

John 3:17-18

- The word from which “world” or “the world” in John 3 is translated, is the same in all cases. It is the greek word “kosmos”, and corresponds to Strong’s G2889.
 - God so loved “the world” (v16)
 - God sent not His Son into “the world”
 - God sent not His Son into “the world” to condemn “the world” (v17)
 - But that “the world” through Him might be saved (v17)
 - This is condemnation, that light is come into “the world” (v19)
- Thus, it is a very general term, which, according to “The Blue Letter Bible” has at least seven different meanings for this word. Hence, it is not possible from the word alone to determine its meaning. We have to consider the context.
 - First, Jesus came into “the world.” “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law”. God the Father “prepared a body” for His Son. The Son of God was born a man. That is how He came into this world. “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). He took part of our nature (Heb. 2:14).

Like the children predestinated to adoption (Eph. 1:5), He was a partaker of flesh and blood (Heb. 2:14). Thus, into the physical world of mankind, the Son of God. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). He was born. He grew from a baby into manhood. He spoke God’s word to men. He revealed God in His own person as Jesus of Nazareth, and in His own words and in His works. Thus, as a Prophet, He spoke and lived the message God gave to Him, making known God in His character, will, word and work (Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 7:37; John 15:25-28; Heb. 1:2). Especially in His sufferings and death, and His teaching about His suffering and death (e.g., John 3:13-15; 12:23-33), we learn of Him and of God by Him (John 14:6-9). In this first sense, “the world” means more than just this universe, this earth, this physical world. It means that, but more specifically, He came into this world — the world of mankind — as a man.

- Second, it is clear that in the context of John 3, verses 16-19, within “the world”, there are those who are loved of God (v16), who are saved (v17), who believe on the Son of God, believe the Son of Man who was the crucified, has risen and is now reigning in heaven (vv. 15, 16, 18, 36), who are not condemned (v18),

who do not perish (v16) and who have been given everlasting life (v15, 16, 36).

- But in contrast, within the same “world,” there are those who do not believe (vv. 18, 36), who are condemned, who perish, who do not have everlasting life.
- Moreover, in the broader scope of the Gospel of John, Jesus is the Bread of Life who gave His life for “the world” (John 6:33, 51).
- Hence, since Jesus came to do the will of God (Psalm 40:6-8; Heb. 10:4-18; Luke 2:49; John 5:34; 5:36; 6:37-38-40; 9:39; 10:15-18, 27-29; 12:23-33; 14:31; 16:7-11, 28, 33; 17:1-5; 19:28-30; Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:10-14), knowing that He finished that work, knowing that He, at all times, knows what He will do (Acts 15:18; John 6:6; Eph. 1:11), therefore, since He came to give His life for the life of the world, and that only some in the world have eternal life and are raised again according to the will of God (John 6:37-40), therefore, “the world” must, in some cases, refer to those given to Christ and so believing on the Son of God and given eternal life, and in other cases, those already condemned, perishing and not given eternal life (John 3:18).
- As God promised Abraham, “In thee and in thy Seed [Christ] shall all families of the earth be blessed, and

that blessing was, according to Gal. 3:16-19), justification by the blood and righteousness of Christ (Gal. 3:6-9), redeemed from the curse of the law and given the Spirit of God indwelling them (Gal. 3:13-14), and an eternal inheritance of eternal, spiritual and heavenly blessings (Gal. 3:29; Gen. 15:1; Eph. 1:3-7; Heb. 11:8-16; 1 Pet. 5:10; 2 Tim. 1:9-10; 2:10). Therefore, consistent with scripture, Christ came to bless with salvation all those given to Him of God as God's children of promise (Rom. 9:6-8; Gal. 4:28), who are, in time, given the Spirit of God with spiritual life by His Spirit (John 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6; Eph. 2:4), and with faith in Christ as their righteousness and salvation and Lord (Eph. 2:8-9; Acts 18:27; Jer. 23:5-6) according to the eternal will of God (Acts 13:48).

- Just as Abraham had two sons (Ishmael and Isaac), and Isaac had two twin sons (Esau and Jacob); and just as Adam and Eve had two boys (Cain and Abel), and yet, of these (and so many other cases like them in scripture), only one of those sons (Isaac, Jacob, Abel) was an elect, chosen child of promise, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb (Isaiah 43:1; Eph. 1:3-7), so that they were redeemed OUT OF EVERY kindred, tongue, people and nation; in the same way, out of this world into which the Son of God came, there are those

in the first category: loved of God, not condemned, believing, not perishing, given everlasting life and saved; while at the same time, there are those in that same world who do not believe, are condemned and do perish.

- Now, it was of the elect, who, according to God's predeterminate counsel and foreknowledge, were loved from everlasting (Jer. 31:3), loved to the end (John 13:1-2), loved of God the Father in Christ as adopted children by Christ (Eph. 1:4-6; Rom. 8:31-39), that "the world" refers in general. But it is of the elect Gentile world in particular that Jesus refers in John 3:16-17. I say that because, as John Gill proves from Jewish writings, the Jewish theologians believed when Christ came, He would destroy Gentiles and deliver Jews only. The elect from among both Jews and Gentiles were predestinated to sonship and eternal life (Rom. 8:29-30; Acts 13:48). For them, the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb, was ordained to be shed so that they did not perish under the wrath of God (1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; 21:27), but would have everlasting life, even life received from God with faith given by His Spirit.
- For all these, the Father delivered up and did not spare His Son (Rom. 8:32). And therefore, seeing God the Father would so love and give Christ for them, He

shall without fail, give them all things with Him (Rom. 8:32; Eph. 1:3-7)!

- These (elect, redeemed) all not condemned. Why? Because they are in Christ, and because Christ died for them (Rom. 8:1, 34). God does not condemn them, but rather, He justifies them by the blood and for the righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:33). Neither does Christ, the Son of God condemn them, for it was He who died to save them and now reigns to make intercession for them by His endless life, even to save them to the uttermost (Rom. 8:34; 5:10; Heb. 7:25)!
- God's love is saving (Zep. 3:17; Eph. 1:4-6; Rom. 8:29-39; Rev. 1:5; 1 John 4:9-10; Rom. 5:5-21).
- God's love is redeeming (Eph. 1:7; 5:25; Rev. 5:9).
- God's love is eternal in its commencement (Jer. 31:3).
- God's love is unchanging in its objects (John 13:1; Rom. 8:32-39). Nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord! Not our sins, for it is Christ who died to wash us from them and justify us in the presence of God by His own blood (Rev. 1:5; Rom. 5:9). Not anything in this present life, nor anything in the future, nor any angels, nor any devils, nor all the troubles that come in this life, nor any persecutions, nor any temptations, nor death or the

grave! But in these and in all things, Christ always gives us the victory (1 Cor. 15:57).

- God's love is unchanging in its degree (John 17:23-24). We are loved in Christ, loved in Him even as God loves His Son! God's love towards His own before our conversion is said by Him to rise to the highest possible level, so that even His love after our conversion is not said to be greater. And this is consistent with the immutable nature of both the love and person and counsel and will and purpose and work of God! We were chosen in Christ, adopted as sons by Christ before the foundation of the world, a kingdom was prepared for us before the world began, Christ was given in sacrifice to redeem us from our sins before time began (1 Pet. 1:20; Titus 2:14; Gal. 1:4; Acts 15:18). We were loved before, predestinated, called, justified and glorified in God's eternal covenant in Christ before we were born (Rom. 8:29-30; 2 Tim. 1:9). God gave Himself to be our God in an everlasting covenant made in the blood of His Son (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:10-12; 13:20; Gal. 3:16-19). He gave His Son for us in redeeming blood (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 5:9-10; Rom. 8:32; Zech. 13:7; Isaiah 53). He exalted His Son to be our Advocate and our Intercessor and to rule over all things in all places at all times to bring us to glory (John 17:2-3). He gave us

His Spirit while we were yet in our sins (Eph. 2:4). He made an everlasting covenant with Christ and with us in Him as our covenant Head. We were called His “sheep”, “church”, “people”, “children”, “chosen generation”, and so many other terms of near-kinsman relation, and for all of these, and of these only Christ is said to “lay down His life”, “give Himself”, “purchase with His own blood”. Now, seeing God so loved us before our conversion, knowing His love does not change in degree or end in duration, that it is in Christ, therefore, we are assured of the greatest confidence of His love in the best and worst of times (1 John 4:16-17).

- God’s love is giving. He gave Himself in covenant to be our God. He gave His Son, delivering Him up for us. And Christ gave Himself for us (Gal. 2:20; Rev. 1:5; Gal. 1:4). He gave His Spirit to us. He gives us eternal life. He prepared and shall give us an eternal inheritance (Matt. 25:34), and all things with Christ (Eph. 1:3). He orders all for our good (Rom. 8:28). He especially designs to make evil turn for our salvation (Gen. 50:20; Acts 2:23; 4:28; Rom. 5:1-11; 8:31-39; 1 Cor. 15:54-57; Rom. 5:21).
- God’s love is without repentance. He gives without regret, as nothing surprises Him, but all is ordered by

Him and used by Him to accomplish His will of love to us (Eph. 1:11).

- Think of the conclusion that would result if Christ gave Himself for those that perish, who are condemned, who are not given everlasting life.
 - If God loves all and Christ died for all, then what difference did either the love of God or death of Christ make between those saved in the end and those perishing? It must not be what God has done or Christ has done, but what man has done to make the difference! But such a conclusion gives the glory in salvation to man!
 - If God loved all, and Christ loved all the same, then why even mention His love and purchase by blood of the Church (Eph. 5:25), His people (Matt. 1:21), His own (John 13:1), His brethren (Heb. 2), children (Heb. 2), nation (1 Pet. 2:9), redeemed (Rev. 5:9), those washed from their sins in His own blood (Rev. 1:5)?
 - If God knows all of His works from before the foundation of the world, and prepared a kingdom for those given a kingdom in the end, then He must have known from the beginning all those saved in the end (Rom. 8:29-34; Jer. 31:3; Matt. 25:34), and He must not have known all those who perish in the end (Matt. 7:23).

- If faith is not of us, but is the gift of God, a gift of His grace, precluding all works and overcoming all lack of good works in the redeemed (Acts 13:48; Eph. 2:8-9); and if faith is given to those ordained to eternal life before the world began (Acts 13:48; Rom. 9:6-16), then faith is God's work (Col. 2:12; Eph. 2:10), it is not the work of man (Eph. 2:8), and therefore, though none have it naturally (not of yourselves, it is the gift of God), and some do (2 Thess. 3:2), therefore, faith is the result of God's saving grace (2 Pet. 1:1), even the result of Christ's redeeming work (Php. 1:29; Acts 3:16; 5:31; 26:18; Psalm 110:3) and the Spirit's effectual call (John 6:37-45). And hence, faith is the result, not the cause of salvation, and is given to all those that the Father gave to Christ (John 6:37-40).
- (v18) Those believing Christ are not condemned. Those not believing Him are condemned already¹. Unbelieving Israel perished in the wilderness. God called their unbelief “sin” (Heb. 3:6-19; Rom. 10:16-17; 1 Pet. 3:1 — if any obey not the word). Therefore, for their unbelief, God’s wrath was against them and they perished in the wilderness. How

¹ “This must be understood of one that is a final unbeliever, or that lives, and dies, in a state of impenitence, and unbelief” (Gill).

much more is God's wrath and condemnation and certain death awaiting those who do not believe God's Son?!

- But also notice, that though we are guilty for our own unbelief, God alone is to be credited for our faith (Heb. 12:2; Eph. 2:8-10). “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help” (Hosea 13:9)! Faith is the gift of God (Php. 1:29; Heb. 12:2; 2 Thess. 3:2). It is not of ourselves. It is not of our works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8-9). It is given to all who were ordained to eternal life (Acts 13:48). It is given to those on whom God sets His name, on whom His name is called (Acts 2:39; 15:14-18; Rom. 9:23-30). This gift of faith is also called “obedience” in contrast it with “sin”. Thus, “But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Rom. 6:17). “We have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name” (Rom. 1:5). “They have not all obeyed the gospel (Isaiah 53:1ff). For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 1:16-17). “**Whose heart the Lord opened**” (Acts 16:14). “Who **by him do believe in God**, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit...” (1 Pet. 1:21-22). “Elect according to the

foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:2). “17...[Jesus said to Paul on his way to Damascus to persecute believers] the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith² that is in me” (Acts 26:17-18). “To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:1).

- (John 3:17-18) If Christ does not condemn us (John 5:22-23; Rom. 8:34), then God does not condemn us, but instead justifies us (Rom. 8:33) by the blood (Rom. 3:24-25; 5:9; 2 Cor. 5:21) and obedience of His Son in shedding His blood (Rom. 5:19; Php. 2:6-8; Rom. 10:4; 1 Cor. 1:30; Isaiah 53:11).
- Here is a great wonder! God in all of His holiness, who cannot lie, finds, by His wisdom, according to His will, nothing in a sinner to condemn him, because by His grace, He finds all in Christ to justify that ungodly sinner (Rom. 4:5)! This is grace indeed! This is holiness, righteousness, truth at the highest level! This is God’s final judgment in

² Hence, faith is part of our sanctification, and is therefore part of the operation of regenerating grace by the Spirit, looking to the blood of Christ, whose blood is sprinkled on our conscience (1 Pet. 1:2; Heb. 9:12-14).

the matter, and it is holy beyond all comprehension, just and complete beyond measure.

- Since the beginning of time, this has been the great question: how can man be just with God?
- Since the beginning of time, this has been the one issue: will God accept a sacrifice; has He accepted the sacrifice?
- Since time began, all who look to Christ and see in Him and in so looking, find in Him what God sees in Him: a full answer to justice; a fulfillment of His law; honor to His law; fulfillment of all righteousness, satisfaction of pure justice, exaltation of all truth, perfect and eternal peace, and the spring of grace for His people — all so seeing in Christ all this from God, and so trusting their all to Christ, they shall not be condemned, shall not perish, shall be saved to the uttermost and have everlasting life! And they know it in believing Christ! This word from God silences every enemy (John 8:1-11; Rom. 8:33-34), because the decision from heaven's court silences all by the answer Christ gave, by God's acceptance of Him (John 16:7-11).
- This, by the promise and prophecy of God, will be to the exceeding joy of God the Father (Luke 15:11-24) and the Son (Eph. 5:25-27) in the presence of God in all of His glory (Jude 24-25; Zep. 3:17)!
- This word (John 3:17-18) is so comforting! To see in Christ God's gift of eternal, saving love, to see Christ's gift of Himself in total, so see His condescension and His

humility, and His compassion, to stoop to do and die and bring this glad news to the most unworthy and ill-deserving of sinners, who no better than the Jews (Rom. 3:9) opposed Christ, but who, by overcoming, redeeming love and blood and grace, have been subdued to bow in worship and call upon our great God and Savior (Rom. 10:4-17)!

- In the Jews, we see our natural pride and aversion³ towards God:
 - “Thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel” (Isaiah 43:22).
 - “Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God” (2 Kings 17:14).
 - “For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose [to put it from them because they did not like to retain the knowledge of God in their hearts, but despised and hated Him Rom. 1:18-28-30] the fear of the LORD” (Prov. 1:29).
 - “Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and *from* your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD” (Zechariah 1:4).
- But in Christ, we see God’s grace and faithfulness to His eternal purpose of love to save a sinful people for Himself

³ “Opposition or repugnance of mind; dislike; disinclination; reluctance; hatred” (Webster, 1828).

in Christ their Surety! “**I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified**” (Isaiah 43:25-26).

- Christ’s purpose in His first coming was not to condemn the world. Since all of the “world” are condemned for their sin.
 - “Through the offence of one many be dead” (Rom. 5:15);
 - “The judgment *was* by one to condemnation” (Rom. 5:16);
 - “By one man's offence death reigned by one” (Rom. 5:17);
 - “By the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation” (Rom. 5:18);
 - “By one man's disobedience many were made sinners” (Rom. 5:19).
 - “In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph. 2:2-3);

- “We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another” (Titus 3:3).
- “In Adam all die” (1 Cor. 15:22).
- “From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23).
- “*There is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Eccl. 7:20).
- “God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Eccl. 7:29).
- “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). To come short of “the glory of God” is to fail to do the one thing for which we were created: to glorify God our Creator in whose image we were made! To come short of “the glory of God” is to disqualify myself by my sin to stand in the presence of His glory (Jude 24). To come short of “the glory of God” is to miss heaven, eternal life and eternal glory (Col. 1:27; 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Pet. 5:10). All without exception have disqualified themselves by their sin to appear before God (in the presence of His glory)

accepted, in peace. Instead, in every part, we have failed to glorify the God in whose hand our breath is and whose are all our ways (Dan. 5:23; Rom. 3:9-20).

- (Rom. 5:12-14). The world Christ did not come to condemn includes all men, whether Jews or Gentiles. In His first coming, He did not come to condemn any of the entire world of mankind. He did not come to condemn unbelieving Jews in His first coming. He did not come to condemn unbelieving Gentiles in His first coming. His first coming was to condemn any people, whether believing or unbelieving, whether Jew or Gentile. His first coming was to save His elect (Matt. 18:11; Luke 19:10). He will save His people. “Thou shall call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). To save His people was the work God gave Him to do. He finished that work (John 4:34; 5:36; 6:38; 9:39; 10:15-18, 27-29; 12:23-33; 14:31; 17:1-5; 19:28-30; Heb. 10:4-14 with Psalm 40:6-8; Luke 2:49).

“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world... not “even any part of it, or any in it: not the Gentiles, as the Jews thought he would; for though God had suffered them to walk in their own ways, and had winked at, or overlooked the times of their ignorance, and had sent no prophet unto them, nor made any revelation of his will, or any discovery of his special grace unto them; yet he sent his Son now, not to destroy them for their idolatry, and wickedness, but to be the Saviour of them: nor the Jews; for as impenitent and unbelieving, and as wicked as they were, he did not accuse them to the Father, nor judge and condemn them; he was to

come again in power and great glory, when he would take vengeance on them, and cause wrath to come upon them to the uttermost, for their disbelief and rejection of him; but this was not his business now: nor the wicked of the world in general; to judge, and condemn them, will be his work, when he comes a second time, in the day God has appointed to judge the world in righteousness" (Gill).

- He justified them before God. He will justify them in their conscience by faith. He will justify them before the onlooking universe in Judgment. But He will judge the world in righteousness and condemn all who do not believe Him.
- Christ's first coming was to save His people. His purpose in His first coming was not to condemn any, but to save His elect!
- (John 3:18). To fail to believe Christ is disobedience arising out of the proud, hard heart of natural man (Rom. 11:32; John 16:7-11; Rom. 10:16-17).
- Of this we are all guilty (Rom. 11:32; 3:9-20; 2 Thess. 3:2; Rom. 15:3; Acts 18:27; Eph. 2:4-10; Acts 13:48; 2:39; 15:14-18).
- God's elect are known in believing. We cannot see our election. But seeing and believing Christ, we know it (John 6:37-40-45).
- To believe Christ is the gift of God out of life from spiritually dead in their sins (Eph. 2:1-10).

- Condemnation is that men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. We all, by nature, are described by God as “darkness” (Eph. 5:8).
- Justification is by Christ’s blood. All who believe Him are justified — not because of their faith, for that is the gift of God that springs from the eternal will of God (Acts 13:48; 2 Pet. 1:1). We are justified on the grounds of the redeeming work of Christ, and not on the grounds or because of our subjective faith in Christ (Gal. 4:4-6; 1 Pet. 1:20-21; Eph. 2:4-10). But our justification in Christ is made known to us in believing.
- Thus, in believing Christ, we look at these verses in John 3:13-21 with great comfort and delight, because we find His broken body and shed blood to be our meat and drink (John 6:33-69).
- Jesus did not come to condemn the Gentile world, because His elect were in it. Thus, as Abraham prayed God to spare Sodom for the sake of the righteous, so Christ saved the Gentiles by saving His elect out of it.
- “The world” in John 3:17 refers to the elect in general, whom God determined to save, and has chosen to obtain salvation by Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:13-14), and has appointed Christ to be the salvation of them. And Christ, being sent, came into the world to seek and save them (Matt. 18:11; 19:10).

- “The world” is more particularly God’s chosen people among the Gentiles. Wherefore, Christ is said to be God’s salvation to the ends of the earth. “Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 45:22). “It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: **I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth**” (Isaiah 49:6-8).