

**The High Priestly Prayer of Christ**

**John 17:3-5**

**Part Two**

We are presently examining what is commonly known as the high priestly prayer of Christ. This prayer 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 the prayer by looking at various people Christ prayed for as He addressed His Father. And we began to do that very thing last week by seeking to answer the question: Who did Christ pray for in His high priestly prayer?

So who was the first person that Christ prayed for? Christ in John 17:1-5 prayed for Himself. Let me read these verses for you. **“These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, ‘Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee, (2) even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind, that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life. (3) And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. (4) I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do. (5) And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.”** Jesus in these five verses prayed for one thing. Christ in John 17:1-5 prayed for His glorification. We saw this stated very clearly in the very first verse. What did He say? **“Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son.”**

In other words, Christ was asking His Father in His arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and coronation to put His true identity and what made Him so special on display. Or in other words, Christ was asking His Father in the hour that had now come upon Him to glorify Him.

And why did Christ want His Father to put Him on display in the midst of the hour that had now come upon Him? Why did Christ want His Father to glorify Him? Christ wanted his Father to glorify Him in the hour that had now come upon Him in order that He through His glorification might glorify His Father (John 17:1).

We know this because this is what He told His Father. Let me once again go back to **John 17:1** and see if this is not so. What did He say to His Father as He lifted His eyes toward heaven? This is what He said. **“Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that the Son may glorify Thee.”**

This is what Christ’s life was all about! This is what explained Him. And this is what our lives should be all about and this is what should explain us. And if we in fact live our lives in this way not only will the Lord be blessed but we also will be blessed!

If you want to know why Christ did what He did it was always about seeking to live His life in a manner pleasing to His Father; or in other words, it was always about seeking to live His life in such a way that His Father would be glorified.

So how would the glorification of Christ in the hour that had now come upon him glorify His Father? Christ explained this for us in **John 17:2**. Let me read this verse for you. **“Even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind, that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life.”**

Jesus’ glorification would glorify His Father because Christ’s glorification in the hour that had now come upon Him, in other words in His arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and coronation, made it possible for Him to extend the gift of life to all those that the Father had chosen for salvation regardless of whether or not they were Jews or non-Jews since His father in His incarnation had given Him authority over all mankind.

Or we could say it this way: The glorification of Christ would glorify His Father because the glorification of Christ made it possible for His Father’s redemptive plan to move forward (John 17:2). This is where we left off last week in our study and this morning we will once again pick up our study of Christ’s request to His Father on behalf of Himself in **John 17:1-5**.

Even though we may be continuing our study of Christ’s initial request He prayed to His Father on behalf of Himself, we should not think that we will simply be going over the same ground that we had last week. We will not be doing this, which you will see immediately as we go to the next verse.

This brings us to **John 17:3**. So let me read this verse for you. And this is what He said, “**And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.**” So what did Jesus in the midst of asking His Father to glorify Him actually do in this verse?

Christ, in John 17:3, explained the benefit that would be derived by those, who according to His Father’s redemptive plan, would receive from Him the gift of eternal life.

Now notice the wording that I chose. I did not say “a benefit” or “the top five benefits.” I said that Jesus explained “the benefit.” In other words, Jesus in **John 17:3** actually explained from His perspective the most important benefit derived by someone receiving the gift of eternal life.

But before we consider what Christ said let me ask you what you would say. Would you say that the most important benefit would be the opportunity to live forever and ever and ever or to enjoy life without end? Or would you say that the most important benefit would be the opportunity to live without the fear of judgment or eternal damnation. Or would you say that the most important benefit would be the opportunity to live a life filled with the hope of one day living in the glory of heaven? I don’t know what you would say but I do know what Christ said and this is what we will consider this morning as we begin to examine **John 17:3**.

But before we consider what He said, let us first of all consider what He did not say. The benefit derived by those receiving the gift of eternal life in John 17:3 is not about living forever (Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:7-14). In fact, the gift of eternal life has never been about people living on and on and on without end.

Certainly it is true that those who receive the gift of eternal life from Christ in accordance with His Father’s eternal redemptive plan will live forever but this would have been true even before they had received the gift of eternal life from Christ. Let me ask you this question. What happens to people who have not received from Christ the gift of eternal life when they physically die? Do they no longer exist? And of course the answer would have to be no!

What does **Hebrews 9:27** tell us? It tells us this: **“It is appointed unto man to die once and after this comes judgment.”** So if there is a judgment that is to take place sometime after a person physically dies, then certainly we would have to conclude that physical death does not end a person’s existence. They in fact must live on otherwise they would never be able to stand before God in judgment as indicated in **Hebrews 9:27**.

But how long will they live on? Perhaps the judgment itself that is spoken of in **Hebrews 9:27** will actually annihilate them and will finally bring their conscious life to an end but this is not so. Rather the Scriptures teach us that in this future judgment those who have rebelled against God and have turned their back on His Son will in fact be cast into the lack of fire to be tormented forever and ever. This not only includes Satan but it also includes all those who followed Satan in His rebellion against God; or in other words, it includes both fallen angels and unredeemed men.

So where do we see this in the Scriptures? We see this in **Revelation 20:7-14**. This section of Scripture begins with Satan’s final judgment in **verses 7-10** and finishes with the final judgment of unredeemed men at the great white throne judgment in **verses 11-14**.

So let me begin by reading to you John’s description of Satan’s judgment in **Revelation 20:7-10**. So what does it say? This is what it says. **“And when the thousand years are completed [or in other words, after the church age, the tribulation and the millennial reign of Christ have run their course then...], Satan will be released from His prison, (8) and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. (9) And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. (10) And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”**

These verses describe for us God’s final judgment upon Satan. And what was the result of this judgment? Was the result of God’s final judgment on Satan his annihilation? No! It was not his annihilation but rather it was eternal torment.

So after detailing for us the final judgment of Satan, John then goes on to the final judgment of unredeemed men in **Revelation 20:11-14**. So what do these verses say about the final judgment of unredeemed men? This is what it says. **“And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. (12) And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. (13) And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. (14) And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.”** Clearly in these verses we see God casting unredeemed men into the same lake of fire that God had cast Satan.

So let me ask you a question. Were these unredeemed individuals who were thrown into the lake of fire annihilated? No, if Satan a spiritual being was not annihilated when he was thrown into the lake of fire then neither will the spirits of unredeemed men be annihilated when they are thrown into the lake of fire, but rather they like Satan will live on perpetual and eternal torment.

So what is the point of what I have shared with you? The point is this. The benefit of receiving eternal life in John 17:3 could not be living forever since everyone is destined to live forever. Really the only question is where are we going to live; or in other words, are we going to live in heaven or hell.

Isn't this true? So perhaps this is the benefit that Christ is going to highlight for us in **John 17:3** and the great benefit of receiving the gift of eternal life according to the eternal redemptive plan of His Father. Though it is a benefit of receiving the gift of eternal life, this was not the benefit that Christ had in mind when He explained to His Father the benefit that would be derived by those who received the gift of eternal life.

So what is the benefit that highlighted in John 17:3? According to John 17:3 the direct benefit of receiving the gift of eternal life from Christ is that those who receive this gift not only come to know Christ but also come to know His father as well.

Let me read for you **John 17:3**. “**And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.**”

When Christ spoke of eternal life as knowing both Him and His Father, He was speaking in terms of a close personal relationship (Ephesians 1:3-6).

This is the great benefit of receiving the gift of eternal life. It is not simply living forever or even living forever in heaven. The great benefit of receiving the gift of eternal life is that we enter into a close personal relationship with Christ and with His Father.

What an amazing benefit? This morning when we woke up we could commune with Christ and His Father as Christ Himself communed with His Father while on earth. This morning as we sit here in this service we can commune with Christ and commune with His Father in the same way that Christ was able to commune with His Father while on this earth. And this will always be true for us if we have in fact by faith come to Christ and have received from Him the gift of eternal life.

When we come to Christ and by faith receive the gift of eternal life we are no longer Christ’s enemy and neither are we the enemy of His Father. Rather we are immediately adopted into God’s family and become sons and joint-heirs with Christ this is part and parcel with receiving the gift of eternal life.

Let me read for you **Ephesians 1:3-6**. “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, (4) just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love (5) He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, (6) to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.**”

Could we ever have received this knowledge or have entered into this close relationship with His Father without knowing Christ in the same way? Absolutely not! We cannot know the Father without knowing the Son because Christ is the way to the Father. This is implied in **Ephesians 1:3-6** and clearly stated in **John 14:6**. So what did Jesus tell His disciples in **John**

**14:6? “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”**

This is why Jesus in **John 17:3** does not simply say to His Father, **“And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God.”** But rather He goes on to say, **“and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.”**

So what is eternal life? Eternal life is knowing the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He sent or having a close personal relationship with both the Father and the Son.

Does this mean that everyone who has come to Christ and received from Him the gift of eternal life will always be aware of this close personal relationship? No, not necessarily!

Enjoying the personal closeness that comes with having received the gift of eternal life is dependent upon us seeking to live our lives to glorify God just as Christ did. And this hopefully is what we are striving to do not only because it is right but also because this is truly what will complete us.

We do not have to wait to get to heaven to walk arm and arm with our Lord and Savior. We can do it, in a spiritual sense, right now. And this hopefully what we are striving to do.

So what did Christ initially pray for in respect to Himself? He prayed for His glorification. And why did He pray for His glorification? He prayed for His glorification so that His Father might be glorified. And how would His Father be glorified in glorifying His Son. His Father would be glorified in glorifying His Son because the glorification of His Son was necessary in order for His eternal redemptive plan to move forward. And what was His eternal redemptive plan? The eternal redemptive plan of Christ’s Father was that through the glorification of His Son, His Son would be able to give the gift of eternal life to all those whom He had chosen before the foundation of the world to the praise of His glory. And what was this gift of life that His Son would give to those whom He had chosen before the foundation of the world? The gift of life was a close personal relationship with both Christ and His Father.

Christ will now once again ask His Father to glorify Him as He had done in **John 17:1** but this time He will give His petition a different emphasis. In other words, He will not be focusing on His cross but rather on His crown.

So now let me read for you **John 17:4-5**. What do these verses say? **“I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do. (5) And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.”** Christ had done His work on earth perfectly. He is assuming and rightfully so that everything He had done up to that point and everything that He would do on earth after this point would be done perfectly and for the right reason, which was to glorify His Father so He then moves back to where He began His prayer in **verse one** but only with a little different emphasis.

Christ in John 17:4-5 asked His Father, in light His part in carrying out His Father’s redemptive plan while on earth, to restore to Him the glory that He enjoyed with His Father prior to His incarnation (Philippians 2:3-11).

Throughout Christ’s ministry of suffering He longed to regain what He had voluntarily surrendered when He came into this world to die for sinners. He was now asking His Father that this former glory would be restored.

We all need a light at the end of the tunnel when going through difficult times. For Christ the light at the end of His tunnel was regaining His former glory. For us it is not regaining our former glory but rather entering into the glory that has been promised to us in Christ.

So how should we occupy ourselves while we await this future glory? We should occupy ourselves in the same way as Christ occupied Himself, which was to live life in such a way so that His Father might be glorified. And this needs to be our prayer.

May God give us the grace to faithfully live our lives in the same manner as Christ lived His life until that day when we enter our heavenly rest to the praise of His glory.