

Series: John

Title: The World God Saves

Text: Jn 12: 19

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When Christ entered Jerusalem—great crowds ran out to meet him—laying palm branches before him—crying, “Hosana, Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

John 12: 19: The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

Did the whole world go after the Lord? Was it everyone in the world without exception? No. They meant many. The word “world” and “all” is used in scripture in this way many times.

Believers often try to declare the good news of the gospel to our friends and loved ones. Our desire is to give them the good news of how God the Father elected, chose whom he would in Christ before the world was made by his free and sovereign grace without a cause in us. We declare to friends and family that the Son of God, Christ Jesus, laid down his life and accomplished the redemption of his particular people. It is good news to us and we want our neighbors to know that each elect child must and shall be regenerated by the Holy Spirit and called to faith in Christ. Since we are born dead in sins, unable, unwilling until the Spirit gives us life and faith it is good news to know that God shall quicken and call every sinner Christ’s redeemed. We declare salvation is of the Lord so that no sinner shall glory in God’s presence.

1 Corinthians 1: 30: But *of God are ye in Christ Jesus*, who of God is made unto us Wisdom and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption; that as it is written, he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord.

But when we declare the gospel to men and women, especially religious men and women, the most common objection is to quote to us the first half of John 3:16, “God so loved the world!” Sometimes they object using the second half of 2 Peter 3: 9, “*God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*” Others object using 1 Timothy 2: 4, God “*will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*”

A long time ago I preached a message looking at scripture where the words “world” and “all” are used. Recently, someone told me how some of these scriptures were used when they declared the gospel. So I thought it might be helpful to look at a few of these scriptures again.

SCRIPTURES USING THE WORD “ALL”

These are scriptures which some vainly think teach the false doctrine of universal atonement saying that Christ died for all men without exception. This doctrine is false.

Headship is vital to understanding the gospel. So we will begin in Romans 5. Here God shows how Adam was a type of Christ in Headship. The latter half of Romans 5: 14 says Adam was “the figure of him that was to come.” Adam was a type of Christ to come. Adam and the Lord Jesus are heads who represented “all” their children. They are heads of “all” the children that have and shall be born of each.

By the disobedience of Adam, “all” whom Adam represented sinned in Adam. Therefore, they “all” died in Adam. Since we all are born of Adam the word “all” here means everyone without exception.

Romans 5: 12: Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon ALL men, for that ALL have sinned:...18: Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon ALL men to condemnation....

Are all born of Adam? Yes. Our first birth was from Adam to his children, to their children, on down to you and me. So here “all” means everyone without exception. All are children of Adam. All were in Adam. All sinned in Adam. And all died spiritually.

But the good news is that Adam was a type of Christ in Headship. The same as Adam represented “all” his children, so Christ represented “all” his children. “All” who God elected to save were in Christ, “all” made righteous by the Lord Jesus and “all” shall be born of Christ.

Romans 5: 18: Therefore as by the offence of one [Adam] *judgment came* upon ALL men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one [Christ] the free gift came upon ALL men unto justification of life.

The same as condemnation came upon all who Adam represented, so the free gift of righteousness came upon “all” who Christ represented. The only way we believe on Christ is by being born-again of the Spirit of God. Are all born of the Spirit of God? No. But all who Christ represented have or shall be born again by the Spirit of God because Christ made all his people righteousness by his obedience. Christ perfectly obeyed God’s law for all who he represented. He satisfied justice on the cross for all his people. Therefore, all must be regenerated and given faith in Christ. It would be unjust for God to condemn one who Christ made righteous by his obedience.

Notice in verse 19, what each head did “all” who he represented were “made.”

Romans 5 19: For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Adam's disobedience did not make us susceptible to become sinners based on what we did. By one man's disobedience all whom Adam represented were made sinners. Even so, Christ's obedience did not render us savable depending on us doing something. All who Christ represented “*were made*” righteous by Christ's obedience. It says “shall be made” because we must be born-again of God and brought to faith in Christ. That is how the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. All for whom Christ died shall be born of the Spirit of God and given faith because Christ accomplished the work of making each one righteous.

Notice in verse 21, the same as Adam’s sin reigned unto death, Gods’ grace reigns unto life by Christ.

Romans 5: 21: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

The false doctrine of universal atonement says that Christ did not succeed in making his people righteous but only made salvation possible. That is a universal failure! The same as sin reigned unto death, grace reigns unto eternal life by Jesus Christ. In other words, Christ shall not fail!

In 2 Peter chapter 3 we find another passage using the word “all”. Since we are born spiritually dead, Christ’s people must be born-again of the Spirit and be given repentance toward God and faith in Christ Jesus. Since Adam caused us to be born spiritually dead then it has to be by God’s will that we are born-again and granted repentance. In this passage the apostle Peter is declaring that the reason Christ is waiting to return is because he still has a people that he redeemed who must be born again of the Spirit through the preaching of the gospel. God is not willing that any who Christ redeemed perish but that all shall be brought to repentance.

2 Peter 3: 9: The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance....15: And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation;

Notice, it says “*God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*” Men say this means that it is God’s will that all sinners should come to repentance. But they make it God’s wish. They portray Christ as having done all he can, now it is up to the sinner. God is merely wishing all would believe. Or they use this to say it is not God’s will to punish any for sin so want you please believe on Christ so God will not be disappointed. It is as if God is waiting and hoping that sinners will believe on him. That is not true of the true and living God. God is sovereign to work his will. If God wills it, God does it.

Daniel 4:35...he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

In 2 Peter 3: 9, the “usward” are God’s elect chosen by God’s grace in Christ.

Ephesians 1: 3: [God the Father]...hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6: To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved....11: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

Whatever God wills God does. He elected a people to save by his will. He sent his Son Christ Jesus who redeemed us because it was God the Father’s will. God the Father predestinated us to be adopted as children by his Son sending the gospel and the Spirit and bringing us to faith in him. We who have been called were given an inheritance because God predestinated us unto it according to his purpose and God works all things after the counsel of his own will.

So the apostle Peter is declaring that God is waiting until God works his will. That is until he has brought each elect child to repentance. We saw in Romans 5 how Christ made his people righteous by his obedience therefore God will not pour out justice on Christ and then on them too. So Peter declares the reason God is waiting to return is because he is “*longsuffering to usward [his elect], not willing that any should perish, but that ALL should come to repentance.*” Therefore, since God is sovereign to work his will he says in verse 15 “*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation.*” It means “all” who God wills to repent, God shall grant repentance and save us by Christ his Son.

Universal redemption says Christ made it possible to be saved. But it hinges on your will and decision for Christ. The old free will preachers used to say, “God voted, the devil voted and you must cast the deciding vote.” But, sinner, if your salvation is based on a decision that you made for Christ then you voted for the devil! If the Lord Jesus only made redemption possible, determined by the sinner, then salvation is not by what Christ did but what the sinner did. That is a blasphemous lie. Salvation is of God’s will. We are made willing only by the power of God creating in us a new will in the new birth. God the Father said to his Son, “*thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power*” (Ps 110: 3)

SCRIPTURE USING THE WORD “WORLD”

We will begin with the one scripture almost everyone knows, John 3:16. But we will look at the verses after it as well.

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. 17: For God sent not his Son into the WORLD to condemn the WORLD; but that the WORLD through him might be saved. 18: He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

When it says God sent his Son “that the world through him MIGHT be saved”, it does not mean maybe. It means that Christ shall save each one God sent his Son to save. “He shall not fail...” (Is 42: 4).

Context is always vital. In this passage the Lord is speaking to Nicodemus. He was a Jew who thought only the Jews were God’s elect. Christ declares that he has elect in all the world. That is why he used the word “*world*” and “*whosoever*”. He is saying the same thing as Revelation 5: 9:

Revelations 5:9:...[Christ] wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by [his] blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

God so loved his elect people who are scattered in all the world that he shall send the gospel and the Spirit shall regenerate us to life and faith in Christ “whosoever” they are, be they, Jew or Gentile.

Notice, before John 3:16, Christ declared we must be born-again of God the Holy Spirit.

John 3: 3: Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4: Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? 5: Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6: That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7: Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8: The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

It is because we are condemned by Adam’s transgression. We are born the first time spiritually dead. Read the verses after John 3:16.

John 3: 17: For God sent not his Son into the WORLD to condemn the WORLD; but that the WORLD through him might be saved. 18: He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19: And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20: For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21: But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

The condemnation is that men love darkness rather than Light and will not come to Christ because all died in Adam. That is why in John 3:14 Christ said he must be crucified.

John 3: 14: And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Most preach John 3:16 as stressing the greatness of God’s love—“*God so loved...*” But the word “so” means “after this manner.” The Lord Jesus declared we must be born again (vv3-8), the gospel must be preached to us (vv10-12), Christ must be lifted up on the cross in place of his people (vv13-14), and salvation is only through faith in Christ, apart from our works (vv15-17). It is after this manner that God loved his elect scattered throughout the world over all periods of time. All are saved the same way—through faith in Christ—whosoever they are.

The good news is God left nothing in our hands. Since God the Father chose his people in Christ and Christ redeemed his people, he shall send the Spirit and regenerated each one to faith in Christ. Christ said, “*no man can come to [Christ] except the Father draw him.*” (Jn 6: 44) It is after this manner God loves. It declares that God’s love is everlasting love. It means those God loves, God saves!

Romans 8: 35: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?...39: [nothing] shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Universal atonement declares God changes. It says he loves all the world. But if a sinner does not make himself be born-again and decide to exercise his will to believe on Christ then God stops loving him and condemns him. But God’s love never changes because God never changes. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. (Mal. 3:6; Job 23:13; James 1:17). God’s elect are sons of Jacob—sinners like our father Jacob. But though we sinned in Adam and were born sinners, God’s love did not change but called us to faith.

Malachi 3:6 For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Think about it. The doctrine of universal atonement reduces the love of God to nothing. Is it love not to secure the salvation of his people when God has the power to do so? If the word “world” always means all without exception as most people think it does then what about John 17:9? The Lord said,

Joh 17:9 I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.

God has his people scattered throughout the world. This is why we preach the gospel in all the world. Christ intercedes for those he loves, for those given to him of the Father by electing grace, and Christ shall call each one through the Spirit through the gospel. Are you one of the “whosoever?” Those he calls believe on Christ.

Always seek to understand scripture in light of Christ. Christ succeeded in making his people righteous. It is righteous that they never perish. Each one must be brought to faith in Christ and kept and none lost. That is good news when you know you are a sinner.

We find another scripture with the word “world” in 1 John 2.

1 John 2: 1: My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole WORLD.

This is written to “*little children*”, that is, to believers in Christ. It is because of what Christ has done for us that makes believers to never want to sin. John says, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” But we know that we do sin. Therefore, he gives us this word of assurance. This is the word that motivates us not to sin. When we do sin, we have an advocate with our heavenly Father. It is Jesus Christ the Righteous. He is our Righteousness. As our Advocate he makes intercession for us by his own Righteousness. It is by whom that we are made righteous. Again, John is writing to Jewish believers. But Christ is the Advocate and Propitiation, not for his elect-believing-Jews only, but for his elect, believing Gentiles wherever we are in the whole world.

Do you see? God has not left salvation in the hands of the sinner. God saves according to his will. Those God everlastingly loved, God made righteous in Christ his Son.

1 John 4: 9 In this was manifested the love of God toward us, [toward God’s elect] because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might [shall] live through him.10: Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son, the propitiation [atonement] for our sins.

We did not love God. God loved his elect. He sent Christ who is the propitiation for our sins. To propitiate is to appease or make atonement for sin. Christ succeeded in making atonement for the sins of his people. He reconciled us to God. Christ brought each of his elect into friendship with God by his blood. Then he called us to believe on him and made us experience reconciliation in our own hearts. God’s own justice demands we must be called to faith in Christ and no sin ever be laid to our charge.

Romans 8: 33: Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. 34: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

A FEW REMINDERS

One, when reading scripture never take for granted the words “all” and “world” mean everyone without exception. Sometimes it does such as Romans 3: 19. Here it declares all without exception are guilty sinners who cannot be justified by us attempting to keep the law.

Romans 3:19: Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and ALL THE WORLD may become guilty before God.

But most times the words “world” and “all” do not mean all without exception. It does not mean all without exception in our original text nor in Luke 2:1.

John 12: 19: The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.

Luke 2:1: And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that ALL THE WORLD should be taxed.

Secondly, always read the first verses of an epistle to notice that the letters were written to believers who God loved and chose before the world was made. They are written to those Christ redeemed and the Spirit sanctified.

Romans 1: 7: To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints

Three, the test in understanding all scripture is what gives God all the glory and the sinner none.

But the doctrine of universal redemption gives the sinner glory. It says Christ died for all and made redemption possible based on the sinner's choice. That exalts the sinner. But why do sinners object to God electing a people by grace. Why object to Christ accomplishing our redemption and the Spirit regenerating us and calling us to faith? It is a defense of man. It is a defense of man's will and man's decision. It is objecting to God having all the glory and the sinner none.

But the doctrine of universal redemption does not glorify God because it reduces God's wisdom to foolishness. They say God saw who would believe and that is why he chose them. But then they say Christ died for all. Is it wisdom to send his Son to save a people whom he knew would never believe on him? If God chose a people because he foresaw who would believe on him it would not be grace. If that were true then why does scripture say God predestinated us to be regenerated and sanctified by the Spirit? The truth gives God all the glory: God elected a people; Christ redeemed his particular people alone; the Spirit regenerates each one; salvation is of the Lord, apart from our works. This gives God all the glory and the sinner none.

But universal redemption does not give God the glory because it denies the justice of God. (Ps. 85:8-13; Prov. 16:6; Isa. 45:20-21). Why did Christ go to the cross? It was to declare the righteousness of God. It was to manifest how God can be just in that all his people died under the law's justice in Christ. And it manifests that God is the Justifier of his people because Christ is the Son of God who justified us (Rom. 3:24-26) Being saved by simply believing on Christ, apart from our works, excludes all boasting in ourselves and our works. But they say that God punished Christ then punishes those for whom he died. The truth glorifies God because Christ died for his elect and justified us. Therefore, the justice of God demands they cannot die but must be regenerated and given faith to believe on Christ—and each one shall. Christ said, “all that the Father giveth me shall come to me and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (Jn 6: 37).

But universal redemption glorifies the sinner. It says that Christ's work is not effectual unless the sinner let's God save him. That makes the omnipotence of God weaker than the will of man. Universal redemption declares multitudes are in hell for whom the Lord Jesus died in vain! But the gospel gives God all the glory declaring “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities” (Is 53: 11).

If one part of salvation were dependent upon us then we would have no reason to hope in the Lord. If the fails then why hope in the Lord. But here is the good news. Christ has never and shall never fail. Therefore, God says to every believer, "Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption" (Ps. 130:7)

Amen!