

### Exegesis

**Vs. 13** – “And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.” Again, Jesus' imminent departure is the catalyst that has prompted this prayer. So, as before (cf. 14:25; 15:11, 17, 21; 16:1, 3, 4, 6, 25, 33), when Jesus says "these things," he is referring to the Farewell Discourse (13:31-16:33).<sup>1</sup> And again, as with his parting words, Jesus' parting prayer was intended to elicit "joy," not sorrow (cf. 14:28; 15:11; 16:6, 20-24). No doubt, great mourning still lay ahead (cf. Lu. 22:62), but an even greater morning awaited the apostles (cf. 20:1). They would soon experience the sort of exultation that is eternal, the kind which "no man" will be able to snatch from their hearts (16:22; cf. 10:10; Ac. 5:41).

**Vs. 14-16** – “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. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

Jesus says, "I have given them thy word" (cf. vs. 6-8). Again, we're reminded that the Lord did not take credit for things he said. Before his words were his own, they were first his Father's. This transmission of information from the Father to the Son to the apostles has caused nonbelievers to become antagonistic toward believers. Jesus says, "The world hath hated [his followers], because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (cf. 7:7). The disciples were once a part "of the world" (vs. 6; cf. 15:19), but the moment they were cleansed by Christ's word (cf. 15:3), they became a part of a *different* world. Just as Jesus was never truly a part "of the world,"<sup>2</sup> so will the disciples never again be considered citizens "of the world." They've become sojourners in their own country (cf. 1 Pet. 1:17; Phil. 3:17-21). And as such, if "the world" hated the Son of God, so will haters of God hate the children of God (cf. 13:33; 15:18).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Carson (1991), p. 564, agrees that "these things" refer to the Farewell Discourse. However, he also speculates that the Lord may be talking about just the prayer and, if so, suggests a close parallel with 11:42. There, the Lord prayed out loud for the benefit of those present.

<sup>2</sup> Morris (1995), p. 645, "That Jesus is not of the world is easy enough to understand. This Gospel reiterates the truth that his essential being is heavenly; he came from God."

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., "Insofar as they side with this revelation, the disciple infuriate the world. The world loves its own, and the disciples are *not of the world* [author's emphasis], but are of God and his revelation. This revelation, in presenting the truth and commanding assent, condemns the world and exposes its evil (3:19-21; 7:7), and the world snarls with savage rage."

Given the hostility that awaits Jesus' followers, one might think that Jesus himself would desire that his disciples would be spared the same aggression he faced. But the Lord doesn't request such a thing. And just so there's no confusion about this point, he says, in no uncertain terms, "I pray *not* [emphasis added] that thou shouldest take them out of the world." By saying this, the Lord is superior to many OT saints. For instance, the prophet Jonah prayed, "O Lord, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live" (Jon. 4:3). Or take, for example, Elijah, who, in despair, once said, "It is enough; now, O Lord, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live" (1 Ki. 19:4). Jesus is even better than the famed Moses who, driven to madness by the Israelites, pleaded, "I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favor in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness" (Num. 11:14-15).<sup>4</sup>

Trouble is inevitable for followers of God (cf. 16:33). This is because Christians have been tasked with changing the world by being "salt" and "light" (cf. Mat. 5:13-16). What good is salt if it is not used to season a bland meal? The salt must be utilized, or else it serves no purpose. What benefit is light if it is not used to brighten a dark room? The light must be activated, or else it serves no function. Likewise, what advantage is Christianity if it does not try to quicken a lost world? Believers must be engaged with unbelievers, or else they serve no objective.

Earlier, Jesus said the disciples would follow in his footsteps (cf. 13:36), so why doesn't he want them to go with him now? If God's children were taken out of the world, how could children of the world become the children of God (cf. Rom. 10:14-17)? Though Christ was not *of* the world, he came *into* the world so that he might save us *from* the world (cf. 1:9-13; Heb. 2:14-18). Similarly, disciples, though no longer *of* the world, must be *in* the world so that they might rescue others *from* the world. Once saved, Christians ought not to turn and burn, leaving the world behind, but they should turn and return, invading enemy territory in the hopes of saving others. Faithful disciples do not abandon those in the world; they seek adoption.

Rather than ask God to teleport people out of the world when they get saved, Jesus petitions his Father to "keep [believers] from the evil." The term "evil" could refer to wickedness in an abstract sense, but it almost certainly refers to a specific being: *Satan*.<sup>5</sup> This is because Jesus never refers to the world *impersonally*. Whatever evil we might see in the world is evidence that "the ruler of this world" is at work (cf. 12:31; 14:30-31; 16:8-11; Eph. 6:12; 1 Jn. 2:13-14;

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<sup>4</sup> Morris (1995), p. 646, and Köstenberger (2008), p. 495 mention Moses, Elijah, and Jonah as contrasting examples to Jesus.

<sup>5</sup> Carson (1991), p. 565; Morris (1995), p. 646, "They are to be "in" Christ (16:33; 1 Jn. 5:20) and therefore "out of" the evil one. They have a task to do in the world, so it is important they should be in the world. But it is equally important they should be kept from evil, for evil is fatal to the discharge of their task."

3:12; 5:18-20).<sup>6</sup> Evil is not some inanimate force but an intelligent and malevolent entity (e.g., Star Wars, the dark side vs. the light side). If God is to be known by his good deeds (cf. Ja. 1:17), why not the devil for his evil ones? As creation is the handiwork of God (cf. Ps. 19:1), the fall of creation is the handiwork of the god of this world (cf. 2 Cor. 4:4).<sup>7</sup>

Jesus praying that his followers be kept "from the evil [one]," is reminiscent of Luke 22:31-32 where the Lord said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you [plural], that he may sift you [all] as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted [i.e., you have returned], strengthen thy brethren." As we know, the faith of all the disciples evaporated at Gethsemane (cf. Mar. 14:50). But Peter's fall was exceedingly terrible since he not only deserted Jesus but went so far as to deny the Lord *three* times (cf. Mar. 14:66-72). Satan had taken and scattered the apostles like wheat in a sieve; that old serpent had got what he wanted. But little did he know that those strewn and cast aside would be brought together once more. Though the apostles' faith had failed them, God would not (cf. Phil. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:3; Jude 24). Thus, should a Christian be overcome by sin, there is always hope for restoration (cf. Gal. 6:1). For the Lord to "keep [us] from the evil" does not mean believers will live a sinless life but it does mean evil's inescapable grip has been broken. We are no longer "servants of sin" under the dominion of the Evil One but "servants of righteousness" under the authority of the Holy One (cf. Rom. 6:14-23). As Carson puts it, "The followers of Jesus are permitted neither the luxury of compromise with a 'world' that is intrinsically evil and under the devil's power, nor the safety of disengagement. But if the Christian pilgrimage is inherently perilous, the safety that only God himself can provide is assured, as certainly as the prayers of God's own dear Son will be answered."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Klink (2016), p. 721; Köstenberger (2008), p. 495.

<sup>7</sup> Of course, humanity lent a helping hand in its own demise. But Satan, being the one who instigated it, bears greater responsibility for the fall.

<sup>8</sup> Carson (1991), p. 565.

## VIDEO DESCRIPTION

### **Deep Dive: The Gospel of John | Week 73 | John 17:13-16**

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

Today, Jesus' prayer will move in *a surprising* direction. He'll establish that the apostles are not "of the world," and because of that, they'll be hated "by the world." Knowing this, we might expect the Lord to pray that his followers will be *removed* from the world and thereby be *removed* from any danger. Instead, Jesus prays that the Father would "keep them from the evil [one]." In other words, the Lord is far more concerned with our spiritual *fidelity* than our physical *safety*.

Of course, this does not mean God cares not for our physical well-being; he, in fact, cares a great deal (cf. Matt. 6:25-34). However, the issue at hand deals with distinguishing between two things of differing important levels. After all, should one forfeit their life for Christ's sake, they will undoubtedly find it again. However, should one forfeit their soul, what hope would they have (cf. Matthew 16:25-27)? And so, Christians must be aware that though we are "in" the world, we mustn't be "of" the world. The longer we follow Jesus, the less we will feel at home in this world. And this is as it should be.

**Pastor's manuscript can be found here:**

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