

# JOHN — WEEK 24

## THE PURPOSE OF WHAT'S COMING



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*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

## The cover image is *Ecce Homo (Behold the Man)* by Caravaggio

Everything is going according to plan, even the loss of Judas. Jesus notably does not pray for His disciples to “miss all the fun” but rather to be protected. Ultimately, they will have joy, but not at first.

This is all so that the world may believe that Jesus was sent by the Father and that His love will be in His people.

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John, Week 24 — The Purpose of What's Coming  
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1 John 17:12

*“Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”*

Sure enough, this is a purpose construction. The purpose (or a purpose) of Jesus “losing” Judas is the fulfillment of prophesy, especially Psalm 41:9:

*Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted,  
Who ate my bread,  
Has lifted up his heel against me.*

But why would the fulfillment of a prophesy be the purpose for anything? That makes it sound like the prophesy wasn't right to begin with and something had to happen to keep it from failing.

Surely, that's not what's actually going on. So, what is?

The answer is that the purpose is God's original purpose. Losing Judas was in the plan from the beginning, as demonstrated by the earlier prophesy. That prophesy was going to come true, no matter what.

So, Judas being lost is a requirement, and that was simply fulfilled.

It checked a box.

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Many people are troubled by what happened to Judas and that God foreordained it all.

*“The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”* — Matthew 26:24

But there's no doubting that scripture says these things. We can't run away from the implication. God's plans include tragedies. Here are some other key references on this troubling subject.

*As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”* — Romans 9:13

*You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will? But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, “Why have you made me like this?” Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?”* — Romans 9:19–21

Paul treats this thoroughly in Romans. God's will in tragedies is an advanced topic, but every Christian will eventually face it. My in-depth study of Romans is here:

<https://www.ailbe.org/resources/item/15390-romans>

The truth is that God is just as right to create tragedies as Shakespeare is. Creators have creative agendas.

2 John 17:13

*“But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.”*

This verse is yet another purpose construction. The purpose (actually, a purpose) of Jesus’s teaching is joy.

*“But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, [for the purpose] that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.”*

Jesus mentioned joy earlier in this prayer.

*“Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.” — John 16:20*

That passage, which goes on to compare the disciples’ coming anguish to the pain of childbirth, is about how pain and sorrow are replaced by joy. The pain doesn’t physically go away; it’s just overcome by something of greater significance.

But now Jesus is elevating joy from a thing to a purpose. Joy isn’t the ultimate purpose—that’s always God’s glory—but an immediate purpose.

Still, that’s surprising, and important. It’s in stark contrast to the frequent warnings that Christians should expect to be persecuted.

But how are Christians supposed to have joy in the presence of persecution? Persecution can get incredibly painful.

The answer is that joy is not the opposite of pain.

The joy of knowing God, and of knowing our place in the kingdom, overcomes the pain.

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This final teaching about joy comes just moments before Jesus’s arrest. Judas is on the way with his band of unmerry men. These words will still be ringing in the disciples’ ears when everything (seemingly) starts to unravel.

As Jesus noted back in John 16:20, their joy won’t be coming immediately. As the analogy with childbirth illustrates, the joy comes after the labor is complete.

So it will be with the disciples. The coming trials will be trials. There will be pain, fear, and grief.

Then Easter morning will dawn.

3 John 17:14–19

*“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth.”*

The key to this passage is verse 15. *I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.*

Trials are coming and Jesus is not praying for them to be avoided. Instead, He prays for God to keep His disciples from *the evil one* (“*tou pon-ay-rou*” **του πονηρου**).

This is profound because Jesus is not asking for anyone’s deliverance from trial, nor even for success. He’s praying for protection from one specific danger. This means that the one specific danger is the big threat.

And Jesus gives this point great emphasis when He says, *“I do not pray that You should take them out of the world.”* What an amazing thing to say in a prayer.

Imagine you’re in a prayer group and someone prays something like this. “I am not praying for ...” That’s not wrong, just unusual. Whatever that person prays for next has got to be important.

Here, it’s the Lord Himself. He knows what is and isn’t important. By saying He’s not praying for one thing but is praying for another, He’s transmitting to us His perspective on what’s most important.

What a wondrous lens into what trials are all about.

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If you were in a trial, or merely anticipating one, what would you pray for?

Most folks would pray to be delivered from the trial, or maybe for success. We tend to focus on the physical trial itself. That’s like treating the symptoms of a disease instead of treating the disease.

So, that’s not what Jesus prays for here. Jesus prays that His disciples be kept from the evil one. The trial itself isn’t the real issue; it’s the enemy. The evil one is the issue.

That said, not every trial is a spiritual attack. While we need to avoid the mistake of not considering spiritual issues in a trial, we also shouldn’t make the opposite mistake of seeing everything as spiritual warfare. Sometimes things just go wrong—especially when our own errors are the cause.

Still, every trial should be assessed to see if it’s spiritual in nature. Sometimes, it’s an attack from the enemy. Sometimes it’s God’s discipline. Sometimes it’s both.

The calamities that befell Job were both.

4 John 17:20–23

*“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one; I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.”*

There are three purpose constructions in a row at the beginning of this section.

*“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; [for the purpose] that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; [for the purpose] that they also may be one in Us, [for the purpose] that the world may believe that You sent Me.”*

So, what we're looking at here is a chain of higher and higher purposes.

And this one isn't just for the apostles; it's for you and me. We're part of the group of *those who will believe in Me*.

Our faith is for the purpose that we may be one, for the higher purpose that we may be one in “Us,” (God) for the even higher purpose that the world (meaning all mankind) *may believe that You sent Me*.

In His final hours, Jesus announces His plan for world domination.

And we're part of that plan.

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While the highest purpose noted here is the faith of all mankind, the application takeaway is the centrality of unity.

This unity theme keeps coming back round on the guitar. Unity in the church is critical to its success (success meaning world domination).

That was working great in the first few centuries of Christianity. We took over the Roman empire, which some passages refer to as the world.

*And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered.* — Luke 2:1

Now, we're not unified and the plan for world domination is sputtering. Do you really think a non-believer looking at the church from the outside is going to notice what we're arguing about?

No. They're just going to notice that we're arguing. If something is so central to the faith that it takes priority over unity, then you're “arguing” with a non-believer.

Just stop.

5 John 17:24–26

*“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”*

We see another purpose construction in, *“that they may behold My glory,”* but the big news is in the word translated as “behold” (“theorosin” **θεωρωσιν**). The definitive Greek lexicon (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker) specifically mentions this use of theorosin in John 17:24 as meaning, “The spiritual perception of the one sent by God, which is possessed only to the believer.”

This is amazing. The purpose here is not world domination, or anything else so seemingly grand. Jesus wants His disciples to stay close, simply so that in witnessing His Passion, they will get a “front row seat” view of His glory.

And that front row seat will be one of supernatural perception.

But it’s still a request. Jesus is praying for this because it’s not automatic. The coming events will be intimidating, and the disciples will surely feel like fleeing.

But if they stick around, they will behold a glory rooted in love from *before the foundation of the world*.

Then the last two verses wrap up this grand, final, pre-cross prayer. First, Jesus reviews His mission accomplished—the disciples know that Jesus was sent by the Father.

Then we get one final, climactic purpose clause. Jesus has *declared to them Your name, and will declare it*, [for the purpose] *that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them*.

The final purpose Jesus gives for His ministry is that the Father’s love may be in the believers and that Jesus may be in them too.

That’s His vision for the church.

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We hear the word “love” so much in church that were almost desensitized to it, but love is the cornerstone of life in Christ.

And it’s God’s love in us that drives the whole system. Love started the whole thing. Love is why we don’t receive the condemnation we deserve.

Injecting the Father’s love into us, and injecting Christ too, is the purpose of Jesus declaring God’s name.

That’s the direct purpose of all evangelism.

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. What do you wish God would do differently?
2. Have you ever seen pain turn into joy?
3. In times of trial, how do you pray?
4. How can we tell things worth arguing about vs. things to let unity prevail on?
5. What is the right and the wrong way to do evangelism?

*Items for prayer:*