



Bible Study

John 17

The Priestly Prayer

John 17 - The Priestly Prayer

Here, we reflect upon Jesus' prayer for himself, for his disciples and for the future church.

We understandably, become absorbed in the record of Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane in Matthew, Mark and Luke, where the outstanding issue is Jesus praying through the coming agonies of the cross, to the point where he prays, "Father, not my will, but your will be done." However, John shows that something else is happening and the record is very challenging!

Jesus Prays for Himself

Jesus is looking to the Father, to honour his obedience as a son. He has finished the work that the Father gave him to do. He is looking forward to coming home, to enjoy again the glory he knew before coming to earth. The gift of eternal life, which is knowing God in a precious, personal way, is now available to all those who believe in Jesus. It will cost him everything to provide but it's all in place. It is hard to imagine the immense challenges Jesus faced as Almighty God, coming down to earth as a man, tasting our life and living on our earth, all without giving in to sin!

Jesus Prays for His Disciples

We learn in Luke, that Jesus was praying for them, knowing that Satan would sift them like wheat and that all of them, not just Peter, would go through tremendous trials as they watch Jesus get arrested, put on trial and taken to the cross.

He acknowledges that the disciples are a gift from his Father. He knows that they have received his teaching and recognise the authority he has.

He prays for their protection. He does not ask that they be taken out of trials but, rather, that they would find strength and hope within the trials. He knows that God's enemy, Satan, will be working hard to destroy them and so, he looks to the Father to help them overcome.

He also knows that a major threat will be disunity and division, so his prayer for protection is particularly for that unity to be preserved. Of course it is answered. Even though they are afraid, they stay together and together discover that he gloriously rises from the dead!

He prays that they will know his joy, which can be experienced even when the trials come.

He prays for their sanctification. That the trials will have a positive outcome for them and will not be destructive.

Jesus Prays for All Believers - which includes you and me!

New believers will come through the testimony of the 11. The things that Jesus prays for his disciples are also for us. Again, unity is emphasised. The world will be touched when they see Christians standing together, resolute in the knowledge of his death and resurrection.

A special extra thought is added, as Jesus prays that all believers will share and see his glory. He is longing to have us with him for ever!

Points to Consider:

1. Jesus prays for himself. It's important to pray for ourselves but what can we learn from Jesus about that?
2. Are our prayers too self-centred? How much do we ask for God's protection, particularly spiritual protection not just physical protection?
3. With regard to unity and loving each other. Do we consider enough, the impact that Godly unity can make upon our non-Christian world?
4. Are we looking forward to being with Jesus, as much as he looks forward to receiving us?