

## **The High Priestly Prayer of Christ**

**John 17:1-26**

### **Part 3**

We are presently examining what is commonly known as the high priestly prayer of Christ. A prayer that was prayed on the last night of Christ's earthly life and is recorded for us in **John 17:1-26**.

Though this prayer is difficult to subdivide, because it is essentially a unity, I am attempting to provide for you a way to track the movement of this prayer by asking the following question: Who did Christ pray for in His High priestly prayer?

First of all, as we have seen over the past two weeks Christ in John 17:1-5 prayed for Himself. And what was His specific request in **John 17:1**? He asked His Father to glorify Him in the hour that had now come upon Him. That was His specific request. And what was the reason for His request? According to **John 17:1** He asked His Father to glorify Him in the hour that had now come upon Him in order that He might glorify His Father. And how would His glorification glorify His Father? According to **John 17:2**, Christ's glorification would glorify His Father because Christ's glorification in the hour that had now come upon Him would allow His Father's eternal redemptive plan to move forward. Or in other words, if Christ were not glorified in the hour that had now come upon Him it would have been impossible for Him to give the gift of eternal life to those whom the Father had chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.

And what is this gift of eternal life that Christ's Father, according to His eternal redemptive plan, wanted His Son to give to those whom He had chosen? Eternal life, according to **John 17:3**, was not simply living forever or even living forever in heaven but rather enjoying a close personal relationship the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom He had sent. This of course is the essence of the gift that Christ provides to those, hopefully such as ourselves, who come to Him by faith and embrace Him as their Lord and Savior, and what a wonderful blessedness that is.

But even though this blessedness is a wonderful thing and hopefully we are reaping the benefits of it each and every day this is not the specific blessedness that Christ primarily had in mind when He asked His Father

glorify Him. I believe this became clear to last week when we examined **John 17:4,5**.

The primary blessedness that Christ had in mind when He asked his Father to glorify Him so that He in turn might glorify His Father was the blessedness that would come to Him and His Father after He successfully completed His earthly mission. And what was this specific blessedness that would come to both Him and His Father? The specific blessedness that He primarily had in His mind and that would come to Him and His Father was the renewal of the glorious heavenly fellowship He and His Father enjoyed together prior to His incarnation.

And it was this anticipation of this renewed glorious heavenly fellowship that provided Christ the proverbial light at the end of tunnel, which was able to fill Him with hope even while He hung on the cross.

We have now completed our examination of Christ's request on behalf of Himself in **John 17:1-5**. So whom else did Christ pray for? Christ in John 17:6-19 prayed for His disciples.

This is rather a lengthy section of verses so we will not be able to complete the examination of all the verses this morning but the verses that we will cover will help us to understand what motivated Christ to pray for His disciples. So what was that motivation?

What was the motivation for Christ to pray for His disciples (John 17:6-11)?  
The answer to this question is spelled out for us in **John 17:6-11**.

Christ's motivation in praying for His disciples in John 17:6-11 was love. Let me read this section of verses for you. **"I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, and they have kept Thy word. (7) Now they have come to know that everything Thou hast given Me is from Thee; (8) for the words which Thou gavest Me I have given to them; and they received them, and truly understood that I came forth from Thee, and they believed that Thou didst send Me. (9) I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine; (10) and all things that are Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I have been glorified in them."**

I would hope and pray that as we consider Christ's motivation in praying for His disciples, or as we consider Christ's love for His disciples that we will be able to see His love for what it truly is as an unconditional and unwavering love that is rooted and grounded in God's eternal decrees. This is my hope and this is my prayer.

So let us take a look first of all at **verse 6**. It begins with the words, **“I manifested Thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world.”**

So how does this fit with the immediate context? Christ, in **John 17:4**, had spoken of having completed the work that His Father had sent Him to do. This work certainly included the cross but that was not the only work that His Father had sent Him to do. Another work that His Father had sent Him to do was to manifest His name to certain men or to reveal Him to certain men so that they might come to know Him. And who were these men according to John 17:6?

The “men” that Christ referred to in John 17:6, to whom He manifested His Father's name while on earth, were His eleven disciples (John 17:12). This is clear from **John 17:12** when Christ, referring to the same group of men, said, **“While I was with them [in other words, with the men of verse 6], I was keeping them in Thy name which thou hast given Me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”**

So who were the men that Christ had manifested His Father's name to in **John 17:6**? The men that Christ had manifested His Father's name to in **John 17:6** were His eleven disciples.

Of course, we know that Christ's Father had manifested His Father's name or had revealed His Father to many more than just these eleven disciples, but because of the strategic importance of these eleven men, in terms of their very special future work, Christ therefore chose to highlight these eleven in this prayer on the last night of His life.

So what does Christ say to His Father about these men? Let us continue to read **John 17:6**. **“I manifested Thy name to the men [or in other words, the eleven] whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; [then He says,] Thine**

**they were, and Thou gavest them to Me.”** The eleven disciples belonged to Christ’s Father because His Father had chosen them in eternity past for salvation. So if they belonged to Christ’s Father by virtue of His choice of them in eternity past for salvation, why did He then give them to His Son? The reason why Christ’s Father chose to give the eleven disciples to His Son was so that His Son might save them through His atoning sacrifice.

These eleven disciples were rather simple men, not highly educated, not particularly powerful, not particularly influential certainly not rich, but from eternity past God the Father had chosen them and continually had them on His mind and in His heart, knowing that He was going to bring about something very special on their behalf.

But in order to bring about that very special something He needed, in love, to give them up to His Son. And why would He do this? He would do this so that His Son might, through His atoning death, be able give them the gift of eternal life.

So let me ask you a question. Was Christ successful in manifesting His Father to His disciples and providing them the gift of eternal life in accordance with His Father’s eternal plan?

Absolutely! How do we know this? Let us go back once again and read **John 17:6. “I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were, and Thou gavest them to Me, [and then what does it say?] and they have kept Thy word.”**

The proof that Christ had in fact manifested His Father to His eleven disciples and had given them the gift of eternal life was that His disciples had “kept Thy word” (John 17:6). Does this mean that they were obedient to each and every one of Christ’s commands? Certainly this was not the case. They so often, like our selves, messed up big time. So what does this mean when it says they had **“kept Thy word?”**

“Word” (LOGOS) is not plural but singular and therefore must be understood as referring to Christ and Christ’s message as a whole. This now helps us to understand what Christ meant when He in His prayer told His Father that His disciples had kept His word.

Christ's disciples could be described as having kept His Father's word because they unlike the world had responded by embracing Jesus as their Messiah.

And once they did this. They came to know something. The disciples, in committing themselves to Jesus as their Messiah, came to know that everything about Christ had its origination in His Father. Let me now read for you **John 17:7**. **“Now they have come to know that everything Thou hast given Me is from Thee.”** In other words, the eleven believed in Jesus from the start; but the longer they were in contact with Him, the more they came to realize that everything about Him was originated with His Father.

Now the means by which this realization came about is now stated by Christ in **John 17:8**. Let me now read this verse for you. **“For the words which Thou gavest Me I have given to them; and they received them, and truly understood that I came forth from Thee, and they believed that Thou didst send Me.”**

So how did Christ's disciples come to know that everything about Christ was from the Father? The disciples came to know that everything about Christ had its origination in His Father through the words (RHEMATA) that He spoke (John 17:8).

Did His disciples always understand what He spoke? No! In fact, very often they were confused by what He was saying. But even though they were confused at times by what He was saying, they came to accept what He was saying as having come from His Father. And this ultimately led them to conclude what?

Because the disciples came to know that everything about Christ had its origination in His Father, the disciples ultimately concluded with certainty that His Father had sent Him (John 17:8). We see this at the end of **verse 8** when Christ says, **“and they believed that Thou didst send Me.”**

These eleven disciples had been on the mind and in the heart of Christ's Father before the foundation of the world in eternity past. And they continued to be on His mind and in His heart as He provided Christ the words to speak to them throughout the time that Christ spent with them

while here on earth. And through these words they came to know that His Father had sent Him.

Hopefully this is the conclusion that each of us here this morning have come to as well as we have over time heard the words of Christ spoken to us through the Scriptures. Perhaps there have been times when we found the words of Christ difficult to understand. Perhaps there have been times when we have found the words of Christ difficult to accept. Perhaps there have been times when we found them difficult to apply. But hopefully through it all we have come to this rock solid conviction that Christ is in fact who He said He was and did what He said He did. And this confidence in Him unshakeable not matter what.

Were Christ's disciples loved by Christ's Father? Absolutely! He had always loved them and continued to express His love for them in not only sending His Son into this world to atone for sin but in sending His Son into this world to speak His words to them so that they might come to know with certainty, not only that Jesus was the Christ, but that He had been sent from His Father.

Jesus, after outlining for His Father the special relationship that He had always enjoyed with His disciples, now prepares Himself to specifically pray for them. But though Christ was now ready in John 17:9 to pray for His eleven disciples, He was not prepared to pray for the world.

Let me read for you **John 17:9. "I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine."**

The reason why Christ was prepared to pray for His disciples and not for the world was because the disciples belonged to His Father and knew the Father in contrast to the world who did not.

In other words, it would be futile to pray for the salvation of those whom His Father had not chosen before the foundation of the world for salvation since only those chosen by His Father and who by the choice belong to His Father according to His eternal decree could ever be saved.

So someone here in light of this might ask, does this mean that I could never pray for any unsaved person that Christ might bring them through Christ's gospel to salvation? Of course not! We do not know who the Lord has chosen or who He has not chosen. But we can be assured of this. All those whom the Father has chosen and given to His Son, that He in turn might manifest or reveal His Father to them through Him, will be saved whether we specifically pray for them or not.

Jesus will now make one more very important point. What belongs to the Father also belongs to the Son (John 17:10). Let me read for you **John 17:10. "And all things that are Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I have been glorified in them."** Christ in effect by making this statement declared that just like His Father all things belong to Him just as they belong to His Father.

And of course though all things do in fact belong to them there are eleven particular individuals that He particularly had in mind, and those particular individuals that He specifically had in mind would be His eleven disciples. And what does He say about them? He says that His Father and Himself have been glorified in them.

Why is this? Because they have and would in the future continue to faithfully adhere to Christ and would proclaim the message that needed to be heard, that He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, through thick and thin no matter what.

Isn't this what we want for ourselves? Isn't this what we desire for ourselves? That we through thick and thin will continue to adhere to Christ and testify to the fact of who He is and what He has done.

May God give us the grace to trust the words of Christ even when they are difficult to accept or to apply so as faithful disciples we might prove ourselves to among the chosen ones.