

John 17: The Nature and Completed Purpose of Jesus Christ

A narrative reflection on Jesus' High Priestly Prayer

Introduction

John 17 records one of the most sacred moments in the Gospel of John: Jesus Christ lifting His eyes to the Father and praying before His betrayal, suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection. This chapter is often called Jesus' High Priestly Prayer because He stands before the Father as the intercessor for His people. In this prayer, Jesus reveals His divine nature, His eternal relationship with the Father, His authority to give eternal life, His mission to reveal God, and His completed purpose on earth. John 17 does not present Jesus merely as a teacher facing death; it presents Him as the eternal Son who knowingly completes the work the Father gave Him to do.

Body

1. Jesus Christ Is the Eternal Son Who Shares Glory with the Father

John 17 begins with Jesus saying, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You" (John 17:1). These words reveal that Jesus understands His death not as a tragic accident, but as the appointed hour of divine purpose. The "hour" points to the cross, where the Son would display the love, justice, holiness, and saving power of God.

Jesus then says, "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5). This statement reveals the preexistence and deity of Christ. Jesus did not begin His existence in Bethlehem. Before creation, before time, and before the world existed, He shared glory with the Father. John 17 therefore presents Jesus as eternal, divine, and one who possesses glory with God Himself.

In this prayer, the nature of Jesus Christ is revealed as both distinct from the Father and united with the Father in divine glory. He speaks to the Father, yet He also claims the glory that belongs in God's own presence. This shows that Jesus is not merely a prophet sent by God; He is the eternal Son who came from the Father and returns to the Father.

2. Jesus Christ Has Authority to Give Eternal Life

In John 17:2, Jesus says that the Father has given Him “authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.” This reveals that Jesus possesses divine authority over humanity. Eternal life is not presented as something people earn by religious effort; it is a gift granted through the Son by the will of the Father.

Jesus defines eternal life in John 17:3: “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” Eternal life is more than endless existence. It is a living relationship with God through Jesus Christ. To know the Father truly, one must also know the Son whom the Father sent. This reveals that Jesus is central to salvation and to the knowledge of God.

The purpose Jesus completed includes making eternal life available through His obedience, sacrifice, and revelation of the Father. His mission was not simply to inspire moral behavior, but to bring people into saving knowledge of God. John 17 shows Jesus as the mediator of eternal life, the One through whom sinners may know the only true God.

3. Jesus Christ Revealed the Father to His Disciples

Jesus says in John 17:6, “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world.” In biblical language, to reveal God’s name means to make known His character, nature, and truth. Jesus revealed the Father through His words, His works, His compassion, His holiness, and His obedience.

In John 17:8, Jesus says, “For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them.” This shows that Jesus did not speak independently from the Father. His teaching came from God, and His disciples came to understand that He had come from the Father and was sent by the Father. Jesus completed the purpose of revealing God clearly and faithfully to those entrusted to Him.

4. Jesus Christ Is the Intercessor and Protector of His People

John 17 also reveals Jesus as the loving intercessor. He says, “I pray for them” (John 17:9). He prays specifically for those the Father has given Him, showing His personal care for His disciples. He does not abandon them as He approaches the cross; instead, He brings them before the Father.

Jesus asks, “Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are” (John 17:11). This request reveals both His concern for their spiritual preservation and His desire for their unity. Jesus knows that His followers will remain in a hostile world, so He prays for their protection, not their removal. In John 17:15,

He says, “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.”

This shows that the purpose Jesus completed was not only to save individuals, but also to form and preserve a people for God. His followers are kept by the Father, guarded from the evil one, and called to live in unity that reflects the unity of the Father and the Son.

5. Jesus Christ Sanctifies His People in Truth

In John 17:17, Jesus prays, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” To sanctify means to set apart for God’s holy purpose. Jesus asks the Father to make His disciples holy through the truth of His word. This reveals that the work of Christ includes transforming His people, not merely rescuing them from judgment.

Jesus continues, “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world” (John 17:18). The disciples are not saved in order to withdraw from the world, but to be sent into it with the message of Christ. Jesus then says, “And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth” (John 17:19). His self-consecration points toward the cross, where He fully gives Himself to the Father’s saving will.

6. Jesus Christ Completed the Work Given by the Father

One of the clearest statements of completion appears in John 17:4: “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” Though the cross still lies ahead historically, Jesus speaks with certainty because His obedience is complete and the hour of sacrifice has arrived. His life has perfectly revealed the Father, His teaching has made known God’s truth, and His coming death will accomplish redemption.

The work Jesus completed includes glorifying the Father, revealing God’s name, giving the Father’s words, preserving His disciples, consecrating Himself for their salvation, and preparing a people who will continue His mission. John 17 shows that Jesus’ purpose was not accidental or partial. He came with a mission from the Father, and He completed it in perfect obedience.

7. Jesus Christ Prays for All Future Believers

Jesus’ prayer expands beyond the disciples who were with Him that night. In John 17:20, He says, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word.” This means that Jesus prayed for all future believers, including every person who would come to faith through the apostolic witness.

His central request is unity: “that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You” (John 17:21). This unity is not merely organizational or social; it is spiritual unity rooted

in the shared life of God. Jesus says this unity has a missionary purpose: “that the world may believe that You sent Me” (John 17:21). The unity of believers is meant to bear witness to the truth that Jesus was sent by the Father.

In John 17:24, Jesus prays, “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.” This reveals the final purpose of Christ’s work: that His people would be brought into His presence and behold His glory forever. Jesus does not merely save His people from sin; He saves them for communion with Himself.

Conclusion

John 17 reveals Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God, glorious with the Father before the world existed, sent into the world with divine authority to give eternal life. It reveals Him as the faithful revealer of the Father, the intercessor for His people, the protector of His disciples, the sanctifier of believers, and the One who completes the Father’s saving purpose. His mission was to glorify the Father by revealing Him, giving eternal life, preserving His people, consecrating Himself for them, and uniting all believers in love and truth.

The chapter also shows that Jesus completed His purpose with perfect obedience. He came from the Father, lived to reveal the Father, prayed for those given to Him by the Father, and moved toward the cross with confidence that the Father’s work would be fulfilled. John 17 invites believers to see Christ not only as Savior, but as the eternal Son, High Priest, and victorious Lord whose completed work brings His people into the knowledge, love, unity, and glory of God.