

# COMMENTARY ON JOHN

## LESSON NUMBER 33

*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. <sup>17</sup> For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.”*** .....John 3:16-17)

### **FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In Jesus’ words, there were many things communicated. First, what He said was always the truth in the purest and most extensive sense: Words like *“of a truth I say unto you,”* or *“I tell you **the truth**”*<sup>NIV</sup> (Mk 12:14; ; Lk 12:44; 21:3). Poignantly He asked, *“And if I **say the truth**, why do ye not believe Me?”* (John 8:46). His words were an indication of the will of God: *“For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, **what I should say, and what I should speak**”* (John 12:49). There was not a sense of obsolescence in Christ’s words, for He said they *“shall not pass away”* (Matt 24:35). There was also an enlivening effect to His words. He said, *“**the words** that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”* (John 6:63). The purposeful retention of His words will result in God loving the individual, and God and Jesus coming and making their abode in such an one (John 14:23). Jesus also said, *“If ye abide in Me, and **My words abide in you**, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you”* (John 15:7). Upon careful examination, you will find that all of these affirmations are clearly implied in what the Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus. Whenever Jesus spoke, whether to His disciples or to the multitudes, no one got the idea He was merely sharing an opinion, or that He was speaking about something that was unimportant or incidental. His enemies would not have been angered by His words if He was merely speaking of novel things, or something of fleeting interest. His words were also with gravity – obviously that extended beyond the novel, current events, and that were merely curious. It ought to be noted that Jesus is not properly represented by such presentations. Nor, indeed, does the Holy Spirit work with words that have no obvious connection with God and His will. This is one reason why men are warned about their words (Matt 12:36-37). May the Lord Jesus be seen as the One who has set the standard for talking.

### **FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD**

*John 3:16A* ***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son . . .”***

This is one of the most frequently quoted verses of Scripture. That very circumstance has caused men to give little attention to it, and to assign cursory meanings to it. However, this is a word spoken by the Lord Jesus, who Himself was *“the Word”* (John 1:1,14), and whose name is now *“the Word of God”* (Rev 19:13).

This statement is also made within the context of the necessity of the new birth (John 3:7), being able to see *“the Kingdom of God”* (John 3:3), and entering *“the Kingdom of God”* (John 3:7).

Its contemporary use often ignores these realities, and this statement is too often presented from an emotional or sentimental point of view .

**FOR GOD.** This is a statement about God, and for that very reason it is to be approached with the greatest sobriety and interest. This chapter refers to *"the kingdom of God"* (3:3,5), **God** loving (3:16), **God** sending (3:17), the objective of **God** (3:17), the *"Son of God"* (3:18), deeds that are wrought by **God** (3:21), **God** being *"true"* (3:33), *"the words of God"* (3:34), **God** giving the Spirit to Jesus without measure (3:34), and *"the wrath of God"* (3:36).

**SO LOVED.** Other versions read, *"had such love,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"loved <sup>1</sup> the world in this way,"* <sup>CSB</sup> *"this is the way God loved,"* <sup>NET</sup> *"this is how God loved,"* <sup>NJB</sup> *"loved the world so much,"* <sup>NLT</sup> *"so greatly did God love,"* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *"thus God loved,"* <sup>ABP</sup> *"This is how much God loved,"* <sup>MSG</sup> and *"God so greatly loved and dearly prized the world."* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

As used here, the word translated "so" [houtu] means "IN THE MANNER SPOKEN OF; IN THE WAY DESCRIBED; IN THE WAY IT WAS DONE; IN THIS MANNER; IN SUCH A MANNER," <sup>THAYER</sup> "IN THIS MANNER, IN THIS WAY," <sup>FRIBERG</sup> "SO, THUS, IN THIS WAY," <sup>LOUW-NIDA</sup>

This does not refer to the measure of God's love, but to its manner. When reading of the love of God, expressions like *"How much,"* *"so much,"* applies objectively more to Jesus the Son than to *"the world"* (John 3:35; 5:20).

**It was a provisional love,** which is certainly a *"great love."* Thus it is written, *"But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved"* (Eph 2:4-5). Again it is written, *"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rom 5:8).

**THE WORLD.** Here, *"the world"* does not equate to every individual. It rather refers to the whole race, all humanity, the offspring of Adam as a whole. Compare it with *"the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation"* (Jude 1:6a). Rather than providing for their recovery, God *"hath reserved [them] in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day"* (Jude 1:6b). The *"so loved"* provides insight into the Divine response to the sin of mankind – the **accumulated** sin of mankind. *"So loved"* does not address His personal attitude toward the individual sinner, or even the inherent value of the sinner. That some of this is involved in the love, cannot be denied. However, the manifestation of Divine love is seen in **the provision** He graciously made for sinners. If you were to remove Jesus from the circumstance, the love of God would not be focused on any man, let alone, sinners as a whole.

Even though man had sinned as a group, just as the fallen angels that sinned, God *"so loved"* the world–i.e. He loved in a manner that provided a means of escape from the wrath of God.

**THAT HE GAVE.** Other versions read, *"He gave His one and only Son,"* <sup>NIV</sup> *"His only Son,"* <sup>NRSV</sup> and *"His only and unique Son."* <sup>CJB</sup> O, this transcends all human comprehension. Man – all humankind – sinned, and something had to be done about it. God's nature would not allow Him to ignore man's sin. Further what needed to be done could not be accomplished by man. So God assumed the liability Himself. He acted as though the sin had been committed on the side of Deity. He would give His only Begotten Son as a sin offering. The sins were *"laid upon"* Christ (Isa 53:6), and God did to Him what man deserved to be done to him–i.e. He was forsaken (Matt 27:46), cursed (Gal 3:13), and made to be sin (2 Cor 5:21). God *"gave"* Christ by delivering Him up (Rom 4:25) to pay the debt created by fallen humanity. He did it to spare the race, rather than bind it in chains of darkness until the day of judgment – like He did the angels.

**THE EFFECT OF KNOWING THIS LOVE.** When men see what God's love moved Him to do, it will have a calculated effect upon them quite unlike thinking that He loved you personally *"so much."* This is a love that provided a way out of the condemned state, but it

cannot be personally experienced unless men believe on the Son, which point is made in the next clause. God had made men for His own glory (Isa 43:7), and He refused to abandon that purpose. Our rescue demanded that God Himself do something about our condition. It was His love that moved Him to do something – *“even when we were dead in trespasses and sins”* (Eph 2:5). The fact that God *“loved”* us [Adam’s offspring] moved Him to do something **before** we personally had been born. Further, the remedy addressed **the whole of sin from Adam to the end of the world** – a marvelous manifestation of His love.

### **THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM**

<sup>16B</sup> . . . *that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*”

**THAT.** Other versions read, *“so that,”* <sup>BEB</sup> and *“And this is why: so that.”* <sup>MESSAGE</sup> This is the reason God *“gave His only begotten Son”* – gave Him in death on the cross. The stated effects could not have taken place if Jesus did not lay down His life, and take it up again (John 10:17-18). It was all contingent upon God delivering Jesus up for us all (Rom 8:32). Sin could not be ignored by God. Something had to be done about it, and only God could do it through Jesus Christ. This is why it is so wrong to tritely consider sin, or to be tolerant of it, or not to hate it.

**WHOSOEVER.** Other versions read, *“whoever,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“everyone,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> and *“anyone.”* <sup>LIVING</sup> No person who meets the qualification will fail to realize the promise – **but the stipulation must be met, just as it is stated.** All of the distinctions are included: Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female (Gal 3:28). No person will be disqualified upon the basis of age, race, social status, or gender. That is because sin leveled the playing field. All are guilty of sin, and no natural condition or status can negate the fact that they have sinned.

**BELIEVETH IN HIM.** Other versions read, *“believes in Him,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“believeth on Him,”* <sup>ASV</sup> *“has faith in Him,”* <sup>BEB</sup> *“trusts in Him,”* <sup>CJB</sup> *“is believing in Him,”* <sup>YLT</sup> *“commits himself to Jesus,”* <sup>IE</sup> *“who trusts in Him,”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *“trusting in Him,”* <sup>ABP</sup> *“believing into Him,”* <sup>LITV</sup> and *“believes in (trusts in, clings to, relies on) Him.”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The word *“believeth,”* or *“believes,”* is in the “present” tense, and the “active” mode. <sup>THAYER</sup> It is NOT in the past tense, and does not refer to something that has already been completed. It is properly viewed as *“is believing,”* as compared to *“has believed.”* It speaks of a condition in which a person **IS** persuaded of the true identity of Jesus, **IS** trusting Him to both save and keep, and **IS** relying on Jesus to bring him to glory. The word *“believed”* speaks of when we *“first believed”* (Rom 13:11). It speaks of the commencing of believing, not its completion (Acts 13:48; 1 Cor 3:5; 15:11; Gal 2:16; Eph 1:13; 2 Tim 1:12). Believing *“in Christ”* has to do with His true identity. Believing *“on”* Him has to do with trusting Him, relying upon Him, and resting the weight of our souls upon Him. This believing is presently taking place.

Technically, the proper translation is expressed in the LITV (Literal Translation of the Holy Bible) – *“believing into Him.”* The word translated *“in”* [eis] means *“A PREPOSITION GOVERNING THE ACCUSATIVE, AND DENOTING ENTRANCE INTO, OR DIRECTION AND LIMIT: INTO, TO, TOWARD, FOR, AMONG.”* <sup>THAYER</sup> **That is, believing is the means by which we come into Christ, or are joined to Him, and is the means by which that unanimity is maintained.**

The promise that is now articulated is only for those who have believed, and continue to believe. It is only for those who *“continue in the faith”* (Col 1:23), fight the good fight of faith (1 Tim 6:12), and *“keep”* the faith (Rev 14:12; 2 Tim 4:7). It is not for those who *“depart from the faith”* (1 Tim 4:1), make *“shipwreck of the faith”* (1 Tim 1:19), *“deny the faith”* (1 Tim 5:8), or are overtaken by unbelief, *“departing from the living God”* (Heb 3:12).

**SHOULD NOT PERISH.** Other versions read, *“may not perish,”* <sup>NRSV</sup> *“may not come to destruction,”* <sup>BEB</sup> *“being utterly destroyed,”* <sup>CJB</sup> *“will not die.”* <sup>GWN</sup>

The word translated "*perish*" [apollumi] means, "TO PUT OUT OF THE WAY ENTIRELY, ABOLISH, PUT AN END TO, RUIN: RENDER USELESS, CAUSE ITS EMPTINESS TO BE PERCEIVED." THAYER To "put out of the way," is to remove from the arena of human activity – the place in which salvation can be realized. To "abolish," "put an end to," and "render useless," is to remove any utility or usefulness. It does not remove one's being, but makes existence totally useless and vain – something that will produce unspeakable suffering and horrors, for man was made to be someone and do something. In its various forms, "*perish*" occurs forty times from Matthew through Revelation. It is a state from which believing in Jesus delivers us.

**BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE.** This is everlasting productivity, eternal response to Jesus, non-ending usefulness, and ever-increasing joy. It is an uninterrupted knowledge of, and association with, God the Father, and Jesus Christ the Son. It involves an understanding that brings unparalleled benefit and joy, and an increasing knowledge that yields unequalled satisfaction. "*Everlasting*," or "*eternal life*" begins now, while we are in the world, yet not of it, being in Christ Jesus. However, it is presently like a tributary of the river of "*the water of life*" (Rev 22:1-2). In this world, eternal life is like a mighty river that flows around some "*miry places*" and "*marishes*" that are not healed (Ezek 47:11) – i.e. the "*old man*" (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9), "*fleshly lusts*" (1 Pet 2:11), "*ungodliness and worldly lusts*" (Tit 2:11-12), and "*members*" that have to be "*mortified*" (Rom 8:13; Col 3:5). In this circumstance, "*faith*," which is given to us for our tenure in this present evil world, gloriously triumphs over these obstacles. It enables us to lay hold on eternal life, developing a stronger hold upon it, so it does not slip from our grasp. This is why God "*gave His only begotten Son*" – not to fulfill our worldly ambitions, but so could overcome the world.

### **NOT TO CONDEMN THE WORLD**

*"<sup>17</sup> For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved."*

**FOR GOD.** It is true that Jesus "*came into the world*" (1 Tim 1:15). Nine times Jesus said "*I came*" (Matt 10:34; Mk 2:17; Lk 5:32; John 6:38; 8:14; 12:47; 16:27; 28; 17:8). That is, He volunteered to come, saying to the Father, "*I come to do Thy will, O God*" (Heb 10:9). However, in the expression of this text, the Lord traces the ultimate cause for Him coming into the world back to God Himself – God the Father.

**SENT NOT HIS SON INTO THE WORLD.** Jesus confessed that the Father had "*sent*" Him (John 5:23; 6:40; 10:36). Peter preached that God "*sent*" Jesus (Acts 3:26). Paul wrote that "*God sent forth His Son*" (Gal 4:4). John wrote that "*God sent His only begotten Son into the world*" (1 John 4:9,10,14). The purpose belonged to God the Father, and Jesus came to do His will. He Himself confessed, "*For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me*" (John 6:38). Jesus said the Father "*sanctified*" Him, and sent Him "*into the world*" (John 10:36). On the eve of His betrayal, Jesus said to His disciples, "*I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father*" (John 16:28). Jesus did not come to be a part of the world, but to finish a work in the world, and return to His Father. If it was not for the work He had been assigned to do – lay down His life and take it up again (John 10:17-18) – He never would have come into the world.

**NOT TO CONDEMN THE WORLD.** Jesus came as a "*Light*" into the world (John 12:48), yet He did not come to condemn the world, even though the light exposed their sinful condition. This means that humanity could not be saved from its condemned status until it knew the truth about itself. God would not save men in an ignorant state, which means salvation is more than Divine pity. The Lord does have pity for those who fear Him, praise the Lord: "*Like as a father pitieth His children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear Him*" (Psa 103:13). However, without Jesus

coming into the world to lay down His life, men would have been condemned anyway, pity or not.

Although it was necessary for men to be shown their status, that was not the finality of the matter. They would be shown that they were in a condemned state, which was the result of Adam's sin. As it is written, *"Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life"* (Rom 5:18). However, Jesus' purpose and ministry does not end with the exposure of man's lost state.

**BUT.** Other versions read, *"so that,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"but rather,"* <sup>CJB</sup> *"but in order that."* <sup>NRSV</sup> As pointed out in previous lessons, Jesus did not come to give Israel political prominence, or to calm the political waters, or to resolve the problems of humanity, or to make households stable, or that everyone might have good health, and realize their worldly ambitions. Particularly, He did not come to *"condemn the world."* It was already condemned. Condemnation was man's current state, and he needed to know about it. However, the purpose for which God sent Jesus into the world is that it, through Him, *"might be saved."*

**THAT THE WORLD THROUGH HIM MIGHT BE SAVED.** *"Saved"* involves being delivered from this present evil world (Gal 1:4), being *"delivered from the power of darkness"* (Col 1:13), being cleansed *"from all sin"* (John 1:7), purging the conscience from dead works (Heb 9:14), and being *"delivered from the wrath to come"* (1 Thess 1:10). It also involves being justified from all things (Acts 13:39), being reconciled to God (Rom 5:9-10), being called into the fellowship of Jesus (1 Cor 1:9), being translated into the Kingdom of God's dear Son (Col 1:13), being seated with Christ in heavenly places (Eph 2:6), being sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb 10:10). Being saved includes being baptized into one body (1 Cor 12:13), placed in that body where it pleases God (1 Cor 12:18), experiencing the crucifixion of the *"old man"* (Rom 6:6), and our bodies becoming the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). There is no such thing as a saved state that does not include such things – and there would not be a saved state if Jesus did not humble Himself, take on the form of a servant, and die for our sins.

The person who does not believe in Jesus, flee to Him for refuge (Heb 6:18), and cleave to Him with purpose of heart (Acts 11:23), has rejected the only provision God will ever make for sin and sinners. In that condition he is locked into a state of condemnation, even though full provision has been made for a triumphant exit from sin, and a thorough cleansing from iniquity. The fact that this is so unreasonable to multitudes confirms the powerful delusion of the devil, and the staggering weakness of the natural man. Yet, all of this can be thoroughly overcome by believing in the Son of God! As one believes in Him, God will put Him in the Son (1 Cor 1:30), provide complete and effective protection, and accomplish unity with the Godhead. That will give every advantage required to safely negotiate through the world to glory. It is insanity to reject such provision.