

LUKE 2:25-35
DESTINATION BETHLEHEM—A GRAVE

“There was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

‘Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation
that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel.’

“And his father and his mother marvelled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, ‘Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.’”¹

Chrismons are symbols of the Christian Faith. Chrismons are an increasingly popular form of decoration for Christmas Trees, especially in Christian homes. Chrismons have come down to us through history. The word “chrismon” is a combination of the words “Christi monogramma,” meaning “monogram of Christ.” Chrismons are meant to be symbols representing Christ or representing some aspect of His ministry. The source of inspiration comes from the Scriptures, which are full of “Names of Christ” illustrating His character and work and that are easily demonstrated with objects. We think of such symbols as the fish, the dove, the shepherd’s crook, the chalice, the shell and the Celtic cross.

Like parables, chrismons are earthly symbols with heavenly meanings. They were designed, carved and drawn by the earliest Christians and have been found on jewellery and utensils, just as they are found in the catacombs, on doors and buildings. They were symbols used by early Christians to show their faith to the world. They were always displayed in gold and white to symbolise majesty and purity.

Among the items which could qualify as a Chrismon, none is more symbolically accurate than that of a tomb. The Son of God was born to die—and to rise again. Perhaps the first person to see clearly that the Son of God was born to die was an old man named Simeon. We know little of the old man except that he was righteous and conscientious concerning the Word of God. He read the Scriptures and under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit he realised that the time for the birth of the Anointed One was present. He lived in anticipation of the birth of God’s Messiah.

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Moved by the Holy Spirit, this godly man went into the Temple at the precise moment when the infant Jesus was being brought into the precincts by His parents. The Word of God is careful to say that Simeon came in the Spirit; the Word specifically notes that he was moved by the Spirit to go into the Temple courts. We are left with the clear assumption that he anticipated the revelation of the Messiah that day. Simeon went to the Temple in expectation of seeing what God was doing for the benefit of mankind.

As Simeon waited in the Temple court, Mary and Joseph brought their firstborn son into the Temple. Ostensibly, they brought the child in order to name him and present Him before the Lord. They would offer the sacrifice required for a firstborn son, acknowledging that He belonged to the Lord. Before they were able to perform even one aspect of the required ritual, Simeon approached them, lifted the child from His parent's arms and began to praise God.

The Greek and the Latin read as follows:

Nyn apolyeis ton doulon sou, despota,
kata to rhēma sou en eirēnē;
hoti eidon hoi ophthalmoi mou to sōtērion sou,
ho hētoimasas kata prosōpon pantōn tōn laōn,
phōs eis apokalypsin ethnōn
kai doxan laou sou Israēl.²

Nunc dimittis servum tuum Domine,
secundum verbum tuum in pace:
quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum,
quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum:
lumen ad revelationem gentium,
et gloriam plebis tuæ Israēl.³

The song of praise which broke from Simeon's heart to rise to the heavens is known as the *Nunc Dimitis*, from the first words in the Latin version of this canticle. Focus with me on this song as together we learn something of God's grace and learn also something of God's wisdom. Join me in exploration of the Word in this final message in this series studying the convergence of God and man at Bethlehem more than two millennia past. Review the account of Simeon as he witnessed God's grace in the Temple when the child Jesus was brought in to be presented before the LORD.

GOD PREPARES PEOPLE TO RECEIVE HIS PURPOSE — God's purposes are open; they are ever available for scrutiny by those wishing to know what He is doing. God never works in darkness to accomplish His will. This is not to say that God never works during those times we think He is silent; rather, it is to say that in the great, divine plan for all mankind God has worked openly and without fear of exposure. There is a reason that God works openly in order to accomplish His will. That reason is stated in the opening words of John's Gospel.

² Kurt Aland, Barbara Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini and Bruce M. Metzger, **Novum Testamentum Graece, 28th Edition** (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 2012)

³ **Biblia Sacra Juxta Vulgatam Clementinam, Ed. electronica** (Logos Bible Software, Bellingham, WA 2005)

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men” [JOHN 1:1-4].

Later, John will state of darkness, “This is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God” [JOHN 3:19-21].

Near the end of his life, the aged servant of God iterated this divine truth as he drafted his first missive. The Apostle of Love stated yet again the message he had faithfully delivered throughout his ministry. “This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, in him is no darkness at all” [1 JOHN 1:5].

When Paul appeared before Agrippa and Festus, he articulated a wonderful truth. He gave his testimony, explaining how God saved him and appointed him to divine service. Explaining this divine work in his own life, Paul affirmed a marvellous truth. “To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles” [ACTS 26:22, 23].

Porcius Festus, governor of Judea, had invited Herod Agrippa the Second, king of Palestine, to hear Paul’s defence of charges proffered by Jewish leaders hostile to the Christian Faith. As Paul explained his call to service, the governor broke in, exclaiming, “Paul, you are out of your mind; your great learning is driving you out of your mind” [ACTS 26:24].

Note Paul’s response to Festus’ interjection. “I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner” [ACTS 26:25, 26]. Especially notice the Apostle’s final words: “This has not been done in a corner.”

The message of Christmas is that God has ever worked for the benefit of mankind—even before the creation of the world. At the beginning of his first letter, Peter wrote of God’s glorious purpose. “If you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God” [1 PETER 1:17-21].

Christ the Lord was chosen before the creation of the world to be the Lamb of God. When John the Baptist saw Him coming at the initiation of His brief ministry, he cried out, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” [JOHN 1:29]! Christ our Master was born that He might die, that He might give His life as a sacrifice. The Apostles are united in testifying that God works openly to accomplish His purposes in salvation. How did these men know of the divine purpose?

Simeon, moved by the Spirit to enter the courts at the precise moment that the baby Jesus was being brought into the Temple, praised God:

“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation
that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel.”

[LUKE 2:29-32]

I take note that Simeon had been told that he “would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.” God had a witness to what He was doing in bringing His Son into the world. His witness was not confined to an angel choir, nor to Gabriel, nor yet to astronomical phenomena; God readied a witness who could identify with the remainder of fallen mankind.

When our first parents sinned, God Himself gave them hope. He promised,

“I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
He will crush your head,
and you will strike His heel.”

[GENESIS 3:15]

In the midst of looming misery, God spoke of deliverance from the effects of the curse, though it would be at the expense of death for the One promised who would be known as the “Seed” (literal meaning of *zar'ah*). Later, mankind was divided into two distinct groups—those who walked according to their own wisdom and those who would thereafter “call upon the Name of the LORD” [see GENESIS 4:26]. Those who walked according to their own wisdom exalted their own desires over the will of God. Those who called upon the Name of the Lord were individuals seeking the will of God—they sought to honour Him as God and to do His will.

Adam himself proclaimed the coming deliverer, as did Abel and his brother Seth. The list of faithful prophets continued through Noah; and after the Flood this godly lineage continued through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Witnessing the steady march of time toward the revelation of God’s Messiah, we note a succession of faithful prophets who spoke of His coming. Samuel, David and Solomon each spoke and wrote prophetically of the coming Lord. Many prophets wrote of His rule, including each of the Major Prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. Many of the Minor Prophets wrote of Him. Among them are included Joel, Amos, Obadiah and Micah. Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi each pointed to the coming Lord of Glory.

Throughout the long history of the race, God has always had a witness to His purpose. After the grace of God was revealed in the birth of His Son and the fulfilment of His purpose, God raised up Apostles and prophets and evangelists and pastors and teachers [see EPHESIANS 4:11-13] so that all mankind would be confronted by the truth.

I know this to be true. I recognise this truth because I see it revealed throughout the Word of God. I further recognise this truth because I have heard it proclaimed repeatedly throughout the brief days of my pilgrimage. Now, by God's mercies I have received appointment as an individual by which this truth is echoed to you who hear me. God called me, just as He appoints many to declare His message of life, a message calling all to life in the Son of God. God has not left Himself without witness to the divine purpose; He has raised up many heralding the truth that God is ever at work, calling men to repentance and providing a means by which their sin can be put away.

Each Christian, each follower of the Way, is appointed by God to declare the truth of Christ the Lord. Jesus commanded all who follow Him, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" [MATTHEW 28:19, 20].

The purpose of God is salvation for all who are willing to receive it, and this is faithfully proclaimed, just as the Word of God declares. "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, 'Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

"How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!' But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?' So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" [ROMANS 10:9-17].

GOD'S PURPOSE IS DISPLAYED OPENLY — The first advent of the Messiah was not secret. Angels filled the heavens with their joyous exclamation heard by shepherds tending the sheep destined for sacrifice in the Temple. The Word informs us that the angels were saying,

"Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased."

[LUKE 2:14]

God was glorified and man received the message of life which is delivered until this day. If you receive God's salvation, you also will discover the peace of God today. Salvation will break out on you like the measles; you cannot keep the work of God secret for long. Your life will be transformed and you will find it impossible to remain in darkness.

A brilliant star appeared drawing Magi from ancient Persia to worship the child. Their journey brought them to Jerusalem where a king was enraged at the purpose of their journey. That corrupt king added to his bloody heritage by slaughtering innocent babies—every infant boy two and under. Just so, receipt of God's peace and life may mean that you will pay dearly in this world, as the Christ Himself has said.

Jesus warned His followers, “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have been guilty of sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. Whoever hates me hates my Father also. If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin, but now they have seen and hated both me and my Father. But the word that is written in their Law must be fulfilled: ‘They hated me without a cause’” [JOHN 15:18-25]. To embrace the child is to invite unreasoning, irrational hatred from those identified with the world. His presence and the peace which He brings will compel you to choose between Him and the world about you.

Similarly, when the child was presented in the Temple, men and women recognised as righteous spoke of the child’s purpose. Simeon was recognised by those who worshipped as a righteous and devout man—as a man who waiting for the consolation of Israel [see LUKE 2:25]. Anna was a prophetess distinguished for her worship and recognised for her fasting and praying.

Let me step aside for a moment to make a statement which may be of some help to you. We often speak of our singing as worship. Precision demands that we acknowledge that worship does not consist of songs. Our singing is praise. Worship is seeking hard after God—seeking that is marked especially by prayer and meditation. Worship is primarily thoughtful contemplation of the Word of God coupled with energetic response to the demands of the Word whenever it is read or preached. Worship prepared Simeon and Anna to recognise the Messiah when He was presented; but their response when He was presented was to praise Him. Just so, as we worship we seek the Lord; but when He is revealed among us we will praise Him. This point is incredibly vital in our world today for we confuse worship and praise to our own detriment.

The promise of God throughout the long centuries following the Fall of our first parents was that God would provide a sacrifice to set mankind free. When the child was born, God made it apparent that the child was born to fulfil the divine promise. Listen again to Simeon’s words to Joseph and Mary. “This child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed” [LUKE 2:34, 35].

Peter recognised that Jesus during His days in the flesh caused many to fall. Writing in the first letter to believers scattered in the Diaspora are recorded the teaching of 1 PETER 2:4-10. “As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture:

‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’

So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,

‘The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,’

and

‘A stone of stumbling,
and a rock of offense.’

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” The presence of the Christ was a source of scandal which brought about the downfall of many and the salvation of yet others.

With His first advent, God called to life those long excluded from the covenants of grace. We Gentiles received a position as sons of God within the Family of God. The Jews, long blessed of God because of their heritage, were not excluded. Do not think ill of the Jews, for they are loved by God. The Apostle has written of the Jewish people, “They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen” [ROMANS 9:4, 5].

Here is the glorious truth concerning the Son of God. The purpose of His first advent was so that He might present His life as a sacrifice in the place of sinful man. He was born that man might live. He would be compelled to taste death for every man ere His days on this earth were complete [see HEBREWS 2:9]. Thus, it is said that “by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” [HEBREWS 10:10].

This same Jesus is coming again, and just as His first advent was open for all to witness His Second Coming will not be a secret. He shall come the second time to judge those who rejected His provision provided during the days of His flesh. Listen to the Word of God concerning this issue. “It was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” [HEBREWS 9:23-28].

Just as the Son of God Himself has said, “The Son of Man is going to come with His angels in the glory of the Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done” [MATTHEW 16:27]. Later, on the verge of His passion, this same Jesus encouraged those who would follow Him. “As the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” [MATTHEW 24:27]. Christ the Lord is coming to judge the world of sin, because they do not believe in Him [see JOHN 16:8-11]. Though it is impossible for any man to state when He shall come, we are assured that Christ the Lord is coming again; and Christmas is the promise that He shall come again.

Just as His first advent was open for all to witness, so His Second Coming will be open and all mankind shall witness that return. Exiled on the barren Isle of Patmos, the aged Apostle John wrote of the Second Coming of the Son of God. He penned a dedication of the message he faithfully delivered. John wrote, “To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen” [REVELATION 1:5b-7]

With confidence born of the truth and according to God’s own Word we announce to all who hear, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” [2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-21].

All this is evident from the birth of the Son of God. We know that, “When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God” [GALATIANS 4:4-7].

GOD’S PURPOSE IS OUR SALVATION AND HIS GLORY — If ever a principle was enshrined in and obvious through reading the Word of God, it is this principle which states that the purpose for Christ’s first advent is salvation for all who will receive it. One truth predominates over all other truth in the Word of God: the Son of God came to give His life because of sinful man. It has been truthfully said that a scarlet ribbon runs throughout the Word of God. On every page is found a reference to the death of the Son of God. Every sacrifice offered on Jewish altars pointed forward to the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. Since His sacrifice, every prayer is a confession that He is God, providing His life in the place of sinful man.

The court prophet, Isaiah, looking forward to the coming of the Son of God, wrote more than seven hundred fifty years in advance of the event. He spoke of the purpose for the Messiah’s coming when he wrote,

“For to us a child is born,
 to us a son is given;
 and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
 and his name shall be called
 Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
 Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
 Of the increase of his government and of peace
 there will be no end,
 on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
 to establish it and to uphold it
 with justice and with righteousness
 from this time forth and forevermore.
 The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”

[ISAIAH 9:6, 7]

A child is born, and a Son is given. The child who was prophesied to come was coming that He might give His life as a sacrifice for God’s fallen creation.

Simeon spoke of God’s salvation, an open secret prepared for and presented before the sight of all the people. The salvation of which Simeon spoke was to be a light opening the way to life for the Gentiles and serve to honour Israel. This is precisely what God has accomplished in presenting His Son. “Salvation is from the Jews” [JOHN 4:22]. The romance of salvation is the account of God’s gracious preservation of a godly line through the Jewish people until the time was fully prepared for the advent of His Son.

How very powerful is that statement which Paul makes in the Ephesian Letter. “In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” [EPHESIANS 1:11-14].

Christ died to provide salvation for all who are willing to receive Him. This is the message of Christmas. Thus, we invite all who will receive the message of life, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” [ROMANS 10:9, 10].

I must take a moment longer to emphasise another wonderful truth. For Christians, this truth will be a source of rich encouragement once we have grasped what is promised. For outsiders, this same truth will serve as inducement to consider Christ Jesus as Master over life. In providing salvation, God is glorified. The wonderful truth is that we are invited to share in that glory. Listen to this closing statement concerning God’s purpose in saving us. In 2 THESSALONIANS 1:3-10 the Apostle to the Gentiles has written these encouraging words for believers. “We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.

“This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.”

To all who will celebrate the Spirit of Christmas, this final prayer of our Lord speaks to His purpose in calling us. “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours. All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them” [JOHN 17:1-26]. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus.