

WHO DOES GOD ACTUALLY LOVE?

JAMIE MCNAB

18.7.20

Not many people fear God. Even though Jesus said “Fear Him”!

Most people either don't believe in God at all ... or believe in a God who loves everyone unconditionally — who never disapproves of any behaviour.

A God who always loves the sinner.

Many churches and TV evangelists avoid talking of sin ... and repentance ... and a coming judgment. They don't want to offend their audience? It might affect their offerings?

We've seen that Jesus did preach of a future judgment — and warn about it. Jesus was a Hell-Fire Preacher. He spoke about the weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But many churches focus on God's love — almost entirely.

They base their approach on John 3:16 — the “most popular” scripture.

However ... it is almost universally misunderstood?

John 3:16-17

16 **For God so loved the world** that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Usually explained as “GOD SO VERY MUCH ...”. It means “thus” or “in this manner” — loved the world.

Referring to:

John 3:14-15

14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, **even so must the Son of Man be lifted up**, *(even so — or ... thus — or ... in this manner)*

15 **that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.**

As God delivered ancient Israel by lifting up a bronze serpent — “even so” He lifted up His Son.

The crucifixion was God’s act of love for humanity.

Notice: Verse 16 does not say God “loves” the world ... present tense. **It uses the past tense — Loved.** That’s where God demonstrated His love for His creation ... 2,000 years ago.

Notice also that **verse 16 says those who don’t believe will perish — be destroyed!** This is in a continuous tense “believes in Him” — and continues to believe.

John 3:36

36 **He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.**”

If you don’t “have the Son” — “the wrath of God abides” on you — hovering over you.

John 3:16 is often explained as Jesus Himself preaching about the Love of God to unconverted Nicodemus (and by extension to the whole unconverted world).

But — despite “red letters” — it is almost certain that Jesus stopped speaking at verse 15.

Verse 16 onwards is the Apostle John commenting. And he wrote to believers.

The discussion of God’s love is for believers — to encourage them to continue to believe — not give up.

One of the main heresies of John’s day was that of Cerinthus — that Jesus was just a man — not divine. That’s what he taught. Some believers had fallen away or were getting “shaky”.

Lots of churches focus almost entirely on the Love of God — how God loves everybody.

Yet — the Bible makes very little reference to the Love of God. Maybe one verse in a thousand?

Even in the New Testament. Nothing in Matthew ... Mark ... and Luke. Nothing in Acts ... or Revelation. A sprinkling in the Epistles. And a few references in the writings of John.

And those references to “the Love of God” ... are addressed to believers ... disciples — God’s Family. Not to the unconverted. Yet churches choose to talk endlessly of God’s love to the unconverted.

It is not Biblical! And not very effective? Look at our society today.

Perhaps churches are guilty of “casting their pearls before swine”?

Let’s look at some of these New Testament “Love verses” and see what they say.

John 14:19-23

19 “A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.

20 At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.

21 **He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father**, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

22 Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?”

23 Jesus answered and said to him, **“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him**, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.

Those who obey — will be loved by God.

John 15:5-14

5 **“I am the vine**, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

6 **If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.**

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

9 **“As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you;** abide in My love.

10 **If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.**

11 “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

12 **This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.**

13 **Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.**

14 You are My friends **if you do** whatever I command you.

Jesus talks of His great love — for those who obey. The called ... converted ... disciples. Not speaking here to hostile sinners.

Unconverted not included?

John 17:20-23

20 **“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word;** *(Jesus is praying for those who believe — the disciples then and for us disciples now)*

21 that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

22 And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, **that they may be one just as We are one:**

23 I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

The Father loves believers **as** He loves Jesus.

John 17:25-26

25 O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.

26 And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, **that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.**”

That’s it for the Gospels! There is nothing in Matthew ... Mark and Luke — only 2 or 3 places in the Gospel of John (who is known as The “Apostle of Love”).

Nothing in the Book of Acts. Though we can see a glimpse of what Paul preached publicly.

Acts 24:23-25

23 So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him.

24 And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, **he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.**

25 **Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come,** Felix was afraid and answered, “Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.”

Felix was afraid (other translations say ... alarmed ... terrified!)

Paul preached “out of love” — but his message was of judgment to come!

Acts 26:19-20

19 “Therefore, King Agrippa, **I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,**
20 **but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.**

Paul’s message — repent!

Preaching about the Love of God is for believers. God’s sons and daughters.

Having been forgiven and reconciled ... they should be able to understand and appreciate it!

Yet — even for believers — it’s profound.

Ephesians 3:14-21

14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, **to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,**

17 **that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;** that you, **being rooted and grounded in love,**

18 **may be able to comprehend with all the saints** what is the width and length and depth and height—

19 **to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge;** **that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.**

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, (*in us — believers*)

21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:19 (TPT)

19 **Endless love beyond measurement that transcends our understanding**

It needs a spiritual mind to understand the Love of God. Not for the unconverted?

Ephesians 2:4-10

4 **But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,**

5 even when we were dead in trespasses, **made US alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved),

6 **and raised US up together, and made US sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,**

7 that in the ages to come **He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward US in Christ Jesus.**

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

God's great love to us — the converted — the "saved".

In time ... God's love will be for millions more — but not now.

Romans 5:1-2

1 **Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,**

2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

We (saints) have peace.

Romans 5:6-11

6 **For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.**

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

8 **But God demonstrates His own love toward US, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for US.**

9 **Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.**

10 **For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**

11 **And not only that, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.**

Christ died for us — reconciling us to God.

Paul mentions "Love of God" in around 5 other passages — so even in Paul's Epistles ... there's not much reference.

Yet this is the number 1 topic for many churches.

Most other references in John's letters (actually — only the first!). John is writing to the saints.

1 John 3:1-2

1 **Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!** Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

2 Beloved, **now we are children of God**; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, **but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.**

God's love isn't just a "vague affection" — He's made us sons and daughters. He has added us to the God Family — with all of its privileges.

1 John 4:7-16

7 **Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God**; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

8 He who does not love does not know God, for **God is love.**

9 **In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.**

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.**

11 Beloved, **if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**

12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.

13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.

15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

16 **And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God,** and God in him.

GOD IS LOVE. God's love is in us.

Verse 16 — "we have known and believed the Love of God".

And that's John's contributions!

So: very few references to the Love of God.

It's a "pearl of great price" — needs a spiritual mind to understand. Even for us ... something we have to ponder. To reflect on.

Not something you throw out carelessly at a God-hating world?

Better to preach repentance and coming judgment ... rather than encourage sinners to believe God loves them just as they are.

Psalms 7:11

11 God is a just judge,

And God is angry with the wicked every day.

The wrath of God hovers over the wicked.