

Jesus' Prayer for His Disciples

Key Verses:

***“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”
—John 17:20,21***

Selected Scripture: John 17:14-24

have loved you.” (John 13:34) Later, the Apostle John, recognizing the fact that Jesus had literally given up his life on behalf of others, expounded further on this “new commandment,” instructing us that “we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” (I John 3:16) In obedience to this commandment of love for the brethren, and under the directing influence of the Holy Spirit, Jesus’ footstep followers throughout the present age

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ministry, he invited those who followed him to be his disciples, saying, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.” (Matt 16:24) To carry out these instructions requires that one give his all in service to God and, as Jesus’ disciple, to also undergo trials and testing. Those who faithfully follow the Lord’s footsteps in this regard can claim the promise, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him.”—II Tim. 2:12

The night before his death, Jesus said to his disciples, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I

have engaged in the work of laying down their lives in sacrifice and service for one another.—I John 4:7-11

After giving his disciples the “new commandment,” Jesus prayed for them. “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.” (John 17:9) Although Jesus’ petition was specifically on behalf of the eleven disciples who were with him at that time, our Key Verse shows that his prayer encompassed all of his faithful followers throughout the entire Gospel Age. He prayed for all of his present and future followers because he knew that difficult trials and hard experiences would come to all of them in due time. (Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:20; Rom. 8:16-18) Jesus prayed “not for the world,” because the work of the present age is not for the world’s conversion, which will come about when his Messianic kingdom is established.—Matt. 6:10

In his prayer, Jesus said that his footstep followers “are not of the world.” (John 17:16) He then petitioned his Father: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” (vs. 17) In asking God to sanctify his disciples, Jesus was requesting of the Father that he provide all the experiences which would be necessary for his followers in order to set them apart from the world, and to make them holy. This sanctification work, we understand, does not mean perfection in every thought, word, or action in life, for that is not possible under present imperfect conditions. It does mean, however, the development of perfection of intent in the “meditation” of the heart.—Ps. 19:14

Through the words of his prayer, uttered nearly two-thousand years ago, Jesus exhorts us to have the same mind, desire and disposition as he had, and which allowed him to do the will of his Heavenly Father. This brings about our oneness with him, and with the Father—a oneness of purpose and love for God’s glorious plan of salvation for all mankind. “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”—John 17:21 ■