



G R A C E

REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

SOLI ♦ DEO ♦ GLORIA

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, Part 2

John 17

July 2, 2006

BACKGROUND / REVIEW

- ⇒ This is the third prayer of Jesus in the Gospel of John. The others are: (1) at the tomb of Lazarus (11:41-42); and (2) after the Greeks seek Jesus in John 12:27-28.
- ⇒ This third and final prayer of Jesus in the Gospel of John is often referred to, appropriately, as the “High Priestly Prayer.” The reason for this is that Jesus performs to role of a mediator, the primary priestly task, praying for Himself and those He came to save.
- ⇒ This prayer can be broken up into three primary sections:
 - * Jesus prays for Himself (verses 1-5)
 - * Jesus prays for His disciples (verses 6-19)
 - * Jesus prays for the Church (verses 20-26)
- ⇒ This prayer of Jesus is one of those rare places in Scripture where we, as contemporary readers, are given the opportunity to observe the intimacy between the Father and the Son. This prayer further underscores the **distinction** (Jesus prays *to* the Father), yet **equality** (Verse 10), between the persons of the Father and the Son.
- ⇒ As we examine this prayer of Jesus further, there are four primary points that we should observe:

- I. **The Basis of Christ's Prayer**
- II. **The Purpose of Christ's Prayer**
- III. **The Object of Christ's Prayer (For whom does He pray?)**
- IV. **The Result / Outcome of Christ's Prayer**

I. The Basis of Christ's Prayer

- In short, the basis of Christ's Intercessory High Priestly prayer is **His finished work – ALL He accomplished.**
 - Verse 4: "***I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You gave Me to do.***"
 - When Jesus prays, 'having accomplished the work which you have given Me to do,' He is looking, not only backwards at His work during His life, but forward to the crucifixion.
 - When speaking of the atonement, most Christians think exclusively of the Cross. However, the atonement was accomplished in the **entire work of Christ** – His incarnation, life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. He had to accomplish **all the work the Father had given Him.**
 - Verse 1: "Father, ***the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.***"
 - Jesus recognizes that His 'hour' has come – that is the 'hour' of His crucifixion.
 - The Cross is the place where the Father is glorified in the Son – that is the glorification of the Son glorifies the Father. The reason for this is that on the Cross of Calvary, the Father displays His supreme hatred toward sin and the zeal He has for His own glory (through His **wrath**). But it also the Father's **love** for His people that compels Him to pour out His wrath on His Son. [Certainly it is the Son's love for the Father AND His sheep that compels Him to perfectly obey the will of the Father to the point of death on a cross]. Further, only the Son, fully God and fully man, could bear the wrath of the Father. Any being less than fully God would never be able to accomplish this; no being less than fully man would be able to be our representative.
 - Verse 2: "even as ***You gave Him [the Son] authority over all flesh...***"
 - Verse 5: "Father, ***glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.***"
 - Verse 10: "and all things that are Mine are Yours, and ***Yours are Mine***; and I have been glorified in them."
 - Verses 11: "that they may be one even as ***We are*** [one]."
 - Although the basis of Christ's intercession was His accomplished work – perfectly in obedience to the Father's will – we must also not forget, as

revealed in this prayer, that Jesus Christ, as the eternal Son of God, had (1) authority over all flesh; and (2) as one in essence with the Father, He shared the divine glory with the Father from eternity past, prior to His incarnation.

II. The Purpose of Christ's Prayer

- In one word, the purpose of Christ's High Priestly prayer here in John 17 is **intercession**.

This is why this passage is so pivotal – it provides that 'link' between Jesus' **ministry** as the **Incarnate Messiah** and His role as **mediator** as the **exalted, reigning King – the eternal Son of God**.

Once again, as the context of John 17 bears out, Jesus prays as Mediator - with His finished work in mind – His **finished work in both His life and His obedient death on the Cross** [the Basis of His Prayer] –

* This is crucial to properly interpreting the words of Jesus in this chapter. *

- Verse 9: “***I ask on their behalf***, I do not ask on behalf of the world,”
- Verse 13: “But now ***I come to You...***”
- Verses 15: “***I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but*** to keep them from the evil one.”
- Verse 20: “***I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for*** those also who believe in Me through their word.”
- Verse 24: “***Father, I desire that they*** also, whom You have given Me...”
- As the fulfillment of the Law and the entire Old Testament, as well as our perfect Savior, Jesus Christ now possesses the three-fold office of Prophet, Priest, and King.
- However, in this passage, in this context, Jesus is performing, specifically, the intercessory work of a Priest – indeed, a perfect High Priest.
 - ⇒ Psalm 110:4: The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’

* Quoted in Hebrews 5:5-6 [and Hebrews 7:17]: “So also Christ did not glorify Himself so as to become a high priest, but He who said to Him,

‘You are My Son,
Today I have begotten You’;
Just as He says also in another passage,
‘You are a priest forever

According to the order of Melchizedek.’

- ⇒ Hebrews 3:1
- ⇒ Hebrews 4:14-15: “Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.”
- ⇒ Hebrews 6:20
- ⇒ Hebrews 7:26
- ⇒ Hebrews 8:1: “Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,”

□ As our perfect High Priest, Jesus Christ:

1. **Offered Himself up to the Father as the perfect sacrifice to satisfy God’s divine wrath and justice and to reconcile God’s people – the Church – to Himself.**

- Romans 3:26: “for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”
- Hebrews 2:17: “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.”
- Hebrews 9:14, 28: “how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”

“so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many...”

2. **He continues to make intercession for all of God’s people.**

- John 17:6-24
- Hebrews 7:23-25: “The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”
- Hebrews 9:24: “For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;”

III. The Object of Christ's Prayer (For whom does He pray?)

- Verse 2: “that *to all whom You have given Him [the Son]*, He may give eternal life.”
 - It is clear, here in Verse 2, that “all whom You have given Him” are all believers from all time, to include the disciples.
- Verse 6: “*they were Yours* and *You gave them to Me*, and they have kept Your word.”
 - In Verse 6, Jesus shifts the focus of His prayer to the disciples; however, He acknowledges that, just as in Verse 2, the disciples [like all other believers] are **given to Him by the Father**.
 - Notice, also, in Verse 12, that Jesus says that ‘not one of them perished **but the son of perdition**.’ The **precision of the language** here is very important. Jesus is being VERY precise, VERY specific, in His language: BOTH who He IS praying for and who He is NOT praying for. This is, probably, the most clear in Verse 9:
- Verse 9: “*I ask on their behalf; I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours;*”
 - In Verse 9, Jesus gives the clearest indication as to who He is praying for. The first phrase, “I ask on their behalf,” most certainly refers to His disciples. But, then, Jesus says who He is NOT praying for: the world. Then, He says, “but of those whom You have given Me” [repeating the verbiage from Verse 2 where, clearly, Jesus is referring to ALL believers]. Finally, Jesus concludes His reason: **for they are Yours**. Since the Father chose all believers in Christ before the foundation of the world, and since Jesus is functionally subordinate to the Father, Jesus acknowledges this truth. In other words, Jesus is, in this prayer, praying for ALL THE FATHER HAS GIVEN HIM – and, He is praying for NONE that the Father has NOT given Him.
- Verse 20: “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, *but for those also who believe in Me through their word;*”
 - Jesus, now, makes it clear that His intercessory prayer is not limited to only the first century disciples, but “for those also who believe in Me through their word.” Of course, these are also given to Him by the Father.
- Verse 24: “Father, I desire that *they also, whom You have given Me*, be with Me where I am...”
 - Jesus, then, makes it clear that He intercedes for the church **also**, acknowledging that, like the disciples, they were given to Him by the Father.

- NOTE: Even those who are not Reformed in their soteriology admit that, in this Chapter, Jesus only prays for His people.

In his book, *Chosen But Free*, Norman Geisler (a non-Reformed theologian) writes:

“Several important things should be noted in response to this. First, the fact that Christ only prayed for the elect in this passage does not in itself prove that He never prayed for the non-elect at any time. If, as extreme Calvinists admit, Jesus as a man could have had negative answers to His prayers, then He could have prayed for some people who were not elect, even if it is not recorded in Scripture. Many things Jesus did are not recorded (John 21:25).”

However, in response to this assertion by Geisler, James White wrote, in his book *A Potter's Freedom*:

Such a response [that Jesus could have prayed for the non-elect in an ‘unrecorded’ prayer and received a negative answer to those prayers by the] completely misses the reason the passage is cited by Reformed exegetes. The context of John 17:9 is *the Lord's High Priestly prayer*. It is pure misdirection to even introduce the idea of prayers receiving negative answers: *is it [Geisler's] assertion that the Father will give a negative answer to the Son's intercession for His people? ...* The fact remains that when praying as our High Priest *specifically* about the salvation of the elect Christ *excludes* those who are *not* His.

IV. The Result / Outcome of Christ's Prayer

- J.C. Ryle wrote concerning Christ intercessory work in John 17: “This special intercession of the Lord Jesus is one grand secret of the believer's safety. He is daily watched, and thought for, and provided for with unfailing care, by One whose eye never slumbers and never sleeps. Jesus is ‘able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him, because He ever liveth to make intercession for them’ (Hebrews 7:25).”
 - **Eternal Life**
 - Verse 2: “...that to all whom You have given Him [the Son], He may give *eternal life*...”
 - **Protection / Preservation**
 - Verse 11: “...*keep them in Your name*...”
 - Verse 15: “...*keep them from the evil one*.”
 - **Fullness of Joy**
 - Verse 13: “...*that they may have My joy made full in themselves*.”
 - **Sanctification**
 - Verse 17: “*Sanctify them in the truth*...”
 - **Unity**
 - Verse 22, 23: “...*that they may be one, just as We are one*;”
 - Verse 23: “I in them and You in Me, *that they may be perfected in unity*...”