

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

JOHN 17:6 I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.

7 Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee.

8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.

9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

10 And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.

11 And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.

12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.

16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

17 Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

18 As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

19 And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

NOTES

Jesus' Prayer for His Disciples

Lesson Text: John 17:6-19

Related Scriptures: John 6:35-40; 17:1-5, 20-26

TIME: A.D. 30

PLACE: Jerusalem

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GOLDEN TEXT—"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:16).

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Lesson Exposition

PRAYER FOR THE FAITHFUL— John 17:6-10

Gift of the Father (John 17:6). As the chapter opens, we read that Jesus "lifted up his eyes to heaven" and prayed. This was the beginning of Christ's great intercessory prayer on behalf of His apostles and disciples. In praying this prayer, He was already undertaking the office of high priest.

Christ manifested the Father's name to His disciples (John 17:6); He revealed the true character and nature of God the Father to them.

The people Jesus prayed for here are those whom the Father had given Him. They came to Him through faith, believing in the words He spoke to them. They had also remained obedient to His words since they had begun following Him.

Reception of His words (John 17:7-8). Some three years with Jesus had led the disciples to the conclusion that His words and deeds were from the Father.

Glory through their faith (John 17:9-10). Jesus here specifies the objects of His high priestly prayer. He is not praying for all people of the world without exception. His prayer is of-

fered exclusively on behalf of those whom the Father has given to Him.

The world that Jesus was not praying for was the world that is opposed to God and His plan to save sinners through faith in Jesus Christ.

Those who belong to Jesus also belong to the Father, and vice versa. That being so, Christ is glorified in them.

PRAYER FOR PROTECTION— John 17:11-12

Although He was physically still in the world, in a real sense Jesus could declare, "I am no more in the world."

Since Jesus would be taken from them, it was appropriate that He pray for the disciples' welfare in His absence.

It was important that the apostles remain unified in their testimony and their mission. They all shared a single Lord and a single mission. Later in His prayer, Jesus prayed specifically for those who would come to believe through the testimony of the apostles (John 17:20). He prayed that they also would be unified so that succeeding generations might likewise believe their testimony about Him.

Mentioned in Jesus' prayer was

“the son of perdition” (John 17:12), a reference to Judas Iscariot. The word “perdition” includes concepts such as destruction, damnation, and hell itself. The term conveys the truth that Judas was sent by Satan and was doomed to perdition for His betrayal of Christ, as had been prophesied.

PRAYER FOR JOY AND PRESERVATION—John 17:13-16

Joy amid hatred (John 17:13-14). Knowing that His time on earth was now limited, Jesus prayed that His disciples would experience joy.

Because Christ had given the apostles His words, the world hated them because they were not “of the world.”

In but not of the world (John 17:15-16). While we might think that the way to protect His disciples would be to shelter them from the world, that is not what the Lord desires.

It is detrimental to the Great Commission to isolate believers from society at large on a long-term basis. It is only as we interact and communicate with the people of the world that we can be effective witnesses for Jesus.

Jesus did pray that the disciples be kept “from the evil” (John 17:15). The disciples needed to be protected from the deceptive tactics of Satan. After all, their writings were to become the foundation of the church (cf. Eph. 2:20). Jesus was praying that the Holy Spirit would miraculously protect them so that they could complete their legacy of the inspired Scriptures.

PRAYER FOR HOLINESS—John 17:17-19

Set apart by the Word (John 17:17). The word “sanctify” means to be made holy—to be set apart for a holy purpose. The words “holy” and “saint” derive from the same root word. Sanctification is mainly a progressive process that begins after conversion and

continues throughout our lives.

While we usually think of God’s Word in its written form in the Bible, these men had been given God’s Word directly from the mouth of the Son of God Himself. Some of them would actually be instrumental in penning the words we have in our New Testament.

Set apart for a mission (John 17:18-19). A theme running throughout the Gospel of John affirms that Christ was sent by the Father.

The apostles themselves were about to be sent into a hostile world to carry on the mission and ministry of Christ.

For the sake of His disciples, Christ sanctified Himself to complete His divine mission. He did this so that His apostles in turn would be sanctified to carry on His mission.

—John Alva Owston.

QUESTIONS

1. What office did Jesus undertake in praying the prayer recorded in John 17?
2. What does it mean that Jesus manifested the Father’s name to His disciples?
3. How had the disciples responded to God’s Word?
4. Which world was Christ not praying for?
5. Why is unity among Jesus’ disciples important?
6. Who was the son of perdition?
7. How did this person fulfill Scripture?
8. Why is it essential that Christ’s disciples remain in the world?
9. Why was it so important that the apostles be protected from Satan?
10. What does “sanctify” mean?

—John Alva Owston.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. Our relationship with the Son rests in the Father's giving us to Him (John 17:6-8).
2. Believers can draw strength from knowing that Jesus prays for us (vss. 9-10).
3. Jesus knew that His disciples would need to be strengthened upon His absence (vss. 11-12).
4. We can take great comfort in knowing that Jesus commits us to the Father for safe keeping (vss. 13-14).
5. Our goal should be to change the world for the Lord (vss. 15-16).
6. We were called to be drastically different from the world (vss. 17-19).

—Charity G. Carter.

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Why is it important to know and firmly stand upon the truth that Jesus was sent by the Father (John 17:8)?
2. Jesus prayed for current and future believers. How does knowing this impact your thoughts today (vss. 9-10)?
3. Why did Jesus ask the Father to keep those who belong to Him?
4. Has the Father ever kept you from evil in the midst of a trying situation that He did not immediately remove you from (vs. 15)?
5. What does it mean to be sanctified through God's truth (vs. 17)?

—Charity G. Carter.

Golden Text Illuminated

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16).

The people of God who entered into Canaan went home to a place they had never been before. For like reason, Hebrews 11:13 and I Peter 2:11 call the people of God “strangers and pilgrims” on earth.

Jesus asserted that His disciples were not “of” this world. In the Greek, the preposition is *ek*, which in this passage is best understood as “from.” Jesus was not from this world, and He stated that His disciples are not from this world either (cf. John 1:12-13).

Accordingly, Jesus asked the Father to keep His disciples from the evil one. It is important to note that when God says something, it comes to pass. When He said, “Let there be light” (vs. 3), light appeared. Similarly, when Jesus prayed that the Father would keep His disciples from evil, this became true as well (cf. Jude 1:24-25).

Immediately after Jesus prayed this prayer, He and His disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus was betrayed. If we still wonder about our true status in this world, the events of Jesus' betrayal, arrest, and death should leave no doubt that we are aliens and strangers here.

Now we dream of heaven as home, but more than this, our final home is New Jerusalem, where heaven and earth merge (Rev. 21:1-3). In that city, God and the Lamb sit on the throne, and the river of life is proceeding from it (22:1). This is our home, but we have never been there. If not before, I will see you at our homecoming!

—David Samuel Gifford.