

Listen Jesus Is Praying – Part 1

John 17:1-5

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As I said, John 17 has often been called the holy of holies of Scripture. I can't really debate or dispute that; I totally agree with that. If the Bible were the holy of holies, then John 17 would be that inner sanctum of the heart of God as the veil is pulled back and Jesus, our great High Priest, enters in to begin to pray for us, for Himself, and for the disciples. It's been called the crown and conclusion to His Upper Room Discourse. Jesus turns now from teaching His disciples, John 13-16, in the upper room just hours before He's arrested in the garden and crucified to actually praying to the Father. This is what we would actually call the Lord's prayer. We commonly call the Lord's prayer the, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name," and we know that quite well; but it's really not the Lord's prayer. He would have never had to pray, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

A little interesting footnote, before I forget, is that whenever Jesus prayed, He never really said, "Our Father." That's very clear in this passage tonight. He actually just says, "Father," and talks about Him being a righteous and holy Father, but He never said, "Our Father." In the pattern for prayer that Jesus gave us that we call the Lord's prayer, is really the disciples' prayer. We pray, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," then we pray, "Give us this day our daily bread...And lead us not into temptation," so it's our prayer that we pray together as a family to our Father which is in heaven; but here, Jesus, as God the Son and the Son of God, is talking to God the Father.

This chapter is also quite trinitarian as Jesus has just taught about the Holy Spirit. Now, as the Son of God, He addresses God the Father; and the thought that we could listen in or eavesdrop on the Son of God talking to the Father is an amazing thought. They were both God—and have been God from all eternity past—and that in His incarnation and His humiliation, Jesus now opens His heart and talks to His Father in heaven. It's not the disciples' prayer, it's the real Lord's prayer where Jesus is actually praying.

I believe that this is the greatest prayer offered in the Bible. There are a lot of prayers in the Bible, but this is the greatest. There are a lot of places where Jesus prayed in the Bible, but none where He prayed at such length and in such depth. The length of the prayer, even though it's the longest recorded in the Bible, would only take about five minutes to read the whole prayer. Prayer isn't measured by length, it's measured by depth, by weight, and height. It's also interesting to see that when we pray, God is wanting us to pray like Jesus—from our hearts.

Why is this such a great and amazing prayer? Let me give you three quick reasons, before we unpack verses 1-5, why this prayer is so wonderful. First, because of the Person who prayed, Jesus the Son of God. We have the Son of God talking to God the Father—God the Son talking to God the Father. As we go through the prayer, I'll point out many places where the deity of Jesus shines bright and clear. There are some New Testament scholars that actually say that if you want to see the deity of Christ, you discover it very clearly and powerfully, more

than anywhere else in John 17, which to me is a bit shocking. We think of so many—John 1 or Hebrews 1—other places to look at the deity of Christ, but to think of just listening to Jesus pray to His Father, we get such clarity on His divine nature. If Jesus prayed, we should pray.

Secondly, it's a great prayer because of the petitions in the prayer, so the Person who is praying, it's God the Son, and then the petitions that He prayed. Jesus prayed for three things, and here's the outline of the chapter. First of all He prayed for Himself, verses 1-5, but it wasn't a selfish prayer. Secondly, He prayed for His disciples, verses 6-19. Thirdly, He prayed for the whole church, verses 20-26. That's the three divisions of the prayer of John 17. He prays, verses 1-5, for Himself, that the Father would glorify Him that He in turn could glorify the Father. Secondly, He prays for His disciples, verses 6-19; and in verses 20-26, He prayed for the whole church.

These three petitions, thirdly, show us the Lord's priorities—the Person who prayed and the petitions He prayed are significant, and the priorities of His prayer. You can just take John 17 and take notes all the way through it and say, "What was on the heart of Jesus? What were the priorities of His prayer? What was He praying about? What was He concerned about?" and it kind of conveys to us what the priorities of prayer as well should be. To summarize them, He prayed first for the glory of God the Father, verse 1. Secondly, He prayed for His disciples to be kept securely, verse 15, and to be sanctified, verse 19, or preserved or made holy. Thirdly, He prayed for the whole church, for them to have unity and to have love, "That they all may be one," He said, "Father...even as we are one." These are the priorities that Jesus had in prayer—the glory of God the Father, the security and sanctity of His disciples, and the whole church would have unity and walk together in love.

Tonight I want to look at verses 1-5, and we're going to actually just take it verse by verse through these five verses. Let's read them beginning in verse 1. "These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3 And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. 4 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. 5 And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

I want you to note in verse 1 the phrase, "These words spake Jesus." What words did John refer to when Jesus spake them? He's referring to John 13-16. In the context, we're at the end of the Upper Room Discourse. It started in John 13 with Jesus washing the disciples feet. The teaching really started in John 14-16, and just out of curiosity, back up into John 16:33. It says, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world," and with no break from John 16 to John 17, "These words spake Jesus." He just got through saying, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." He moves into His prayer in which He prays for them to be kept from the world, to be preserved and kept safe in the world, and that they would be a blessing and a light to the world as well. So, "These words spake

Jesus,” in the context was right after He gave His Upper Room Discourse.

In the prayer, Jesus used the word “world” nineteen times, and the end of John 16 set the stage that they were in the world having tribulation. He’s going to actually pray that they would be a witness to the world and overcome the world even though they would experience trouble, trials, and tribulation. But it’s interesting that Jesus had just taught them, now He’s praying for them. I want you to note that sequential order: He taught them the Word of God, now He prays for them to God. The Word of God and prayer go together. We need it in our lives and in our church. “If we just had the Word of God,” someone said, “we could dry up. If we don’t pray to God and wait on the Spirit of God, then we will dry up.” We need the Spirit of God and the Word of God to grow up in our walk and relationship with Jesus Christ. There’s no separation between the Word of God and the prayer of Jesus in John 17. He just finished teaching them, and the two go together.

In John 17:1, it says that Jesus, “lifted up his eyes to heaven.” In the culture in which Jesus was praying in the time for the Jews, they didn’t fold their hands, close their eyes, and bow their heads. Isn’t it interesting that the Bible doesn’t tell us to do that when we pray? That’s fine. You can do that, that’s cool. Someone said that they thought that might just be an invention of the Sunday school teacher to keep kids from squirming in their class. The Bible doesn’t say that He folded His hands, bowed His head reverently, and closed His eyes. The Jews actually would open their hands, lift them to heaven, and would lift up their eyes and look heavenward. I think that’s pretty cool. We kind of cower like we don’t want God to strike us with lightening; but the Jews would look up, open their hands, and say, “Abba,” or Papa, and would receive what blessings God wanted to give them.

I picture Jesus lifting up His hands and maybe the moonlight shining on His face (it was night time). We don’t know where He was in transition from the upper room to the Garden of Gethsemane, but somewhere in there (the Bible doesn’t tell us where He prayed this prayer) it would seem He prayed it out loud and the disciples heard it and were able to record what He said rather than going to a mountain alone to pray or going deeper into the garden to pray. He actually prayed with His eyes lifted up, His hands lifted up, and He lifted up His voice to the Father. The disciples were able to, either by the Holy Spirit, remember every word that He prayed or to write it down as He prayed.

Just a little point before I move on is that the Bible doesn’t tell us that our bodies have to be in any particular position to pray. Now, we find people praying on their knees or on their feet. We find people praying in different positions. Your body position doesn’t matter, your heart does. God looks at the heart. He’s not looking at, “Well, your eyes aren’t closed. You haven’t folded your hands,” or “you’re not kneeling down.” God looks at the heart.

Jesus just addresses the Father as “Father.” Now, Jesus did say, “O righteous Father,” in verse 25. He did call Him, “Holy Father,” in verse 11, but here He just addresses Him as Abba or Father. You have God the Son praying to God the Father. When we pray, I believe that we pray to God the Father, through God the Son, in the energy and power of the Holy Spirit. It doesn’t

mean you can't cry out to the Son or, "Jesus, help me," or you can't say, "Holy Spirit, please give me Your comfort and guidance and direction." There's evidence in the Bible of people who prayed directly to the Lord and prayed also to the Holy Spirit, but the basic kind of format for praying is that we talk to the Father and come to Him through the Son—He's the mediator, we come on His merits—and that we do it in the energy and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is giving us a model of that as He prays.

Jesus says, "Father, the hour is come," verse 1, "glorify thy Son, that," or the reason that, "thy Son also may glorify thee." Now, when He says, "the hour is come," we're familiar with that phrase in the gospel of John because it started in John 2 when they were at the wedding at Cana and His mother asked Him to do a miracle to help out. He said, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come," that repeated phrase, "mine hour is not yet come." Now we see that Jesus says, "the hour is come." What He's referring to is the hour of His crucifixion and resurrection—the very primary purpose for which He came into the world. After these three years of ministry, Jesus has finally come to the point in time where He will give His life on the cross as the substitute for man's sin as He would be the redeemer of the world. He's referring to His death by crucifixion, and it would include His resurrection, His ascension, and His exaltation in glory; but the hour had come.

Do you know that God always answers prayer but has His own time frame? Have you noticed that? Wouldn't it be neat if God not only answered prayers the way we want Him but when we want Him to? "Lord, this Friday night by 5:30 I need this money, I need this thing," and God's writing it down in heaven, "Can you run that by Me again? I need to make sure I get this straight." I've learned by praying over the years that God doesn't always give me what I want or when I want, that is why His timing is perfect. So, now's the time the Son of God will go to the cross. This is the hour for which He was born. This is the hour for which He came into the world, but we have to wait for God's timing. If you're praying tonight for something, and God hasn't answered, it might be, "Just wait." Maybe it's not a "no" but just a wait, and you need to wait on God's timing. You need to wait on God's will.

What does Jesus pray for? He prays, "Father...glorify the Son." It's interesting that that statement that we call a petition, it is a petition because He's praying, in the Greek is actually in what's called an imperative. An imperative is actually a command. Again, this would go unnoticed but was another subtle indication that it's the Son of God talking to God the Father because we as humans can't command God in heaven, right? When we pray...now there are some people that like to think they can boss God around, that they can order and tell God what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. They do it quite brashly, but it's only the Son of God that has the authority or ability to actually tell God the Father, "This is what I want You to do," so it's an imperative, "I want you to glorify Your Son."

Jesus is actually praying for the Father to glorify Him in that in the cross, in the resurrection, His ascension, exaltation, and His sending the Holy Spirit, that Jesus Christ, we see that in Philippians 2, would be "...given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,

to the glory of God the Father.” It wasn’t wrong for Jesus to pray this for Himself, and He’s going to go on to pray (we’ll get there in just a moment) that He would have, “...the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” He was God and shared this “glory,” as we’ll see in verse 5, with the Father before He came into the world.

Notice what else Jesus says in verse 1. He says, “...that thy Son also may glorify thee,” notice He says, “I want You to glorify Me so that I can glorify You.” He’s actually giving us the reason why He wanted to be glorified and others to see His glory so that He could reflect that glory, and give that glory, back to the Father. It wasn’t a selfish prayer. The goal of His prayer, verse 1, was that God the Father would get all of the glory. This is a very important principle when it comes to prayer. You’ve heard me say it before: The purpose of prayer is the glory of God. Whatever you pray, whenever you pray, whatever prayer you pray, God must be glorified. When you say, “In Jesus’ name,” you’re saying, “For His glory.” You don’t pray for your glory or other people’s glory. You don’t pray for your own advancement. You’re always praying for God to be glorified, and then you learn to accept whatever answer to prayer God brings or gives because your bottom line is you want God to be glorified. So, “God, if it’s a healing that You’re going to be glorified, we ask for a healing.” “Lord, if You decide not to heal this person, and maybe You even take them home to heaven, but in death even,” as we’re going to see in Christ’s death, “You can be glorified. Lord, be glorified.” “Lord, whatever Your will is, I want Your will; and I want Your glory.” The goal of prayer is not to get my will done on earth, it’s to get God’s will done and to align my will with God’s. One of the purposes of prayer is not to pull God to your will but for you to be pulled in alignment with His will.

A missionary by the name of Stanley Jones, years ago, once said, “If I’m in a boat and I throw the anchor to the shore and pull on the rope, do I pull the shore to myself or do I pull myself to the shore? I certainly don’t pull the shore to myself, I pull the boat to the shore.” That’s what prayer does. It doesn’t pull God to my will, it pulls me to align with God’s will. This is why prayer is so important: not to get our will done, but to get God’s will done. He’s chosen to use prayer to get His will done and for our attitudes and hearts to change and actually align with the purpose and plan of God. When I think of Hannah praying that God would give her a child, God finally answered her prayer when she said, “Lord, if You’ll give me a child, I’ll give him back to You.” The minute she said that, submitted to God’s will, God gave her her request of Samuel. He was given to her. Many times in our prayers we have to submit to God’s glory and God’s will.

Notice where, in the context of verse 1, God would be glorified, in the cross of Jesus Christ. It is the cross of Jesus that the world looks at and says, “Crucified,” but the believer looks at the cross and says, “God be glorified.” It’s that the world looks at the cross and stumble over that, we look at the cross and we glory in that. Paul said, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Whenever I meditate upon the cross and the manifestation of God’s grace, mercy, love, and glory in the cross, it just amazes and overwhelms me. All the attributes of God are seen in the cross—His love, His righteousness, His wisdom, His power, His grace, His mercy, His holiness. This is what theologians used to call the theatre of the cross; and what the world looks at as a thing of horror, a thing of shame, and a thing of

weakness, the Bible declares to be the glory of God. When He says, "...glorify thy Son," or glorify Me, "that thy Son also may glorify thee," He's referring to His crucifixion in the cross.

God is glorified not in our strength but in our weaknesses. It's counter to the teaching of the Bible to think that God can only be glorified in my strengths or in my health or in my wealth. I heard a health and wealth preacher years ago say that God cannot be glorified in a body that doesn't work right. If your eyes don't work right or your legs don't work, if your hands don't work, how can God be glorified in your body? I thought, Tell that to Joni Eareckson Tada. Whenever I hear her speak, I'm blown away and see the glory of God. It's our weaknesses when God's grace and mercy shine most brightly; so don't be afraid to be living the crucified life as Jesus did, that's the way to bring glory and honor to our Father.

Notice now, in verse 2, Jesus says, without skipping a beat, "As thou hast given him power," now, "...glorify thy Son," verse 1, "that," in order that, "thy Son also may glorify thee: 2 As thou hast given him power," so I can glorify You, Jesus is saying, because You've given Me power. The word "power" would be better translated authority, "over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." So, You have given Me power or authority over all flesh, and that power and authority is that I should give eternal life; and I give it to those, "thou hast given," Me.

I want you to note in verse 2 that three times you have the word "given," then the word "give," and then "given" once again. There are three things that are given to Christ that He used to glorify the Father. The first is His authority or power over all flesh—He is the Lord of all. Secondly, He is the One who gives eternal life. Notice it in verse 2. He says, "...that he should give eternal life." Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life," so being a Christian is having the life of God in your soul. It's God's own life shared with us right now. We have eternal life.

Let me make it very, very clear because I think some people are confused. When you get born again or when you are born again, regenerated by the Holy Spirit, you have, at that very moment, eternal life. You don't get it when you die and go to heaven. I've seen headstones, "Entered into life, such and such a date, entered into eternal life, such and such a date," and I've never understood why we do that. If the Christian dies, they entered into eternal life the moment they were born again. When they die, they only leave their bodies and go to heaven. They've already got eternal life. If you're a Christian, you're not waiting to die to go to heaven and in the sweet by and by you're going to be able to have eternal life; you actually possess eternal life right now, and Jesus makes it clear. This is another one of the subtle but clear indications that He is God because He's the One who gives the life of God in the soul of man.

Thirdly, there's the Father's gifts to the Son in light of His giving eternal life. Notice it in verse 2. I give it "to as many as thou hast given him." That's an amazing statement here, and I don't want to get too bogged down in the doctrines of these statements because Jesus is basically just praying and not really teaching. But what it implies there is the doctrine that if you're a Christian, you are actually a love gift from the Father to the Son and that the Son has received

that gift from the Father that you are a gift from the Father to the Son. We know that the Father has chosen us, but He also has given us as a love gift to His Son; and those whom He has been given to from the Father, He gives them eternal life. In that statement, "...to as many as thou hast given him," Jesus is referring to the love gift of the Father that He gets as He regenerates and gives new life.

Notice in verse 3 it says, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee," there's really again no break in His thought. I give all flesh, those who believe in Me and are a gift from the Father, eternal life. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent." Eternal life is knowing God. Without knowing God, you do not have eternal life. The word "know" there is the Greek word *ginosko*. It means to know intimately and experientially. It's used for the intimate relationship of a husband and wife in marriage where it says, "And Adam knew Eve his wife." The idea there is that they were intimate with and knew experientially one another. A person that's a Christian actually knows God; and eternal life, He's going to say in the same verse, is also knowing the Son. Knowing God the Father, God the Son, and knowing God the Father through God the Son, is eternal life; so knowing God and knowing Him through the Son brings life eternal. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," eternal life. That's not just length of living, it's quality not just quantity. It's a new sphere of life that's a work of the Holy Spirit in a person's heart, so He says that you know God.

If you are a Christian, you actually know God. I know that freaks people out. You're not just religious—you don't just go to church, believe in God, or read the Bible—you actually know God. You know, you can ask people sometimes, "Are you a Christian?" "Oh yeah, I'm a Christian. I go to church. I'm born in America and eat apple pie with cheese on top. I'm a Christian. I wave the flag," and all that kind of stuff. Or, "I'm religious," or "I've been baptized," but if you really want to get to the core of the issue, you ask them, "Do you know God?" That freaks them out. "Ohhhh, what do you mean, know God?" I mean do you have a relationship with Him? I love that old hymn, "And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am his own, And the joy we share...None other has ever known." It's that old hymn about walking and talking with God in the garden, so you're actually in a love relationship with God. You actually know God. You can just turn to Him and talk to Him. You have a relationship with Him. That's what Jesus is talking about. He talks about the eternal life, "...that they might know thee the only," notice, "true God." There are false gods, but the Father here is a reference to the true and living God. How about you. Do you know God? Do you have a personal relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ?

Notice, not only, "...the only true God," as opposed to the false gods, but that eternal life is knowing Jesus Christ. I have always loved this statement in verse 3 where He says, "...the only true God, and Jesus Christ," Jesus is praying, "whom thou hast sent." If you don't have Jesus, you don't have God. If you don't have Jesus, you don't have God and you don't have eternal life. You can't have eternal life without Jesus Christ. You have to know Jesus to be able to know God the Father. Without the Son, you have not the Father, and in Jesus is eternal life.

He's the light. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." He's the breath of God, John 20:22, "... he breathed on them," and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," Spirit. In John 4 and John 7, He's the water that we drink of for life, and He is also the bread of God that "...came down from heaven: If any man eat of this bread...he shall never hunger," and if he drinks thereof, he will never thirst.

Notice in verse 4, Jesus says, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Jesus is telling us that He came into the world to do what God called Him to do, and it started with that work of bringing glory to God the Father. This applies to us. In this world, in this life, we are called to do one thing, and one thing only: to honor, magnify, and glorify God. You were made to glorify God, and if you're not bringing glory to God in your thoughts, in your attitudes, in your words, in your actions, in your conduct, then you're not doing what God made you for. You're not fulfilling your created purpose.

Jesus actually says, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," which is interesting because He hasn't yet been crucified. He's only a few hours away from the cross, but I think it's in light of Gethsemane where he agonized in light of the cross and said to the Father, "...not my will, but thine, be done." If it's possible, can this cup pass from Me, "nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." He submitted to the Father's plan in the Garden of Gethsemane. That's where the victory was won. It's almost as though He's basically saying, "It's a done deal. It's a completed task. There's no turning back now. There's no shuddering from the cross. I've finished the work You gave Me to do," even though He hadn't actually died on the cross yet, He saw it as a finished work and that was the reason for which He came into the world. We need to ask the question: Am I bringing glory and honor to God on the earth, the place where sin and rebellion is in the world?

Notice Jesus then said, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." We need to be able to say the same thing. First, "God, I've glorified You." Secondly, "I've finished the work You gave me to do." I don't know how to put this into words, and I don't know how to really convey it, but this is kind of how the Lord speaks to my heart from this verse. I don't usually get into this subjective God speaks to me from this verse, but this is the way it applies to me, and I think it has a universal application to every one of us. We all need to think deeply about our lives—the brevity of life, the certainty of death—and the longer we live and the more we age, we come to that point where we realize, What has my life been? What have I done with my life? How has my life impacted others? Have I really brought glory to God? Have I finished what God really gave me to do?

If you've ever had, and I have, near-death experiences; or maybe you've been really sick and in the hospital, maybe in ICU hooked up to a bunch of machines, I've been there; and God comes to you and speaks to your heart and shows you your life kind of in a quick instance and you look at all of your life, What have I done? How have I lived? Where has it gone? What has it been for? When I read these words of Jesus, I think, He only had three years. He had three years of ministry. He was 33-years-old.

I won't tell you how old I am, and I won't tell you how many years of ministry I've had, but I'm a lot older and I've had a lot more years of ministry. In three years He was able to say, "Father, I've glorified You," and "I've actually finished everything You wanted Me to do." To be able to come to the end of your life and not have regrets, "Why did I waste so much time? Why did I waste so many hours on trivial pursuits? Why didn't I make my life count more for You, God?" If you're faithful to what God called you to be and do, and you do it in dependence upon Him for His glory and live by faith and trust Him, I believe you can come to the end of your life like Jesus is right now. He's at the end of His life and actually says, "I have glorified thee...I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." I don't know about you, but I want to be able to say that. I don't know how much more I can do for God, I don't know how much longer I have to serve the Lord, I don't know what God's plan and purpose is for me for the future, but I want to, if I'm on my deathbed, be able to say, "I glorified God, and I finished what He gave me to do." I don't want to have any regrets or to look back and not be able to pray the way Jesus prayed at this point.

I think of 2 Timothy 4 where Paul the Apostle was actually singing his swan song in prison. He knew he would die, and actually said, "I have run the race, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." He said, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown...and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." He said, "Right now I'm being poured out," he used the imagery of a libation or a drink offering, "I'm being poured out right now," and it would only be a matter of hours or days where Paul would be taken out of prison in Rome, his head would be severed from his body, and he would go to his reward in heaven. That day comes for every one of us when we need to say, "Lord, I want to glorify You. I want to finish the race. I want to do what You've called me to do." Graham Scroggie said, "No disciple will finish his work who neglects prayer." I love that. Part of that finishing the work that God gives us to do in glorifying Him is prayer to our heavenly Father.

Lastly, verse 5, Jesus said, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self," so He opens in verse 1 with, "...glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee," and He closes in verse 5, which is the section on His prayer for Himself, saying, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me," and do it, "with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Jesus, in verses 1-5, is basically praying for God's glory, for the Father's glory. He has glorified the Father, and He's glorified the Father in the work that He gave Him to do, and now says, "I want to be reinstated with the glory that I had with You before the world was." Now, I said that there's a lot of places in this prayer that indicate very clearly the deity of Jesus Christ, and this is the top one. This is the clearest one. This is what we call the eternality of Christ—that He pre-existed Bethlehem, that He's eternal, His pre-incarnate glory. When Jesus says, "...the glory which I had with thee before the world was," He's actually saying, "In eternity past—before Bethlehem, before I was born on earth—the glory which You and I shared, I want to come back to that glory." What a great theme for Christmas, that Jesus left the splendor and majesty of heaven, came down to earth, and took on humanity. He took on a humble body of flesh—sinless flesh, but flesh the same—with all of its weaknesses, all of its frailties, His need to depend upon the Father, and to pray.

In Philippians 2 we have a description of this where it says, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God," not something to hold on to, "...he humbled," emptied, "himself," which means He laid aside His glory, majesty, and splendor; not His deity, but His majesty, "...and took upon him the form of a servant," that's His incarnation, His humanity. That's the Christmas story, "...and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," and because of that, "Wherefore God," the Father, "also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name," again, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...And that every tongue should confess." A great cross-reference to John 17:5 is Philippians 2, the kenosis passage, where Jesus took on His humanity and laid aside His majesty; but when Jesus goes back to heaven, He maintains His humanity but is now in a glorified body and is reinstated with the Father and sharing the glory there that He had with the Father before the world ever was created. Again, you have a reference to God the Son going back to heaven to be with God the Father. You have a reference to Christ's eternality and His pre-existence. Those are two separate things. He not only pre-existed Bethlehem, but He is eternal and then His deity that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

You take this prayer and put it in the lips of any human being and you have blasphemy. Jesus is either crazy, a blasphemer, or He is the Son of God; and we're certain He is the Son of God. Amen? Jesus can pray things that no one else can pray. He said, "Father, I want to have the glory back with You that I had before the world was," and, indeed, He would have that glory restored.

The lesson for us in these first five verses is that there are three ways to overcome the world. Actually, all the way through this prayer, John 17, He's going to be praying and it's going to be implying ways we overcome the world. The first is by knowing God and having eternal life. The second is by glorifying God. In verse 1, "...glorify thy Son," verse 5, "...glorify thou me," so if you want to be an overcomer and overcome the world, then you do that by eternal life, knowing God, trusting Jesus, having a relationship with God, and then glorifying God; and thirdly, by finishing God's work that He called you to do or that He gave you to do. May God help us to evaluate our lives in light of eternity and say, "Is my life glorifying God? Is my life finishing the work that God gave me to do?" What has God called you to be and to do for His glory? Let's pray.