

John 3:16

Part 6

John 3:16 in Modern Australia

6.02.2005

John 3:16 is a good and useful summary of the Christian faith. It does not say everything about Christianity, but it tells us that God loves this world in such a way that he gave his one and only son for us, that whoever believes in him, won't perish, but has eternal life.

I have spoken on various aspects of this over five sermons, and today we come to the final one for now. Those of you who do a marvellous ministry of encouraging one another by attending each week, may be wondering what today's sermon could be on, as you have had the opportunity of hearing me speak on each clause and phrase.

Today, I want to talk about John 3:16 in multicultural Australia. For we do not live in a totally Christian society. Our laws have been based on the ten commandments for a large part of our history, but there are many faiths represented across Sydney.

I want to take a risk, and give a summary of 5-6 of the faiths, but please forgive me for only giving a very quick snippet of those faiths, just as John 3:16 is only a small, but important snippet, of Christianity.

First, let me summarize the majority view of many Aussies, who are nominally Christian, and not too bothered about religion.

They believe in God and know He loves us. That is seen in the good things of life... and we are the lucky country. You do not have to be a wowser, just be reasonably good and things will be sweet forever after you die.

If they had a **Norm 3:16** it would go something like *"For God so loves me, that He gave me good mates, freedom and sport, that whoever is not a wowser and who does not do too badly, will not perish but hopes to have eternal life."*

Secondly, Buddhism. There are several different types in Sydney, from the Zen Buddhists to Theravada Buddhists.

The Theravada Buddhists see people as

individuals and alone in the universe, without a god. Their key virtue is wisdom. For them, religion is a full-time job, primarily for monks. To them Buddha was a saint, not a saviour, and prayer is not asking and thanking, rather it is a meditation to be released from care, anxiety and cravings.

If they had a **Pitaka 3:16**, it might go something like this: *"There is no God, so meditate on that, and Buddha taught us that by meditation and release from craving, we may finally avoid reincarnation and achieve our blending in Nirvana."*

However, Zen Buddhists (a branch of Mahayana Buddhism), pursue self-effort. They claim Buddha taught "Look within, you are the Buddha." By putting effort into emptying yourself through the practice of Zazen meditation, you can then realise the final enlightenment. Their teaching in Koans encourages you to learn through the process of finding answers, not in the logic or critical appraisal of the answers. If they had a **Koan 3:16**, it might go something like this: *"For Buddha had compassion on us, that he gave us Zazen and koans, that whoever daily performs them, will not suffer, but finds final enlightenment."*

Thirdly, the Taoists. The Tao is the way of life, yet it is also mysterious and much more universal. It is the impersonal ultimate reality, the ground of all being. People should avoid all stress and violence, communing with nature. As this happens life will flow with the Tao. A major aspect of Tao, which is held in common with Confucianism, is Yin and Yang (meaning negative and positive). The universe is made up of opposites, like male and female, good and evil, light and darkness, life and death. A proper balance of the two is necessary for a harmonious life. Taoism can be kept at simply a philosophical level, or it can be taken in a religious level, with temples, priests, many gods, heaven, hell and a new age to come. The best way to achieve this is Wu Wei, which is the

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basic attitude of inaction. A late 1960's popular Western version was "tune out and drop out".

If it had a **Tao Te King 3:16**, it might read *"For Tao established Yin and Yang for the world, that it gave and took at the same time, that whoever is inactive may not perish but may achieve harmony."*

Fourthly, the Hindus. This is a very complex religion, with many varying beliefs. However, most Hindus believe that Brahman is the impersonal absolute reality. It is a philosophical reality, the all-pervasive deity, which includes the whole world as part of the deity. Brahma is the Creator, Vishnu is the Preserver and Shiva is the Destroyer. The law of Karma declares that from good must come good, and from evil must come evil. Everything is the result of fate, and the caste system you were born in was deserved by your former lives, so therefore you stay in that caste until your next reincarnation. Eventually, especially with the use of yoga and virtue, Nirvana can be reached, at which the chain of reincarnation ceases.

So if there was a **Veda 3:16**, it might say something like *"The world is part of the Brahman, and every creature has been set on the chain of reincarnation, so that whoever is virtuous and unselfish after many, many lives, will not be reincarnated, but shall attain Nirvana."*

Fifthly the Moslems. Most Islamic people are nominal Moslems, just as most Australians would be nominally Christian. Amongst the more active Moslems, there are three major strands, the Sunni, the Shiites and the Sufis. They believe in Allah, whom they call the all merciful, but Allah is disinterested in humans, and fate or Kismet, is the way he allows humans to be treated. Mohammed is for them the greatest of prophets. Islam means submission, and by following the 5 pillars of the faith, they hope to achieve paradise in the after-life. The 5 pillars are a creed about God and Mohammed, Prayer, almsgiving, fasting and the Pilgrimage to

Mecca.

So if there was a **Koran 3:16**, it might read something like *"There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet, that whoever submits and observes the 5 pillars of faith, will not perish but will enter paradise."*

I could keep going with many others, however, what I want to do is to reinforce the uniqueness of what God has done for us in Christ. Our God loves the whole world, good and bad. He is distinct from the world and wants it to be saved, not perish. So he gave his one and only Son, that whoever simply believes in Him, is promised freedom from perishing, but will have eternal life with him.

That is so amazing and different to what many people think. Trust in Jesus and live.