

Must I Be Born Again? Part 2 - John 3:16-21 - Jn08

We really answered the question, “Must I be born again?” in our last study. We watched as Nicodemus sought out Jesus, and Jesus explained to Him why a man must be born again. So it’s important to go through our last study to get the foundation for our text today.

Last study, we answered the question “WHY must I be born again?” Today we’ll answer the question, “HOW do I become born-again?” Today we have the loudest, clearest answer in all the Bible to Nicodemus’ question, “How can a person be born again?” It’s the most quoted, most familiar verse in the Bible. Martin Luther called John 3:16 “the Gospel in miniature.” No other single statement in the Bible so perfectly sums up God’s plan of salvation for the entire human race.

It has been said that all the highways of divine truth meet at John 3:16. This verse has been called the “hub” of all of God’s revelation in the Bible. John Phillips says, “There should be no less than 10 sermons taught on this one verse because in it are 10 of the greatest themes of the Bible.”

In John 3:16 we see:

- The greatest Being
- give the greatest love
- to the greatest degree
- to the greatest company of people
- the greatest gift
- of the greatest opportunity
- in the greatest simplicity
- offering the greatest promise
- of the greatest assurance
- for the greatest eternal possession.

10 of the greatest themes of the Bible wrapped up in one verse, showing us the greatness of God’s love, which is a vast, boundless, bottomless sea. This verse is the very heart of the gospel. John 3:16 is not merely “God is Love,” but much more than that. It is “For God SO LOVED that He gave.”

There’s a great old hymn sung about the love of God, the last verse of which the hymn writer found inscribed on the wall of an insane asylum, next to the bed of a man who had just died:

Could we with ink the ocean fill
and were the skies of parchment made
Were every stalk on earth a quill
and every man a scribe by trade
To write the love of God above
would drain the ocean dry
Nor could the scroll contain it all
Though stretched from sky to sky

Remember, Nicodemus was asking, “How is it possible for this new birth to occur? What is it that makes this new, eternal, spiritual birth possible?” “Nicodemus, do you want to understand how

this can happen? It is only and exclusively by and through God's overflowing, boundless love for you and for the whole entire world, and John 3:16 is the greatest picture in the Bible of God's extreme love for you."

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 everlasting life."

"For God"

The Almighty God – the eternal, self-existent, uncreated, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent Elohim, Jehovah, Adonai, the God who sits high and lifted up, worshiped by adoring angels, cherubim, and seraphim, who, in God's presence, hide behind their wings and cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord," the creator and sustainer of the universe, who gazes out on galaxy after galaxy, each obeying His command. It is this God who initiates this great sacrificial love for you.

"So loved"

Loved so much – here is a glimpse of God's unfathomable love for us – a love that conquers death, a love that will never leave us or forsake us, a love that cannot be quenched, a love that suffers long, a love that never fails, a love that passes knowledge. If you could borrow Jacob's ladder and ascend that glorious stairway until you stood on the streets of gold of the city of God, and if you could find the herald angel Gabriel and could ask him, "Gabriel, how much does God love me?," he would say, "Dave, for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. That's how much God loves you!"

"The world"

The sinful world – the Greek word for "world" is *cosmos*. It is used 186 times in the New Testament and every time it appears, it is used in a sinful connotation. You want to know what "Amazing Grace" is? "For God so loved the sinful world." This is God's universal love for the entire human race, without distinction or exception.

"That He gave"

He sacrificed – the only way to reconcile a sinful world to a holy God was for "God to give," and the only thing that could meet God's requirement of holiness was for Him to give Jesus Christ Himself to suffer and die for you as the great propitiation sacrifice, which means He became your sin so that you could have righteousness in Him. Hebrews 10:5 says, "Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.'" And verse 7 says, "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come . . . to do Your will, O God.'" Jesus Christ was given as the only acceptable sacrifice so that you could be saved, and there's nothing that can be taken from Jesus Christ. All that He sacrificed for you, He gave freely!

"His only begotten Son"

The center of heaven's focus – in the King James Version, there are 25 words in this verse. The very center word is the word "Son." There is no plan or program of God for this world or the heavenlies – there is no purpose in the universe, for time and eternity, that does not center on the Son Jesus Christ. He is the center of heaven's focus and, as our thoughts center on Christ, so our thoughts are in harmony with God. "Only begotten" does not infer that Jesus had a beginning because, before time began, "Jesus was." This term means *the only one of its kind*, and it's used to set Jesus uniquely above all beings.

“That whoever”

That each, every, any, or all – when John says “For God so loved the world,” the Greek word is *cosmos*. It means *the whole, complete human race*. And here, when He says “whoever,” it is the other end of the spectrum. This word is the most specific and individual term that could be used. The Greek word translated “whoever” literally means *each, every, any, or all*. Each, every, any, or all who believe will be saved. No one is left out, not for any reason. You can’t escape His love, even if you revile Him and reject Him and choose to spend eternity in a hellish separation from Him. It doesn’t change the fact that He loved you so much that He gave His only begotten Son “that whoever” – that includes you. Every person is equally offered the greatest pardon and the greatest gift of salvation in all eternity.

“Believes in Him”

Puts their trust in Him – again, we’re brought back to a central focus on Jesus. Jesus is the One who saves us from our sins and the death sin brings. Jesus is the One who writes our names in the eternal Book of Life. Jesus is the One who secures our place in the family of God and secures our inheritance in heaven. And the single word that activates ALL that Jesus Christ does is the word “BELIEVE.” God calls us simply and completely to believe in Jesus Christ. The ultimate and unforgivable sin that God cannot forgive is the sin of refusing to believe in His Son Jesus. That is the greatest insult a man can hurl at God. But the decision that brings all the power and glory of God into our lives is the decision to believe in His Son.

“Should not perish”

Escape eternal misery – 2 Peter 3:9 says, “God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” 1 Timothy 2:4 says, “God our Savior...desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Jesus Christ alone has made a way for you to not “perish.” This word “perish” should make us, as sinners, tremble. The word for “perish” literally means *to give over to eternal misery, to be lost ruined or destroyed*. It is the unimaginable “lostness” of those who die in their sins, compared to the unimaginable “life” of those who die in their Savior. The word “perish” and the word “life” in this verse are both eternal words. They are a contrast of the extremes – the extremes of the greatest horror and the greatest happiness.

“But have”

A confident assurance – this is in the present tense. As believers, we currently have eternal life. Philippians 1:6 says, “Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Hebrews 6:19, which is our very own foundation scripture here at Calvary Nuevo, says, “This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil.” Don’t forget that the Biblical definition of “hope” is *a confident expectation based on solid certainty*. In Christ, we have assurance of our salvation.

“Everlasting life”

Eternal joy indescribable – the most incredible part of “eternal life” is that we are not just given extended life for eternity, but we are made “joint heirs” with Jesus Christ. We are not only pardoned – we are preferred. We are treated as children of God for eternity. Romans 8:15 says that when we were born again, “...[we] received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” Then in verse 16-17, Romans 8 says, “We have become children of God, and if children – then heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified.” I can’t explain to you all that “everlasting life” with God means because my finite mind can’t even

conceive it all, but I do know that He has made us “kings and priests” of God and “joint heirs with Jesus Christ” by adoption, and I know that the eternal joy that comes with that is indescribable.

“For God” (the Almighty God) ***“so loved”*** (loved so much) ***“the world”*** (the sinful world) ***“that He gave”*** (He sacrificed) ***“His only begotten Son”*** (the center of heaven’s focus) ***“that whoever”*** (that each, every, any, or all) ***“believes in Him”*** (puts their trust in Him) ***“should not perish”*** (escape eternal misery) ***“but have”*** (a confident assurance) ***“everlasting life”*** (eternal joy indescribable). Though we could stop there for today, the next few verses expand this “greatest of all truths” in John 3:16.

John 3:17

“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”

The first time Jesus Christ stepped off the throne of heaven to come to earth, He did not come as a “judge,” but as a “Savior.” He came with one mission – to save you and me from the condemnation of sin. He came with saving grace to cover sin abounding. But there’s a day coming when Jesus Christ will step off that throne a second time to return, and the next time, He is coming as a judge. God must judge sin, but because of His unbelievable love for you, He Himself has made a way for you to escape that judgment.

In verse 18, we see it really is your choice.

John 3:18

“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

If you die condemned to eternal misery because of your sin, it will be your choice. God’s supreme desire is that you would repent, believe, and be adopted into His family for eternity. If you choose to reject God’s great gift of salvation, then truly, you will have condemned yourself.

John 3:19

“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

We see here a great and simple truth. That is, the choice of light or the choice of darkness. Our sin nature is evil and, left to itself, it will choose darkness. Jesus Christ came to give us the ability to choose the light. But unbelievably, because of the strength of sin, there are those who will choose darkness and condemnation over light and eternal life. In verses 20-21, we see the final comparison between those who choose darkness and those who choose light.

John 3:20-21

²⁰ For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

²¹ But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”

Every person in this world is currently on death row, condemned and waiting to die, and the King of Kings has come to you and offered you total forgiveness and a complete pardon. Not only that, but He’s offered to adopt you into His own family and make you a joint heir with Him if you will

only believe and trust in Him. But if you reject His forgiveness and you choose to die condemned, then it is not the King of Kings who has judged you. He came to give you life, for now and for eternity.

How is it, when a person is sitting on death row and they're offered complete forgiveness, that they can say, "Thanks anyway, but I think I'll work it out myself. I've got my own ideas on the whole thing?" Or worse yet, we have the audacity to say, "I think I'll just go ahead and die here on death row. It can't be that bad." How in the world can we even imagine what death without God's forgiveness is like? We don't have any idea what it's like. The Bible says it's the greatest horror of eternal misery, and I pray none of you arrive there.

If you would choose life over death, then Jesus Christ says you must be born again. You must believe in Jesus. You must come to Him in repentance and receive His gift of salvation, and then you will walk in the newness of life, for now and for eternity.

Nicodemus asked, "How can a man be born again?" The answer is very clear. It is only through belief in Jesus Christ – looking to Jesus, raised up on the cross, where the full penalty of your sin was paid. We've got to give up all our futile thoughts and plans of becoming religious, and simply and completely "look to Jesus," believing that He is who He said He is.

Isaiah 55:22 says

"Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other."

If you desire to be born again, you can receive God's gift of life right now - right where you are. Simply pray a prayer like this one;

Dear Jesus, I know that I'm a Sinner, I believe that you died on the cross to pay the penalty for my sins, please forgive me of my sins, please come into my life and make me 'born-again,' please fill me with your Spirit, and make me a disciple, thank you for saving me, Amen.

If you just prayed that prayer, God has forgiven your sins, and you have been 'born-again.' Praise the Lord.