, like his heavenly Father, "just." But unlike the other N.T. authors, John only uses *dikaios* three times: 5:30, 7:24, and 17:25.

In 5:30, Jesus said, "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just [*dikaios*]; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." By asserting that his "judgment is just" because he seeks the "will of the Father," he is implying that the one who "sent" him is also just. The progression of thought is that since God is righteous, and Jesus only does God's will, everything Christ said and did was also righteous.

In 7:24, while speaking to the crowds during the Fest of Tabernacles, the Lord says, "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous [*dikaios*] judgment." In saying, "judge not according to appearances," he meant that *appearances can be deceiving*, and such judgments made with that type of *subjective* evidence are, by implication, *unrighteous*. Instead, they should use "righteous judgement;" which, to put it plainly, means they should make judgments based on *objective* evidence, and in the context, he was explicitly referencing his miracles.

However, notice that *both* passages explicitly deal with *judgment*. Jesus' "judgment" was *right* because he made decisions based upon his Father's "will," and the crowd's "judgment" was *wrong* because their conclusions were based on "appearances." So, when Jesus calls his Father "righteous," it should come as no surprise that, in the same breath, he also mentions that "the world hath not known" God. The Father is *right* all the time; his every word is truth (cf. vs. 17). And because the world does not *know* him, it stands in the *wrong*, condemned before a morally "righteous" God (cf. 1:10-12; Psa. 7:9; Heb. 11:4).

To be clear, when Jesus says, "the world hath not known thee," he is not saying that the world had no intellectual knowledge of God. Instead, unbelievers in the first century did not want a relationship with the Father *as he was revealed through the Son*. And arguably, they didn't want a connection with God at all (cf. 5:46; 8:55). So, it is *not* that the world did not know of God; they did not *want* to know him. They did not desire an experiential knowledge of God. Rather than accept him in the flesh, they crucified their own God. As such, sinners are condemned not because of simple *ignorance* but *willful* ignorance (*see notes vs. 15:21*). The unrighteous world stands in the wrong before the "righteous Father" with a *defiant* gaze, not a *blank* stare. They could know God if they wanted to, but they refused.

Unlike the world, Jesus says, "But I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me." Just as any child would know their parent better than anyone else, God's Son knew his Father best. As such, those closest to the Son of God would get to know the Son's Father as well (cf. 14:6-11). And people with that kind of intimate knowledge will come to one conclusion:

God “sent” Jesus Christ. God the Father and God the Son are a package deal. A *relationship* with the latter is equivalent to a *relationship* with the former, just as a *rejection* of the latter is equivalent to a *rejection* of the former (cf. 13:20; Matt. 10:40-42). You cannot accept God and reject Jesus, nor can you accept Jesus and reject God. To *truly* know Jesus is to understand that he came from the Father, a point he's made once already in this prayer (cf. vs. 8). But to *truly* know God is to know he sent his Son, a fact that Jesus has now made *six times* in this chapter alone (cf. vs. 3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25).⁴

Vs. 26 – “And 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.” Jesus has already mentioned that he's “manifested [God's] name” to the disciples (vs. 6; cf. vs. 11-12) and now he claims to have “declared” it. And though the two are similar, the verb “to declare” is not the same as the verb “to manifest.”

Per our discussion of vs. 6-8, to *manifest* God's name is to *reveal* the sum total of the Godhead; it is to *literally see a visible manifestation of God himself* (cf. 1:31; 2:11; 7:4; 21:1). And only those who actually walked with Jesus—i.e., the apostles and first believers—could claim to have seen God's name in the flesh (cf. Lu. 2:30; Ac. 26:16; 1 Tim. 3:16; 1 Jn. 1:1-3).

Unlike “manifest,” the Greek term for “declare” refers more to a revelation of the *mind* rather than the *eye* (cf. 17:3; 1 Jn. 2:3; 3:1; 5:2; 13). Thus, to “declare” God's “name” means to *make known* his character; it means to explain his identity (cf. 1:18). This is something Jesus has already claimed to have done. He says, “I have declared unto them [i.e., apostles] thy name.” For the first disciples, manifestation and declaration coincided. They both *saw* and *knew* Jesus personally, and in doing so, God's name was manifested and declared unto them.

But Jesus does not stop at the fact that he's “declared” God's name in the *past*; he also says that he “*will* [emphasis add] declare” it in the *future*. Again, the Lord did not see the cross as his end. He knew that there would be more to come. His work of declaring God's name would continue! Of course, Jesus would not do so in bodily form; after all, he went back to the Father. Instead, as 16:12-15 indicates, he would work through the Spirit to make God's name known. So, while Jesus will eventually visibly manifest himself again at his second coming (cf. Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 Jn. 3:2), *anytime* God's name is explained, God the Son works to declare God the Father through God the Spirit.

All that declaration would be pointless without a *purpose*, and, in fact, Jesus gives a two-fold aim. First, the Lord would not exert such effort if it weren't for a good cause. And indeed, his

⁴ Klink (2016), p. 725, “...there can be no true knowledge of God without Christ.”

rationale for declaring his Father's name is not just good but great! The reason why Jesus will work so diligently is so "that the love wherewith [God] hast loved [him] may be in them." The *drive* behind Jesus' actions was *love*, not of the standard variety, but the sort of love God "hast loved [Jesus]" with. This refers to the preexistent love mentioned in vs. 24. When God's name is declared, Jesus is working to make known a form of love that is eternal, timeless, and transcendent, which he is personally familiar with.⁵

The second goal that Jesus had in mind when declaring God's name was so that "[he may be] in them." This phrasing is the language of the covenants.⁶ In Ex. 24:16, the "glory of the LORD abode upon mount Sinai..." In Ex. 40:34, "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." Time and again, God reminded the children of Israel that he would "dwell" among them (cf. Ex. 29:45-46; Deut. 7:21; 23:14). Then, in the prologue of John's account, the beloved evangelist says that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (1:14). As God tabernacled among the Israelites during ages long past, he now, in this new age, dwells amongst those who believe the declaration of God's name by God's Son. A believer's heart is the home of the Triune God (cf. 14:23; Matt. 18:20).

⁵ Carson (1991), p. 570, "The crucial point is that this text does not simply make these followers the objects of God's love (as in v. 23), but promises that they will be so transformed, as God is continually made known to them, that God's own love for his Son will become their love. The love with which they learn to love is nothing less than the love amongst the person of the Godhead."

⁶ I am indebted to Köstenberger (2008), p. 501, for the following observations.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Deep Dive: The Gospel of John | Week 77 | John 17:25-26

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

As Jesus Christ closes out his parting prayer tonight, he will make *three* crucial points.

First, *to truly know Jesus, one must* understand that God sent him. In other words, God the Son and God the Father are a package deal. Calming to know God but rejecting Jesus is impossible, and vice versa. You cannot have one without the other.

Secondly, in declaring God's name to every believer, past and present, Jesus intended for Christians to experience God's love. This is not of the standard variety, but the sort of love God "has loved [Jesus]" with. This refers to the preexistent love mentioned in vs. 24. When God's name is declared, Jesus is working to make known a form of love that is eternal, timeless, and transcendent, which he is personally familiar with.

Lastly, those who believe in God's name and experience his love become the *abodes* of Christ himself. This is covenantal language. Time and again, God reminded the children of Israel that he would "dwell" among them (cf. Ex. 29:45-46; Deut. 7:21; 23:14). Then, in the prologue of John's account, the beloved evangelist says that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (1:14). As God tabernacled among the Israelites during ages long past, he now, in this new age, dwells amongst those who believe the declaration of God's name by God's Son. A believer's heart is the home of the Triune God (cf. 14:23; Matt. 18:20).

Pastor's manuscript can be found here:

Grace Pointe Baptist Church

12029 Eastern Ave.

Baltimore, MD 21220

Contact: info@GracePointeLife.com

Website: <https://www.gracepointelife.com>

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