

171. The Gospel of John—17:4-5

With Jesus Behind the Veil-Part 5

A message by Pastor Phil Ballmaier

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We have been studying the **greatest prayer in the Bible**—the High Priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ—the *real* Lord's prayer!

This prayer is divided up into 3 main parts:

- **Jesus Prays for Himself—verses 1-5**
- **Jesus Prays for His Disciples—verses 6-19**
- **Jesus Prays for All Believers—verses 20-26**

I. Jesus Prays for Himself—verses 1-5

John 17:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

- **What did Jesus mean by this statement (verse 4)?**
- **In what way did He glorify His Father on the earth—**
- **What was the work the Father had given Him to do?**

The work Jesus came to fulfill on earth was twofold:

- 1. To show this world what God was really like**
- 2. To die on Calvary's Cross to redeem us back to God by paying our debt**

The first is embodied in the statement— **"I have glorified You on the earth"**—and the second in the statement— **"I have finished the work which You have given me to do."**

- 1. To show this world what God was really like**

John 17:4 (NKJV)

⁴I have glorified You on the earth...

God's *glory* involves or encompasses—His intrinsic, eternal attributes—the qualities that are only found in His divine nature (God's love, God's grace, His peace, mercy, justice, etc.).

And so thru Jesus' life and death and resurrection—these and other attributes of God's were put on display for the world to see—and **this allowed God to be glorified by showing the world (primarily the Jewish people) what He is really like.**

You see, the **Jewish people had gotten a warped understanding and impression of God over the years**—primarily because they tried to relate to God thru the Law—which they kept breaking and therefore kept reaping the judgment of God upon themselves and the nation.

This caused them to believe that God was nothing but a 'vengeful, wrathful, fire-breathing God'—a God they had to constantly *appease* thru sacrifices—a God, who for the most part, they were terrified of and therefore had a hard time getting close to.

So, Jesus came to set the record straight!

REFLECTION: How did/does Jesus show us his intrinsic attributes so we can know what he/God is really like?

John 1:18 (NKJV)

¹⁸ No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared *Him* ("made Him known", "revealed Him clearly").

John 14:9 (NKJV)

⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

So, the work Jesus came to earth to fulfill was:

- 1. To show this world what God was really like**
- 2. To die on Calvary's Cross to redeem us back to God by paying our debt**

John 17:4 (NKJV)

⁴ ...I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

Even though Jesus had not yet gone to the cross to die for our sins—He put it in the past tense as a way of declaring the absolute certainty of it. In fact, in just about 15 hours Jesus would say from the cross (just before He bowed His head and dismissed His spirit) **"It is finished!"** (John 19:30)

As we have pointed out many times before, in the Greek the word Jesus used for "It is finished" is **'tetelestai'**—a word that could be translated **"paid in full."**

To fully understand the power of what Jesus was saying when He said from the cross *“It is finished”*—we need to read Paul the apostle’s comments in Colossians 2—

Colossians 2:13-14 (NKJV)

¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, ¹⁴ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

What is Paul referring to when he talks about the “handwriting of requirements that was against us”? It’s a term that means “the bill, the record of sins, the debt we owed God.”

- The NASB— *“...the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us”*
- The NLT— *“...the record that contained the charges against us.”*

The Bible says that every sin that a person commits against God’s Law (of which the Ten Commandments are a part) is a debt that he or she owes Him—**a debt that has to be paid**. Just like when a criminal finishes his time in prison we say, *“He has paid his debt to society.”*

The same goes for violations against God’s laws—Who by the way keeps meticulous records of every word, thought and action that violate His Law. Every sin is a crime against a Holy God and is written in our ledger (i.e., our RAP Sheet)—and these crimes (sins) **must** be paid for.

Jesus came to earth to pay our debt—

Isaiah 53:5-6 (NKJV)

⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, everyone, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Colossians 2:14 (NASB)

¹⁴ having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

When Paul says in Colossians 2:14 that Jesus took our sins out of the way— **“having nailed it to His Cross”** he is referring to a practice back then by which guilty criminals paid their debt to society.

A man convicted of breaking the law had his crimes written on a piece of parchment which was then nailed to his dungeon door.

When he finished paying for his crimes, they would take the piece of parchment and write across the bottom **“tetelestai”** which meant **“paid in full”** and give it to him as proof he had paid his debt to society and could never again be charged for those crimes—they had been paid in full.

Paul is saying that Jesus took all the sins (crimes) we had ever or would ever commit against a God’s holy laws, everything that would ever be written in our ledger—**and nailed it to His cross** (signifying He served our punishment, He paid for our crimes).

Just before He died, He said from the Cross, “It is finished” (tetelestai)— “paid in full.”

This was the work Jesus came to earth to accomplish (John 17:4)—**the work of redemption**.

Many people today have no idea what **redemption** is—especially when it is talked about in the pages of the New Testament. However, the first century Greco-Roman world knew exactly what redemption was all about—**it was all about slavery**.

You see, in the first century Greco-Roman world slavery was very much a part of their daily lives—in fact, it has been estimated that more than half the people you’d see on the streets of some of the great cities of the Roman Empire back then—were slaves.

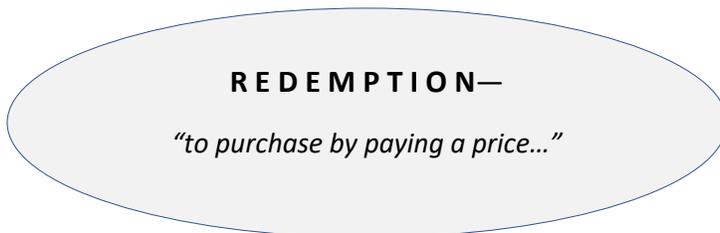
These were people without rights—mere property existing only for the comfort, convenience, and pleasure of their owners. As you can imagine—the life of a slave was often hard, hopeless, and downright terrible. They were bought and sold like tools or animals—and discarded just as easily by their owners.

The Roman statesman Cato said, *“Old slaves should be thrown on a dump, and when a slave is ill do not feed him anything. It is not worth your money. Take sick slaves and throw them away because they are nothing but inefficient tools.”*

Juvenal wrote of a slave owner whose greatest pleasure was *“listening to the sweet song of his slaves being flogged.”*

Now, the idea of being set free from slavery wasn’t foreign to them—that was the whole idea behind redemption—a concept they were very familiar with. You see, the word redemption meant—“to purchase by paying a price”—and that was a concept everyone in the first century Greco-Roman world understood very well.

There were some 60 million slaves in the first century Roman Empire—and they were constantly being redeemed.



For example—in the center of every major city stood the agora (marketplace)—this was the main place where slaves were bought and sold.

Thus, one of the Greek words for the act of *redemption* (the purchasing of a slave) is **agorazo**—from ‘agora.’

There’s a second word for *redemption* that the Greek reader of the New Testament Scriptures would have readily understood and that was **exagorazo**—*“the act of purchasing or redeeming a slave who would never again return to the agora.”*

You see, oftentimes, a man would redeem (buy) a slave, use him for the cultivating and planting of his fields or for the harvesting of his crops—**and then return him to the marketplace to be sold again.**

Exagorazo was the antithesis of this practice, in that it spoke of a man redeeming a slave—who would become the permanent possession of that master for the rest of his life.

The third Greek word for redemption is **apolutrosis**.

Apolutrosis speaks of a man going into the agora to purchase a slave for the purpose of—setting him free completely **never to be a slave again.**

Granted, that was rare but not unheard of—especially if it was a relative who had become another man’s slave due to unpaid debt. However, when the Lord Jesus along with the writers of the New Testament talked about *redemption*—they weren’t talking about being set free from physical slavery as sanctioned by the Roman Government—they had another slavery in mind.

When they talked about being redeemed—it was in reference to being set free from the bondage of spiritual slavery to sin and the devil.

REFLECTION: What does “redemption” mean to you?

That was the context in which Peter and Paul used it in their writings—

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NKJV)

¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, *like silver or gold*, from your aimless conduct *received* by tradition from your fathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

Colossians 1:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins [i.e., “the payment of our debt”].

When Paul talked about our redemption through Christ in Colossians 1:14, he used the Greek word apolutrosis which speaks of Jesus’ blood setting us totally and completely free never to be a slave of sin and Satan ever again.

If a person refuses to receive what Jesus Christ did on Calvary’s Cross—His death which paid for all of their sins—then they will have to stand before God someday and be sentenced to pay for their own crimes in hell forever. **This will be a great tragedy since no person needs ever to go hell—Jesus has paid our debt in full!**

Of course, our redemption is based on the principle of—**the innocent dying for the guilty.**

Under the **old sacrificial system** God allowed **animals to be substituted for guilty sinners**—but they had to be ‘*without spot or blemish*’. That was a system (Old Covenant) where the blood of animals could be substituted for the blood of the person who had sinned against—i.e., had broken God’s law.

As God spoke through the Prophet Ezekiel— “*The soul that sins shall surely die*” (Ezekiel 18:20); and in Leviticus 17:11—“*I have allowed the blood of animals to make atonement for your soul (for your life that you should not die for your sins)—for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.*” (Also—Hebrews 9:22)

Of course, the main problem with the Old Testament sacrificial system was that the blood of animal sacrifices would only **temporarily cover sins until the next sin** (the next time a Jew broke one of God’s laws)—then they were pronounced guilty and would have to bring another animal sacrifice to the priest to be offered for their sin.

But under the **New Covenant**, God ordained that **one sacrifice would be sufficient to atone for all of our sins forever**—and that would be **the sinless Lamb of God** whose sacrifice wouldn’t just *temporarily* cover our sins but would **forever pay their penalty** and take *them away* once and for all time:

John 1:29-30 (NKJV)

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "**Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!**"

Hebrews 9:12, 14 (NLT2)

¹² With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever...¹⁴ ... For by the power of the eternal Spirit, Christ offered himself to God as a perfect sacrifice for our sins.

REFLECTION: What are the main differences between the Old Testament sacrificial system of redemption and the New Covenant practice?

Hebrews 10:12-14 (NLT2)

¹² But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time [i.e., ‘once forever’]. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God’s right hand. ¹³ There he waits until his enemies are humbled and made a footstool under his feet. ¹⁴ For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy.

- **Of course, our redemption is based on the principle of—the innocent dying for the guilty.**
- But for a man to be born innocent (without a fallen sin nature) he would have to **be virgin born**—why? Because in Adam all die (not in Eve).
- The **sin nature is passed down from the father to his children**—and the only way for someone to be born without sin would be for them to be virgin born (born without the seed of an earthly father in conception).

And there was only one Man born into this world from a virgin—and that was the God Man, Jesus Christ

Matthew 1:22-23 (NKJV)

²² So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ²³ "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

Only God could have redeemed us from the penalty of sin and death—because only God could have lived a perfect life and therefore been worthy to die for fallen sinners “the innocent dying for the guilty.”

This is what Jesus was referring to in John 17:5—

John 17:4-5 (NKJV)

⁴ I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵ **And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.**

John 1:29-30 (NKJV)

²⁹ The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰ **This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'**

REFLECTION: What does it mean “the innocent to die for the guilty?”

Jesus was born physically six months *after* His cousin John in His humanity—but in His divinity (as the eternal God)—He has always existed.

John 1:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.**

When John says, “**In the beginning was the Word**” he uses the imperfect of the Greek word *eimi* which expresses the idea of “*continuous timeless existence.*”

This is in contrast to the word for “**was**” in verse 3 “**All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.**”

In verse 3 the word John uses for ‘**was**’ is the Greek word is “**egeneto**” and means “*to come into existence*” or to “*begin to be.*”

So, John wants us to be clear that the ‘Word’ (Jesus Christ) brought forth the physical creation—it (the physical universe) had a beginning.

But the One Who created all things, the Lord Jesus, already existed before everything in the physical realm was created.

➤ *Why is that such an important point for John to communicate to us?*

It's important because John is presenting the divinity of Christ by first of all talking about the pre-existence of Christ to the creation of the material universe or in other words—the *eternality* of Jesus Christ.

This, of course is consistent with other verses in the Bible—such as:

Micah 5:2 (NKJV)

² "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Though* you are little among the thousands of Judah, *Yet* out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth *are* from of old, from everlasting."

Psalm 90:2 (NKJV)

² Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever You had formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.

This completely refutes what is known as the "Arian Heresy."

Arias taught that Jesus was a created being—that He was greater than a mere mortal man but less than Almighty God. (This is the heresy the Jehovah's Witnesses have embraced)

In John's condensed course on Christology, he tells us first of all that Jesus wasn't a created being—He has eternally existed; and secondly, that He isn't less than God—He is equal with Almighty Jehovah God—because He is Almighty Jehovah God!

John 1:1 (NKJV)

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Hebrews 1:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ But to the Son *He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. ⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."*

Again, my point is presenting all of this is so that everyone is clear that **Jesus had to be God in human flesh to redeem those born of Adam**—and complete the work the Father had given Him to do (John 17:4). In so doing, He put on display one of God's greatest attributes—the absolute, unconditional love of God for lost sinners.

John 3:14-16 (NKJV)

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Once again, the theme of eternal or everlasting life permeates John's Gospel—but was also the first words out of the mouth of Jesus when praying His High Priestly prayer—expressing perfectly the heart of the Father:

1 Timothy 2:4 (NKJV)

⁴ who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

REFLECTION: What is the greatest of God's attributes?

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower— please, reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Reach out to us [here](#).

Want to know more? Click [here](#).