

John 17:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

I pray for them (ἐρωτῶ περὶ αὐτῶν, erōtō peri autōn)—Christ makes explicit the scope of His high-priestly intercession. The verb erōtaō indicates intimate request between equals, used elsewhere only of the Son addressing the Father. This is not generic prayer but covenant advocacy.

I pray not for the world (οὐ περὶ τοῦ κόσμου ἐρωτῶ)—the κόσμος here means the rebellious system opposed to God, not individual sinners whom Christ came to save (3:16). This verse delimits the scope of His present priestly prayer, not His redemptive work. He intercedes specifically for **them which thou hast given me** (ὧν δέδωκάς μοι)—the elect given by the Father before the foundation of the world. The perfect tense dedokas emphasizes completed action with ongoing results: these belong irrevocably to Christ. **For they are thine** (σοί εἰσιν)—divine election is ultimately the Father's sovereign choice, executed through the Son's redemptive work.

Historical Context

Spoken in the upper room on Passover night (AD 30), hours before Christ's arrest. This is the culmination of the "high priestly prayer" (John 17), where Jesus intercedes for His disciples before going to the cross. The distinction between "the world" and "those given to me" reflects Jewish covenant theology—God chose Israel from among the nations, and now Christ speaks of the new covenant community.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does Christ's specific intercession for the elect provide assurance that He is praying for you if you trust in Him?
2. What does the phrase "they are thine" reveal about the relationship between the Father's election and the Son's redemptive work?

Interlinear Text

ἐγὼ περὶ αὐτῶν ἐρωτῶ οὐ περὶ τοῦ κόσμου ἐρωτῶ
I **for** **them** **I pray** **not** **for** ^{G3588} **the world** **I pray**
G1473 G4012 G846 G2065 G3756 G4012 G2889 G2065

ἀλλὰ περὶ ᾧν δέδωκάς μοι ὅτι σοί εἰσιν
but **for** **them which** **thou hast given** **me** **for** ^{G4671} **they are**
G235 G4012 G3739 G1325 G3427 G3754 G1526

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 9:24 (Parallel theme): For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

John 17:2 (Parallel theme): As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

John 17:6 (Parallel theme): 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.

John 17:20 (Prayer): Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;

Luke 22:32 (Prayer): But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

1 John 5:19 (Parallel theme): And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

John 14:16 (Prayer): And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;

Revelation 20:15 (Parallel theme): And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

Revelation 13:8 (Parallel theme): And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Hebrews 7:25 (Parallel theme): Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.