

# JOHN 3:16, WHAT IT SAYS AND WHAT IT DOESN'T

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We have been told by many throughout the years that John 3:16 is the “golden text” of the Bible. But labeling it as such seems to imply it holds priority over all the other verses found in Scripture. Therefore, we must ask, why is this passage elevated above all others, and what is the motivation in support of such a position? In considering such a claim, one must admit that such a stance places all other Biblical passages in a subordinate role. This paper is not an argument that there are not cardinal Biblical passages that stand above others, but do all Biblical passages stand or fall on John 3:16? Or is it possible John 3:16 supports a cardinal passage of greater importance than itself? We must further question whether or not we even understand John 3:16 as it was originally written in the Greek. Did the translators do the Greek justice?

There are some that go so far as to make the claim that John 3:16 was never in the original manuscripts. On October 4, 1996, I went to Loudon, Tennessee, at the Piney Ruritan Community Center for the Feast Of Tabernacles. There were four speakers scheduled to speak: James P. Wickstrom, Richard Hoskins, Paul Burnham, and a fellow by the name of Scott Vaught. Wickstrom got so upset with Scott Vaught that he packed his things and left, whereupon another speaker was invited to take the pulpit in Jim's place. His name was Jeremias Faulkner and lived near there at the time. In one of his presentations he said the following about John 3:16, which I have on audio tape:

“Let me try to explain some things to you that you might not know about this book. Like my friend, brother Wickstrom, I don't like to call it the Bible. It's a collection of Scriptures, okay. And the Bible's oldest complete manuscript that we have in existence today only dates back to the 700s, which are in St. Peter's Cathedral at Rome. And older than that are the Scriptures in Aramaic that we have that are [from the] 300s, and they rest right now in Kurdistan. We have broken copies of the Scriptures from the Dead Sea Scrolls. But when you hear somebody get up and say that they are now going to quote from the original; original what? And it's about as original as we can get. You know, 700 A.D. in St. Peter's Rome. I have a friend, he has two doctorates, one including a Ph.D. Once a year it is his privilege by authorization of the Pope to fly into Rome and examine the earliest manuscripts in existence, okay? Then he takes the plane on to Kurdistan because he is a professor in Aramaic, and

gets a chance to see the Scriptures in the Aramaic language. Do you know how much these are guarded? He has to wear a mask just like a doctor. I mean ... you're not allowed to ... suppose you sneeze or cough or spit on one of these things? And just like a doctor he goes in robes and has a mask on, and he goes all the way across the ocean ... the last time ... he told me ... gets a plane fare to Rome ... to Kurdistan and on home to do four verses ... four verses! Do you think it would be worth it all? And yet we being so prolific ... and we get up and do chapters and verses ... and go on and on and on. But sometimes I think we'd be better doing three or four words even in one verse, and try to get some kind of understanding of it.

“I want to get your attention somehow. I want to get you thinking. I'm not here to give you any doctrine or to put any of my views upon you. But if I can get you thinking, there is a chance in the end that truth might come in. Can I shock you with something I'm sure you will be shocked with? John 3:16 ... John 3:16. How many could almost quote it if you had to? ... John 3:16? This friend of mine, who examines these Scriptures once a year, told me the last time we were in California. He said, I can share this with you, but I don't know anyone else I can share it with. I said, likely I'm going out to share it with everybody I meet. Do you know that John 3:16 isn't in any of the original Scriptures? Do you know when it was inserted in there? In the 13th Century, but not even in the Scriptures. Just in a marginal note, and it never even got into the Scriptures to [sic till] the fifteen hundreds. Do you know why it never got into the Scriptures until the fifteen hundreds? Can anybody guess? Because it is not true. I hate to tell you, but it's not true. It starts off with a premise; if you believe John 3:16, you yourself are really going nowhere. John 3:16 says this, 'For God so loved the world, [sic] he gave his only begotten Son' ... not true ... not true ... not true! And if the churches in this world can stand on the high pedestals and look down at you folks in a pew or a seat someplace, and tell you that God only has one Son, you will never amount to anything. Only a sinner, you know, partly saved by grace singing from the old hymnbooks. You see, Yahshua that came here to earth wasn't His first son either. Well not if Luke 3 and 38 [sic Luke 3:38] is true. Because of the genealogies it says 'so and so begat so and so begat Adam ... the what? ... 'the son of God'.' Really? And when they put the marginal note in, this is how it read; it said, 'For God the only Father.' Hey, this is beginning to make a difference ... 'God the only Father' ... it's not the 'only Son', it's 'God the only Father'.' ... And He did give a dearly beloved Son. That was the marginal note. But when these church people went to put it in ... you can just take my word for it ... he goes to Rome once a year and says it's neither in the Aramaic, nor is it in the Scriptures in St. Peters. Does that shock or amaze any of you? It kind of gets your attention ...”

Seeming somewhat reasonable, I, like many others, fell under Jeremias Faulkner's sway. I questioned, why would “God so love the world” at John 3:16, and at John 17:9 say “... I pray not for the world”? In 1996 I was not as advanced in my research as I am now, so at that time, I didn't question Faulkner's story.

With this paper, we'll examine this subject in greater detail. Faulkner claimed these manuscripts were at “St. Peter's Cathedral at Rome.” Faulkner failed to notice that, in the Nestle-Aland “Novum Testamentum Graece”, 27th edition (NA27) list of Greek mss. that it employs, the Vatican holds many Greek mss., some of them very old

indeed, and many others were copied as recently as the 16th century, and still in Greek! Many other Greek mss. of great antiquity are held in various libraries throughout the Western World. The NA27 also cites (and provides a listing of those employed) Latin versions in its critical apparatus, but these are far fewer in number than the Greek. Apparently, contrary to popular opinion, the Vatican has a long tradition of Greek manuscript preservation. The NA27 lists the Vatican Library as “Citta’ del Vaticano, Bibl. Vat.”, and surely this is not “St. Peter’s Cathedral” as Faulkner states!

The NA27 cites several Syriac (Aramaic) versions in its critical apparatus. The versions cited include the Syrus Sinaiticus dating to the 4th or 5th century A.D.; the Syrus Curetonianus which dates to the 5th century; the Peshitta, which is “the most widely accepted of the Syriac versions”; the Philoxeniana, the “first Monophysite Syriac Bible version, commissioned by Bishop Philoxenus of Mabbug in A.D. 507/508”; and the Harklensis, “The version made by Thomas of Harkel in A.D. 616 is the only Syriac version containing the entire New Testament.” With the exception of the Philoxeniana, of which most of its content has been lost and so can not be spoken for, there is no indication that John 3:16 is missing from any of these.

## EXPLORING THE GREEK OF JOHN 3:16

By William Finck

John 3:16 in the A.V. reads thusly: “**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 Greek from which this verse was translated, from the NA27 reads: οὕτως γὰρ ἠγάπησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν κόσμον, ὥστε τὸν υἱὸν [αὐτοῦ] τὸν μονογενῆ ἔδωκεν, ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται ἀλλ’ ἔχη ζωὴν αἰώνιον. In order to properly understand this verse, that is, in a Biblical context and in the time it was written, we must comprehend the meanings of certain terms as they were then written. Especially important are the terms κόσμος (“world”), ὁ μονογενῆς (“only begotten”) and πᾶς (“whosoever”), which will be discussed here.

To properly understand the meaning of the word “world” in the Bible, one must first learn that there are two Greek words which have been translated “world”, and investigate the meanings and usage of those words in the Greek vernacular.

The first word, οἰκουμένη appears in the New Testament 15 times (according to *A Concordance to the Greek Testament*, edited by W. F. Moulton and A. S. Geden) and is defined by Liddell & Scott in their *Greek-English Lexicon*: “*the inhabited world, a term used to designate the Greek world, as opposed to barbarian lands ... so in Roman times, the Roman world, N.T.*”

Strabo the Geographer, who died in 25 A.D. used this word οἰκουμένη often, and described it fully in 17 books, most of which survive today. The οἰκουμένη of Strabo, his “world”, included all of Africa north of the Sahara from the Straits of Gibraltar to the horn of Africa, east to the Ganges river in India, north to the Jaxartes river in Asia, and west to the British Isles. This was the Greco-Roman “world” in spite of the fact that Eratosthenes (who Strabo quotes and refers to often) calculated the circumference of the planet a couple of centuries before Strabo, and that they knew of

land masses beyond their “world.” They knew the planet was a sphere, and Eratosthenes’ calculation of its size was within reason. This world, as described by Strabo and all of the Greeks before him, was astonishingly White (Adamic), and the non-white races or mixed races at its fringes were quite marginalized.

The second word translated “world”, κόσμος, appears in the N.T. approximately 182 times, of which 102 are in John’s books, and 51 in Paul’s letters (Moulton & Geden) and is defined by Liddell & Scott: “order, ... 2. good order, good behavior, decency ... 3. the form, fashion of a thing ... 4. of states, order, government ... II. an ornament, decoration, embellishment, dress ... III. a regulator ... IV. the world or universe, from its perfect order ... 2. mankind, as we use ‘the world’, N.T.”

Once it is realized that “mankind” in the Bible is truly only Adamkind (e.g. Romans 5:12-14; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45; 1 Tim. 2:13; Jude 14; Acts 17:26 and Deut. 32:8; Romans 8:21, 39; Luke 3:38 and Genesis 5:1-2; et al.) and that the οἰκουμένη in Roman times encompassed the very same lands discussed at Deut. 32:8, in which the Genesis 10 Adamic Nations were long before distributed, and that the Greco-Roman “world” – and the New Testament “world” – was limited to this, then a much deeper understanding of the scope of the Bible may be realized. In all actuality the κόσμος is the state of order within the οἰκουμένη (extended to the heavenly bodies also, which the ancients perceived as being much more a part of their “world”); the κόσμος is the decorum of the οἰκουμένη! The οἰκουμένη was that portion of the planet inhabited by the White Adamic Race, or MANkind.

It would not be improper to translate οἰκουμένη “the inhabited [by Adamites] earth” and κόσμος “the Adamic world”, and anything short of such definitions allows room for those who would want to cause confusion concerning such things.

### ?? “ὁ μονογενής” ??

The literal meaning of ὁ μονογενής is “the only begotten.” But is that what John meant when he wrote his gospel? Did John mean to call Yahshua Christ τὸν υἱὸν τὸν μονογενῆ, “the only begotten Son”, in spite of Luke 3:38 and Deut. 14:1? Or does the phrase have another meaning, idiomatic and unnoticed by many translators and commentators? There is definite proof that the term does have an idiomatic meaning, as “best loved” or “most beloved” etc., and in writings quite contemporary to John, even in the N.T.! Yet few have taken notice of this ...

William Whiston’s edition of *Josephus’ Antiquities*, at 1:13:1 (1.222) begins: “Now Abraham greatly loved Isaac, as being his only begotten ...” And a footnote reads: “Note, that both here and Hebrews 11:17, Isaac is called Abraham’s only begotten son, though he at the same time had another son, Ishmael. The *Septuagint* expresses the true meaning, by rendering the text *the beloved son.*” At *Antiquities* 20:2:1 (20.17), Josephus describes the birth of a son, Izates, to Monobazus, king of Adiabene, who “had indeed Monobazus, his elder brother, by Helena also, as he has other sons by other wives besides. Yet did he openly place all his affections on this his only begotten son Izates...” And Whiston has in a footnote here: “Josephus here uses the word monogenê, an onlybegotten son, for no other than one best-loved, as does

both the Old and New Testament; I mean, where there were one or more sons besides Gen. 22:2; Heb. 11:17.”

In the A.V., Genesis 22:2 begins: “And He said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest ...” and the *Septuagint* translators recognized the idiom, writing (as Brenton has): “And He said, Take thy son, the beloved one, whom thou hast loved – Isaac ...” Paul at Hebrews 11:17, referring to this very thing, states (as the A.V. has it): “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*”, where that same word *μονογενής* was used.

So here we have two instances in Josephus, another in the Old Testament, and then Paul, where the best beloved of multiple sons is referred to as “only begotten”, and so there should be no doubt that the term serves as an idiom for “best beloved”, and should be interpreted in that manner when we encounter its use in places such as John 3:16 and 1 John 4:9, not forgetting Luke 3:38 and Deut. 14:1! Not to do so, but to insist upon a purely literal translation in spite of the evidence presented, is brazen intellectual dishonesty!

The word translated “whosoever” in the A.V., *πᾶς*, properly means “all” or “the whole”, depending upon whether one refers to many entities, or a single one. The translation of *πᾶς* as “any” must be limited to certain contexts and circumstances, for which see Liddell & Scott *πᾶς* III. 2. where use of the Accusative case *πᾶν* is illustrated. Proper ways to say “whosoever” in Greek, found often in the N.T., are *ὅς ἐάν*, *ὅς ἄν* or *ὅστις* (for which see Liddell & Scott, *ος*, II. 4. and also *ὅστις*). The word “his” in John 3:16 does not appear in the earlier manuscripts, but in a papyri, P<sup>63</sup>, dating to 500 A.D., and some other uncials and miniscules. I would omit “his”, as does the NA27.

In light of all of this, I would translate John 3:16: “For Yahweh so loved the cosmos [the order or adornment of the *οἰκουμένη*] that He gave the best-beloved [or ‘most-beloved’] Son, in order that all who are persuaded in Him [or ‘all who are believing in Him’] would not be lost [or ‘destroyed’] but would have eternal life.”

### **FINCK’S ANSWER TO FAULKNER’S FICTION:**

There are twenty-two ancient papyri – discovered via archaeology – employed by the NA27 among the “consistently cited witnesses” for the Gospel of John. Three of these are dated to the second century, and eight to the third. Of these eleven – of course none are complete – three papyri contain any part of John 3: P<sup>66</sup>, P<sup>75</sup>, and P<sup>80</sup>, which is but a fragment of John 3:34 only and must be discounted here. P<sup>66</sup>, said to be “circa 200 A.D.” is complete from John 1:1 to 6:11, 6:35 to 14:26, and has fragments of chapters 15, 16, and 20. P<sup>75</sup>, from the third century, is complete from John 1:1 to 11:45, and has fragments through the rest of chapter 11, and chapters 12 through 15. Of course neither P<sup>66</sup> nor P<sup>75</sup> have any part of the noted interpolation of John 7:53-8:11. Neither is John 3:16 wanting in either of these manuscripts! With this verse’s presence in these ancient papyri, and no indication from the NA27 of the verse’s absence in any of the uncials, miniscules or other mss. handed down since the fourth century, it must be asked, by what source or authority is this verse to be considered a marginal

reading? **With such overwhelming evidence, one must treat John 3:16 as part of the text!**

In order to understand the definitions of the terms “cosmos” (for which see my recent essay in reply to Dave Barley), the context of the phrase “whosoever believeth”, and the meaning of υἰὸν τὸν μονογενῆ, or “only begotten Son.” For “whosoever” must be limited to the Adamic race, and for “only begotten Son”, I would translate “best beloved Son.” Please refer to the notes which accompany my Hebrews translation at Hebrews 11:17 (page 115 of my notes), where this idiom is explained at least concisely, with examples cited from the *Septuagint* and *Josephus*. The word “his” in John 3:16 does not appear in the earlier mss., but in a papyri, P<sup>63</sup>, dating to 500 A.D., and some early uncials and miniscules. I would omit “his”, as does the NA27, (where I have [αὐτοῦ] above).

*William Finck*

### **GALATIANS 4:1-6 DEFINES THE “WHOSOEVER” OF JOHN 3:16**

Galatians 4:1-6 is very important to bring John 3:16 into its proper context and reads as follows: “**1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; 2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: 4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, 5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might recover the position of sons. 6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.**”

Who else was under the Law but Israel? Also, the phrase “made of a woman” in verse 4 in the KJV takes us to Genesis 3:15 in the center reference. Inasmuch as Eve was made from Adam, that **excludes** all non-Adamic peoples from this discussion. **Not** “all men”, or as the AV renders it, “whosoever” in a universal context as mainstream churchianity interprets it! When are we ever going to learn that our Redeemer is a **Kinsman** Redeemer, and that only a **Kinsman** can Redeem a **Kinsman**! Now don’t try to pull that fiction that Israel is Redeemed and the other races are “saved” business, for Luke 19:10 says: “**For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.**” Who else was “lost” but Israel? So, too, only Israel can be “**saved**”!

I have now presented evidence showing both sides of the story about John 3:16. It will now be each individual’s responsibility to decide what he believes to be the truth on the matter. But there still remains another side of the story concerning John 3:16, for there is probably no other verse in Scripture taken so entirely out-of-context to support the false doctrine of “universalism.” The universalists seize upon the words “world” and “whosoever” to support their universalist orientation. They clutch onto many passages, taking them completely in error, to build their unstable position. John 3:16 is only one of the passages the universalists have used to erroneously prop-up their unsound theory. No doubt, it has been the universalists, past and present, who have

dubbed John 3:16 as the “golden text” of the Bible. Using Yahweh’s Word in such a manner causes it to become of no effect.

They will use Matthew 13:44 about the “treasure hid in a field” to try to prove that our Messiah purchased the entire world, which they claim represents the “field”, in order to obtain the true treasure, the Israelites. They will then back up to Matt. 13:38 and point out that it says “The field is the world.” They entirely overlook that Matt. 13:44 designates “that field”, not the entire farm! The Greek word for “that” at Matt. 13:44 is #1565, and means: a place ... that place ... that one ... (same) ... selfsame ... that (same, very) ...” The universalists claiming to be Israel Identity take the position that our Messiah purchased all the other races in order to acquire the true treasure, the Israelites. They also completely overlook the fact that these are two distinctly different parables, and that the word “field” might have an entirely different idiomatic application in the two separate parables. Poor old God, can’t do anything right! This is the kind of defective reasoning the universalists use.

What ever happened to the statement by our Messiah that, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel”, Matt. 15:24? Or what ever befell the proclamation, “You (Israel) only have I known of all the families of the earth ...”, Amos 3:2. These two passages are hardly in context with the idea of “buying the whole world”! Such nonsense must be forcibly read into the Scriptures for it isn’t there!

### **FATHER AND SON ARE ONE AND THE SAME**

By this time, the reader should be acquiring some idea of what John 3:16 says and what it doesn’t, but there is one more factor we should consider. And while chiding others, I must also condemn myself, for I too once believed in a “trinity.” Since John 3:16 speaks of a “best beloved Son”, we should know who that Son is. This can all be cleared up with the passage at John 14:7-10, which says:

**“7 If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. 8 Philip saith unto him, Yahshua, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. 9 Yahshua saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father? 10 Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.”**

While there is a sense of Fatherhood and Sonship involved, the two are but one person. How much plainer can it be “... he that hath seen me hath seen the father ...” Our Redeemer expected Philip and the other Disciples gathered there with Him at that occasion to believe His statement! I am quite sure that if one of us today were to make the same request as Philip, we would receive a very similar reply although we have not as yet seen Him! Let’s follow that one with John 20:29: “**Yahshua saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.**”

Looking back, which is nothing more than 20/20 hindsight, I realize that I should have questioned Jeremias Faulkner’s presentation more thoroughly about John 3:16

not being in the original manuscripts. To say the least, I no longer hold to Faulkner's concept, and will no longer pass his testimony along to others as being credible. If you want to know what Faulkner said on this subject, it's all contained in this brochure.