

Notes of the Cheltenham Meeting

by John Nelson Darby

John Nelson Darby's sermon emphasizes the relationship between Christ, the Father, and believers, highlighting the call to live in unity and bear witness in a rejecting world.

Scripture: John 17:1

Topics: "Unity in Christ", "Witnessing in a Rejected World"

Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the significance of John 17, clarifying that while intercession is present, the chapter's primary focus is on the relationship between Jesus, the Father, and His disciples. He explains how Jesus, as the divine Person, was rejected by the world, and how His glorification and the sending of the Holy Spirit establish a new relationship between believers and God. Darby highlights the importance of understanding our identity in Christ and the call to be witnesses in a world that has rejected Him, urging believers to maintain their testimony despite the surrounding evil. He concludes by affirming that the unity of believers reflects the love and harmony that Jesus desires among His followers.

Transcript

John 17

It is a mistake to take this chapter as intercessional: intercession is one element in it, but that is not the object.

In the previous chapters we get the Spirit of God as the operating power. From ch. 13 you have the Lord on the earth, or else this testimony concerning Him - but rejected. Always rejected in John. He is looked at as a divine Person in a world which rejected Him, as in ch. 1, "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not."

You see quickened souls from the 1st chapter: but the world and the Jews as such set aside. You get the power of God working in individual souls by whom the divine Person was received, but He is not seen as in the other Gospels presenting Himself to Israel in His character of Messiah, Son of David, Son of Man, servant. He stands from the very beginning as rejected as a divine Person, and this involves rejection, for "the carnal mind is enmity against God." We do not get the electing love of God in the other gospels.

In chapters 11, 12 we see the 3 characters of Christ brought out as Son of God, Son of David, Son of Man. Son of God in the raising of Lazarus, Son of David when He rode into Jerusalem, then the Greeks come

up and His title as Son of Man is brought out, but He must die to take His place as Son of Man. He cannot take the far wider glories connected with that title till He has been through death, for until death has come in He cannot have men along with Himself. He cannot stay with them, so He fits them to be with Himself. They cannot be washed over again - "ye are clean" - but He washes their feet that they may have part with Him.

In chapter 14 he tells them what He had been on the earth, what they ought to have known. The Father being revealed in the Son, and He going away; they knew the Father, knew also where He was going. They might be very dull about it, but there it was. When the Holy Ghost came they would know not only that He was in the Father, but also that they were in Him and He in them: union known only by the Holy Ghost: they ought to have known about His person upon earth but they would not know about being in Him.

In chapter 15 looked at as to Judaism, we get the Jews set aside and then [?the ?this] Christ and His disciples substituted for them. Israel would have thought Him the best branch in the vine, but no, He is the Vine and they the branches. The Comforter would testify what He was in heaven: rejected as the Vine He takes His place in heaven and that closes the history of the Vine. When Paul comes out he does not know Him after the flesh.

At the end of chapter 15 and in chapter 16 we get the Comforter sent by the Father giving consciousness of sonship and of being in Christ; we also get Him sent by Christ (v. 7): the revealer of the glory of the rejected Man. Remark here, this is the testimony of the total setting aside of the world [altogether]. Grace is sent out into the world now, but it is "to deliver from this present evil world." The Comforter demonstrates the sin of the whole world as the rejecter of God: "will convince the world of sin because they believe not on me." There are plenty of other sins, but the Holy Ghost would say to the world, "Where is Christ? What have you done with Him?" The whole world as such has hated Him.

If all have sinned, where is righteousness? With the Father. "I go to the Father," and the world sees Him no more till it sees Him in judgment. The devil was the prince of this world, but he had committed himself hopelessly, and the one he had put to death was sitting at God's right hand - judgment was not finally executed, but it was proved that all that was in the world was not of the Father, for the One the Father had sent the world had refused.

People fancy the worst of fancies, that by the introduction of Christianity Satan ceased to be the god of this world - it is just the contrary. Satan was never called the god of this world till Christianity came, and then came the total setting aside of this world, and the perfect demonstration that Satan was its prince.

The testimony from the beginning of John's gospel is that the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not. The world is judged though perfect grace goes out to it, and those who are of God in it all connected with that One who was turned out of it: the Holy Ghost came down and connects them with Him. The world cannot receive Him because it sees Him not. Christ was seen, the Holy Ghost cannot be seen. Christ being rejected, the heart [?] becomes the temple, but the world cannot see Him. He is only known by those in whom He dwells. This "other Comforter" abides for ever. Christ could not abide and indwell.

In chapter 17 we get the disciples put into His place in the world. He being gone, He sets them in His place. He is for them in heaven and they are for Him on earth., He appears in the presence of God for us, and we appear in the presence of men for Him. The statement of this is in chapter 17; He puts them in His

own place before the Father and before the world. We get all the blessing He had, except in eternal sonship, and as regards this world, we are sent to take His place in it.

"Lifted up His eyes to heaven" - "the hour is come; glorify thy Son." In John we always see the divine nature in One who was man. "Glorify me." He is gone into all the glory He had before the world was, and He takes us with Him. He is the "first-born among many brethren." He has taken the place of glorifying the Father, as man and as Servant [for ever], and He will never give it up. It is well to remember that all we get - association with Him, nearness to Him, only makes us more capable of seeing the glory of His person.

Hebrews 1:8-9 takes up most beautifully His divine and human character; it begins with "Thy throne, O God" and then comes, "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity" as the ground of being alone among His "fellows," but in Zechariah, when His being smitten is in question it is "Awake O sword against the man that is my fellow." We get a beautiful instance of His grace in associating us with Himself in Matthew 17 when Peter is asked "doth not your master pay tribute?" but the Lord anticipated him and asked, "of whom do the kings of the earth take tribute, of their own children?" "No, of strangers." Christ was the Son of the great King of the temple, and He brings Peter into His place - "lest we should offend them" - and then He puts forth His power as Lord of creation, and then says to Peter "that give for me and thee." But His divine Person is always fully maintained. On the mount of transfiguration, when they saw Moses and Elias in the same glory with Himself talking familiarly with Him, they would have put Him on a level - "let us make three tabernacles" - and instantly Moses and Elias disappear and the voice comes "this is my beloved Son; hear Him."

"Thou hast given him authority over all flesh" - the head of every man is Christ - "to give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." The electing love of God comes out all through, for He was a rejected Christ: the Jews would not have Him, but He says, "Well, I will have my sheep all the same."

"That they may know thee (the Father), the only true God." The world all gone [?] - it had rejected His Son. He shews grace to it, but all that is in the world is not of the Father. It does not say "not of God;" all that is created is of God; the cross brought in separation from the world. Man is saved out of it, but as to testimony it is judged before God. God created music: of course He did, who else could? God made the trees in the garden, but Adam used them to hide himself from Him. Man takes these things and uses them to separate himself from God if he can, and the question is not "has God made them?" but the use man puts them to. Cain went out from the presence of God and built a city, and then used the things God had made to make himself happy without God. It is a great delusion to speak of God making the world as it is. The point is this, we have a world that has rejected the Son - what has it then to do with the Father? What we have to do with the world is to go through it as Christ did and be a testimony to God in it.

Then we get the absolute grace, "This is life eternal," Christ Himself. 1 John 5:20 brings this out. We are not eternal life, but we have it in having Him; the character is knowing the Father. This is brought out doctrinally in John's epistle: "in this was manifested the love of God towards us" and "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son."

"I have glorified thee", we get the whole work done perfectly: the Father glorified upon the earth, and the work totally and entirely finished, and man put in glory in the person of Christ. What God owns has been transferred to heaven and our hearts with it. Adam's one work was to ruin man - Christ's to bring him back to God - not only to put his sins away. The first man was set in responsibility, but now that the second man is come we have an entirely new thing founded not on responsibility but on redemption which can never

fail. Now we get another step - "Glorify thou me with thine own self."

"I have manifested thy name." In 2 Corinthians 6:18 [?text reads 2 John vi. 10] we have three names of God beautifully brought together. God Almighty was the name revealed to Abraham, Jehovah was the God of Israel, but now it is the God Almighty, Jehovah who is our Father. The relationship is that of Father because the Son has been revealed, but since the Son is rejected the relationship is found in heaven. What would characterise the disciples is "they have kept thy word." John Baptist, the greatest born of woman, spoke of things of God but connected with the earth. "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven." (Christ was the heavenly Messenger speaking heavenly things and man would not have Him at all.)

"Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee." At first sight this looks like tautology, but the thought is "of thee" as Father. Martha had said "I know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, he will give thee," but now He had declared the Father's name and they were to know that all He had was the Father's gift: relationship was brought out.

"I have given them the words which thou gavest me." The words He had received in that relationship He had passed on to them, and thus teaches them His relationship with the Father.

"I came out from thee and they have believed that thou didst send me." He had tried to teach them this in chapter 16:28, "I came forth from the Father . . . and go to the Father," but they could not understand, and they say, "by this we believe that thou camest forth from God."

The whole world is set aside. "I pray not for the world." "All mine are thine." He puts them as objects of common interest to Himself and the Father. "Holy Father, keep through thine own name." He looks to His Father as Holy Father to keep the children according to the nature of God. In all this He looked for His joy to be fulfilled in them.

In what follows this [?viz] we get relationship with the world. How did Christ come into the world? As of it? No, as of the Father, and He was the witness in the world of everything the world denies. The testimony which we bear would [?should] not be in any way affected by the evil which surrounds us. The smallest thing of flesh breaks communion. Look at Stephen. The Lord lit up the light in the lantern and at last the lantern became so transparent that the light came out as clear as it went in. We are earthen vessels, but if ever man acts he spoils the testimony. There is no truth in the world like the word of God. Our hearts are not true, we like a fair show in the flesh. Is [?not] that true?

When the Lord met Satan in the wilderness everything as to man's salvation depended on the word of God. It was the only competent instrument with which He defeated Satan.

The first Adam did not mind the word of God. The second [sic, last] Adam did. One simple word of God was enough. I dare say some criticism of it could be found now but it was enough for the Son of God, enough for the devil, and I thank God it is enough for me.

"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so send I them." You can't send anyone into the world if he be in it already. I must be separated from it first and then I can be sent into it. "I take thee out from the people and from the Gentiles, to whom I now send thee."

"That they all may be one." The world would see them living together in love and harmony, upon principles which the world knew nothing about.

"Righteous Father." "Thou lovedst me before the world was. O Righteous Father." Was the world right in crucifying Christ, or was Christ the Son whom the Father took to Himself? The Father is to settle this question.

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