

Exegetical Analysis – John 3:16

16 – For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. (16. οὕτως γάρ ἡγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν (κόσμον) ὥστε τὸν νιὸν τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν Ἰησοῦς (πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων) εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ’ ἔχῃ ζωὴν)

κόσμον (kosmos) ~ world

In John's context the word kosmos (κόσμον) has the implication of *both* Jew and Gentile...The Jews would have believed that there was a limitation to them only, but John clarifies here that it is not *only* that Jesus died for the believing Jews but also for the believing Gentiles...

πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων (pas ho pisteuon) ~ Whosoever/Whoever Believes

πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων denotes particularity in that pas (everyone/whoever) of that particular group who believes will not perish. There is a specificity to faith, there are people who believe and those who do not believe and this is perfectly consistent with God's electing grace and perfectly consistent with the free offer of the Gospel. The verse means "all the ones engaging in the action of substantive adjectival participle believing" will be saved. In English this means "whoever" is definite and specific to believers.

"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... Why then should not the world here be taken not universally for individuals, but indefinitely for anyone, Jews as well as Gentiles, without distinction of nation, language and condition. that He may be said to have loved the human race, inasmuch as He was unwilling to destroy it entirely but decreed to save some certain persons Out of it, not only from one people as before, but from all indiscriminately, although the effects of that love should not be extended to each individual, but only to some certain ones, viz, those chosen out of the world?"

— Frances Turretin, Reformed theologian in Geneva (1623-1687), *Theological Institutes*.

"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. In explanation, specifically, of the "world" of John 3:16, Kuyper went on to say that the reference is to the "proper kernal" of the creation, the elect people of God, "which Jesus snatches away from Satan." out of this kernal, out this congregation, out of this people, a "new world," a "new earth and new heaven," shall one day appear, by a wonder-work of God. The earth does not merely serve to allow the elect to be saved, in order then to disappear. No, the elect are men; these men form a whole, a collection, an organism; that organism is grounded in creation; and because now this creation is the reflection of God's wisdom and the work of His hands, God's administration of it may not come to nothing, but in the Great Day God's will with this creation shall be perfectly realized."

— Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch theologian (1837-1920)

"It is a lesson as to God's love: (1) Its magnitude--he gave his only begotten Son. (2) Its reach--he gave it to a sinful world (Romans 5:8). (3) Its impartiality--he gives it to whoever; that is, to all alike (Matthew 5:45; Revelation 22:17). (4) Its beneficial richness --it blesses with life eternal. (5) Its limitations--it is nowhere said that God so loves that he will save unbelievers. Love is the mutual and binding grace between God and man; it may also be said that in Christ is made God human and man divine"

— Martin Luther

Website Reference: <https://www.studylight.org/commentary/john/3-16.html>