

This statement of drawing all men to Christ is usually taken to mean that the proclamation of Christ's atoning death exerts an attracting influence on all who hear the gospel, and that all who hear the gospel either yield to this influence or resist it. In this interpretation the "all men" is limited to "all men who hear the gospel."

But suppose the "all men" were not limited. Suppose through His humiliation and death, Christ has been exalted to be King of kings and Lord of lords, so that all men will be drawn to Him and bow the knee to Him, either in loving, voluntary submission or in resentful, involuntary submission (as in Philippians 2:5-11). Then by His death on the cross He would indeed powerfully draw all men to Himself! This suggestion could be particularly cogent, since the word translated "draw" also means "to drag".

k. John 3:16

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

The term "world" as used here is troublesome. It could mean the whole created world, but since the second part of the verse focuses on human beings instead of rocks and oceans and plants and animals, it would seem that "world" in the first part of the verse has special reference to human beings.

In addition, there is no explicit distinction made between the general love that God has for all of His creation (which includes mankind) and the special love that He has for those who are savingly related to Him through His Son. Yet this distinction underlies the two halves of the verse.

The verse teaches that God loved the human race so much, that He sent His Son into the world to live a perfect sinless life and die a perfect sacrificial death, so that those human beings who would trust savingly in Christ would be saved and receive eternal life.

Thus the movement of thought is from God's general love for all mankind, to His gracious and loving provision of a Savior whose atonement is sufficient for all mankind, to His gracious and loving application of that atonement to all human beings who trust in that Savior.

This, then, is a promise that anyone who trusts savingly in Christ will receive eternal life. It does not address the question of whether all human beings will trust in Christ or whether any sinful human beings in their natural state are inclined to trust in Christ; it simply tells us what happens to those human beings who trust in God's beloved Son. And this promise is open to all who will receive it!

- l. Since many of the Scriptures which are quoted in opposition to the doctrine contain universalistic terms, perhaps a primer of interpretive principles for the proper understanding of such terms is in order.

Principles for Interpreting Universalistic Terms

(such as "all", "every", "everyone", "no", "none", "no one", "world", and "earth.")

First determine from context the class being spoken of 'all' what or 'all' of whom?