

Connecting Minds

"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31)

The Gospel of John

Chapter 17:6,9

"I have manifested Your Name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word... I pray for them. I do not pray for the world, but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours."

"Whom You have given Me out of the world..." The Greek word for "world" is Kosmos. This word can mean the physical universe, heaven and earth. It also means the mass of people, everyone alive on the earth. Further yet, it can mean the "world" as it stands in opposition to God. If we look at the way Jesus uses the word in verses 6 and 9 it would appear that the primary meaning of Jesus' words is that He is speaking of the world as it opposes God - "I do not pray for the world *but* for those You have given Me..."

The Christian's position with regard to the world is that he or she has been given to Christ from out of the world, a world that lifts itself up in opposition to God. Sanctification (growing into holiness) begins with understanding our position in Christ. If we are a Christian it is a certain fact that we have been given to the Son out of the world. But how can we tell if we are of the world or not? In the parable of the four soils Jesus describes how the cares of the world and the pleasures of life will cause you to be unfruitful. If you are of the world there will be no growth of the Christian life in you for it will be choked out by the greater desires of the world (Mark 4:18,19, Luke 8:14). We are not to look to our works or to our fruitfulness *for* salvation. Nor are we to look for some mystical, invisible mark that we call election. We are told to look to fruitfulness as a mark of life, of election.

But what of the world? We have been given out of the world to the Lord Jesus. So what is Jesus' regard to the world? In verse 9 He tells us that He does not pray for the world. This might seem harsh. "Jesus doesn't pray for the world?" we might ask. How unkind. How unchristian even. It may even seem inconsistent with what we see in the scriptures. After all, we do see Jesus praying for sinners in the New Testament. Even from the cross He

prays for God to forgive His murderers. Paul calls us to make “all supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks [to] all men, for kings and all who are in authority...” (1 Timothy 2:1,2). Many of those in authority in Paul’s day were pagans who were persecuting Christians.

So there must be a particular, singular way in which Jesus does not pray for the world. The truth is that He does not intercede for them, the world, as their Mediator or as their Saviour. We must remember that this prayer in John 17 is Jesus’ High Priestly prayer. He is praying for His people in a special way as the Mediator, the Intercessor, the Redeemer.

To use the Old Testament analogy, the world’s names are not on the breastplate of our great High Priest. Exodus 28:29 reads “So Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel on the breastplate of judgment over his heart when he goes into the holy place...” The world’s names are not on the “breastplate” that Jesus wears as our great High Priest. The world is not brought to God in the holy place. The world is not close to the heart of Jesus in this special, saving manner. Does this produce sadness? Not all will be saved. We know this. But we should never be gleeful about it. Jesus’ wept over the unbelieving city of Jerusalem. Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes “I do not know if you can tell me of a sadder statement in Scripture than John 17:9: ‘I pray not for the world.’”¹

Let us pray for our unsaved family members, friends and co-workers.

TableTalk

Read Galatians 1:4 and 1 John 2:15. We have been taken out of the sinful world and given to Jesus Christ. What effect should this knowledge have upon us?

¹The Assurance of Our Salvation, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, pg. 218