

JOHN THREE: SIXTEEN

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CHAPTER THREE -

The World

ONE DAY in the Santa Fe railroad yards in Topeka, Kansas, during the noon hour, an infidel, seeing a fellow workman reading his Bible, said: "What! reading that? You surely don't believe it?"

"Well, I have struck a verse just now I hardly know whether to believe or not."

"Aha," retorted the infidel in glee, "I thought so. What is it?"

"John 3:16. It seems too good to believe."

It does seem too good to be true. We could easily understand why the Word might declare, "God so hated the world." If we could say, "He loves us because we first loved Him," we might be able to understand it, but just the reverse is true.

"The World" Demands Definition

The necessity for definition is seen in the fact that in Scripture five Hebrew and four Greek words are translated "*world*." Dr. Pierson suggests that the distinction might be set forth by using four simple phrases: matter-world, created world, habited world, timed world.

However, it is not necessary in this study to take up the nine words. We will forget eight of them and look at the one in the text: *cosmos*, which is properly translated "**world**." From "*cosmos*" we derive "cosmology," the science which treats of the order and course of nature; "cosmopolitan," which means "common to all the world" (Man is called cosmopolitan to denote that he is a citizen of the world); "cosmetics" - but why bring that up?

The word "*cosmos*" still needs definition, since it is used in a three-fold way in the Scriptures. It means the material world, and is so used in Romans 1:20 - "**creation of the world**." It is also used of the world people; that is, for all the people living in the world. "**He is the propitiation for... the whole world**" (I John 2:2). And of course this means world people, not the material world.

We might note carefully that these world people (for whom propitiation is made) are sinners, alienated from the life of GOD. John 1:10 tells us that Christ came into the world, and "**the**

world was made by Him and the world knew Him not" - That is, He came into the material world which He had made, but the world people knew Him not.

This word is also used for the world system. The course of the affairs of the world people is according to an order, a system. In Ephesians 2:2 we are told that the walk of the world people is "**according to the course of this world.**" The world system is further stated to be "**according to the prince of the power of the air**"; that is, Satan, who was called by our Lord "**the prince of this world.**"

From the above we are sure that the reader will understand that "Christian world" is a misnomer. The world of John 3:16 refers to the world people who live in this material world under the sway of the world system, which leads us to state that

"The World" Designates Humanity

The world of John 3:16 does not refer to geology or geography, biology or zoology. It means the world of men. The greatest love of man or woman is generally love of self. What a narrow love that is! GOD so loved the world.

Dr. Walter Wilson said, "No one in all the world could possibly love everyone in the world. Most folk find it quite difficult to love all of their relatives. Perhaps the most bitter of all hatreds is that which exists in families among those who should love one another the most. But GOD has found it possible, with His great heart of love, to love every individual in the entire world, in spite of his faults. How supreme must be His love which enables Him to overlook all those things which we magnify in human lives, and to love faulty people!"

GOD so loved" - what? The home? The city? The state? The country? No, the world.

"**GOD so loved**" - what? Anglo Saxons? Sometimes we seem to think that His love is confined to us, but there were no Anglo Saxons when John 3:16 was written.

"**GOD so loved**" - what? The Jews? Well, yes, but also the Norwegians, Swedes, Danes, Dutch, Belgians, French, Japs, Chinese, Spaniards, Portuguese, Italians, Swiss, Austrians, Greeks, Poles, Germans, Russians, English, Scotch, Irish, Welsh, Mongols, Tartars, Telegus, Bengalese, Burmans, Malays, Bushmen, Hottentots, Bantus, Filipinos, Czechoslovakians, Maori, Singhalese, Indians, Dyaks, Arabians, Moors, Persians, Turks, Egyptians, Australians, Canadians, Eskimos, Pigmies, Yankees, Bulgarians, Syrians, Mexicans, Bedouins, Polynesians and Fijians.

If that is not impressive enough we will add the Canaanites, the Gergashites, the Perizzites, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amalekites, the Midianites, the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, the Amorites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, the Moabites.

If that is not sufficient, we will even add the Anglo-Israelites.

Do you get this? "**God so loved the world**"?

"**God so loved**" - what? White men? Well, yes; but red men, and black, and brown, and yellow men, and mixed men; the half-breed, the mulatto, the quadroon, the octoroon; and all the wretched, degraded, bloodthirsty, fierce, superstitious, war-like, animal-like beings who have ever lived.

"**God so loved**" - what? The civilized? Yes, and the savage. The cultured? Yes, and the illiterate. The millionaire? Yes, and the pauper. The strong? Yes, and the weak? The godly? Yes, and the ungodly. The home man? Yes, and the traveling man. The master? Yes, and the slave. The free man? Yes, and the imprisoned man. The Baptist? Yes, and the Methodist. The ruler? Yes, and the ruled. Me? Yes, and you!

"**God so loved**" - what? Men who live now? Yes! Two billions of them, and also two hundred billions of men who have been, and billions who have never yet been.

"**God so loved the world**" of men. The Apostle John? Yes, and Judas. Mary? Yes, and Jezebel. Jonah? Yes, and Nineveh. Abel? Yes, and Cain. Moses? Yes, and Pharaoh. David? Yes, and Ahab. People who believe on Christ? Yes, and the men who crucified Him.

God loves the modernist. Probably you don't. GOD loves Stalin, and Mussolini, and Hitler. GOD loves President Roosevelt. Maybe you do, and maybe you don't. I am not sure about you; I am sure about GOD.

Almost twenty years ago the writer heard a preacher in Chicago in a prayer plead, "GOD, damn the Kaiser." A great many people were damning the Kaiser in those days. Multitudes hated him with an intense hatred. GOD loved him, and still does. We went from Chicago to Pennsylvania, and in the course of a conversation with a very spiritual woman, the Kaiser was mentioned. The saint said, "Oh, that poor man, he is such a sinner. He has so much to answer for. I pray for him every day." What a revelation of the love of GOD shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost!

GOD loves the preacher. Yes, and the saloonkeeper, and the gambler, and the harlot. He is no respecter of persons. He loves the residents on Fifth Avenue, New York, and He loves the transients of the Gateway in Minneapolis. The world! Do you see it?

"**God so loved the world**" - all colors, all conditions, all circumstances, all climes, all castes, all classes, all characters, all companies - the world. As Helms says, "The smallest, lowest, meanest, worst, grandest, noblest, purest, highest, best - the world."

"**God so loved the world**" - Can you see it? None excluded: all included. None omitted: none overlooked.

"**God so loved the world**" - a world of angels? No! A world of saints? No, a world of sinners!
"**While we were yet sinners Christ died for us.**"

But wait. Do not make this to mean that GOD loves sin. GOD loves the criminal; He does not love the crime. GOD loves the rebel; He does not love his rebellion. GOD loves the modernist; He does not love his modernism. GOD loves the blasphemer; He does not love blasphemy. GOD

loves the liar; He does not love his lie. GOD loves the idolater; He does not love his idolatry. GOD loves the sinner; He does not love his sin.

Why does GOD love the sinner? Because GOD can see in every sinner the possibility of holiness. GOD can take the outcast, the lost, and the sinful and make them into saints. GOD can take the coarse stuff of man and refine it.

Sinful human souls are the raw material of which GOD makes saints.

GOD can take a drunken barber and make of him a Mel Trotter. GOD can take a river pirate and make of him a Jerry McCauley. GOD can take a thief and gambler and make of him a Harry Monroe. GOD can reach into a gypsy tent and bring forth a flaming evangelist.

A converted Irishman once said, "He is the only One I ever found who would take a man without a character. "

"He saves the worst to the uttermost."

"The World" Denotes Condition

The world of John 3:16 denotes not position so much as condition; not sphere so much as atmosphere; not place so much as power. It is Satan's system.

It is composed of those who live only for material and temporal things. It is made up of the children of the devil. It is a world of busy human concerns, of thinking, planning, striving, working, all for its own glory, without any thought of GOD. It is a world that does not know GOD. **"The world by wisdom knew not God." "He was in the world and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God."**

The Head of the World

Satan is the prince of this world. He has dominion over it. I John 5:19: **"The whole world lieth in wickedness."** Ephesians 2:2: **"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."** JESUS CHRIST is not the head of the world; He is the head of the Church, but one day He will be the head of the world.

Satan is the head of the government and politics of the world. If you doubt that, read your morning newspaper. We live in a godless state. He is head of the business of the world. The first city and civilization, the first trade and commerce, the first arts and mechanical sciences were founded by Cain and his line. Cain is described as **"of that wicked one."**

He was the first advocate of a bloodless religion. Satan is the head of the society in this world. The prince of this world is the center of its godless society. Solomon was so entangled with

society that he wed seven hundred princesses who turned him from GOD. Satan is the head of the religion of this world. He is called the "**god of this world.**"

This world is very religious. India has more religion than the United States. South America is full of religion. Rome has a great deal of religion. Paganism is religion. Many Protestants are religious. Hell will be full of religious people. Cain was a religious man. He brought an offering - not to an idol, but to JEHOVAH. Religion is of Satan; salvation is of GOD.

The Heart of the World

"**The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil**" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). This verse does not say "hearts of men" but the "heart," meaning that mankind has a common heart. That heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. That is why Galatians 1:4 speaks of it as a "**present evil world.**"

- It reeks with moral putrefaction.
- It delights in sin and rejects salvation.
- It is filled with covetousness, uncleanness, jealousy, incest, murder, adultery, drunkenness, hatred, suicide, and selfishness.
- It is because of this fact that John wrote, "**For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.**"

"**Lust of the flesh**" - not lust of the body, but that sinful nature in man which is called flesh, that nature which is in conflict with GOD. It refers to our appetites which are pampered for pleasure's sake to gratify sensual appetites in any direction. It means unlawful pleasure of sins.

"**Lust of the eyes**" refers to externalities, the world which exists for the eye alone. What excitements, temptations, follies, extravagances that world contains! It means to look upon that which stirs up unruly passions within, the desire to see unlawful sights for the sake of sinful pleasure derived from them. As a child runs a sweet morsel over its tongue, so men roll sin over and over in the mind. It means avarice, covetousness, the desire for possession which arises from seeing some object. So Lot looked upon Sodom and desired it. So Balaam looked upon wealth and desired it. So Demas looked upon the present world and desired it. So David looked upon Bathsheba and desired her. So Achan looked upon the silver and the gold and desired them.

"**Pride of life**" - the love of making a boastful display; "the boastfulness of our way of living," says Lias; refers to ostentation in the manner of living, the desire to outshine our neighbors, a life that sets value upon caste, wealth, education, power. It means birth-pride, purse-pride, brain-pride, heart-pride. It means pride of face, pride of race, pride of place, pride of grace. It means above all else conceit of knowledge which says like Satan, "**Yea, hath God said?**" There is nothing more dangerous in the world today than the arrogance of knowledge. The world is filled with an unholy desire for what it has not, and with unholy pride in what it has. It is filled with the wrong desire for what is not possessed, and makes wrong use of what is possessed. A worldly life may not be given up to extreme wickedness, but it is given up wholly to material and temporal things.

The Hate of the World

The world is at enmity with GOD. "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with GOD? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

Every man born into the world is born in the flesh, and the mind of the flesh is always enmity against GOD (Romans 8:7). This is why a Christian is not to love the world. The world hates the true Christian. **"If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you"** (John 15:18-19). Again the Lord said, **"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."** A great many believers do marvel at the hatred of the world. They seem to think that because they are followers of CHRIST the world should love them.

The Hope of the World

Can there be any hope for a whole world guilty before GOD? There could be none did we not read, **"God so loved the world."** Had it not been for GOD's love, the world of mankind must long since have been wiped out.

Christmas Evans presented an allegory in which Justice and Mercy debated over the doom of the sinner. Mercy pled for the sinner, but Justice was inexorable. He declared that if sin should go unpunished, the very foundations of the moral universe would be weakened, and the character of GOD compromised. It was Wisdom who came in and proposed the sacrifice and offering of the SON of GOD as the means of the sinner's redemption.

Helms seized on the same allegorical thought when he wrote: "Seeing the butcheries and blasphemies and holocausts and wrongs and hells and wretchedness, if Justice had spoken, it would have said, 'The world deserves annihilation; let me annihilate it.' Truth, seeing the falsehoods and deceptions, would have cried, 'Away with it!' Omniscience, if it had spoken, would have said, 'I have looked into the world's deepest darkness; there is not one that doeth good; wipe it out.' But Love pleads, 'Spare it a little time yet; wait, wait, I'll go down.' And down, down He came, crying, 'Let me at this pollution.'"

Our only hope is in Him. **"So loved"** pours itself out into death to save the sinner. CHRIST is the **"Lamb of GOD which taketh away the sin of the world."** The **"Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."**

In the South, many years ago, a judge was engaged to marry a beautiful girl. They quarreled and separated. Pride ruled the girl, and in spite of her love, she would not consent to a reconciliation. The judge became reckless, and when yellow fever swept the community, he went to Sand Hills and devoted his time to the sick. At last he succumbed to the dread disease. His altruistic spirit had touched the entire city and not a few knew the cause of the judge's sadness. Some days passed when his physician met the sweetheart of the judge whom he had known for many years. He said to her, "Do you know that your friend, the judge, is very sick at Sand Hills?"

She replied with apparent indifference, "I have heard that he is sick. How is he, doctor?"

"He has passed the critical point in the disease, but he is dying."

"I do not understand you, doctor. How could he be dying when he has passed the critical point in the disease?"

The old physician replied, "You foolish, heartless girl, don't you know why? He is dying of a broken heart."

Her eyes filled with tears, and she said, "Doctor will you come with me?" She led the way to a florist's establishment where she placed her order, and wrote upon a blank card just above the pet name the judge loved to call her, "With the love of all my heart." Then she said to the doctor, "Will you please see that the judge gets this box of flowers?"

When he returned, the judge reached his trembling hand into the box and drew out the card. When he looked at it, his heart hoping against hope until his eyes had seen the name, he said: "Doctor, did she really send those flowers?" The next day the judge was sitting in an invalid's chair; the fifth day there was a quiet wedding in that Florida city. Oh, love is a tonic.

This world is sick.

- It has a fever worse than that of Peter's wife's mother.
- It has a leprosy worse than that of Uzziah or Naaman.
- It has a palsy worse than that of the man borne by four.
- It has a blindness worse than that of blind Bartimaeus.
- It has an insanity worse than that of the man of Gadara.
- It is more helpless than the man at the pool, or the one who lay at the gate of the temple.

This world is sick, and it is a sickness unto death - eternal death!

Nineteen hundred years ago GOD turned to His garden of love. He plucked the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley, and wrapped around them the smile of His eternal love. His card is John 3:16. Then the messengers announced His Gift: "**Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy... For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.**"

There is no hope for this world apart from GOD's great Love Gift. The judge could have refused the gift of the girl; even so you may refuse the Gift of GOD. A remarkable painting of CHRIST on the Cross presents this only hope. The SAVIOUR, hanging on a Cross which rests between the two hemispheres, is looking down upon the world for which He died. Drops of blood from His hands rest upon every continent and island. Underneath the painting in three languages may be read: "**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.**"

"The World" Discloses Destiny

This destiny is expressed in two words in the text PERISH and LIFE. Our Lord said: "**Now is**

the judgment of this world" (John 12:31). The crucifixion of CHRIST called forth this sentence, and it will be executed in due time just as certainly as there is a GOD in Heaven. This world is in danger of perishing; judgment and destruction are ahead; Hell is ahead.

These all loom large for the world that rejects the grace of the SON of His love.

The world, however, need not perish, for God has set forth JESUS CHRIST as the propitiation for the world. This word "**propitiation**" is translated in Hebrews 9:5 as "**mercy seat**." This simply means that GOD today is mercy-seated, and that any sinner coming to GOD in faith will be dealt with in mercy rather than judgment. The sin of Adam turned the throne of GOD into a throne of judgment. The Cross of CHRIST has changed that throne into a throne of grace.

Before our Lord departed this earth, He declared that the Gospel was to be preached to all the world, to every creature, that whosoever believeth should have everlasting life. This Gospel by which men are saved is that of the death of CHRIST for our sins, and His resurrection from the dead.

GOD can do no more for the world than He has done. It is striking to note that our Lord said, "**I pray not for the world**" (John 17:9). Our Lord's present ministry is one of intercession, but not for the world. "**He ever liveth to make intercession for them**" - that is, Christians. GOD has nothing for the world beyond the death of His Son. A sinner is shut up to faith in that Son. It is either "**believe**" or "**perish**."

I believe that this love of GOD for men is the greatest key, the surest key, we can use to open the heart of anyone we want to win to Christ. Margaret Meredith told in an old number of the outlook of the conversion of a notorious, rough miner named Ike Miller. Henry Morehouse, a young preacher, was preaching to a company of these miners when Ike Miller came in and took a seat near the front. Preacher and helpers trembled, for this wicked man had threatened to break up the services. The sermon was on the love of CHRIST, and the young preacher longed to reach the heart of the wild, grimed miner who sat so strangely quiet, gazing into his face. When the meeting was over, some of the good old men gathered around the preacher regretfully.

"Ah, Henry, you didn't preach right. You ought to have preached at Ike Miller. You had a great opportunity and you lost it. That softy sort of preaching won't do him any good. What does he care about the Love of CHRIST? You ought to have frightened him, and tried to make him see his dreadful danger, and the dreadful punishment he is going to get."

The young preacher only said: "I am real sorry I did not preach to him right. I did want so to help him."

Meanwhile the big miner was tramping home. His wife - poor, gaunt woman! heard his step and started. "Home so early?" she involuntarily cried, and ran in front of the children who were crowding themselves into a corner. But as he entered she stared in bewilderment. He was not drunk; he was not scowling. He put his arms around her and kissed her, and said: "Lass, GOD has brought your husband back to you." Then, gathering up the shrinking children, he said: "My little boy and girl, GOD has brought your father back to you. Now, let us all pray," and he knelt down. There was a long pause, a silence but for many sobs; he could not think of any words; his

heart was praying, but Ike Miller had uttered no prayer and heard no prayer since he was a little boy. At last words from those distant days came back to him - something that his mother had taught him; and from that hovel floor, in the midst of that remnant of an abused family, to be abused no more, he sounded out in rugged gutturals, groaned out through his sobs:

"Gentle JESUS, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to thee."

Any sinner who comes with the faith and simplicity of Ike Miller will be saved. His story may not be written in a magazine, but his name will be written in the Book of Life.

~ end of chapter 3 ~
