

**“And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.” (1 John 4:14)**



**God so loved the world**

One of the best known verses in the entire Bible is John 3:16.(NIV) It reads: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

**Which World?**

It is common practice to apply these words to the entire world, as if we were talking about all of those people who are alive on the face of this earth today. Does this really make any sense? How could he love today’s world? It was not even in existence then.

To understand the distinction that we must consider when we use the word “world”, we should note that in 2nd Peter 3, Peter speaks about 3 different worlds. One of those worlds was over and gone. It was destroyed by the flood. (2 Peter 3:6) The next world was ready to be judged, and the third world was still in the future. Which of these worlds did God love in the reference from John 3?

**The Jewish World**

God loved the world that was in existence at the time of Christ. To be more specific, it was not the entire world, it was the Jewish world. The world of his people. Jesus was very clear on this point. In one specific incident he stated: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel." (Matthew 15:24 NIV) He also stated on one occasion: “Salvation is of the Jews.” (John 4:22)

It was not until later in the development of God’s plan, that the call of the Gentiles (the rest of the world) was initiated. God’s purpose was to redeem His people first. When they rejected Jesus as their Messiah, (after the words in John 3:16 were spoken), then he reached out for other people.

“Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, **It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you:** but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldst be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.” (Acts 13:46-47)

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**Things Concerning**

The Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ

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♥ *Jesus Loves* ♥

**“Jesus died for us all. Regardless of race, age, sex, religion or past (????)”**

It is commonly believed in Christian circles that Jesus Christ is the saviour of the whole world. Recently, I saw a sign on an automobile that said: “Jesus died for us all. Regardless of race, age, sex, religion or past”

**Is this a true statement?** Like so many parts of modern Christianity, there is a mixture of truth and wishful thinking presented in this message. It would be wonderful to think that all mankind, regardless of religion would be blessed by salvation in Jesus. However, the offer of salvation taught in the bible is conditional and exclusive. Few take advantage of the opportunity, even when it is presented to them.

We could say that an opportunity is available to all men to seek salvation through Jesus Christ, but we must certainly understand that the way that leads to life is a narrow path, chosen by very few. The road to destruction is very broad and it attracts many. (See Matthew 7:13-14)

**One True Religion**

It is true that a man who once professed another religion can forsake that religion and accept the true religion embraced in the gospel of Christ. But we must understand that he can not continue in his former faith and still be saved. The word of God makes it very clear that there is no salvation available through any other religion.

“Then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is “the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.’ Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:10-12 NIV)

It is true that our past is no longer a factor after we have been baptized into the saving name of Jesus Christ. But we can not live in the past. We can no longer continue in the deeds of the flesh that we left behind when we buried the old man in baptism. (See Colossians 3:5-11)

Jesus is the saviour who is available to all men, but his death will be beneficial only to those who believe and respond to his offer. (See 1 John 4:10) Baptism is an essential part of that response, followed by a life of obedience. Grace in the judgment will eventually reveal those who Jesus actually died for.

**“That you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”**

(1 Peter 2:9 NIV)

### THE CALLING FOR ISRAEL

The benefits of salvation through Christ have not always been available to individuals from all nations. This may seem unfair, but it is God who is choosing, or calling out a people for His name. He has chosen to select His people gradually and from specific areas at different times. At the same time, He is not willing that any perish, and would not deny an opportunity to any who seek Him sincerely.

If we look at the history of the Bible, we see that God called Abraham out from the nations and gave him special promises. These revealed the blessing that his spiritual descendents would eventually receive through the sacrifice of Jesus.

For a period of nearly 2000 years God's offer of salvation was available primarily to Abraham's descendents, the Children of Israel.

They were told at Mount Sinai: "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." (Exodus 19:5-6 NIV)

### THE CALL OF THE GENTILES

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." (1 Peter 2:9-10 NIV)

This passage from Peter demonstrates that the same special calling that had once been an opportunity for Israel alone, is now available to individuals out of all nations.

In Acts 15 we are told: "Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: "After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things" that have been known for ages." (Acts 15:14-18 NIV)

### PROGRESSING OPPORTUNITY

It is apparent, from the verses that we have considered, that there is a progression in the scope of the offer of salvation. Although there are exceptions to the rule, the hope of salvation in certain periods was offered to:

- BC 4000-2000** - Individuals with faith, who called on the name of God
- BC 2000-AD 70** - The descendents of Abraham (Children of Israel)
- AD 70- Advent\*** - Individuals selected from the Gentiles (All Nations)
- After Advent\*** - Salvation offered to the rest of the remaining world during the early phases of the Kingdom of God on this earth.

Advent\* (The return of Christ to this earth to set up his Kingdom)

**“For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.”** (1 Timothy 4:10)

### GOD THE SAVIOUR OF ALL

In writing to Timothy, Paul reminds us of an important Bible truth that we must keep in mind. Many think of Jesus as our savior, and fail to appreciate that it is only through the power of God, his heavenly Father, that Jesus is able to save. The line of authority is clarified in an earlier part of this same message: "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5)

### THOSE THAT BELIEVE

In the verse, in the box above, we also see that there is a qualification placed on the expression "saviour of all men." Salvation is especially for those that believe.

There is a sense of confusion in this verse that can only be cleared up through a consideration of the entire council of God. How is it that God is the saviour of those who do not believe? Only if they change.

We learn from Hebrews 11:6 that without faith it is impossible to please God, and that he only rewards those who diligently seek him. We also learn from Romans 9 that God has mercy on only those whom He chooses to have mercy on. There are many, many references that demonstrate that a response is necessary before any individual is considered for the grace of God.

### BELIEVE, BE BAPTIZED AND...

Jesus sent his disciples out into the world to preach the gospel. He said that those who believe (the true gospel of Christ), and who are baptized, will be saved. Those who believe not will be condemned. (See Mark 16:15-16) Sadly, this includes the majority of people on this earth.

It would be unreasonable to think that salvation is guaranteed, once we have believed the gospel and are baptized. We still have to live our lives in obedience to the commandments of Christ. We have been asked to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily, following the ways of Jesus. (Luke 9:23)

It is only in doing the will of God that we become a part of the family of Jesus. (Matthew 12:50)

God has offered salvation to all men through the sacrifice of Christ, but He will only honor those who diligently respond to the call through faith, and obedience.

