

The World

by Thomas Bradbury

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being born again through the power of the Holy Spirit to enter the kingdom of God and receive eternal life.

Scripture: Luke 18:9, John 1:10, John 3:16, John 15:17, John 17:8, Acts 5:20, Acts 11:14, Romans 1:8, 1 Corinthians 7:31, 1 John 2:1

Topics: "Divine Love", "Salvation Through Christ"

Description

Thomas Bradbury preaches on the profound love of God as demonstrated in John 3:16, emphasizing the necessity of being born again to understand divine truth and experience salvation through Jesus Christ. He delves into the significance of the term 'the world,' refuting the misconception that it refers to all mankind, and instead reveals its various contextual meanings in Scripture. Bradbury highlights the exclusivity of God's love for His chosen ones, contrasting it with the world's enmity towards God, and underscores the divine purpose of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles, breaking down all barriers through Christ.

Transcript

"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." (John 3:16)

THESE are the words of Incarnate Wisdom. They are words of love flowing of life spoken by Him Who declared Himself to be "the Resurrection and the Life," and gave His message to the liberated disciples, as "all the words of this life." (Acts 5:20) Spiritual and eternal life are richly enjoyed by them. They are words of salvation such as those spoken by Peter to the house of Cornelius. See Acts 11:14, "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." Such words as those spoken of by Jesus to His Father in John 17:8, "For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I come out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me." And you may rest assured that the sinner who has ears to hear, and for whom the Master has a God-provided message, will know something about it. He will know something concerning himself as a guilty sinner before God, and will not find fault with Him for drawing a faithful description of himself as a guilty wretch deserving eternal condemnation, and as too filthy to associate with the holy. I speak not in exaggerated terms, for I might refer you to many Scriptures which you would rather I did not.

But it is ours to dwell upon themes which may tell for our spiritual instruction, for our growth in grace, and for our establishment in the things of God. It is well worth while noticing the diversified truths with which this narrative abounds. My mind goes back a long way this morning. I remember some forty-one or forty-two years ago being interested in this very chapter. God brought home truths to my mind then, which have undergone no change and have received no gloss or adornment, but remain unchanged where God was pleased to locate them, as I believe, in a spiritual and enlightened understanding.

"There was a man of the Pharisees." Who were they? Who are they nowadays? I will tell you. They are to be found in profusion among all shades of religious opinion, and in all denominations. They abound in every place where the church is lifted up at the expense of Christ where rites and ceremonies, and so called good works are the prevailing characteristics. But the works of such are not good in God's esteem. The Pharisees prided themselves in being righteous because of their fleshly performances and outward walk, while they despised others. A graphic description is given of them in Luke 18:9-14, in the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The Pharisee could talk of what he had done. The publican could confess that he had sinned. The Pharisee boasts to set himself off before his fellows. The publican confesses himself a sinner to humble himself before his God. Here we have "a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus." Nicodemus! Look at the meaning of that name Innocent blood. No doubt when Nicodemus's mother saw him at first she would think him a non-such the finest baby out. And his father with admiring looks would say, "Ah, there is none of the corrupt blood of the Gentiles in the veins of my little son. I will give him a name corresponding with his nature Innocent blood!" But with all this traditional boasting the father was one in nature with his child and the child with the father. Here you have them, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Ps. 51:5) You see, in the name of this man there was a religious lie. I use great plainness of speech because I want you to understand me not to misunderstand me for a moment. Yes, there was a rabbinical falsehood upon the very face of the name Innocent blood. Nicodemus was "a ruler of the Jews." One of the Seventy composing the great council of the Jewish nation the Sanhedrim. "The same came to Jesus by night." There is something very pleasing in the reception Jesus gave to him. He came by night for fear of the Jews, lest they should see him and put him out of the synagogue, as we gather from subsequent portions of the gospel. He came to Jesus. That was enough. What matters it when a man comes to Jesus if felt necessity brings him? He may come like the younger or the elder brother laden with sin or reeking with fleshly piety but he comes to learn that the blood of Jesus is efficacious in both cases to cleanse away everything offensive to God's pure eyes. It is not, Have I come to Jesus aright? It is, Have I come to Jesus at all? Has Jesus a place in my heart, and have I a place in His heart of love? It matters not whether I come with strong faith or weak faith with hope bright or dim with love exuberant or love languishing. It is not my coming but His receiving that is the confidence and joy of my heart.

Nicodemus said unto Him, "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a Teacher come from God." He addressed the Lord according to his station and profession. He had received lessons in etiquette and a few in flattery also. But the Lord took no notice of flattering compliments. This reminds me of dear old John Franks, who on one occasion turned to me with this loving rebuke, "O my brother, there are neither compliments nor excuses in the kingdom." And there art not. Now notice our Lord's answer, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee." Did you ever turn over that expression in your mind? It is equivalent to the "Thus saith the LORD" of the Old Testament Scriptures, and to the "What saith the Scripture?" of the New. It is Christ's affirmation. It is something more. It is Christ with that authority which ever characterized Him, speaking on oath in the presence of His Father, and that to one whom He was bent upon teaching. He says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Born again! The margin reads, "Born from above." Not

born from below. Here we see where the mistake of the Christian world exists. This is the rock upon which religious confederacies and ecclesiastical systems make shipwreck of God's truth. They begin at the wrong end altogether. They begin down here. Christ begins with His own up yonder. He begins where the Father was in the beginning with Him. He begins up yonder where the affection of the regenerate is fixed. He begins where His all prevalent intercession ascends to the Father, and from whence He sends the Blessed Spirit with His incorruptible seed to the hearts of elect vessels of mercy, there to germinate and bring forth fruit to His honour and glory. Are we the spiritually begotten sons and daughters of the Father? Listen! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for" (1 Peter 1:3,4) all God's kept ones.

If not born from above, we cannot see we cannot understand we know nothing at all about the kingdom of God. A man may be a bishop on the bench, a great one in the church, a wise philosopher, but if not born again, with all his knowledge and prestige, he is but a dead dog. He may dress himself up in gaudy attire and strut like a stage player before the gaze of wondering mortals, but what is he in the estimation of God? A mass of corruption—a garnished sepulchre. And that is true of each of us only as God is pleased to enrich us with the heavenly treasure of His grace in these poor earthen vessels. Nicodemus did not see the kingdom of God, and gave sad evidence of his blindness. "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Nicodemus was thinking and speaking naturally. Christ was teaching spiritually. Nicodemus was dwelling upon earthly things. Christ was inculcating heavenly things which Nicodemus would shortly understand. "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Here I would again ask you to notice the difference in the meanings of the two expressions by Matthew and John. Matthew uses the term, "the kingdom of heaven." John says, "the kingdom of God." Matthew's kingdom of heaven is likened to a net cast into the sea bringing forth bad as well as good fish, to be separated eventually. It is likened to a field in which grew both wheat and tares. The kingdom of heaven aspect is the church mixed up with, and more or less influenced by, the world. But the kingdom of God aspect is, a clean lift above the world. Here we have to do spiritually with God. While others are busy with religion, morality and a thousand things which must perish with the using, here we have to do with God Himself on spiritual ground, by spiritual means in His own hands His own Word communicated by a Spiritual Teacher, the Holy Ghost.

"Born of water." Which water? If you know anything of the spirituality of the Saviour's teaching you will see that it is eternally opposed to the blasphemous figment taught at St. Paul's, and delighted in by the old impostor at Rome baptismal regeneration. I look upon a person as very far gone from the right use of his judgment, and gone altogether from the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus recorded in the Scriptures of truth, who believes in regeneration by baptism.

To me it is arrant folly and profanity. The beautiful babes born again by baptism fill our slums with bullies and blackguards and the dens of infamy with harlots and hags. Sacramental grace! Away with it! It savors more of hell than heaven. With it I may be damned; but with the grace brought home to me by the "pure river of water of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," damnation is an utter impossibility. Now look at the word again, "Except a man be born of water."

First, except a man be born out of and separated from the filthy water of corrupt humanity from the wicked who are like the troubled sea, casting up mire and dirt he cannot see or enter intelligently into the kingdom

of God. Second, when we are born from above, through, by, or of, the water of God's providing the water of life the water of eternal truth, we are the children of God. Turn to John 13:10, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all."

They had all been washed with the water in the basin, yet were they not all clean. No. There was a devil in that little company. See John 6:70, "Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil." That is shocking! say you. No, not when you understand it rightly. Why did He choose a devil? To do a devil's work. Look at John 13:30, "He then having received the sop, went immediately out: and it was night." Then came the hour of the world's deep gloom, and the power of darkness.

Jesus was then left alone with His loved ones all of a piece. Then could he breathe freely and say without restraint, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." Now go through that chapter revealing union, the 14th, to that of communion and fruit bearing, the 15th, and you will hear Jesus saying to His own, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." There is no spiritual cleansing but through the word. Listen to Peter, whom deluded papists say was the first pope.

If he lived now, they certainly would not have him. Listen! "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit." (1 Pet. 1:22) There is no other way of purifying the soul, but that of obedience to "the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren." Let us read on "see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently, being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Pet. 1:23) This is as clear as light.

Yet, to those who have eyes to see. But what about those who have not eyes to see? Well, their eyes are blinded and they cannot see. The man who is not born of the Word and Spirit of God cannot enter into the kingdom of God. It cannot be done. The kingdom of God is spiritual he is carnal. The kingdom of God is heavenly he is earthly. Listen! "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation," or "with outward show." "The kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20,21) The kingdom of God is possessed, "not by army, nor by power, but by My Spirit, said the Lord of hosts." (Zech. 4:6) "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For He that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men." (Rom. 14:17,18)

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Only those born of the Spirit through the communication of the incorruptible seed of the kingdom can enter intelligently, feelingly, and experimentally into the inward and spiritual kingdom of God, or spiritually understand His teaching. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Look at that word, "must." It is not, Will you be born again? nor, Ye ought to be born again. There is nothing of that kind here. No uncertainty in the Saviour's teaching. All is certain and sure. "Ye must be born again," and Nicodemus was born again. In a subsequent portion of this gospel you will find that many of the chief rulers believed on Him, whom, no doubt, Nicodemus represented, but who would not accompany Him, being frightened lest they should be cast out of the synagogue. Though they were afraid to acknowledge Jesus, He was not afraid to acknowledge them and bring them into the blessed realization and understanding of the Father's mind and will concerning them.

"The wind bloweth where it listeth" "The Spirit breatheth where He will" "and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The wind is a conductor of sound. So the Holy Ghost is the Conductor of the joyful sound of the gospel to the ears and heart of the redeemed sinner for whom it was designed in the eternal counsels. "Nicodemus

answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Here was a professed and authorised teacher of the law an expounder of God's word, yet ignorant of its spirituality and meaning. His mind was wholly absorbed with fleshly, earthly things. He could see no heavenly truth in earthly illustrations.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that We do know, and testify that We have seen; and ye receive not Our witness." Who are the speakers? O, say some, Jesus and those whom He sent forth to preach His truth. No. Do not you rest satisfied with that. The Speakers are the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Turn to Matthew 11:25-27, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." "We speak." The Father speaks the Son speaks the Holy Ghost speaks; but who can understand them? "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14) These Divine and Heavenly Speakers are discovered in Gen. 1:26, "And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." Again we hear them in Gen. 3:22, "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of Us." In Isa. 6:8, faith hears Them and bows adoringly before Him "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" This is Jehovah Trinity-in-Unity and Unity-in-Trinity. We have this clearly revealed in Isa. 48:16, "And now the Lord God and His Spirit hath sent Me." These are the Speakers Who teach to profit. Hearken unto them all ye who have ears to hear.

"If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" If I have condescended to the level of your weak capacities, for the purpose of explaining to you the mysteries of the kingdom of God by figures and illustrations of an earthly nature, and ye understand Me not, how can ye believe if I present truth to you in its absolute and heavenly purity? How? Such would be an impossibility. How condescending was Jesus to employ earthly metaphors to illustrate spiritual and heavenly realities, and impart them to the beclouded mind of the learned ruler of the Jews. "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man Which is in heaven." Does not that seem wonderful? The Son of man in heaven? Why He was there and then on earth talking to Nicodemus, and yet He declared Himself to be "the Son of Man Which is in heaven." How are we to understand this? Very many in endeavouring to explain the matter only make confusion all the more confused. They say He speaks here of His divine nature which was in heaven. Why, His divine nature was, and is, everywhere. His human nature as He appeared as the Son of man was there with Nicodemus, and nowhere else. Here He speaks of Himself as God-Man the Father's Righteous Servant the Father's Loving Son in heaven. "'Tis home where the heart is." Have you a home of happiness and comfort, where loved ones dwell who are ever in your heart? Then, distance can only make that home dearer than ever, and your loved ones still nearer to your heart. Then, the spot of your location is not home to you. This was the case with Jesus. His heart was at home with the Father. His whole soul's delight was in the Father and the accomplishment of His will, and the delight of the Father was in the Son while obedient to His will down here. What a blessed view we have of the delight of the Father in the Son, and the delight of the Son in the Father in that precious hymn we sang this morning,

"Lov'd with love which knows no measure,

Save the Father's love to Thee,

Blessed Lord, our hearts would treasure

All the Father's thoughts of Thee.

All His joy, His rest, His pleasure

All His deepest heart's delight

Lord, Thy heart alone can measure

What Thou art in His pure sight."

Now we come to the type of the brazen serpent, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." This brings us to the words of our text

"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."

So far we are confronted by two truths which Nicodemus and those who were religiously one with him did not understand. The first declares that a man must be born again or he cannot have a right apprehension of divine truth, or the enjoyment of salvation by Jesus Christ. The second is revealed in the text, that salvation and the love of God were not privileges confined to the Jewish people. The middle wall of partition must be broken down, that in Christ Jesus there should be neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, male nor female. (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11) Do you think that a godly wife enjoying her place and position here will be loud in her demands for women's rights? Can you imagine that a man who is spiritually one with Jesus Christ, and heir together with his wife of the grace of life, will be asserting his right to his position as one of the lords of creation? Nothing of the kind! On gospel ground we know nothing of separating influences, "for we are all one in Christ Jesus," (Gal. 3:28) and "there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him." (Rom. 10:12) It is not male nor female, it is not Jew and Gentile, it is not Barbarian or Scythian, it is not bond or free we know of no national or political distinction or difference on new covenant ground, "for ye are all one in Christ Jesus," (Gal. 3:28) and Christ Jesus to everyone of us is "ALL IN ALL."

Now we are brought face to face with a remarkable expression "the world." Marvellous capital is made out of it in all Arminian synagogues. There is an infatuated misapprehension of the term and a besotted determination to give it a meaning never intended by God. I remember preaching for a man a few years ago, when, after the service, he gave me a taste of that tart and temper strangely characterizing the tribe of Universal Lovers. With imperious meekness he said, "We have no right to limit the atonement, for 'God so loved the world.'" I quietly answered, "None but ungodly minds would attempt to limit the Holy One of Israel; but when He limits the atonement by His purpose of grace, none have a right to interfere with His purpose or limitation."

"What though all the world resist Him!

God will realise His plan."

"God so loved the world." From these words the disciples of Wesley and all the Arminians and Universalists in the land tell us that God loves everybody. If such be the case then God belies Himself.

God loves everybody! That sounds strange in the face of David's utterance in Ps. 7:11, "God is angry with the wicked every day." What do you think of this? "The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever." (Mal. 1:4) Come to Rom. 9:13, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Is that love to everybody? Is love to all mankind found in these divine statements? Look at that wonderful declaration in Ps. 37:22, "For such as be blessed of Him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of Him shall be cut off." now the desire of our hearts is to have a right understanding of this controverted term, "the world." Jesus was conversing with a Jew, and one of the highest order, whose prejudices were deeply rooted and soon fiercely roused against even a thought of God's favour crossing the separating line between them and the Gentiles. This is evidenced by the fury of the Jewish mob when Paul declared to them the command he had received from his Master, "Depart; for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." (Acts 22:21) They saw not the goings forth of God's love beyond the boundaries of Israel to seek and to save certain objects of His electing love in Old Testament times, who were not the seed of Abraham after the flesh; but were really so after the Spirit. They were objects of His everlasting love, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, and proved to be His children by regeneration, preservation, and gracious provision. He circumcised their hearts and thus cut them off from the world around them, and brought them into the world of his love. Jesus had come to teach Nicodemus the folly of limiting the Holy One of Israel, or restricting His operations in grace to man's weak stretch of mind. God will have His own out of every kingdom, country, clime and tongue of this sinful globe; not from the narrow bounds of Israel, but from every spot where "Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding" seeks, and saves, and claims its own.

That is the world of His love. In the face of all this we are told that God loves everybody. The thing is absurd and contrary to His Blessed Word. Let us seek for the expression "the world," and test it by the infallible touchstone of eternal Truth. Wherever it is found it must be always governed by the spirit and subject of its context. We must never allow a word to govern a subject; but the subject must always govern the word, and the context must rule over any expression appearing in connection with it. Many moved with unscriptural zeal and fleshly determination, desiring to have none left outside the pale of God's grace, will have "the world" to mean the whole race of mankind. Will this bear the test of Holy Scripture? Let us see. Turn to John 1:10, where we shall find "the world" has three different meanings, "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew him not." 1st. It means He trod this earth of ours. 2nd. It means that He created all things. 3rd. It means the ungodly Jews who hated Him, In this short verse "the world" has three different significations. There is no mistake concerning that. Come with me to John 15:17,18; "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." Six times in these two verses "the world" means haters of Christ. Turn to John 17:9, "I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine." That cannot be the world of the Father's love or Christ certainly would not exclude it from His intercession. Then we read in Rom. 1:8, "your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" the Roman Empire. In Rom. 5:12 it means all the descendants of Adam who are naturally involved in the power and guilt of sin." "As by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin." Again, we find that "the world" simply means the Gentiles as we read in Rom. 11:12, "Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world."

Now look at 1 Cor. 7:31, and you will see that "the world" means the provision God has made for the sustenance and preservation of His creatures "And they that use this world as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away." We cannot pass by that awfully perverted portion, 2 Cor. 5:19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." This is the

world of the Father's love. The world to which trespasses are not imputed. The world of Jesus' care and attention. The world of the Spirit's gracious life and light. The world which ever lives in God's heart, and in which He will live for ever and ever. See also John 12:19, "the world is gone after Him." Now we know very well that the great mass of the people never did and never will go after Him. Mark well 1 John 2:1,2; "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous: and He is the Propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." John, a Jew rejoiced with those who were one with him, in the Gentiles participating in the same privileges. All the Gentiles? That never has been, nor ever will be: but all elect Jews and Gentiles who find in Christ Jesus the Righteous their covering from wrath and salvation from sin. This is not true of all mankind. See 1 John 5:19, "the whole world lieth in wickedness" in the Wicked One. Did John lie in the Wicked One? No he lay in the bosom of the Righteous One. Did his little children who were cleansed from all sin in the precious blood of Christ lie in wickedness? No they lay secure in their All-sufficient Covering and Hiding Place. See! The whole world in the Righteous One The whole world in the Wicked One. The children of God and the children of the devil. (1 John 3:10)

Again we see the world associated with hatred and opposition to God. Does God love everybody? Does the world mean everybody? See 1 John 2:15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Again I ask, Does the word "world" mean everybody? Then God commands us here not to love everybody; in other words, not to love anybody. This is a pretty state of affairs to be brought into! Read the Scriptures and test their words as you would those of any other book, and you will be constrained to a just conclusion in reference to the world of the Father's love. "God so loved the world." "So." Beyond all human thought or comprehension. Nothing but that Love can work the faith to grasp and hold the gift bestowed and secured by Himself His Son and eternal Life in Him.

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