

Truths We Believe about God 8

A Biblical & Theological Rejection of Wm. Paul Young's book, "Lies We Believe About God" (*Eighth in a series.*)

"Therefore, beloved . . . regard the patience of our Lord as salvation . . . just as also our beloved brother Paul . . . wrote to you, as also in all his letters . . . which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction."
—The Apostle Peter (2 Peter 3:14-16, NASB)

A Review of the Book's Chapters (*continued*)

A *Catena* (*My Commentary on Young's Catena: Part 3*)

The "World" and "Everyone" Passages (23-28)

The "World" Passages

23. John 1:29 (NASB, emphasis Young's): "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the *world*."

John the Baptist's recognition of Jesus occurs at the beginning of His public ministry. "Behold the Lamb (*amnos*) of God who takes away the sin of the world," John proclaims. Though Jesus was born after John, the prophet testified to Jesus' preexistence by stating He "existed before me" (John 1:30). In John's statement about Jesus the repetition of the definite article is evident: "the" Lamb (*ho amnos*), "the" sin (*ten harmartian*) and "the" world (*tou kosmou*). That Jesus was "the Lamb" indicates He was/is the only Lamb from God (Greek *tou theo*, is a genitive of source meaning *from*). God would require no further sacrifice than He provided (Genesis 22:1-14). With the Cross all sacrificial systems end. The focus for the Lamb's coming was to die for the sin (singular) which constitutes humanity and the world's system. The sins (plural) which people commit are not the focus of John's statement though Jesus' sacrifice provides also for their forgiveness (1 John 1:8-10). Jesus died for the sin of *the world* (*cosmos*). Fulfilling the anticipation inspired by the one-thousand and four-hundred year old sacrificial system demanded by God's Law, John declared the scope of the Lamb's coming could/would not only be the final sacrifice for the sin of the Jews in particular but also for all humankind in general, "Samaritans" and "other sheep" (John 4:42; 10:16).

In contrast to the Day of Atonement which required the sacrifice of goats on a yearly basis (Leviticus 16:1 ff.), John identified Jesus as "the Lamb of God." This designation associates His sacrifice with the slaying of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:1-13), as well as the Suffering Servant the prophet Isaiah portrayed (Isaiah 53:13-53). While other Jews, as regarded the Levitical sacrifices, were so parochially minded that they were no "worldly" good, John the Baptist understood the worldwide mission of Jesus from the beginning. But "In all of this, John the Baptist's testimony is clear:" comments Pate, "Jesus is the Messiah, not him." [86] The

Apostle Paul too associated Jesus' self-sacrifice with the Passover Lamb, "For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed," he wrote (1 Corinthians 5:7b).

Now we turn to the issue raised by Young's quotation of John's statement about Jesus: Does John the Baptist's mention of "the world" imply universalism, that all will be saved? If understood, the Apostle John's concept of the world answers "No!" W. Robert Cook offered the following definition of "world": "It is a way of life ordered apart from and contrary to God, ruled by Satan, and encompassing all mankind who are not in the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ." [87] The antagonism of the world toward God is such that though Jesus prayed to the Father for Himself, His Apostle-disciples and the church, He did not pray for the world ("I do not ask on behalf of the world," John 17:9). Though Jesus loves all people, He viewed the world's system to be both deceptive to and destructive of the very people He, His Father and Spirit love. That Satanic system—"the lust of the flesh" (the love of Pleasure), "the lust of the eyes" (the love of Possessions) and "the boastful pride of life" (the love of Position/Power)—utterly hates the Father, His Son and those who believe on the Lamb (1 John 2:16; John 15:18). The world is a satanic and unloving system which blinds people to the Gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4). So if people love the world, love *for* [objective genitive, ed.] the Father is not in them (1 John 2:15). Might it be said that in God's eyes and taken in this sense, the world is a "lost cause"? So Jesus neither prayed nor sacrificed Himself for the system called the world and those who love to live in it. Such people demonstrate they do not love the Father. That many people love the world indicates that these "worldlings" are not saved because love for God has not been poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

The lesson: unbelievers whose life purpose is to bask in the adulation of society, to indulge their fleshly wants and desires and to accumulate wealth unto themselves indicate they do not love God. "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15b). In the end, these systematic worldlings are not "fond" of the Father, and neither is the Father "fond" of them.

That Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world indicates that forgiveness can only be obtained through faith in the only begotten Son of God (John 1:14). He is *the Way*, *the Truth* and *the Life* (John 14:6). "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, KJV; See Hebrews 9:27-28; 1 Peter 3:18). We should not look to anybody or anything else for salvation—to the church, priests, rituals, prayers or good works—but only to Jesus. "Behold the Lamb from God!" Lord Jesus, we praise you! Your sacrifice alone is the only basis whereby our sin and sins can be taken away.

24. John 3:16-17 (KJV/NIV, emphasis Young's): "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the *world* through Him."

In contrast to the satanic system called "the world, God loves "the world" of people, so much so that He gave His only begotten Son to die for them. Does this mean that all the people in all the world are thereby reconciled to God? Not if the entirety of verse is read and understood!

Jesus stated that whosoever believes in Him will “not perish” but receive “everlasting life.” “He who believes in Him [the Son] is not judged; he who does not believe in Him has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18).

The point: All of humanity is separated into two camps, unbelievers and believers or rejecters and receivers; those doing evil deeds, loving their “dark lifestyles” and therefore hating the Light; or those practicing truth, revealing their “Light-styles” and loving the Light. Light and darkness do not mix, and God does not want us to live in the shadows. We’re either in the dark and away from the Light, or in the Light and away from the dark. The categories of Light and dark as also belief and unbelief belie universal reconciliation. All do not believe in God’s Son therefore all do not have everlasting life. John’s Gospel is filled statements about belief and the consequences of unbelief (John 1:10; 3:36; 5:38; 6:36, 64; 8:24; 10:25; 12:47-48; 16:9); as also the rest of the New Testament (Acts 13:40; 19:9; 28:24; 2 Thessalonians 2:1; 3:2; Hebrews 3:12; 1 John 2:22-23; Revelation 21:8). I don’t know why Young even refers to this verse because to him any Father who would give His “only begotten Son” to die for the world, who would conceive of such an offensive idea as the Cross, is in his view “a cosmic abuser” (Young’s words). (**LWBAG**, 149) By the way, world does not mean all humanity without exception, but all without distinction, no distinction between Jew and Gentile (John 10:16). All are invited to believe in the Lamb God provided to take away their sin(s). According to Jesus, salvation is limited to “whosoever believes in Him” (John 3:16; See Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:11-22.).

25. John 4:42 (Holman CSB, emphasis Young’s): “We no longer believe because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this really is the Savior of the *world*.”

Establishment Judaism, for a complex of grievances, despised the schismatic and cultic Samaritan sect. After the captivity, the Samaritans set up their own worship center on Mt. Gerizim. During the Maccabean revolt (the rebellion of devout Jews against the sacrilege imposed on them by Antiochus Epiphanes, *circa* 200 BC) and to appease the invader/occupier Syrians, the Samaritans dedicated their temple to Zeus Xenos. For accommodating Antiochus (who in mockery and defiance of Israel’s Law and God offered a pig on the altar of sacrifice in the Temple on Mt Zion in Jerusalem) the Jews adopted an official policy, “have no dealings with Samaritans” (John 4:9). Yet for Jesus and His disciples the shortest route from Judea in the south to Galilee in the north was a straight line. So despite the sectarianism of the Samaritans and the attitude of official Judaism toward them, the Lord decided that He and His disciples would not abide by the dictated Jewish custom but would “pass through Samaria” (John 4:4). It was in this highly charged spiritual and social situation that Jesus engaged in conversation with someone who was not only a Samaritan but also a woman!

As a result of Jesus’ loving interaction with her, this many-times-married woman went into Samaritan town of Sychar and told the men—“Come, see a man who told me all things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?” (John 4:29, 39). Many believed on Jesus’ word not because of “hearsay” from the woman, but because “we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is indeed the Savior of the world” (John 4:42). Note the repetition of the word *many*: from Sychar “*many* of the Samaritans believed in Him . . . [and] *many* more believed

because of His word”; *many but not all* (John 4:39, 41). When they too came to believe in Jesus, this group told the woman “we have heard for ourselves and know that this One is the Savior of the world” (John 4:42). They were surprised that not only was Jesus the Savior of Jews who would believe in Him, but also Samaritans! Welcome to their “world.” Before Pentecost Jesus told His disciples, “and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea *and Samaria*, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth” (Emphasis added, Acts 1:8). So this verse Young cites does not teach universal reconciliation.

26. John 6:33 (NIV, emphasis Young’s): “For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the *world*.”

This statement occurs in the context of the first of seven “I Am” sayings in John’s Gospel (John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7; 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; and 15:1)—“I am the bread of life.” Though not wandering in the wilderness like Israel after the Exodus, a crowd of people following Jesus caught up with Him at Capernaum on the Sea of Galilee’s north shore. Jesus recognized the crowd was seeking Him because He had fed them and now they were hungry again. Trying to get Jesus to provide another miracle meal for them, they referred to the Exodus where the Lord gave Israel manna in the wilderness to eat (Exodus 16:4). If the Lord fed Israel in the wilderness, why can’t you feed us now, Jesus? Make a meal for us again! So they used Scripture to try and manipulate Jesus to do what they wanted Him to do; to give them the food they wanted (John 6:30-31). (How like so many of today’s health and wealth Christians!) But Jesus took the occasion of their physical hunger to speak to them about spiritual hunger. He told them that the Father, not Moses, provides “the true bread out of heaven” and “the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world” (John 6:32-33). To the crowd this sounded like an offer of “the fast food” they wanted. So they said to Jesus, “Lord, always give us this bread” to which Jesus responded, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst” (John 6:34-35).

Then Jesus told the crowd, “you have seen Me, and yet do not believe”; then He added an invitation, “everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life” (John 6:36, 40). Regarding obtaining eternal life, only those who behold and believe will receive it. The salvation of the world does not include all humanity without exception, but only those who behold the testimony about Jesus and believe it (John 5:39; Luke 24:25, 27, 44-47).

For an observable reason this statement by Jesus—the bread from heaven gives life to the world—does not teach universal reconciliation. Consistent with how the Gospel presents the concept, “world” does not refer to all people without exception. The difference between people remains: those who behold the Son and don’t believe (John 6:36) and those who behold the Son and do believe (6:35, 40); those who come to Jesus and those who do not (6:37). Rather than believe in Jesus, some people prefer to remain spiritually starving and dehydrating (John 6:35). Even though they were in His presence, Jesus told the Capernaum crowd “you have seen Me, and yet do not believe” (John 6:36). But those who do place their faith in Jesus will “on the last day” be resurrected from the dead and find everlasting security (John 6:37, 39-40). Those who don’t won’t. As regards Jesus’ offer of spiritual nurture, some would rather starve and thirst than by faith eat the bread and drink the water of life Jesus promises to provide. In unbelief they remain insecure regarding Jesus’ promised presence, symbolized by eating the

bread and drinking the water He provides, with and in them.

Personally, I find satisfaction in my every thought about our precious Savior. Because of Jesus' presence with and in me, I neither hunger nor thirst after "something more." Christ's promised inner presence is my spiritual reality and satisfaction. He is with and in me always. I accept this by faith and will not try to manipulate my soul and spirit into feeling His presence by engaging in unbiblical activities like contemplative prayer, mood music, *lectio divina*, Taize worship, repeating like a mantra the Jesus Prayer ("Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner."), etc. But I would be careful to testify that though I am satisfied in Christ, I am not smug in my Christian faith. I need to grow in grace, but not by exercising the legalisms of spiritual disciplines. What the Spirit of Christ began in me will not be perfected "by works of the Law . . . [or] the flesh" (Galatians 3:2, 3; Read verses 1-14.).

27. John 8:12 (ESV, emphasis Young's): "I am the light of the *world*."

This is the second great "I Am" statement in John's Gospel. As John's prologue intimates, the Word for the world is the Light of the world. For reasons previously stated, this does not mean that inherently the world becomes saved. Allow Jesus' own teaching to qualify this.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and *men loved darkness rather than light*, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But *he that doeth truth cometh to the light*, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

—John 3:17-21, Emphasis added.

Some people will not come to the Light because they love darkness; they love "the night life." Stated bluntly, many people are already condemned because they're married to the night wherein they, the ungodly, commit "their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way" (Jude 15). The real reason people do not come to the Light is for reason of their immorality (Compare Romans 1:18-32.). They love their ungodly lifestyles. They prefer the cover of darkness to hide, so they imagine, their evil deeds. All are not saved because many love the night and will not come to the Light.

The "Everyone" Passage

28. 1 Timothy 4:10 (Holman CSB, Emphasis Young's): "We labor and strive for this, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of *everyone*, especially of those who believe."

In this statement the Apostle Paul presents the scope of salvation to be broadly available to all sorts of people (the living God . . . is the Savior of everyone) but narrowly applicable to believers

only (“especially those who believe”). Hiebert comments that, “This concluding phrase [‘especially of those who believe’] shows that God is not the Saviour of unbelievers in the same sense that He is of believers. This statement cannot be used to support an unscriptural universalism which teaches that all men are saved.” **[88]** Another pastor states: “With this clause the Apostle moves from the universal scope of the sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice (“the Savior of all men”) and narrows the field regarding the limited scope of its efficiency (“especially of believers”).” **[89]** If in this verse the Apostle Paul intended to state that everyone is saved, he would not have added the qualifying adverbial phrase “especially (Greek *malista*: “specially” KJV, ASV; “particularly” NLT) of those who believe.” Further, had his intent been to communicate the salvation of everyone, he would have contradicted other of his statements in which “he clearly regards some people as bearing God’s retribution and punishment in the penalty of eternal destruction (cf., e.g., 2 Thes. 1:7-10; 1 Thes. 1:10).” **[90]**

To be continued . . .

Footnotes

[86] C. Marvin Pate, *The Writings of John: A Survey of the Gospel, Epistles, and Apocalypse* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011): 57.

[87] W. Robert Cook, *The Theology of John* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1979): 117.

[88] Hiebert, *First Timothy*: 84.

[89] John A. Kitchen, *The Pastoral Epistles for Pastors* (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Christian Publications, 2009): 178.

[90] George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992): 203.