

Jesus Christ Mediates for the Elect

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Jesus Christ prayed for the elect, the ones the Father gave Him. All the elect are the Father's by covenant relationship. Our Lord's high priestly prayer is recorded in John 17. The first eight verses are introductory to His prayer. Christ's prayer was heard and answered (John 11:42; Heb. 5:7). He was always in the will of God. Christ's pleading included the following: (1) the circumstance the hour has come (v. 1), (2) His relationship the Father (v. 1), (3) His commission to give eternal life to the ones God has given Him (v. 2), (4) His authority God has given Him authority, the nature of which is to rule (v. 2), (5) His devotion to glorify God in fulfilling His will and purpose (v. 4), (6) His finished work finished the work the Father gave Him to do (v. 4), (7) His glory the glory He was having with the Father before the world began (v. 5), and (8) His perfect obedience manifested God's name to the elect and gave them the words that God had given Him (vv. 6-8).

This chapter (John 17) excels all the chapters of the Bible in doctrinal content. The words therein were spoken by our Lord as though His death and resurrection were already accomplished. This is a foretaste of the holy of holies, the place where our high Priest is now interceding for His own. The characteristic timelessness stands out as the Lord Jesus anticipated His age long intercession in glory. The climax to our Lord's earthly life was reached. He no longer spoke "to" His disciples, but He spoke "for" them.

Seven things that have been given to Jesus Christ as Mediator are recorded in John 17(1) He has been given a people: "...as many as thou hast given him" (v. 2). (2) He has been given eternal life for the purpose of communicating it to those whom the Father gave to Him in the covenant of redemption: "thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (v. 2). (3) He has been given power over all flesh of mankind in general and the corrupt principle of man in particular: "...thou hast given him power over all flesh..." (v. 2). (4) He

was given a work to do, and He has finished the work the Father gave Him to perform: "...I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (v. 4). (5) The Father's name has been given to Jesus Christ that He might manifest it to those whom the Father gave to Him: "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world..." (v. 6). (6) He was given words that He might give them to His people: "For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me..." (v. 8). (7) Glory was given to Him that He might give it to His own: "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them..." (v. 22). These seven things were given to Jesus Christ as Mediator that He might communicate them to His people.

This prayer in John 17 is the only recorded prayer of our Lord. Jesus Christ is God, and God cannot pray to God. Jesus Christ did not pray in the capacity of God absolutely considered. He prayed as Mediator, Representative of the elect. Christ's prayer is as applicable for Christians today as it was to the disciples when the Lord uttered the words. Scripture records many instances where He went aside to pray. For instance, He went into the garden of Gethsemane to pray. But those prayers are not recorded.

The Lord Jesus prayed this prayer in John 17, but you will not find anywhere in the Scriptures that He continues to pray at the right hand of the Father. The Biblical language is that He is interceding for us at the right hand of the Father. He prayed in His humiliation as Mediator. He prayed in the capacity of a Mediator who had humbled Himself, had taken upon Himself the form of a servant, and would be obedient to death. This speaks of condescension. He is Mediator now, but He is the exalted Mediator, not the humble Mediator walking among the sons of men. He intercedes for us because He is our Mediator.

It is important to observe that the Greek verbs used in our Lord's prayer were all in the present tense. He even spoke of His death as having already been accomplished (v. 4). At the time He prayed He had not actually died; but from the standpoint of God, it was already a finished act. In His Mediatorial character, He continues to intercede for His own. His impeccable

nature has been glorified; therefore, He sits at the right hand of the Father making intercession for His elect.

The reverential desire of the Lord Jesus was manifested in that He lifted up His eyes to heaven. As Mediator on earth, He was in subjection to the Father; and as Mediator today in heaven, He is in subjection to the Father. He addressed God as "Father" (v. 1), "O Father" (v. 5), "Holy Father" (v. 11), and "righteous Father" (v. 25). When the Lord prayed, He never asked the disciples to pray with Him. The disciples could not pray with the Son of God because they could not pray in the same capacity in which He prayed. The Lord Jesus always prayed alone. Do not make the mistake of calling Matthew 6 the Lord's prayer. Jesus Christ could never say, "forgive me my debts [opheilemata, accusative plural of opheilema, which means debts, sins, or guilts]." He never had any. He approached God as His Father. He made a distinction between the way He approached the Father and the way we approach Him. He is the eternal Son of God. We are the sons of God by regeneration. The Mediator must mediate between God and man, and only the God-Man can thus mediate.

Jesus Christ prayed for the elect. He made a great announcement: "I pray for them" (John 17:9). He gave an explanation: "...they are thine....And all mine are thine, and thine are mine..." (vv. 9, 10). This proves that those whom the Father gave to the Son and those for whom Christ died are the same people. Jesus Christ did not die for every person without exception, and He intercedes for only those for whom He died. They are of equal extent. The elect of God are portrayed in this passage of Scripture. Although the word "elect" itself is not found, reference is made seven times in this chapter to those the Father gave to the Son. Two different inflections of the Greek verb *didomi*, with reference to those the Father gave the Son, are used in John 17. It is used twice in verse 6 as an aorist active indicative verb. The other five references are the perfect active indicative form of the verb *didomi* (vv. 2, 9, 11, 12, 24). The perfect tense can be used in various ways, but in this instance the dramatic perfect, which

is completed action in the past brought vividly into the present as a visible result, is used. It could not be used consummatively, because the elected disciples had not yet been glorified. They had been brought vividly into actual existence. The Father had given them to the Son, and the Son was paying the price for them. They were His by right of redemption. They were the Father's by right of choice, and now they are brought into public view.

Jesus Christ told the disciples He would return to the Father (John 17:11, 13). His hour of crucifixion was come, and then He would return to the Father after having finished the work the Father sent Him to perform. As the Representative of the redeemed, He would take His place at the right hand of the Father. As our Representative, He saves us to the uttermost. Christ's prayer has never gone unanswered. He intercedes, and that is our security. Jesus Christ is the pledge of the Father's love to us. He is the seal of this salvation which we have, and He is the earnest of the glory which we shall have. Without the resurrection, exaltation, and work of Jesus Christ at the Father's right hand, the old rugged cross would be poor theology. The Lord Jesus Christ in His glorious resurrection out from among the dead passed from humiliation into exaltation, from incarnation to transfiguration, from trial to authorization, and from anticipation to realization. Hence, our hope goes beyond what Christ did 2,000 years ago to what He is now doing for us. Our hope lies in the future, knowing that He shall make us like Himself. Because of what Christ has done, is doing, and will do, we shall be delivered from a state of imperfection to a state of perfection, from a state of humiliation to a state of glorification, from a state of testing to a state of verification, and from a state of anticipation to a state of realization.

Believers are in the world but are not of the world (John 17:14-16; 15:19). God has a purpose in our being in the world. There are not only lessons to be learned but also responsibilities to be discharged. We learn not only our weakness but also the strength of our enemies. We learn the dignity of being identified with Christ. As He is not of the world, we are not of the world. We learn that our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). We

experientially learn the fellowship of sufferings (Phil. 3:10). Our dangers are great because the world hates us. We learn that the world is our place of training and service (Rom. 1:14). The language of obedience does not say, my soul is weary of the struggles and warfare of life, and I wish that God would just take me home. That is suicidal language wrapped in religious words. We are here for a purpose until God removes us. God is dishonored by that honor which is ascribed to Him beyond His own prescription. We honor Him by proclaiming only that which He has given in His word. The purpose of God is made known by the results. Christ did not pray that the elect might be healthy in body. Our chief good is spiritual, not temporal. Christ prayed that the elect might be kept while they are in the world. We require keeping. Saints are kept because none of them is lost (v. 12). The evil that can hurt the soul shall never come near the dwelling place of God's elect.

Christ prayed that believers will be kept away from the evil one (John 17:15) while they are in the world. God will keep the feet of His saints (I Sam. 2:9). The Lord will strengthen and protect us from the evil one (II Thess. 3:3). We are kept by the power of God through faith to salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last time (I Pet. 1:5). How is Christ's prayer answered? We are not kept from outward tribulations, distresses, or persecutions (I Cor. 4:9-13). We are not secure from spiritual conflicts. That is why we have the armor given us (Eph. 6). We are not protected from trials or testings (I Cor. 10:13). We are not guarded against humiliating failures (Luke 22:31, 32). We are not kept from physical sufferings (I Cor. 12). We are not kept from actual sin. We continue to contend with the old nature (Rom. 7:14-25). The elect are kept in the power, wisdom, and faithfulness of God. We have been quickened by the Spirit. We possess the grace of God, and we shall be crowned with glory. Jesus Christ is the Captain of our salvation leading us safely and successfully to glory (Heb. 2:10).

A solemn exception in Christ's prayer is that intercession is not made for the world (John 17:9). There is a contrast here between the world and

the elect. Someone may question this by referring to Christ's praying that the sin of those who abused Him might not be laid to their charge (Luke 23:34). But on the cross, Christ prayed as the perfect Man, and Luke portrays Jesus Christ as the perfect Man. In John 17, Jesus Christ prayed His mediatorial prayer of intercession for the elect. Christ's refusal to pray mediatorially for the world does not contradict what the Scriptures say concerning our praying for the lost. Paul prayed for the lost (Rom. 10:1). But do not forget that Israel will be saved. Hence, Paul was not praying in vain but in accordance with the will of God. Christ's mediatorial acts are not to be the standard for you and me.

The reason Christ prayed for His own is that He is glorified in them (John 17:10). Glory is manifested presence. The glory of Christ is the manifestation of what Christ is. As the glory was in the tabernacle and temple, it is in God's people today. God is glorified more by keeping, protecting, and preserving us while we are in the world than if He should take us out of the world. God is glorified more in enabling us to overcome our enemies than if we were removed from our enemies.

Jesus Christ prayed for His own that they might be with Him where He is and behold His glory (John 17:24). There was a glory given to Christ. The glory that was given to Him in the incarnation and that He received from the Father, He bestows upon the elect. Jesus Christ cannot give His essential glory. The essential glory of God and the glory that God gave to Christ as the incarnate One, as the Mediator between God and men, must be distinguished. God's essential glory is incommunicable. He is Deity and we are humanity. He is the infinite God, and we are finite creatures. The essential glory could not be received by Christ because it was His essentially. His glory as Mediator was received, but it too was incommunicable. But the glory given to Him relatively is the glory of grace and truth (John 1:14, 17). He gives that glory to the elect, and as the result, we will behold the glory He had with the Father before the foundation of the world (John 17:24). The

glory of John 1:14 is that glory which was beheld by faith in time. The glory of John 17:24 is that glory that shall be beheld by sight in eternity.

The glory given to Christ which is received from Christ and is beheld by faith is revealed in the glorious titles given to Jesus Christ Prince of life, Prince of peace, King of glory, everlasting Father, Bridegroom, Savior, Redeemer, resurrection and life, etc. The glory given to Christ was not for Himself. He did not need it. It was given to Him for the recipients of grace. His accepting such glory as was given to Him was actually a condescension. The glory given to the elect is the fruit of His sacrifice, His conquest of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, His glorious resurrection out from among the dead, and His ascension to the right hand of the Father. The glory which the redeemed shall behold by sight is the everlasting kingdom. We shall then coexist with Christ. He is now coexisting with us in the assembly, but we shall coexist with Him eternally in the kingdom. He now condescends to come down to us, and where two or three are gathered together agreeing, He is in our midst. But the time will come when He will take us up and we will coexist with Him eternally. Christ's glory refers to His dignity when exalted and reigning as King of kings and Lord of lords.