

Session 5

February 19, 2023

DOES IT HONOR GOD?

John 17:1-9

Because of its intercessory nature, John 17 is known as Christ's *High Priestly Prayer*. It is the longest prayer recorded by Jesus in the gospels and is filled with rich personal insights into the trinitarian fellowship, the ministry of Jesus, and implications for Christianity's future. The prayer is intensely *personal*, with the pronouns "I" (Jesus) and "You" (God the Father) most prominent. But because of its intercessory nature, "them" (His followers) is also emphasized. The prayer is also *complex*, but I have outlined this week's text in a simple way by looking at Jesus' focus on time: praying for the present; reflecting on the past; looking to the future.

Jesus and the present (vv. 1-3). Jesus and His disciples had just left the upper room (see John 14: 31). The entire evening had been a discussion of the pending events that awaited. His betrayal was about to take place, and His arrest was imminent. Jesus had done His best to prepare the twelve for the atrocities that the morning would bring. He had assured them that all of it was part of the plan; that no one took His life from Him, but rather He would lay it down voluntarily and sacrificially (John 10:18). After taking care of His disciples, He turned His attention to the Father. In verse 1, the theme is *glorification*. While the request that He himself might be glorified seems a bit selfish, the context is quite selfless. Jesus is looking to the cross. "The hour has come" indicates not only Christ's willingness to die, but suggests that His entire human journey will culminate in the events of that Passion weekend. The theme of verse 2 is *sovereignty*. Authority to save was given to Christ as *Messiah*, God's anointed One. Authority "over all flesh" is general and universal, while "to all given" to Him is individual and elective. The theme of verse 3 is *eternity*. Eternal life is predicated on *intimate acceptance* of both Christ as Messiah, and God the Father, the author of salvation. For reflection: *Look up John 3:16. As you dissect this favorite verse, reflect on the role of both God the Father and Christ the Son in our salvation.*

Jesus and the past (vv. 4-5). We pastors and teachers often deal with the question of *man's existence and purpose* from a philosophical perspective rather than a theological perspective. For this reason, we need to be careful how we answer it. Sometimes we might insinuate that God created mankind because He was lonely, or somehow "needed us" for fellowship. These verses remind us that the eternal fellowship within the Trinity was perfect long before Adam and Eve were created and will be for all eternity. Simply put, God doesn't need us...we need Him! Here, Jesus voices His longing to be fully and completely in fellowship with the godhead just as He was before the world—and the sin that stained it—began. For reflection: *The Westminster Catechism (dated around 1650) states, "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever." Do you agree with that statement? Why or why not?*

Jesus and the future (vv. 6-9). Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the High Priestly Prayer is the passionate intercession Jesus offered for His followers, both *present with Him* (in these verses) and those *who would come* (see v. 20). As such, in a very real way, Jesus was praying for us! In these verses, several key characteristics of Christ's followers are highlighted. Notice God's ownership of them (vv. 6, 9); their understanding of Christ's deity (vv. 7-8); and their

knowledge that came through the word (v. 8). Throughout the prayer, there is a clear passing of what I call “the gospel responsibility.” God sent Christ; Christ equipped the disciples; the disciples equipped the church; and we (the church) are commissioned to reach the world. Hence, while Jesus spoke of His *past* with the Father and His *present* sacrifice, His prayer for the twelve focused on the continuation of His ministry into the *future*. For reflection: *How effective do think the church is at carrying out its task? What is your own congregation doing to insure our “gospel responsibility” is taken seriously?*