

WHY DO HARDLY ANY BIBLE VERSES SEEM TO SAY THAT GOD LOVES EVERYBODY?

OVERVIEW

John 3:16 says God loved the world that he gave his son to save it. The expression world does not mean literally everybody on earth. It is answering a Jewish opinion that only Jews can attain salvation. 1 Timothy 2:4 says that God wants all to be saved. You can hate your enemy and still wish he would change and be your friend. Romans 5:8 says that God loved us while we were still sinners. It refers to those who have already converted. If God sees an evil person has the potential to convert and loves them that is not necessarily unconditional love. Why do so few verses seem to be about the alleged universal love of God for all that many fantasise about?

ANALYSIS

The Bible says that God hates unsaved sinners. It says it so many times that we know we can be certain it teaches that so any interpretation of the Bible verses that seem to say God loves sinners should be interpreted in the light of these. And even more so when the ones that seem to speak of his universal love are in the minority. Only three verses in the Bible seem to say that God loves everybody. They are, the one in which we are told that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that anyone who believes in him could have eternal life, John 3:16, and the one which says that God wants all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth, 1 Timothy 2:4, and the one where we are told that God so loved us that while we were still sinners he saved us which is Romans 5:8.

In John 3:16, Jesus is telling Nicodemus who thought that only Jews could be saved that anybody in the world who believe could be saved. He said that God so loved the world that all who believe will be saved meaning that all who believe are the world that God loves. God hates the rest. "God so loved all that he sent his Son so that all who believe in him have eternal life". He does not love the unbelievers for he could save them because of their sincere desire for divine forgiveness and their sincerity which must be there to some degree. So love must stand for do good. It has to mean that God did good for the world in sending his Son but strictly speaking he hates the world for it is sinful. You can hate your enemy and love him in the sense that you give him some opportunity to turn to you in reconciliation.

God so loved the world in giving his Son to the world. That is what we are told. But you could hate your enemy's guts but love him so much that you gave him your dinner because he was starving.

God does love all he made in the sense that if he hated it, it would not exist. He loves the damned so far as he allows them to exist and regards them as nice creations but hates them for what they do with this niceness – they twist it and become evil. The world could stand for creation. The verse can be taken this way, "God so loved the creation that he gave his only Son to it so that anybody who believes in his Son has eternal life." This means he might love to keep his evil creations in existence but he still hates them for being evil. To give his Son is an honour to his creation.

Paul's disciple in the Bible says that God wants all to be saved and know the truth for there is one mediator, Jesus, who is the only way to God (1 Timothy 2:4). He means all who can know the mediator and respond to him. It does not refer to all on earth.

Even if it did it would make no difference. God could hate sinners and love them in the sense that he knows they will change if he saves them from sin and wants them to change. But that is why we hate people for they won't change to please us. It doesn't make our hate any less real. Perhaps God wishes he could save them all though he has to hate them. He hates them now but he does not let that hate stop him from making it possible to love them later. The love for what they will be is the reason he makes their salvation possible now not the love for what they are. This is the explanation for the Romans verse (5:8) as well and it is the only explanation for the persons referred to as being loved are clearly those who have embraced the gospel in sincerity and have been saved by it. Many believe that God hates all sinners except sinners he has predestined to salvation. He loves them in their sins now for he sees they will be saved. In other words, their sins are paid for unlike those who will never be saved so he has nothing to hate them for though they are sinners now. But this view is not in the Bible at all. The Bible says we are under God's wrath until we are saved. God could hate you even if your sins are paid for on the basis that the payment has not been activated yet. It has not been appropriated. He could save you to stop hating you not because he loves you now but because he loves you in the sense that he wants to help you so that he can love you properly. Love that is not just intimate but involves approval of the other person's actions is more real than love that disapproves because the intimacy is harmed and because to disapprove of the sin a person commits is to disapprove of the person. In so far as you reduce love you increase hate or not caring about the person. The idea of a God that always cares is

too ridiculous for words and yet if the Church knew what it was talking about and taught a more honest God who didn't love unconditionally it would lose most of its members. If it is comfort you want and if you want to feel loved and cherished then God is not the answer.

The bit in the Sermon on the Mount and in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 6:27-36) where Jesus says we must love our enemies for God gives earthly blessings even to the wicked refers to enemies who sincerely mean well but just are against us for the wrong reasons. Since God gives blessings to the wicked not for their sake but for the good people among them it is clear that Jesus is not saying you go out of your way to help your enemies. You help them when you could be doing the good harm if you don't. Even people who hate their enemies and believe they should agree with that. By love Jesus means do good to not value. Jesus was not saying God loved the wicked. Rather he was denying it.

Jesus telling us to love our enemies does not mean God loves them. We are not God and we don't know the things he knows but he knows everything. Because we can't judge like he can we have to be nice to bad people for we don't know if he hates them much or not.

