



## John 17:1-5

# High Priestly Prayer of Jesus

What do you think God the Son would say to God the Father the night before He would offer Himself up as a sacrifice for the sin of the world?

Imagine with me for a moment what the divine communication between God the Father and God the Son must be like. I wonder what deep conversations must take place between the members of the Trinity. The communiqué between the Godhead must be too profound and unfathomable for us to comprehend. The LORD God said to Isaiah, For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways. . . For as the heavens are higher than the earth so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts (55:8-9).

Everything we know about God has been revealed to us through His self-revelation as recorded in the Old and New Testaments in the Bible. The final and complete revelation was in the person and work of Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:1-3).

God allows us in John 17 to listen in on God the Son talking to God the Father in the simplest words some of the most profound truths in the revelation of God to man.

We hear in these words an example of the divine communication that constantly passed between the Father and the Son while He was on the earth.

In simple sentences Jesus prays to the Father a prayer of consecration of Himself for the sacrifice at Calvary (vv. 1-5), for His disciples who are gathered with Him the night before His death (vv. 6-19), and for you and me who believe as a result of their witness (vv. 20-26).

A. T. Robertson, quoting Bernard notes these are the words of Jesus recorded from the tenacious memory of an old man recalling the greatest days of his life, aided by the Holy Spirit for this specific purpose (John 11:26; 16:13f).

When we open to John 17 we enter with our great high priest into the holiest of all sanctuaries. He takes us into the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High God. In these twenty-six verses we are on holy ground and it behooves us to sit in silence and ponder His words. Here are the words of the prayer of the God-man speaking to His Father before He sacrifices Himself for the sins of the world. The one who is full of grace and truth opens His heart and expresses it to His Father. What will He say? Will we be able to understand Him?

There is no vain self-glorification in this prayer of Jesus. His glory is in the cross. He lifts His eyes to heaven and prays being both the High Priest and the substitutionary sacrifice on the altar. He is both the Lamb of God that would lift up and carry away the sin of the world, and the one perfect priest who did not have to first make an offering for his own sin. Jesus Christ never experienced personal sin. He is the only person who could ever die in the place of another without having to die for his own sins. We could never do that because we are depraved sinners who are worthy of death because the wages of sin is death. ”

## **JESUS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FATHER**

Jesus begins His prayer with the word *Father*. The word reveals relationship as a child to its parent. It is the close relationship of fellowship and intimacy of the Father-Son. The I-Thou of the Old Testament did not know this kind of intimacy with God. Not even Moses had this kind of relationship with God.

Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, *Father*, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You . . . Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was (John 17:1, 5).

God stands in the relation of *Father* to our Lord as the *Head* and *Representative* of the holy family redeemed from among men, notes Pink. Jesus is a Son in a sense absolutely peculiar to Himself. It is a unique relationship shared by no other person.

In verses one and two Jesus uses the third person, calling Himself *Thy Son*, and the Son not merely *Me* and *I*! Jesus uses such language to indicate His deity and eternal relation to His Father (vv. 1, 2; 1:18). *Son* ” designates Him as God (1:14; Acts 3:15; 1 Cor. 2:8; Gal. 4:4; 1 Tim. 3:16). Jesus and the Father are in absolute harmony on all features of His great mission to redeem the world.

F. F. Bruce says, While this is His prayer of consecration in view of the impending sacrifice of the cross, yet in some ways it presupposes the presentation and acceptance of that sacrifice and becomes the prototype of the perpetual intercession in which, as His people’s ascended high priest, He is engaged on their behalf at the Father’s right hand (*John*, pp. 328-29).

The reformer John Knox lay on his deathbed and during the final days of his illness God sustained the old reformer with His grace and strength through the reading of this great chapter every day.

Martin Luther wrote, This is truly, beyond measure, a warm and hearty prayer. He opens the depths of His heart, both in reference to us and to His Father, and He pours them all out. It sounds so honest, so simple; it is so deep, so rich, so wide, no one can fathom it. ”

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Another reformer and friend of Luther, Melancthon said, There is no voice which has ever been heard, either in heaven or in earth, more exalted, more holy, more fruitful, more sublime, than the prayer offered up by the Son of God Himself. ”

R. C. H. Lenski said, This prayer lies on a plane that is so exalted that no disciple can join in its utterance. . . Its serenity, its majesty, and its authority befit only the heart and lips of Him who is the Son. Before this prayer all our prayers fade like tapers in the sun (*John*, p. 1114).

J. C. Ryle said this chapter is the most remarkable in the Bible. It stands alone, and there is nothing like it. ” It is as someone said, It is perhaps characterized truly as unequalled for depth and scope in all the Scriptures. ”

In this intimate prayer of Jesus we are let in on this deep penetrating talk going on in the Godhead. It is exalted, holy and sublime. It is God speaking to God. Jesus is the burning bush of the New Testament on the most holy ground in New Testament soil.

## **GLORIFY THE SON**

### ***The hour has arrived***

An idea repeated through out the Gospel of John beginning at 2:4 is, My hour has not come (7:6, 8, 30, 39; 8:20). Now Jesus prays out loud that the hour has arrived (12:23, 27; 13:1, 31-32; 16:32; 17:1). Even a little earlier as He contemplated the cross He said these words anticipating its soon arrival, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified (12:23). The hour not only has come, but it has come and stays with us. This is the reason for which Jesus came into the world (12:27).

The coming of this hour has to do with the Son being glorified by the Father (5:44). Jesus never sought the glory of man. How insignificant that is when God the Father is going to glorify Him by means of the cross. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men to Myself (12:32).

The whole ministry of Jesus led up to this moment. With the cross in full view Jesus prays the Father will glorify Him. The cross was the means of true glory. To glorify the Son is to glorify the Father.

Of course, the manner in which Jesus glorified the Father was by being obedient to the will of the Father. Lenski says, the entire activity of Jesus in His heavenly exaltation in making the glory of His Father shine forth in all His wondrous attributes before the eyes and hearts of men. The cross, the resurrection and ascension are acts that glorify Jesus.

Lenski adds, The Father is to exalt Jesus by investing His human nature with the unlimited use of the divine attributes in the glory of heaven (Phil. 2:9); and this He is to do in order to effect the purpose that the Son may make the glorious attributes of the Father shine out in all the world through the work of the Spirit and the gospel and in the church (p. 1116). The Father glorifies the Son in the Son's self; the Son glorifies the Father in the world. ”

The glory of God is manifest and demonstrated at the cross of Jesus. It is on the cross that His kingship is proclaimed (cf. 19:19); it is through the cross that He will discharge His Father's commission to Him to bless His people with eternal life (Bruce, p. 329).

The glory of God is linked to His attributes, His intrinsic worth or character. Thus, all that can be properly known of God is an expression of His glory, observes James Boice. As the incarnate Son of God Jesus revealed the essential characteristics of the Father. When the disciples beheld His glory, as in 2:11, they actually beheld His character, which was the character of God. . . if we have seen Jesus, we have seen the Father (p. 1248).

In John 1:1, 14, 18 the apostle John says, We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father full of grace and truth. The apostle Peter wrote, For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased (2 Peter 1:16-17).

### *Pre-incarnate glory of Jesus*

Jesus speaks of His per-incarnate glory in eternity past before He became flesh. Jesus possessed and manifested the same glory with God before He became flesh. The very essence of deity that Jesus possessed cannot be changed. He existed in the form of God. He was equal with God (Philippians 2:6). Jesus was and is essentially and unalterably God. That fact did not change when He took on in addition the form of a bondservant, being made in the likeness of men (v. 7).

The apostle Paul in Philippians 2:7 writes of the self-emptying of the outward visible manifestations of Jesus visible glory while in His flesh. Paul is careful to stress that Jesus did not empty Himself of His divine nature, or His essential attributes of deity. It was a self-emptying of His outward *visible* glory and not His deity. He limited only the *manifestation* of His glory that He demonstrated in heaven. He is God of very God. The self-emptying was the taking on of the form, or essential characteristics of a servant, and humbling Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death on a cross (v. 8). He looked like any other household servant of that day, yet He was fully human –fully God.

Jesus retained the essential attributes, unchangeable and unchanging essential nature of God. The essential nature of Jesus is the same as the essential nature of God. The essential form never alters and never changes. He is God.

Since that is true about Jesus then what does He mean when He says to the Father, And now, glorify Thou Me with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee, before the world was (John 17:5)? Is Jesus praying for the restoration of His essential attributes of deity? No, of course, not, that is impossible because His deity never changed. This glory was God's glory. However, Jesus did not manifest this glory during the days of His incarnation. He hid it behind the veil of His flesh. Jesus is going to glorify the Father in His outward visible glory as He did in eternity past. His present glory in heaven is even greater than in the past because He was obedient to the Father unto death. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name (Philippians 2:9). Every knee will bow to the name of Jesus, and every person will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (vv. 10-11).

It is obvious that this glory is the ultimate in praise, honor and glory renown that can ever be given. It is of His intrinsic worth or character. All that can be properly known of Yahweh, Jehovah or LORD is the expression of His glory. When we have seen Jesus, we have seen the Father. And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). The One who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him (v. 18).

F. F. Bruce says, The glory Jesus would receive from the Father would be the glory which He enjoyed in His presence before creation in that beginning in which the Word was eternally with the Father (Jn. 1:12). It

presence before creation in that beginning in which the Word was eternally with the Father (Jn. 1:12). It would inevitably have a new dimension which was absent from it before the world existed . . . the cross as the essential stage will now be shared with those who have believed in Him (*John*, p. 330).

Jesus is glorified when He receives the ultimate in praise or renown. He never sought the praise of men, like the Pharisees, but only of the Father (John 5:41-44).

The Father will glorify Jesus with true glory in the cross at Calvary the same way as in His pre-incarnate state. The apostle Paul reflected on this glory and wrote, Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father (Romans 6:4). Morris says at the cross Jesus was glorified with true glory, a continuous glory, and indeed identical, with the glory he had before the world was (p. 721).

### *God the Father is glorified in our salvation*

An idea that is dominant in this prayer is eternal life for all whom the Father has given the Son. Jesus prays in 17:3, This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ”

Eternal life consists in the knowledge of God and mediated through the revealer the Father has chosen and sent. This eternal life is a personal relationship with the one true supreme Sovereign of the universe. Lenski says, This is eternal life is equal to saying, This is what it means to have the gift of eternal life. This knowing is in the present tense and might be expressed by the infinitive to know you. Probably Jesus has in mind an ever-increasing knowledge, not something given in its completeness once and for all, writes Morris (p. 719).

To know Thee and to know Jesus, when the object is a person as here, means, to have intimate personal experience and nothing less. A true heart knowledge is the meaning. The only true God can be known in an intimate personal experience only by knowing Him whom He sent, Jesus Christ. ”To know here is to keep on knowing, says A. T. Robertson.

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12; cf. Rom. 10:9-10; John 14:6, 9).

The only way to know the true God is through the revelation He has made to Himself in His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. The Mediator is the only one who can know the true God. And there is no other Mediator. For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 2:5).

It is plain that it is appropriated through faith in Christ (John 6:40). Life is in the Son. The giving of eternal life to men is the outworking of the glory of which Christ speaks, notes Leon Morris. The authority is for the express purpose of conferring eternal life (3:35f; 10:28). ”

Jesus prays that the Father will glorify Him, and as a result of this glorification Jesus will glorify the Father. It is not a selfish prayer. Bless me Lord so that I will be a blessing to You. Father . . . Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify You (v. 1). The same train of thought is found in verse five, Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. ”

The Father is glorified by the perfect obedience of the Son in His death. Jesus said, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work (John 4:34). Everything He did was in conformity to the Father's work. Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees

the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner (5:19). I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me (5:30). Now He prays in anticipation of the completed work, I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do (17:4). As Jesus prays this high priestly prayer He looks on the next day of crucifixion as already completed. From the cross He will cry aloud, It is finished! (19:30).

This is the steady beat of the prayer of Jesus; I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do (17:4). The entire life of Christ had been one of obedience. Now the night before His death Jesus is so totally committed to it that He speaks of it as already accomplished (Bruce).

What Jesus has already done is revealed in verses 4-5. He amplifies His thought by describing the glory for which He makes request. Jesus glorified the Father on the earth by completing the work the Father gave Him to do. The work is the work of atonement for our sins which will glorify God. The crowning point of the work of Jesus is His atoning death for our sins and not only ours but all mankind. Our redemption involves a higher purpose, the glorification of God. Our redemption is viewed by Jesus as a loving gift to Him on the part of the Father.

I glorified You, indicates a completed task. Jesus has completed the assigned work thoroughly and has brought glory to the Father. The work Jesus completed was the work the Father had given Him to do (Heb. 10:7; Lk. 2:49; Jn. 4:34; 19:30). The initiative was with the Father.

### *Authority of Jesus*

Jesus Christ received authority over all mankind when He came to the earth to redeem men. Even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life (17:2; cf. vv. 6, 9).

The authority over all flesh is a Hebrew expression to denote all mankind as weak as opposed to the strength and eternity of God (Morris).

Lenski writes, According to His divine nature the Son already possessed this authority and could not be given what He already had by virtue of His deity. But as a man He could, indeed, and did, indeed, receive this gift. . . . During His humiliation Jesus had this authority, but did not exercise it save in a very limited degree. The humiliation was a brief, transient period, the prelude to the exaltation or glorification of the human nature when Jesus exercises to the full also according to His human nature the authority that came to it as the Father's gift in the assumption of the divine mission (*John*, pp. 1118-1119).

Jesus has the authority to give eternal life. The apostle John wrote, The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him (John 3:35-36). Jesus said, All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day (6:37-40). I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand (10:28). It is hard to miss the message unless you really want to. It is simple, plain and to the point. Jesus has authority to give eternal life to those whom the Father gave Him. Therefore, nothing shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:39).

Jesus exercised authority in bringing men life even as He hung on the cross. He spoke to the dying penitent thief saying, Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise (Luke 23:43).

But did you also note He has received authority to judge unbelievers? (cf. John 5:27-28; 12:48; Acts 17:31; John 6:39; Matt. 28:18; Dan. 7:14; John 3:35; 13:3; Matt. 11:27; Eph. 1:22; Heb. 2:8; 1 Cor. 15:27; Jn. 1:3). It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:26-31).

God did not have to save anyone. It is His sovereign grace that reaches down to us and draws us to Himself. Will you not respond to His pleading even now? He has the authority and power to break our rebellious will, and quicken our dead spirit so that we will respond to Him in faith.

The gift of eternal life is not indiscriminate. Jesus says that He gives life to all whom You have given Me. ” Note the repeated use of give in this chapter. What grace is in the Pauline Epistles, giving is in the Fourth Gospel, observes Abbott.

He also has the authority to send us out making disciples in all the world (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus Christ, as our Sovereign Savior has authority over all mankind to give salvation to all whom the Father has given Him. Thank God, because we were dead in our trespasses and sins and unable to come to Christ unless He first came to us giving us spiritual life (Eph. 2:1-5). If the Holy Spirit is pleading with you, please respond to Him now and receive God's free gift of eternal life. This is the very evidenced you are longing for because of His dealings with you. He raises the spiritually dead and gives life.

With His work completed Jesus anticipates the full restoration to the pre-incarnate glory and fellowship with the Father (1:1) that He enjoyed before His incarnation (v. 14). Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was (17:5). This is the actual conscious existence at the Father's side in heaven before the world was created. That is the way we will see Him in heaven (14:1-3).

### ***Jesus Christ brought glory to God the Father.***

Christ has glorified the Father in His person (Heb. 1:3). He glorified Him by His miracles (Matt. 9:8, etc.). He glorified Him by His words, constantly ascribing all praise to Him (Matt. 11:25, etc.). But above all He had glorified Him by His holy life (Pink, *John*, vol. iv, p. 69).

The last place men would look for the glory of God would be at the cross, a cruel place of execution. His work on earth is now completed. It is finished and now God can glorify Him. In His prayer Jesus is conscious that He has now completed the Father's work perfectly in every point.

The keys of heaven are in the hands of Christ; the salvation of every human soul is at His disposal (J. C. Ryle). Spiritual or eternal life consists in knowing, living on, having communion with and enjoying endless satisfaction in the Triune God through the one Mediator Jesus Christ (Pink).

Every time a sinner is saved God is glorified.

### **OUR GLORY IS IN THE CROSS OF JESUS**

Jesus Christ removed all the barriers to a relationship with the Father. We can now know Him in an intimate personal experience (17:3, 6, 8).

intimate personal experience (17:3, 6, 8).

The Father is glorified when we turn from our sins, and we put our faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior. Our glory in life is to believe on Christ and therefore glorify the LORD God in every thing we do. When we lift high the name of Jesus Christ we glorify the Father. When the Son is glorified in our lives the Father is glorified.

When we bow before the LORD God in these opening verses it is imperative that we plead for Him to enlarge the capacity of our soul for more of Him. We need an attitude of obedience to all we learn of Him and His ways. If you love Me, Jesus said, you will obey Me. Obedience, or a lack of it, is a love problem. If I love Him I will obey Him. How great my love for Him is measured by my obedience to Him. The Father was well pleased with the obedience of Jesus. Is He pleased with my obedience to Him? This prayer of Jesus gets to the heart of our love-obedience.

Are you one of the elect of God? Were you included in this prayer of Jesus? Jesus said, All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out (John 6:37). The answer to that question is answered by another question: have you *believed* on Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? If you have responded to His free grace, and have believed on Him alone for salvation, you should know that you are one who was given to Jesus before the foundation of the world.

The death of Jesus provided the objective and judicial basis whereby the elect would be saved. He gives eternal life to all whom the Father gave Him. Jesus went to the cross the next day knowing that His death would secure the salvation of all whom God had given Him (17:2, 6, 8, 11, 12; cf. Isa. 53:10-11). He had the satisfaction the night before His death of knowing that His substitutionary death would secure our salvation.

Jesus gives eternal life to everyone the Father has given Him. He is just in following His eternal plan of redemption whereby you and I agree or not. He is the Sovereign King. He shows mercy to whom He will, and He is showing mercy to you right now. Will you respond to His pleas?

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12-13).

Will you bow your head and ask Jesus Christ to be your personal Savior right now? For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16).

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Series: John 17:1-26

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