

“For God So Loved The World”

by Wayne Goff

We are all familiar with the words of John 3:16, but I hope we are not *too familiar* with them. They are not just a good memory verse. These words tell the greatest love story of all time and eternity!

It is hard to comprehend such **great love** for one’s enemies. Romans 5 elaborates on this thought: “...in due time Christ died for the **ungodly**” (v. 6). “...in that while we were still **sinners**, Christ died for us” (v. 8). “For if when we were **enemies** we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son,...” (v. 10). There was nothing in mankind to recommend us favorably to God! Salvation is an extreme act of a loving, longsuffering, caring God!

Ephesians 2 words it this way: “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of **His great love** with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...” (vv. 4-5).

Take the time to contemplate this great truth. Take the time to study the God Who has revealed Himself in Holy Scripture. “...The LORD, the LORD God, **merciful** and **gracious, longsuffering**, and **abounding in goodness and truth**, keeping **mercy** for thousands, **forgiving** iniquity and transgression and sin, ...” (Exodus 34:6–7). Now ask yourself this question: “**Do I treasure these qualities in my own life?**” If not, then you should consider doing so. “But I say to you, **love your enemies**, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, **that you may be sons of your Father in heaven**; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matthew 5:44–45)

A MEDLEY OF MATTERS

What Are “The Apocrypha”?

by Bill Crews

[continued from page 340501](#)

The apocrypha or **the apocryphal books** are a collection of religious books that were written by unknown authors in the period of time between the testaments (the old testament and the new testament), purporting to be factual and accepted by some as inspired. They were not written by prophets of God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (as were the 39 books that make up the old testament); they are not part of the word of God. A few give historical information; some are fanciful and ridiculous; some purport to be missing parts of canonical books. They are: ***I and II Esdras, Tobit, Judith, Additions to Esther, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus*** (or ***The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach***), ***Baruch, The Letter of Jeremiah*** (some incorporate The Letter of Jeremiah into the book of Baruch as chapter 6), ***The Prayer of Azariah*** and ***the Song of the Three Young Men*** (or ***Three Holy Children***), ***Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, The Prayer of Manasseh, and I and II Maccabees***. In this list there are fifteen books; there are fourteen books when The Letter of Jeremiah is not counted as a separate book. The Roman Catholic Church accepts all of these as inspired books, **except *I and II Esdras and The Prayer of Manasseh***. The Jewish men who preserved the old testament Scriptures rejected all of these apocryphal books.

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