

Macedonia Primitive Baptist Church

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## ***Is John 3:16 An Invitation to the Whole Human Race to be Saved for Heaven?***

By: Elder Joe Nettles

*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. - John 3:16*

Whether quoted from pulpits or waved on placards at ballgames, no verse in the Bible is more familiar to society. However, I find it to be also the most misunderstood verse. First, let's look at the term "world". Does this automatically mean every human being? This is the conclusion most folks jump to. However, it's imperative when we read the Bible that we not forget to compare scripture with scripture. Note these few examples (more could be given) which prove that *the term "world" in scripture does not always mean "all humanity without exception"*. **1.** In Luke 2:1 there came a decree from Caesar Augustus "that all the world should be taxed." Did the American Indians or Chinese get taxed? No, just the Roman world. **2.** John 17:1-26 records Christ's prayer for his disciples. In verse 9, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me..." Would he die for a world, but refuse to pray for them? Obviously, the two worlds are not the same. **3.** In I John 15:19, "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." It's obvious that those that are "of God" are not included in the "whole world" that lies in wickedness. By the same token, the world referred to in John 3:16 is the world (entirety) of God's elect, not the entire human race without exception.

Let's now look at another term in this great verse - "whosoever". The assumption is made that this denotes "all without exception". However, it must mean "all without distinction". The scriptures are replete with verses which make plain that not all humanity can believe in Jesus Christ as Savior! A few examples are: John 8:42-47, John 10:25-26, John 12:39-40, Matthew 11:25-27, Isaiah 26:10, I Corinthians 2:14, I Corinthians 1:18, John 6:44, and Romans 8:7-8. Now, what does "all without distinction" mean? Jesus is teaching that *his elect children among all nationalities* who are blessed to hear and believe the gospel can feel assured that their sin debts were put away and that heaven will be their home! One of the greatest misconceptions in the day of Jesus was that the Jews were the only nation to receive salvation through the Messiah. The Lord here is teaching Nicodemus, a Jew, that his blood will cover a chosen people "out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Revelation 5:9). As rendered in Acts 10:34-35, "Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." In these verses we learn that righteous, God-fearing, believers of any race show forth evidence of their redeemed state.

*This verse simply gives an expression of assurance to all those who have come to believe in Jesus Christ.* Notice that the term "believeth" means "presently believes". It does not give a recipe for the unregenerate, natural man to be born again. The Bible is manifestly clear that if someone comes to belief, they are already born again! It's too late for them to believe to obtain eternal salvation for they already possess it. I John 5:1 states, "Whosoever believeth (already believes) that Jesus is the Christ is (not "will be") born of God..." In John 5:24 we read, "...He that heareth my word, and believeth (already believes) on him that sent me, hath (already has) everlasting life..." Romans 8:6-10 clearly teaches that the natural mind cannot believe and obey, but "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are (not "will become") the sons of God." (verse 14). Surely, someone who comes to belief in Jesus Christ is "led by the Spirit", aren't they? If belief in Christ is one of the "things of God", and it is, then I Corinthians 2:11-12 proves that you are led there by the Spirit of God. *Belief can only spring from life!*

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Elder Joe Nettles is the pastor of Vidalia Old Line PBC. The above article was printed as three different parts in the local newspaper in Vidalia. I am thankful for his clear presentation of an often misinterpreted verse of scripture. I am thankful that the Lord has blessed Brother Joe to present the truth to many through the local newspaper. It is my prayer that the ones from the Vidalia community who read this article and have a desire to worship in Spirit and in truth will visit Vidalia Church.