

The High Priestly Prayer of Christ

John 17:11-12

Part Four

Our church teaches that once a person makes a genuine profession of Christ in Christ and does in fact become a true disciple of Christ they will persevere in their faith and will ultimately be ushered into the presence of Christ in glory. And why would we believe such a thing? We believe this because the Scriptures in many different ways teach this. This morning we will consider one of those ways as we continue our study of the Gospel of John.

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 its movement by asking the following question: Who did Christ pray for in His high priestly prayer? And that is the question that we have already begun to answer. And what have we learned so far?

First of all, Christ in John 17:1-5 prayed for Himself. And what was His specific request concerning Himself? He asked His Father to glorify Him in the hour that had now come upon Him; or in other words, He asked His Father to glorify Him in all that events that involved Him that were about to take place, such as His arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and coronation. This was His specific request. And what was the reason for this specific request? He asked His Father to glorify Him in the hour that had now come upon Him in order that He in turn might glorify His Father. And how would His glorification in the hour that had now come upon Him glorify His Father according to **John 17:2**? Christ's glorification would glorify His Father, according to **John 17:2**, because Christ's glorification in the hour that had now come upon Him would allow His Father's eternal redemptive plan to move forward making it possible for Christ to give the gift of eternal life to all those His Father had chosen for salvation.

But even though Christ's prayer for His own personal glorification was primarily driven by His desire to see His Father glorified, He still much

desired His own glorification so that He might once again share the glory that He had shared with His Father before the world was. Christ made this very clear in **John 17:4-5**. So whom did Christ pray for first? He prayed for Himself and for His glorification.

So after praying for Himself and His glorification, whom did He pray for next? Christ in John 17:6-19 prayed for His eleven disciples. This is the section of Christ's high priestly prayer that we began studying last week.

And how did Christ begin this rather lengthy section of verses? He began by highlighting His motivation in praying for His disciples. And what was His motivation?

Christ's prayer on behalf of His eleven disciples was motivated by an unconditional love rooted in the eternal decrees of His Father (John 17:6-11). And where did we see this motivation spelled out for us by Christ? We saw it spelled out for us last week in **John 17:6-10**. So as a way of reminder let me once again read those verses for you. What do they say? **“I manifested Thy name to the men [in other words, the eleven] whom Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were [not by virtue of creation, but rather by God's eternal choice of them for salvation], 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 [Who? The eleven!]”** So clearly Christ has changed the focus of His high priestly prayer from Himself and for His glorification to His eleven disciples. And why did He do this; or in other words, what was His motivation in doing this? He did this because He loved them. And why did He love them? He loved them because His Father, based on His own eternal decree or choice of them in eternity past for salvation, had given them to Christ, which made it possible for Christ to reveal His Father and the words of His Father to His disciples in such a way that they not only had received His Father but had also kept the words of His Father. So this is where we left off.

But now we are ready to move on in our text from Christ's motivation in praying for His eleven disciples, which was love, to His specific request recorded for us in **John 17:11-16**. My hope as we begin to examine to request is that we will be once again reassured that if we have made a genuine procession of faith in Christ that we will most assuredly persevere and will ultimately ushered into the presence of Christ in glory. So what was Christ's requests on behalf of His disciples in **John 17:11-16**?

Christ's request on behalf of His eleven disciples in John 17:11-16 was that His Father would keep them in His name.

So how does Christ introduce His request? Let us look at the very first words of **John 17:11**. What did He say? Christ told His Father, "**And I am no more in the world.**" Obviously Christ was still in the world but here Jesus spoke to His Father as if He were not. He was able to do this because He in fact was certain that He would be glorified, as He had just prayed.

But this was not the only thing that He was certain of. He was also just as certain that after His glorification that His disciples would remain in this world. Let us continue to read the verse, "**And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world.**"

Was Jesus concerned about this? Was He concerned that after He returned to His Father that He would be leaving His disciples alone in this world? Of course He was concerned, which is the reason why the next words that we read in the verse are these words, "**and I come to Thee.**" This is a wonderful example for us to follow as well. Anytime that we are concerned about something we need, like Christ, to come before our heavenly Father in the time of our need just as Christ came before His Father in this particular time of need.

So how does Christ address His Father when He approached Him in prayer? He addressed Him as "**Holy Father.**" This particular form of address is quite unique. Certainly this is not how Christ typically addressed His Father, but in light of the request that He was about to make on behalf of His disciples it certainly was very appropriate.

So what was His request? Let us continue to read the verse. **“Holy Father, keep them [the eleven] in Thy name.”** This was His request, but what did it mean? First of all, we need to understand what Christ meant by “Thy name.”

When Christ referred to His Father’s “name” He was in essence referring to His Father’s person. And what did Christ want His Father to do for His disciples in respect to His name or His person?

When Christ asked His Father to keep His disciples “in His name,” or according to His person, He was asking His Father to keep His disciples loyal to Him as He Himself had revealed Him.

So let me ask you this question: How well had Christ revealed His Father? He had revealed His Father perfectly. Let me once again read for you **John 17:11** but this time I will read a little bit further. So what does it say? **“And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them (in other words, keep them loyal) in Thy name (in other words, according to thy person, and then it goes on to say), the name which Thou hast given Me.”**

So let me ask you again. How well had Christ revealed His Father’s name? He had revealed His Father’s name perfectly. And why was that?

No one could reveal the Father in the way that Christ could reveal the Father for the simple reason that His Father had given to Christ His name. And when had He given His name to Christ? He had given His name to Christ in eternity past when He joined Himself to Christ in such a way that to see Christ was to see His Father and to see His Father was to see Christ.

So what did Christ mean when He asked His father to keep His disciples in His name? When Christ asked His Father to keep His disciples in His name or according to His person He was asking His Father to keep His disciples loyal to Him to and to His name.

And why did He ask this of His Father on behalf of His disciples? Christ asked this so that His disciples might be one, even as He and His Father were one.

Let us continue to read **John 17:11** and see if this is not so but this time we will read the entire verse. **“And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves [the eleven] are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them [in other words keep them loyal] in Thy name [in other words, according to Thy person], the name [or the person] which thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are.”** So why did Christ pray that His Father might keep His disciples in His name? He prayed this prayer so that His disciples might be one even as He and His Father were one. So what did this mean?

When Jesus prayed for His disciples that they might be kept in His Father’s name so that they might be one even as He and His Father were one, He was not speaking of an ecclesiastical oneness as if there should be one mammoth denomination. Neither was He speaking of an ontological unity or a unity of essence, but rather He was speaking of a unity of passion, a passion for the name of His Father, which is inextricably, intertwined with keeping His Father’s name or remaining loyal to His Father as revealed in Christ.

Had Christ’s disciples already kept His Father’s name or manifested a loyalty to Christ’s Father as revealed in Christ even before this request by Christ? Absolutely! But He in light of His departure wanted that loyalty, among His disciples, to His Father’s name to continue. So what did Christ ask His Father to do on behalf of His disciples in light of His departure? Christ prayed for His eleven disciples to be kept in His Father’s name so that they like Christ and His Father might continue to be loyal to His Father’s name as revealed to them by Christ.

This continuation of care on behalf of Christ’s disciples so that they might continue to be loyal to His Father’s name is spelled out very clearly for us in the very next verse. Let me read for you **John 11:12**. **“While I was with them, I was keeping them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished.”**

So how had Christ’s eleven disciples been able to be loyal to His Father’s name as He Himself had revealed His father’s name to them? Christ was the one that made this possible because He had kept them.

But there is another person that He felt to mention but whom He did not pray for that He called the son of perdition.

Let us go on and read the verse. **“While I was with them, I was keeping them in Thy name which Thou hast given Me; and I guarded them, and not one of them perished [and then what did he say?] but the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled.”**

There is however one very notable exception and who was that? The one disciple who had not remained loyal to Christ’s perfect self-disclosure of His Father, who in fact had never responded to Christ perfect disclosure, was Judas, the son of perdition. And what did Christ mean by this particularly phrase?

The word “perdition” (APOLEIA) is often rendered “destruction,” with reference to final damnation (Matthew 7:13; Romans 9:22; Revelation 17:8,11).

Just because Judas was the son of perdition or damnation did not mean that he did not labor with Judas. He had labored with Judas just as He had labored with the Jews in respect to seeking to reveal His Father to them. In fact, He continued to persist in His labors on behalf of Judas even to the very last, but as was the case with the Jews, Jesus knew that Judas was not His own; or in other words, He knew that Judas had not responded to His perfect disclosure of His Father in the same way as His other eleven disciples had done. For Judas, his response to Christ and His perfect manifestation of His Father was simply an academic response that failed to produce a loyal attachment either to Himself or His Father in contrast to the response of Christ’s other eleven disciples.

Certainly Judas had at least initially believed at least on a purely academic level but even then He was the son of perdition or the son or product of eternal damnation.

In other words, Judas was not given this title because he went to perdition. Actually the reverse is true. By being the son of perdition he went to perdition which is very consistent with the statement by Luke in **Acts 1:25** when He tells us, referring to Judas, that he turned away or fell away in order to go to his own place. Had Christ failed to keep Judas? No! He had never had Judas.

This certainly, according to **John 17:12**, was not an accident. Judas' rejection of Christ's perfect manifestation of His Father had been prefigured by Ahithopel in Psalms 41:9.

Christ's appointed hour was now upon Christ. God's redemptive plan was moving forward and unfortunately for Judas he was a necessary part of that plan as recorded in **Psalms 41:9** over a 1000 years before Judas' rejection of Christ.

So where are we this morning? Can we be numbered with the eleven disciples of Christ whom Christ had guarded and kept in His Father's name, or are we more like Judas?

This all depends upon how we have responded to what Christ has revealed to us about His Father. If we respond to what Christ has revealed about His Father in His Word simply in an academic way then we would be more like Judas, but if we respond to what Christ has revealed to us about His Father by becoming loyal to His Father as He has in fact perfectly revealed in His Word then we certainly would be more like Christ's eleven disciples.

May God give us the grace to live our lives in such a way that we may prove by the way we are living that we are in fact loyal to Christ's Father, as He has been perfectly manifested to us by Christ