

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	Special Messages	Pastor/Teacher
Text:	John 17:1-26	Gary L. W. Johnson
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THE GLORY OF CHRIST (Part 3)

John 17 is, properly speaking, *THE* Lord's Prayer, in which having reached the climax of His mission, Jesus now prays for glory. B. B. Warfield, in his marvelous book on *The Lord of Glory*, points out that in James 2:1, Christ is referred to as *The Glory*, which he says "seems to stand here in apposition to the name, *our Lord Jesus Christ*, further defining Him in His majesty. There is here something more than merely the association of our Lord with glory, as when we are told that He had glory with God before the world was (Jno 17:5), and after His humiliation on earth (though even on earth He manifested His glory to seeing eyes, Jn. 1:14, 2:11, 17:22) entered again into His glory (Lk 24:26, Jno 17:24, 1 Tim 3:16, Heb 2:9, cf. Mt 19:28m 25:31 [Mk. 10:37]), and is to come again in this glory (Mt 16:27, 24:30, 25:31, Mk 8:38, 13:26, Lk 9:26, 21:27, Titus 2:13, 1 P 4:13). We come nearer to what is implied when we read of Jesus being *the Lord of Glory* (1 Cor 2:8), that is He to whom glory belongs as His characterizing quality; or when He is described to us as *the effulgence of the glory of God* (Heb 1:3). The thought of the writer seems to be fixed on those Old Testament passages in which Jehovah is described as the *Glory*: e.g., *For I, saith Jehovah, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and I will be the Glory in the midst of her* (Zech 2:5). In the Lord Jesus Christ, James sees the fulfillment of these promises: He is Jehovah come to be with His people; and, as He has tabernacled among them, they have seen His glory. He is, in a word, the Glory of God, the Shekinah: God manifest to men. It is thus that James thought and spoke of his own brother who died a violent and shameful death while still in His first youth! Surely there is a phenomenon here which may well waken inquiry."¹

- I. ***A PRIESTLY PRAYER.*** The late James Boice says that this prayer has three parts: "Christ's prayer for himself (vv. 1-5), his prayer for his disciples (vv. 6-19), and his prayer for all who should follow them in faith in the coming centuries (vv. 20-26). The shortest part is Christ's prayer for his own interests. By contrast, he prays at length both for his disciples and for ourselves as members of his mystical body. The prayer has five main petitions, one for himself and four for us. The second and third parts enumerate six distinctive marks of the church, each of which we will eventually study separately: joy, holiness, truth, mission, unity, and love. A study of these verses soon shows that this is the true Lord's Prayer. The prayer that begins, *Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name . . .* (Matt. 6:9-13), should more accurately be termed The Disciples' Prayer. The one in John 17 is Jesus' prayer. It has properly been designated his High Priestly Prayer, for he intercedes for us here as our High Priest before his Father's throne."²
- II. ***PRAYER FOR ALL BELIEVERS.*** The last part of Christ's prayer focuses on the theme of glory. Note this emphasis on *imparted* glory. What this imparted glory is receives an explanation from 1 Peter 1:21, "God . . . raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory." It is the glory therefore of resurrection and reception into His presence. How the Lord Jesus will impart this glory to all believers is stated in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17. He will "fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory" (Phil. 3:21). At that moment and from that time believers will be one, even as the Father and the

Son are one. The fulfillment and completeness is to be realized in the indwelling of Christ and the Father in each and all “I in them, and Thou in Me.” The perfecting into one will be accomplished by, and consist in, our being “like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is” (1 John 3:2). There will be a participation by all in this perfect likeness. Then will be fulfilled the word, “whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Rom. 8:30).³

III. **CHRIST’S DESIRE.** Leon Morris points out the word “I will” (*thelō*) is a verb which expresses the action of the will. It is more than a mere wish.⁴ Jesus prays for three specific things: (1) That his own shall be with him; (2) That they should be like him; (3) That they shall behold his glory forever. On this last point Hendriksen writes: “The glory of which Jesus speaks is his own. He calls it *the glory which thou hast given me*. The Son desires that all believers shall *gaze forever (theōrōsin)* on him, that is, on the radiance of his divine attributes as these are reflected in his exalted human nature (though, of course, they never become a part of that human nature) and in the transformed character, the inexpressible joy, the unquenchable love, and the perfect peace of all those who enter into the rest that remains for the people of God. This is the glory which the Father has given to the Son.”⁵ The word *theōrōsin* is the same word John uses in 1:14, where he speaks of the disciples beholding his glory. It is used again in John 1:32 of John the Baptist gazing in wonder when the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus at his baptism. According to Raymond Brown this particular word “means to look at with concentration, to behold. It implies more expenditure of time than *blepin*. This greater intensity of sight carries with it a certain depth of understanding, but not to any great degree. This interpretation of *theōrein* does seem valid for a number of instances where the verb is used to describe the seeing of signs – a sight which leads to the acceptance of Jesus as a wonder-worker or a marvelous man, but which does not constitute full faith. Jesus is obviously not satisfied with the faith that springs from seeing (*theōrein*) in 2:23, 4:19, and 6:2. It is clear in 6:19 that seeing Jesus on the water does not lead to real understanding. Yet there are other instances where *theōrein* seems to represent the deepest and most perceptive sight. This is verb is used in 6:40, which promises eternal life to everyone who looks upon the Son and believes in him. In 17:24 it is used for the full sight of Jesus’ glory, presumably in heaven.”⁶

CONCLUSION: Calvin’s comments capture the essence of Christ’s desire: “*That they may behold my glory*. Some expound this as enjoying participation in the glory which Christ has. Others explain it as knowing by the experience of faith what Christ is and how great His majesty is. After careful consideration, I think that Christ is speaking of the perfect happiness of the godly; as if He said that His desire would not be satisfied till they have been received into heaven. They refer the beholding of the glory to the same thing. At that time they saw Christ’s glory as a man shut up in the dark obtains a feeble half-light through small crevices. Christ now wishes that they shall go on to enjoy the full brightness of heaven. In short, He asks that the Father will lead them by uninterrupted progress to the full view of His glory.”⁷

ENDNOTES

¹ B. B. Warfield, *The Lord of Glory: A Study of The Designations of Our Lord in The New Testament with Especial Reference To His Deity* (rpt. Baker, 1974), p. 264.

² J. M. Boice, *The Gospel of John: An Expository Commentary IV* (Baker, 1985), p. 1246.

³ W. E. Vine, *Expository Commentary on John* (Thomas Nelson, 1997), p. 195.

⁴ L. Morris, *The Gospel According To John: The New International Commentary on The New Testament* (Eerdmans, 1971), p. 736.

⁵ Wm. Hendriksen, *The Gospel of John: New Testament Commentary* (Baker, 1988), p. 367.

⁶ R. E. Brown, *the Gospel According To John: The Anchor Bible I* (Doubleday, 1980), p. 502.

⁷ *Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries: The Gospel According To John II* (Eerdmans, 1961), p. 150.

