



8) Chapter 17

Chapter 17 is perhaps the densest, the hardest to understand, of the whole Gospel. Often described as the ‘High-Priestly Prayer’, it is perhaps best approached as John’s commentary on, and expansion of, the Lord’s Prayer (which doesn’t occur elsewhere in the gospel). In fact there’s not much in the chapter that is clearer, or more illuminating, in the original Greek than in the English translation, and so in this session we’ll range a little more widely into the Lord’s Prayer itself.

Is there a ‘D’ on the front of ‘Evil’?

The one significant point that’s lost in translation in this chapter (as in the Lord’s Prayer itself) comes in verse 15:

“I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from **the evil one.**” [17.15]

Nouns and adjectives in New Testament Greek (as in Latin and many modern languages) have genders – masculine, feminine and neuter (‘he’, ‘she’ and ‘it’). And for much of the time in Greek the masculine and neuter are indistinguishable from each other.

So in verses like this one (and in the Lord’s Prayer’s “Deliver us from evil”) the phrase *ek tou ponērou* could refer to an abstract entity (“from Evil”) or to something – someone – more personal (“from the Evil One”). What difference do you think it makes?

Do you have any further comments or questions about chapter 17?

The Lord’s Prayer

We’ll take the sideways step mentioned above now, and look at the Lord’s Prayer:

Matthew 6. 9-13

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And do not bring us to the time of trial,
but rescue us from the evil one.

Luke 11. 2-4

Father,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone
indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of trial.’

Back to John’s gospel next time!