

What Did God Love So Much?

When we consider John 3:16 we automatically imagine the text saying, “God loved people so much that he sent his Son to save them”. This is the way it’s been taught to us in the evangelical/Charismatic church systems. In context, the focus of Jesus’ discourse (verses 14-21) is about people and this is then provides the impetus for the Gospel of salvation.

However, looking at what Jesus said from a Kingdom perspective should give us more insightful information about God’s plans and purposes. After all, Jesus came to reinstate the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth, so who better to have the full set of information on this global change.

Jesus’ address uses the word ‘world’ which we skip over (miss seeing) because we’ve been taught that the message is about people, not the world. We overlook ‘world’ even though we know that words are specifically chosen to convey exact information. With this in mind, what if Jesus was referring to Father’s plan for creation, not just humanity?

The word translated ‘world’ numerous times in this speech comes from the Greek word κόσμος (*kósmos*). In a narrow sense, *kósmos* can be used to refer to a people group or to all people. However, in its broadest sense it refers to ‘the universe, earth and the people in it’ – i.e. all of the physical creation. So, which sense was the Greek translator inferring that Jesus used?

It is my contention that Jesus knew that Father wanted to bring humanity, his ruling class, back into their original state so they could be responsible for the return of the planet and its biosphere back to its original state. He had to redeem people first, so they could do the work to restore the planet (‘world’) he loved.

Some of my reasoning is this: When Jesus was referring to people the word ‘**men**’ is used (verse 19), elsewhere, the general word is ‘**world**’. ‘Men’ is translated from the Greek word ἄνθρωπος (*ánthrōpos*), meaning ‘humanity’ or ‘primordial man’ (i.e. man from the beginning) – AKA ‘mankind’. If Jesus was only referring to people in John 3:16, the word *ánthrōpos* would have been the logical choice of Greek words. Instead *kósmos* is chosen by the Greek translator.

Does the refrain from using *ánthrōpos* in verse 16 really show that Father was looking at all the created world, not just people?

One other source to bring understanding is the Jewish NT. In John 3:16 it uses the expression *Olam Hazeh*¹ (עולם הזה) which means 'this world'. A Hebrew lexicon explains this expression as referring to “the world in which we live, where each of us is given the opportunity to honour the Name of the Lord...”² This makes it clear that the Jews see Father focussed on his created world, not just humans.

I can’t prove that Jesus was referring to his creation, even if I get the best linguistic experts to the analyse the passage for me – they would argue the point among themselves any way. Unless we were there and heard what Jesus said we do not know for sure what he was transmitting to his hearers.

However, understanding the Kingdom’s imperatives gives a different take on John 3:16, one that the Gospel of Salvation totally misses. The ignorance of this is part of the basis for attacking the full message of the Kingdom today.

Laurence

10-3-2019

(www.CanberraForerunners.org)

COPYRIGHT

Quotes are the copyright of their authors.

Free graphics are from www.cler.com & free photos are from commons.wikimedia.org.

This document is free to copy, republish and distribute, but only 'as is'. It is free to quote from at length.

All Canberra Forerunners' documents are licensed under

Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License

1 – This is how *kósmos* is translated in the Orthodox Jewish Bible (OJB)

2 – www.seraia.com/seraiuk/lexicon/OlamHazeh.htm