

WHAT WORLD ?

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

In my years of Bible study and labors to defend the subjects of Election and Predestination, there has been no text presented to me, by those who oppose, more than John 3:16. In the minds of those who oppose these two precious doctrines, the word "world" is enough to refute and win the debate that God intended to save everybody, not just an elect family. But after a thorough study, this verse, and every other verse in scripture, will be found in perfect harmony with Ephesians 1:4, Romans 8:29-30 and other texts that clearly teach election and predestination.

Let me begin by asking the reader, (a) If the Lord loves the entire world without exception, why did Jesus Christ not pray for the entire world in John 17:9? Jesus Christ, in the recorded prayer of John 17, did not "pray for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine." (b) If the Lord loves the world without any exceptions, why are we told not to love the world in 1 John 2:15? It would be reasonable to think that if the Lord loved, we should be commanded of Him to love also, right? (c) If the Lord loved the entire world without any exceptions, why are we told by James if we are the friend of the world, we are the enemy of God? James makes it very clear in James 4:4 that if we are the friend of the world "we are the enemy of God."

Secondly, let me ask the reader, Have you considered how the Bible uses the word "world"? (a) In Luke 2:1 we read of a "decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." The world of this verse was the world of the Roman Empire under the reign of Caesar Augustus. (b) In Romans 1:8, the Apostle Paul writes the Church at Rome and tells them that "your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." It would be difficult, if not impossible, to believe that the American Indians were speaking to one another about the Church at Rome, so Paul must have been referring to the world of the disciples of Christ. (c) In 1 John 5:19 the Apostle John makes a distinct difference between the disciples of Christ and the world. John says "we know we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." John, in this verse of scripture, did not include himself, nor the disciples in that world.

Thirdly, let us consider how the Bible refers to the Gentiles as the nations of the world. (a) In Matthew 6:31-33, the Lord Jesus Christ exhorts us to seek first the Kingdom of God. While doing so, He tells us that the Gentiles seek those natural things daily. In Luke 12:30, in a very similar statement, the Lord calls the Gentiles "the nations of the world". (b) In Mark 16:15, the Lord commissions the Apostles to "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." And yet, in Matthew 10:5 Jesus had commanded them not to go unto the Gentiles and Samaritans. When Jesus says "world" in Mark 16:15, He is commanding the gospel to be preached to those Gentile nations (world) as well as the Jews. (c) In Romans 11:15, the Apostle Paul calls the Gentiles the world when referencing the disobedient Jews being cut off from God's blessings in the Gospel. Paul says that the disobedient Jews being cast away, led to the "reconciling of the world" (Gentiles) to the truth of salvation.

After considering all the above, I trust that every reader is able to see that John 3:16 is not referring to a world without exception, but to an Elect World (only God's children) without distinction. Jesus is telling Nicodemus that He has children all over the world, "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev 5:9), not just among the Jews. God has a world, a specific world. It's the world of His people, and He loved them before the foundation of the world (planet). Amen!

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