

G R A C E

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ◇ deo ◇ gloria

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Sermon Notes

For God So Loved the World

John 3:16-3:21

January 2, 2005

Interpreting Scripture

1. Understand that the Bible is authoritative, infallible, and inerrant
2. Approach Scripture prayerfully, humbly, and in submission to the Holy Spirit (i.e. the interpreter must be a Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ)
3. Understand the Scripture is generally clear in its message (this is known as the *perspicuity* of Scripture)
4. Understand that Biblical examples are authoritative and normative only when followed by or coupled with a command
5. Scripture has only one meaning – this is what we are seeking
6. Take Scripture as normal language; “plain sense of the language”
7. Understand the genre
 - a. Narrative
 - b. Parable
 - c. Historical
 - d. Apocalyptic
 - e. Prophetic
 - f. Poetic
 - g. Proverbial
 - h. Letters (Epistles)
8. Know the author.
9. Understand the historical context
10. **Know the audience.**
11. **Use Scripture to interpret Scripture**
(Interpret the difficult passages in light of the easy, straightforward ones)
12. **Understand Word Definition**
 - a. What does the word in question mean?
 - b. **NOTE: there may be multiple definitions, depending upon the context.**
13. **Understand the context of each specific passage – context is king!**

“[P]roblems of biblical interpretation are usually *our* problems, not the Bible’s! While there are indeed some passages in Scripture that, because of their subject matter, are intrinsically difficult to understand, most passages do not at all belong in this category. Fundamentally, the Bible is quite a simple and clear book. We, however, are sinful and ignorant. Whether because of our limitations or our laziness, we often fail to bridge the distance that separates us from the biblical text, and that is what gets us into trouble.”

Moises Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*

❖ **Note the danger of hastily interpreting familiar passages:**

“Many people suppose they already know the simple meaning of John 3:16, and therefore they conclude that no diligent study is required of them to discover the precise teaching of this verse.”
Arthur Pink (1886 – 1952)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

- ❑ Martin Luther called John 3:16 “the Bible in miniature.” Why?

1. **The Context**

- ❑ What is the context of John 3:16?
- ❑ Jesus is in a conversation with Nicodemus, a Pharisee
- ❑ The Pharisees, the Jews of Jews, believed that, because of their lineage [from Abraham], they would automatically be included in the resurrection
- ❑ Jesus’ point is clear: He is the Savior of the whole world, without distinction of national or ethnic origin
 - In other words, salvation would be for not just Jew, but Gentile also
- ❑ In his work, *The Sovereignty of God*, Arthur Pink writes the following:

Now the first thing to note in connection with John 3:16 is that our Lord was there speaking to Nicodemus, a man who believed that God’s mercies were confined to his own nation. Christ there announced that God’s love in giving His Son had a larger object in view, that it flowed beyond the boundary of Palestine, reaching out to "regions beyond." In other words, this was Christ’s announcement that God had a purpose of grace toward Gentiles as well as Jews. "God so loved the world," then, signifies, God’s love is international in its scope.

2. The Scope

- “For God so loved the world...”
 - Most Christians today would embrace the following reading of John 3:16 as the proper understanding of the verse:

“For God so loved each individual in the entire world without exception, that he gave his only begotten Son to die for each one of them, with the desire that each one of them be saved, so that whosoever believeth in him, of his own free will, should not perish, but have everlasting life.”
 - **The important question is:** What does the word *world* in John 3:16 really mean?
 - *World*, or ΚΟΣΜΟΣ; β , *kosmos*, in Scripture has **multiple** meanings:
 1. The Universe as a whole (Acts 17:24)
 2. The Earth (John 13:1; Ephesians 1:4)
 3. The World-system (John 12:31)
 4. Gentiles in contrast to the Jews (Romans 11:12)
 5. All the Unbelievers in the World (John 15:18; Romans 3:6)
 6. The Whole Human Race [without exception] (Romans 3:19)
 7. Believers Only [this would include Jews and Gentiles without distinction] (John 1:29; 6:33; 12:47; 1 Cor. 4:9; 2 Cor. 5:19)
 - There are at least seven different meanings in the New Testament for the word “world”
 - Which meaning, then, is most consistent with John 3?

Dutch Theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) wrote:

For if there is anything that is certain from a somewhat more attentive reading of Holy Scripture, and that may be held as firmly established, it is, really, the irrefutable fact, that the word, world, in Holy Scripture, means "all men" only as a very rare exception and almost always means something entirely different.

The Seventeenth Century Reformer Frances Turretin (1623-1687) wrote:

The love treated of in John 3:16...cannot be universal towards all and every one, but special towards a few...because the end of that love which God intends is the salvation of those whom He pursues with such love...If therefore God sent Christ for that end, that through Him the world might be saved, He must either have failed of His end, or the world must necessarily be saved in fact. But it is certain that not the whole world, but only those chosen out of the world are saved; therefore, to them properly has this love reference...

This does NOT mean that God does not show compassion, mercy, and grace toward those who are not His; it is just that John 3:16 does NOT declare that God loves each individual in the world [without exception].

- 1 John 4:9-10 states, “By this the love of God was manifested in **us**, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that **we** might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved **us** and sent His Son to be the propitiation for **our** sins.” [Emphasis added]

[NOTE: *propitiation* means “the turning away of wrath (of God) by an offering.”]

- Who is it that John is writing to (the **us** and **we**)?

- **Read 1 John 5:13:**

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

- **Read John 3:17.** What are the implications if “world” means every man without exception?

This is not Calvinism, as some would call it. This is not Reformed Theology, as others would.

This is the true Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- **What was the result of God’s love for “the world?”**
 - In other words, what did He do?
- The English Puritan John Owen, in his classic work, *The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, wrote,

To confirm the exposition of the word as used by Universalists, nothing of weight that ever yet I could see, is brought forth, but only the word itself; for neither the love mentioned in the beginning [“For God so loved...”], nor the design pointed at in the end verse [“that He gave is one and only Son”], will possibly agree with the sense which they impose on that word in the middle [“world”].

3. The Result

- **What is the result of true conversion?**
- **The question of the “whosoever’s.”**

Ou&twβ ga; r hj gavphsen oJ qeo; β to; n
 kovsmon, w&ste to; n ui Jo; n
**So for loved God the world so as the
 son**

to; n monogenh'
 e~dwken, i &na pa' β
 oJ
**the begotten (one and only) He gave in order that every
 one**

pi steuvwn ei j β auj to; n mh;
 aj povl htai aj l l # e~ch/ zwh; n
believing into Him not may perish but have life

ai j wvni on.
eternal

Literal Translation: For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, *in order that every one believing into Him should not perish but have life eternal.*

- Who, then, are the “whosoever[s]?” [King James Version]”
 - John 6:37 states, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.”
 - Read 1 Corinthians 1:18
- In other words, every individual whom God has purposed to save will _____.
- “The verse teaches that the giving of the Son guarantees the salvation of all the believing ones.”

Dr. James White, *The Potter’s Freedom*
- John Owen states,

He [God] prepared a way to prevent their everlasting destruction, by appointing and sending 'his only-begotten Son' to be an all-sufficient Saviour to all that look up unto him, 'that whosoever believeth in him,' all believers whatsoever, and only they, 'should not perish, but have everlasting life,' and so effectually be brought to the obtaining of those glorious things through him which the Lord in his free love had designed for them."

4. The Assurance

- **What assurance do we have of our Salvation?**
 - **Read John 3:19-21**
 - Note the distinction between “the world” and “men” in verse 19.
 - **What is the relationship between the one who practices truth and sin?**

5. The Two Great Questions

1. _____?
2. _____?

