

Exegesis

Vs. 11b – After presenting his *rationale*, Jesus presents his *request* on behalf of the apostles. He says, “Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.” As before, Jesus addresses God as “Father” (vs. 1, 5), but this time, he adds the adjective “Holy.” Nowhere else in the N.T. is such an address used.¹ Even in the Book of Revelation, where the subject of God’s holiness is emphasized the most (cf. Rev. 3:7; 4:8; 6:10; 15:4), the designation “Holy Father” is absent. Referring to God in this way positions two of his characteristics side-by-side: God is both a *supranatural* being and a *relational* one. The Lord is every bit transcendent, an entity that is wholly other, but He is also every bit a father, a parent that is wholly relatable. In other words, God is ‘alien’ in every sense of the word, yet he relates to us in terms we can comprehend.

But while we can relate to him as a child relates to a parent, we mustn't *oversimplify* God. Our Heavenly Father is a father, but he is more than just a father; he is *Holy* Father. Thus, Jesus' specifying God as such is the Johannine equivalent of Lev. 11:44: “For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy” (cf. Mat. 5:48).² As holiness was the basis for God wanting Israel to be *distinct* from other nations, so does his otherworldliness call believers to be *different* from the world. We ought to be holy as our Father is holy (cf. 1 Pet. 1:14-16).

The Lord asks God to “keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me...”³ There is no better way to know God than to know Him through His Son (*see notes vs. 17:6-8*). Such knowledge not only means believers will live in accordance with God's name (they will exhibit holy lives), but it also means they will be kept “through [God's] own name.” This is to say, the *security* of Jesus’ followers is *not* established by the *power* of their own name but by the *potency* of God’s (cf. Psa. 20:1; 69:36).⁴ Since Christians *profess* the name of Christ, they also have the *protection* built-in to Christ's name. To know God's name is to be kept by God's name, and there is no greater safekeeping than that (cf. 1:12; 3:18; 20:31; 1 Jn. 5:13).

Jesus asked God to “keep” the apostles “through [his] own name...[so] that they may be one, as we are.” Here, the Lord prays that his followers would be “one” with God as God the Father and God the Son are, at that very moment, already “one.” This verse speaks to the Triune nature of

¹ Köstenberger (2008), p. 493.

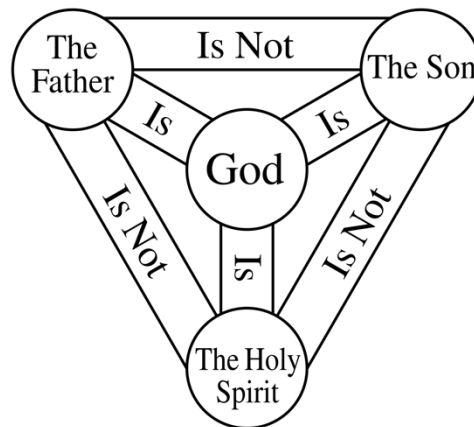
² Carson (1991), p. 561.

³ On “those whom thou hast given me,” see notes on 17:2.

⁴ Köstenberger (2008), p. 493; Kruse (2017), p. 397; Klink (2016), p. 718.

God. Within the Trinity, there is unity and diversity (cf. 20:28). As B.B Warfield put it, “In the unity of the Godhead there are three coeternal and coequal Persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence.” Admittedly, it is impossible for us to fully comprehend this doctrine. But considering the numerous scriptural passages which support a belief in the Trinity (cf. Gen. 1:1; Mar. 1:10-11; Gal. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:5; etc.), we must set aside our perplexity and accept it by faith. This is not to say it's entirely incomprehensible; to a certain extent, we can (and should) try to comprehend it. In fact, we can even visualize the Trinity in the 'The Shield of the Trinity' (see Figure 17.1).

Figure 17.1 – Since the early 12th century, the ‘Shield of the Trinity’ has been used to illustrate how the scriptures depict God’s triune nature.



God is *one* in nature (cf. Deut. 6:4) and *three* in persons (cf. Mat. 28:19). In other words, the Godhead is composed of one *essence*—i.e., each member has the same divine glory, but within the Godhead, there are three distinct *entities*—i.e., Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To be clear, God is not three different gods—i.e., tritheism, as if he were some collective organism (e.g., a three-leaf clover). Neither does God express himself in three separate ways—i.e., modalism, as if he takes on different forms (e.g., water as a liquid, ice, and vapor). The Godhead is not a collection of gods, but each person within the Godhead is the *same* God. And the Godhead does not change hands, but each being within the Godhead is, as the writer of Hebrews puts it, “the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow” (Heb. 13:8; cf. Mal. 3:6; Heb. 1:10-12). There is *one* Father, *one* Son, and *one* Spirit. God is three in one *and* one in three, distinct but combined. Each person within the Godhead is unique, but all are united.

God's triune nature is so fundamental to his identity that a breakdown within the Trinity would mean the collapse of the Godhead itself. In other words, if one of the divine persons were to split from the others, God would cease to be God. Likewise, if any of the disciples were no

longer in step with God, his name, and his Son, then such a person would cease to be a part of God's community. The Church, as an entity, is defined by its allegiance to the *name* (singular) of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (cf. Mat. 28:19). This is why the Lord prays that his followers "may be one, as we are," because, to be otherwise, is to be severed from God's presence and the eternal life offered there. If the Triune God is a being where three divine persons are in eternal coequal *fellowship* with one another, then his followers will, in like manner, be known for their *fidelity* to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They must be kept in God's name if they hope to remain in communion with God himself.

Vs. 12 – "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." The security of the apostles was Jesus' responsibility "while [he] was...in the world." He says that he has "kept them in [God's] name," meaning that he's shepherded the disciples so they would be brought in line with God's character. So proficient was Jesus in his duties as a guardian that he said, "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost..."⁵ Jesus protected those who were his true followers, and all of the apostles (save for *Judas*) remained under his tender protection.

About Judas, the Lord says that "the son of perdition [was lost] that the scripture might be fulfilled." This signifies, at the very least, that Judas' betrayal was not a surprise; it was something that had been *predicted* (cf. 6:70). This is not to say Judas was not responsible for his actions, as if he were some puppet in God's hands. The "son of perdition" was accountable; he was no automaton but exerted his own autonomy. In fact, later, Judas takes full responsibility for what he did (cf. Mat. 27:4; cf. Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10) and does not blame God for his actions. As a Jew, he knew that God was in control and that man must answer for the things he does

So, how are we to take Jesus' words here? Because the Lord knows the beginning from the end, he can use even those things that are intended for evil and use them for good (cf. Gen. 50:20). And because God knows what lies in the heart of man (cf. 2:24; 6:64), he can move in accordance with his will without transgressing man's (cf. Gen. 50:20). Such is the case with Judas. He was *doomed* because of his character; he was not *destined* because of God's designs (cf. 12:6).⁶ The Lord makes his plans in light of man's choices. It is not God's will that man rebels. Nevertheless, because God is sovereign, he can even use rebellion to serve his will. Jesus is merely stressing God's *good* work without feeling the need to stress man's *evil* one.

⁵ On "those that thou gavest me," see notes on 17:2.

⁶ Morris (1995), p. 644-645.

Jesus said that the "scriptures" predicted the loss of Judas, but it is unclear which passage he was referring to. Given that his betrayal was hinted at in 13:18 in conjunction with Psa. 41:9, that is the most likely candidate. However, Psa. 69:25 and 109:8 are good contenders since Peter quotes them when speaking about Judas in Acts 1:20.⁷

⁷ Köstenberger (2008), p. 495.

VIDEO DESCRIPTION

Deep Dive: The Gospel of John | Week 72 | John 17:11b-12

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

Today, Jesus will finally get to his prayer request for the disciples. As we'll see, he prays that the apostles would be unified with the Father. Such fellowship, just as Jesus' unity with God, provides security for those who put their trust in God's name. Which is to say, the *security* of Jesus' followers is *not* established by the *power* of their own name but by the *potency* of God's (cf. Psa. 20:1; 69:36). Since Christians *profess* the name of Christ, they also have the *protection* built-in to Christ's name. To know God's name is to be kept by God's name, and there is no greater safekeeping than that (cf. 1:12; 3:18; 20:31; 1 Jn. 5:13).

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>

Give: <https://www.gracepointelife.com/give/>

Podcast Details:

Season 1 | 70