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"APPREHENDING ABBA"

"MY ABBA IS PROTECTIVE ... Powerfully Protective"

(John 17:11,14; John 8:44; John 10:10; James 4:7; Matthew 23; John 14:16)

Intro ... Would you open your Bibles to John chapter 17 – the most intimate conversation between Jesus and His Heavenly Abba ever recorded. It's in this popularly called "*High Priestly Prayer*" that Jesus revealed the definition of Eternal Life that we have been working with for the past nine weeks – verse three:

"Now this is Eternal Life – that they may know YOU, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom YOU have sent."

Eternal Life – True Christian Life – satisfying, fulfilling Life – Life (as we have said before) that has the scent of Heaven upon it – is experienced as God's Born-Again Children come to truly '*know him*' Jesus says.

That was Jesus' personal testimony ... He, as a human being, had come to truly '**KNOW GOD**' ... His Heavenly Abba.

That prayer statement of His in verse three tells us that such life-giving knowledge is possible for every single person who has been spiritually born into the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

And so, that's what we are seeking to do ... we are seeking to come to '*Know God*' truly and accurately and most importantly personally.

To use the title of this series of messages: we are seeking to '**Apprehend Abba**' even as Jesus did ...

"To capture the concept and the reality of an intimate, child-like relationship with our Abba Father in Heaven"

That, my friends, as we together are discovering is no small task for after all we are dealing with an Infinite Being – a Being whose revealed Attributes have been given most impressive theological designations like **Omnipotence** and **Omnipresence** and **Omniscience** the study of which have filled whole sections of theological libraries.

One could easily get the impression that such study is only for those who are incredibly knowledgeable about theological things and yet Jesus once said that the Kingdom of God is wide-open and the life of the Kingdom of God is even most perfectly suited for one who would approach it with the mindset (and the heart) of a child ... not a professor.

And so, with that encouragement and with the understanding that the Heavenly Father has sent to His Children a '*Companion*' (the Holy Spirit, Pneuma) whom Jesus said would "*Guide them into all truth*" ... We have begun and continue this endeavor.

So far, we have discovered and hopefully begun to experience the daily reality of *nine wonderful aspects* of our Heavenly Abba's nature.

Today's discovery grows out of ...

TODAY'S KEY SCRIPTURE ... John 17:11

*"Holy Father, **PROTECT** them ..."*

That short little prayer request of Jesus for his disciples raises **THREE KEY QUESTIONS.**

1. FROM WHAT DID JESUS' DISCIPLES NEED TO BE PROTECTED?

Jesus would not pray for his disciples' protection unless there were some real dangers that he knew could harm them – dangers from which the Father's intervention could save them.

In this great prayer Jesus identified two.

The **first** is identified in verse eleven:

* The Evil **ONE** ...

"Holy Father, protect them from the evil one."

(John 17:11)

Here Jesus is referring to the Devil or Satan - Lucifer, the fallen Arch-Angel – the leader of the heavenly rebellion that took place long before man was created on the earth. He is the one for whom God has prepared the Lake of Fire into which he will one day be cast. This is the one who deceived Eve in the Garden and led both Adam and Eve into sin. Jesus asked His Heavenly Father to protect his beloved disciples (and you and me as well) from this Evil One.

The **second** great danger from which the Disciples would need the Father's Protection is identified in verse fourteen:

* The Fallen **WORLD** ...
"They are not of the world any more than I am of the world."
(John 17:14)

Here Jesus is referred to that '**world**' of ideas and attitudes that characterize fallen men and woman.

Those worldly ideas and attitudes I once summarized with these three terms:

"Personalism: 'I am all that matters' ...

"Materialism: 'Stuff is all that matters' and

"Temporalism: 'This moment is all that matters.'

There is no room in the mind of a worldly person for the thought:
'God is all that matters.'

Surely, I don't need to point out how pervasive worldly thinking is.

And since '**They**' ... Jesus' Disciples and '**We**' ... His disciples today ... are not '**of the world**' any more than Jesus was '**of the world**' - those worldly ideas and the society that those ideas create can become most problematic.

Getting caught up in **worldly thinking** has derailed many a Christian over the years. Perhaps some in this room are caught up in it right now.

So those are the **two things** that Jesus identified in His High Priestly Prayer as '*Things from which His Disciples needed the Father's Protection*' ... **The Evil One and The Fallen World.**

Here now is the **Second Key Question** that arises from this Prayer Request of Jesus:

2. WHY DID JESUS' DISCIPLES NEED TO BE PROTECTED?

Here's the answer that Jesus gave on an earlier day. His Disciples needed to the Father's Protection from the Evil One **because:**

* The Evil One comes to deceive and ***DESTROY***
"There is no truth in him ... He comes to destroy."
(John 8:44 and John 10:10)

Lucifer, the Bible tells us, deceived one third of the angels in heaven before the world was even created. Then he deceived Adam and Eve and led them into an act of sinful rebellion that mirrored his own. He lied to them about the benefit of disobeying God – He destroyed the wonderful perfect fellowship that they had enjoyed with God.

One of Jesus' own disciples who heard him pray that prayer that night, Peter, would later write these words (1 Peter 5:8) ...

"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

Protection from the lies and the advances of the Devil is critical for all of God's still earth-based Children because he comes to deceive and destroy. **Question Part One** answered.

Now how about **Question Part Two?**

Why did Jesus' Disciples need to be protected from the Fallen World?

They needed to be protected from the Fallen World **because**:

* The Fallen World stands in opposition to God's **HOLINESS**
"The world has hated them"
(John 17:14)

This is the way it has always been. The god of this world – Satan himself – hates every born-again Child of God. Those who belong to this world – those who embrace and pursue its values - do also.

That's the reason way back in the beginning that Cain killed his brother Abel ... because Abel's sacrifice to God was acceptable and Cain's was not. (Story told in Genesis chapter four)

Cain, as one of the very first citizens of the fallen worldly system, hated his brother for his righteous action.

Card-carrying members of this Fallen World's System still do. They hate every reminder of God's Holy Standards.

They will seek to 'kill' ... professionally, economically, relationally, and even physically ... everyone who holds up those Holy Standards. We see examples of this all around us daily.

And now ... the most important of ***Today's Three Key Questions*** ...

3. HOW WOULD JESUS' DISCIPLES BE PROTECTED?

Indeed, what could they (what can we) rely upon for protection from the damage that the Evil One and the Fallen World would do to all who are Jesus' disciples?

Our answer is found in '*Apprehending*' something that Jesus knew about his Abba Father ... Something that we need to be sure we know. Jesus knew that ...

"OUR ABBA FATHER IS PROTECTIVE ... POWERFULLY PROTECTIVE."

He knew that His Disciples could be completely protected from the advances of Evil One and the influences of the Fallen World ...

* By The **POWER** of the Father's **NAME**

"Holy Father"

(John 17:11)

This is the only time in the entire prayer, this is the only time in the entire Gospel record where Jesus addressed his Heavenly Father in this way.

Jesus is letting us know that there is protective power in the Holiness of God for those who embrace it.

Perhaps that will be our next great insight to '*Apprehend!*'

*"**Holy Father,**" he prays,
"protect them by the power of Your Name."*

The implication here is that there is powerful protection in God's Holy Name ...

Those who identify themselves with the Father (like Jesus did) will experience the fullness of that protection.

Here's how Jesus half-brother James put it ...

*"Submit to God; (that is, put yourself under the protective power of His Holy Name) resist the devil and he will flee."
(James 4:7)*

The devil can abide neither God's Holiness nor those who have surrendered themselves to it.

Willfully submitting ourselves to a Holy God is guaranteed to remove Satan and his influence from our lives.

Now here's something really interesting.

Jesus Disciples were protected while Jesus was with them ...

* By the **PRESENCE** of **JESUS** Himself
"While I was with them, I protected them."
(John 17:12)

Think of that time when Peter spoke some 'devil influenced words' ...

"Get behind me, Satan" Jesus commanded
(Matthew 16:23)

Think of the time when Jesus confronted the religious leaders ...

*"Woe to you teachers of the law
and Pharisees, you hypocrites!"*
Matthew 23 ...7 times)

Only Jesus' own chosen twelve enjoyed that kind of personal protection!

Jesus knew that the protection He provided was ending because he was leaving to return to heaven, but it was absolutely necessary, so, he arranged for protection to be continued ...

* By The **PERSON** the Father sent to **COMPANION** them.
"I will ask the Father and He will send you another Companion."
(John 14:16)
*'Another who will protect you on the Father's Behalf
even as I have done.'*

Final Thot ...

"My Abba is Protective ... Powerfully Protective."
Neither the **DEVIL** nor the **WORLD** can destroy me
when I **SUBMIT** myself to Him!