

## **1Yr10 – You Must Be Born Again John 3:1-17**

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Open your Bibles. Let's get to the message today. This is a big message. What I am about to share today is the Hope Diamond of the Bible. It's the most famous verse in the Bible. Title of the message today, "You Must Be Born Again." We'll be in John Chapter 3 in the first 17 verses.

When we left our "One Year With Jesus" series last message, Jesus had just performed his first miracle in Cana. His miracle that represented his desire to bring supernatural joy into our relationship with him that is represented by the wedding union, the marriage relationship. That was last message and it kicked off Jesus' three and a half year public ministry. That three and a half years, listen, is the final leg. It's the final leg of a journey that began outside of time, in eternity to bring you the opportunity to be saved and live forever with God rather than be separated from God and pay for your own sins. That journey that began outside of time, these three and a half years are the final stretch, the final home stretch. That's what we see.

And so today in one verse we are going to see why. We're going to see the motivation why Jesus Christ left the throne room of glory to come to this sin filled, fallen world. We're going to see why Jesus came.

*Let's pray. Lord Jesus, show us. Lord we get it so wrong, we think so highly of ourselves and we think we are okay and that we don't need you Lord. And yet you left your throne room in heaven with all of the glory of all the creation focused on you, and you came down to become a man, to take upon yourself our sin and die in our place. Lord, help us to see why. We want to see why and please give us your Spirit to respond in faith to this revelation. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.*

After the wedding in Cana where Jesus brought supernatural joy, John Chapter 2 says that Jesus and his mother and his brothers (those are his half brothers – same mother, different father) and his disciples returned to Capernaum. Capernaum is on the north side of the Sea of Galilee and it became kind of the base of operations for Jesus while he was in the Galilee, which he tried to be in the Galilee as much as he could.

Here's the problem. As soon as they got back from the wedding in Cana, it was Passover time. And the Passover Festival is one of the three times that every Jewish adult male was required to make the trek to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple. So Jesus begins, really, his formal public ministry after the miracle of Cana by traveling back to Jerusalem for his first Passover during his public ministry.

John Chapter 2 tells us it was also the first of two times that Jesus exhibited his "zeal" for the house of God. So John Chapter 2 says Jesus comes into the courtyard of the house of God, and zeal builds up in him. Enough zeal so that he builds a whip and starts whipping

the merchants who are making money off the pilgrims who came to worship at Passover. The religious elite had established such a marketplace in the courtyard of the temple, that the worshipping pilgrims, especially during the three big festivals, were actually the primary income source for these religious elite. Jesus would not have it. And so his calling card to the religious institution in Jerusalem was swinging a whip and driving all these merchants out of the house of God and turning over the tables in the process.

Some people ask me, “Hey, why don’t you sell anything in church?”

And I always bring them to this text and say I actually believe this. And so I want Jesus here, but not with a whip. That’s why there is nothing for sale in this room. If you want to give, then give. So the religious establishment is not happy about Jesus running out the merchants because he is impacting their livelihood. But John 2:23 says:

**John 2:23 (NLT)**

***23 Because of the miraculous signs Jesus did in Jerusalem at the Passover celebration, many began to trust in him.***

So the religious elite may not be happy, but because of the miraculous signs there were many who did begin to trust him. One of those who did was a man who saw these miraculous signs and wanted to know more. He was drawn to Jesus. The problem is, not only was this man part of the religious institution of the day, he was a primary leader. He was one of the primary religious leaders. He was a leader of the Pharisees. He was a scholar of the Torah, a teacher of the law and he was a judge on the Sanhedrin – the seat of seventy Pharisees who ruled literally every movement in every Jew’s life. They had the right to; it’s like our Supreme Court.

He was a highly educated man and he held one of the highest positions in the Jewish religious machine. But, there was something about Jesus. I mean this guy had some confidence to come storming in to Solomon’s Portico, the courtyard of the Temple, and drive out all the money makers. To stand up to the face of the religious establishment. And so this religious leader wanted to know more and he snuck out, under the cover of darkness, this would never be done. Pharisees would never go under darkness. He snuck out under the cover of darkness to find the leader of this new sect that was making such waves in Jerusalem. And find him he did! Listen, here’s my first point. It’s in 1Chronicles 28:9. King David says to his own son Solomon:

**1 Chronicles 28:9 (NLT)**

***9 . . . For the Lord sees every heart and knows every plan and thought. If you seek him, you will find him . . .***

God has made himself known to all who desire to know him. If you’ll seek him you will find him. This religious leader was seeking him, and he indeed found him. Let’s meet him. John 3 verse 1.

### **John 3:1–2 (ESV)**

*1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.*

*2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.”*

Nicodemus seems to be off to a pretty good start. He decides to begin his interaction with Jesus, his clandestine conversation by acknowledging that “Apparently God is with you. These miraculous signs that you’ve been performing throughout Jerusalem must mean that you and God have got some type of connection.”

And so Nicodemus probably expected some type of acknowledgement of his logical, deductive reasoning. He probably expected Jesus to at least give him a polite nod. He had used all of his education, all of his higher institution learning, all of his knowledge of the law to figure out that God might actually somehow be involved in Jesus’ life. And so he might have expected Jesus to respond with some pleasantries. Not going to happen.

Jesus gives no accolades, no atta-boys. Jesus has one thing to say to the top leader of the religious institution of Jerusalem. And it’s the same one thing above everything else that Jesus has to say to us today. Same to Nicodemus – same to us individually today. It’s in John 3:3, seemingly out of the blue to Nicodemus Jesus answered him.

### **John 3:3 (ESV)**

*3 Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

We can assume that’s not what Nicodemus expected. See, the Pharisees, they lived their whole lives discussing religious philosophies. “Should you be allowed to tie your sandals on the Sabbath? If you can’t tie a knot on a rope on the Sabbath, can you tie a knot in a woman’s scarf on the Sabbath? If you can’t carry anything on the Sabbath is it okay to carry just enough for you to eat? Can you carry your own lunch?”

These are the kinds of questions the Pharisees would get around and discuss. And so Nicodemus surely was hoping to have some type of a religious, philosophical conversation comparing the existing religious institution to this new teacher’s philosophies. That’s what Nicodemus was hoping for.

What Nicodemus got was a spiritual 2x4 right across the head, spiritually from Jesus. Jesus drops a bombshell. Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. And immediately what happens is this seemingly un-crossable divide appears between the current religious philosophies and Jesus Christ’s statement.

You see, the current religious position was do good, work hard, earn your position from God, and you’ll get it. Hard, sincere, religious effort earns favor with God. That is, in

essence, Judaism, and honestly if you don't mind me saying – with the exception of our Messianic brothers and sisters – it still is. Because they have rejected God's way. And so Nicodemus is floored, and if there were someone else with him he would have said, "Uhh, did he just say that what I've been teaching people all my life won't even get you to heaven? Did he just say that all my religious effort and all my religious stress and strain and earning and deserving won't do me a bit of good?"

Yeah. That's exactly what he said, Nicodemus. He said it's not worth a thing. What's worse, is this teacher of the religious institution of Judaism, Nicodemus, couldn't even grasp what it was that Jesus did say. When Jesus said "This is the one thing that's required to see the kingdom of God" it didn't compute in one of the highest religious leaders minds of Judaism. We see Nicodemus' bewilderment in John 3:4. He wants to understand, and ultimately he does. But you can see there is something that is drawing him, but he can't get his mind around it. He has too much religious junk in his head, too much stuff going on. And so he says in John 3:4:

**John 3:4 (ESV)**

***4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"***

Nicodemus says, "I don't get it. How am I supposed to be born again? How am I supposed to go back into my mother's womb and be born?"

The Torah scholar's head is spinning. He's been telling people all of these years how to earn position from God, how to deserve God's favor. And now Jesus gives one and only one requirement. It's the same requirement he still gives today. ***Unless you are born again you cannot see the kingdom of God.*** Period. This is Jesus speaking to the highest level religious leader he'll ever have a genuine conversation with.

Nicodemus wants to understand but it is such a foreign concept he can't get it. And his mind is whirling. So Jesus just continues in John 3:5:

**John 3:5 (ESV)**

***5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.***

Now, there's some discussion about this water and spirit. If you've been around awhile, maybe you've had the discussion. Be careful, having these kinds of nit-picky discussions because, like I just said, that's what the Pharisees did. They specialized in it. And I don't know if you've ever known those people that they just specialize in disagreeing with you. It's their gift. Unfortunately, I don't see that anywhere in the spiritual gifts, so it's an, I would assume, non-spiritual gift. Contrary to spiritual gifts. But don't split hairs when the Bible doesn't split hairs.

But there is conversation about this phrase “born of water and the spirit.” Some people think that the water refers to the physical birth; that you have to be born both physically and spiritually to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. But being born physically, is kind of a given. So the other most substantiated view is that the water is referring to what John the Baptist has been doing in preparing the way of the Lord. John the Baptist came baptizing for repentance. And so there are some scholars who believe this is a reference to repentance because, listen carefully to me please, (the church in America needs to hear this because they have not been hearing it for fifty or sixty years) true salvation brings repentance. *True salvation brings repentance* because if you love your sin you won’t turn from it. But if you love the Lord, you have to turn from your sin. There’s just no way, you have to choose, sin or the Lord. And so there is a chance there is a reference to the water baptism of John the Baptist, which represents repentance.

And just an important little side note, whether that’s what Jesus meant or not, repentance is legit. Repentance means to turn from your sin. And so it’s not okay to say, “Hey, I repeated the prayer. You’re not trying to tell me I have to change my life, are you? Cause I already said the prayer.”

There’s a saying that when we get to heaven there are going to be a lot of people there that we didn’t think were going to be there. And there are going to be a lot of people not there that we thought were going to be there.

So repentance and being born again by the spirit, if that what Jesus is talking about, it’s substantiated through the Bible.

So then in John 3:6

**John 3:6 (ESV)**

***6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh...***

Jesus is still continuing to try to explain to Nicodemus. Nicodemus is like, “I don’t get it, I don’t get it. I thought it was all about all our rules. We have six hundred and twenty-three rules, including the first ten. We added six hundred and thirteen. I thought it was following the six hundred and twenty-three rules that get you into heaven.”

And Jesus is trying to explain.

**John 3:6 (ESV)**

***6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.***

In other words Jesus is saying, “No, Nicodemus. It’s not about going back into your mother’s womb. It’s not about that. Because if you did go back into your mother’s womb you would just come out flesh again. And flesh is flesh. And flesh is going to remain flesh and all flesh is infected permanently with the sin virus. And so you can be born in the flesh as many times as you want, you’re still going to be born a sinner, because flesh

is flesh. It remains flesh. It cannot be cleaned up. It cannot be made righteous. It is sinful to the core and thereby cannot be in the presence of God. You must be born from above.”

The word “again” can be translated “*from above.*” You must be born from above. You must be born again. You must have a spiritual rebirth. You must have a birth that comes from God alone, that is not a birth of the flesh, but it’s a spiritual new birth that brings a spiritual new life. That is the life that is eternal.

In Genesis 1:27 it says that we were made in the image of God. And trust me, when you look in the mirror, don’t think “oh, that’s what God looks like.” That’s not what it means. What it means is that God gave us some of his nature. The primary part of which is living eternally. Our spirit that God breathed into us is an eternal spirit. And we must be born again for that spirit to be renewed. To have a new birth, a new life.

John 1:12-13 says this:

**John 1:12–13 (NLT)**

***12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.***

***13 They are reborn—not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God.***

That’s the supernatural birth. You can’t earn it, you can’t clean yourself up to fake it, you can’t get in any other way. You must have a new birth that comes from God, a supernatural, spiritual birth.

Just then, maybe they were outside, maybe they were inside (most of the homes would have no windows) and so maybe Jesus felt the wind blow through the house, or maybe saw leaves rustling. And he says in John 3:7 (he’s going to use a real life illustration)

**John 3:7-8 - (ESV)**

***7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’***

***8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”***

Jesus is saying, look, understanding how you are born of the spirit is like trying to understand wind. I was thinking when I was writing this; you know what there are probably some people in church or who will listen to my voice who think they do understand wind. And maybe we understand it a little bit more that we did 2,000 years ago, but really, honestly, you still don’t understand it because it comes from God. But especially 2, 000 years ago men didn’t know how wind started or where wind came from. But here’s one thing they knew, they knew the effects of the wind. You may not know where it comes from, you may not know how it gets started, but one thing for sure – you can feel it. Do you get it?

The spiritual birth is the same. You may not be able to fully grasp how God causes you to be born again spiritually. You may not understand all of how that works. But one thing for sure, you can see the effects. You can see the effects when someone is truly born again. And if you take a minute and think, “well, not me.” Let me say it again. *You can see the effects when someone is truly born again.* You cannot have the creator God of the Universe take up residence in your heart and give you new life and have it not show. You just can't. I'm not doubting your salvation, I'm saying just confirm that you are born again to the extent that it shows. Because then you know “The life of God is in me and it shows like the wind blows.”

In John 3:9 Nicodemus says to Jesus  
***“How can these things be?”***

He's still struggling. It's okay to struggle, but stay in the conversation. Nicodemus is in the conversation. Let me just say, since we are about to leave Nicodemus, he does receive Christ. He does believe. He does put his full faith and trust in Christ. And after Christ is taken down from the cross, it is Nicodemus who goes with Joseph of Arimathea to help bury Jesus. And you can imagine when the news spread through Jerusalem of the resurrection that Nicodemus was nodding his head saying, “Okay, now I get it.”

Born again. Who would have thought he would have been first? Nicodemus did get it and he did become a follower of Christ, but here he is struggling and so Jesus kind of scolds him a little bit. He says, “Hey, you're a big teacher of the law and you don't get this stuff? I'm trying to relate this stuff to earthly things. If you can't understand my illustrations of earthly things, how are you going to understand when I tell you about things of heaven?”

And then Jesus says, “No one has ever gone to heaven and returned except one, me. The Son of God has been in heaven and has descended from heaven.”

And so Jesus is saying to him in the next verses, “Listen, I know from personal experience. I know because it's me. I know. Firsthand. Not just experience but firsthand existence.”

And so here is what Jesus is going to do. He is going to explain to Nicodemus something that Nicodemus understands. Catch this because it is an important thing. Jesus goes to where Nicodemus lives and then he brings out something in Nicodemus' life that Nicodemus can say, “Oh I get it.” Also what we are about to see is the gospel written clearly for the Israelites 1,500 years before Jesus is telling the story.

In your Bible in the margin of John 3, write Numbers 21:4-9. You can go read it later, it's a wonderful text. Jesus is going to point to it to say “Surely, Nicodemus, you understand this.”

Here's the story. Israel was in the midst of their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. They had already been to the edge of the Promised Land and they had refused to enter by their lack of belief because they refused to trust God. (All but two, Joshua and Caleb.) So God says "Take forty years to think about it, until you all die."

So they are in that forty year period and wow! They were complaining! Now listen, I don't want to stereotype anybody. Okay? But the Jews know how to complain. They have it down, ancestrally. They have been doing it for thousands of years, criticizing, complaining, and critiquing. I mean seriously, you know I love the Jewish people, but man, oh man, were they complaining. Of course they were wandering around in the wilderness, but they're judging God. Maybe you know someone, certainly not yourself, who has said "God you didn't do this right! Why did you allow this to happen? How come I'm in this place? I told you where I wanted to be. How come you let me be here?"

That's sin, by the way, and if you read Numbers 21 you'll see that God saw it as sin. So God said to Moses, "Let's help them repent."

Do you know that God will help you repent? He will give you motivation to repent. Here's what he did for the Israelites. He sent poisonous snakes to cover the camp. Listen, I hate snakes! I can handle anything, but a snake, especially a venomous snake – it freaks me out! Scares me to death. I don't want to be bit! So Numbers 21 says that God sent fiery poisonous serpents into the camp to bite all the Israelites. And they began dying. And the scholars say that word "fiery" means "*high temperature*" that's why they used the word fiery. And so it may have been a thing where they got a real high fever and eventually died. And so the snakes were too many to evade and they became motivation to repent.

Do you have anything in your life that is biting you? It might be motivation to repent. And it might have come because of your own choices. Israel's did. And so everybody is dying, and the snakes are everywhere and they cry out, "Moses! Intercede for us!"

And they really want to repent. Now the serpent is a symbol of sin. Why? Because of the Garden of Eden, because Satan disguised himself as a serpent in the Garden. And so the serpent is always a symbol of sin. And so the sin came into the camp through the critical spirit of the Israelites and the sin began biting the Israelites and they were dying. So in Numbers 21:8, the Lord tells Moses this:

**NUM 21:8**

***"Make a replica of a poisonous snake and attach it to a pole. All who are bitten will live if they simply look at it!"***

God says make a replica of that which is killing the people. Representation of sin. Make a replica of it, lift it up on a pole and everyone who believes, who looks believing to the replica will be saved. That is a radical illustration of the snakebite of sin, and how that



snakebite really does take us out. And the only way (back in Numbers 21) for the Israelites to be saved was to look in faith to the replica of the symbol of sin, the snake, look to that in belief and faith and they would be saved.

That's the same thing that Jesus is trying to get Nicodemus to understand. Here's how Paul puts it in Romans 8:3:

**Romans 8:3 (NLT)**

***3 . . . So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have (a replica). And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.***

Do you see it? It's the same story that Moses told in Numbers 21. Guys, God's plan of salvation has never changed. Before time, Revelation says that Jesus was the Lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world. This has always been God's plan. And so Jesus is reminding Nicodemus, this is nothing new. Your six hundred and thirteen laws are new; God's plan for salvation is not new. God has planned all along to enable us to be born again, to have new life and a new birth that comes from him through our faith in the replica in the body of sin, who was hung on the cross, and takes the full wrath of God in our place.

Look at John 3:14-15.

**John 3:14-15 (ESV)**

***14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,  
15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.***

Incredible connection. As Moses lifted up the replica of sin and all who looked at it were saved, so Jesus will be lifted up on the cross and all who look to him for salvation will be saved. I hope it's clearer to us than it was to Nicodemus.

So Nicodemus is ready to hear. Nicodemus, it seems, is ready to hear the how. And I pray that we would be ready to hear the how. Sometimes people aren't ready. Have you ever talked to someone who you just think, wow, they aren't ready to hear. Tell them anyway, but just understand they may not be ready. Martin Luther calls this next verse "The Gospel in Miniature."

D.L. Moody credits this next verse with expounding, explaining and illustrating God's great love to him. This verse changed both Luther and Moody – changed their lives. This is the most famous verse in the Bible.

**John 3:16 (ESV)**

***16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.***

This verse will only impact you if you first realize that you are snake bitten with sin. If you first realize that sin brings death. *The wages of sin is death*, Romans 6:23 says.

**Romans 6:23 (NLT)**

*23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

We have to understand the wages of sin is death before we understand the free gift of eternal life that is in Christ Jesus. John 3:16 encapsulates it. It encapsulates both our certain death under sin, and it encapsulates our guaranteed eternal life in Christ.

Again, John 3: 16 says

**John 3:16 (ESV)**

*16 “For God so loved the world . . .*

He so loved the world. I told you why. I told you we were going to see today why, in one verse, why Jesus would condescend from his throne where all of creation gave him all the glory he was due. Why would he condescend to be born in a stable, to be laid in a feeding trough, to grow up sweeping a carpenter’s floor, to be abused and rejected and maligned, to go through all the pain he went through in Passion Week finally taking on the entire sin of the world? Here’s why – *“for God so loved the world...”* That’s why! Because God loves you so much!

The NLT says this:

**John 3:16 (NLT)**

*16 “For this is how God loved the world . . .*

Because the word “so” there can mean *“the process”* or *“the extent.”* This is the process of God loving the world and this is the extent of God loving the world. *“For God so loved the world...”* That’s why Christ came from the throne room of heaven to die in your place on the cross. Because God loved the world so much. A love so radical that God himself came. Throughout the New Testament Jesus is clearly defined as God in the flesh. And so God sent himself, God came himself, to pay the full penalty of our sin so that we could be born again by putting our trust in him, in his Word.

2 Corinthians 5:21 explains it.

**2 Corinthians 5:21 (NLT)**

*21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.*

It’s an exchange. Christ takes our sin and pays the full price and he gives us his righteousness which allows us to be in the presence of God. It’s not more complicated than that. Because *“God so loved the world...”* that he made a way for us to be made

right with him through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Not because you earn it, not because you deserve it, not because God grades on the curve and you are better than your terrible uncle Joe. It's none of that. It's because God loves you he made a way. That's how God loved the world. Totally and completely. Taking your sin upon himself and paying the full price in Jesus Christ.

Again, John 3:16:

**John 3:16 (ESV)**

***16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son . . .***

He gave his only son. He gave his only son to stand in your place, to be that replica of your sin filled life hanging on the cross and taking the full wrath of God to justly pay for the penalty that is due your sin. The term “only son” it is important to point out, doesn't mean that Jesus was begotten by God, like some of the older literal versions say.

Begotten makes us think that Jesus was born. That's not what the word means, it's not even close to what the word means. Jesus Christ did not have a beginning. The reason the newer, the more modern translations say “only” is because the Greek word means “*radically distinct and without equal*” or “*the only one of his kind.*”

And so as Jesus Christ is fully man and fully God, we would say he is radically distinct and without equal. He is definitely the only one of his kind and he is God come in the flesh in order to give you the opportunity to spend eternity with him because of the payment he made on your behalf. “*...whoever believes in him should not perish...*”

**John 3:16 (ESV)**

***16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish . . .***

The word “whoever” means literally “*each, every, any or all.*” It is the broadest term possible to say if there is only one person or if there is every person that has ever lived; the sacrifice of Jesus Christ covers them all. The world, by the way, when it says “***For God so loved the world...***” is used one hundred and eighty-six times, COSMOS in the Greek, in the New Testament it's used for the sinful world system. God came to save sinners. Whoever. Each one. Every one. Any one. Or all of them. It genuinely, literally means *whoever*. Whoever. Whoever wills God will save. For God so loved you that he sent Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for your sin, to be the sacrifice for your sin, that if you would believe in him you would not perish (which is what you are doing without Christ.) You are perishing. You are a whoever – you are why God came.

God says *whoever BELIEVES IN HIM will not perish - but have eternal life*. Let me tell you where the line is drawn okay? And this is important for our culture. The line is drawn on the word “believe.” *The line is drawn on the word “believe.”* That's where the line is drawn. What does it mean to “believe?” Whoever believes in him should not

perish but have eternal life. Let me just ask you, does it mean that you believe God exists? No. The demons believe that God exists (he created them before the fall) they're not saved.

**JAMES 2:19** says even the **Demons Believe God Exists** and they **SHUDDER** at their **coming Judgment**

This word "believe" means "*to put your full faith and trust in him.*" To put your full faith and trust in Jesus Christ. I thought of pictures. I thought of jumping out of a plane and trusting the parachute. I thought of rappelling. I thought of bungee jumping. But the best picture for me is when my kids (my grandkids now) used to throw themselves off the edge of the pool into my arms when they can't swim. And they may be scared to death of the water, but if I (or their dad) is standing there, they'll jump. Full and complete trust in Christ. Full faith and trust in who Jesus Christ says he is. Full faith and trust in what Jesus Christ has done. And full faith and trust in what he has promised to do.

"I throw myself completely on you Jesus. I have no other hope, no other confidence. I have no other way to move past this life. I trust you completely with everything I have. And here's the catch, I trust you enough to actually allow it to change my life. I trust you enough to actually jump, to jump from the sin, to jump from the self-centeredness, to jump from this world, and to jump into your arms. I trust you enough that it actually will impact my life."

That is what the word "believe" means. And if you will do that, then what Jesus has done and what he will do is attributed to you. What Jesus has done and what he will do becomes yours. Romans 6 says through our identification with Christ when he died to sin, we died to sin. When he conquered the grave, we conquered the grave. When he rose to new life, we rose to new life. And when he ascended to heaven, we ascended to heaven. Ephesians says we already are seated at the right hand of God in Christ. Because of our identification with Christ through faith, what he has done becomes what we've done. That is this word "believe." That's having faith that brings you to identification with Christ. Faith that (John 3:16 says) saves you from perishing. Perishing. We don't like to talk about that word anymore. We don't like to talk about that word anymore, in fact there are some who have decided that hell probably just doesn't really exist. They probably say "I'm sure a loving God wouldn't send people to hell."

Have you ever said that before you knew God? Maybe you said, "I'm sure a loving God wouldn't send people to hell."

You are absolutely right. God doesn't send people to hell. People choose to go to hell. They, themselves, choose to go to hell. God has made a way for you to be saved, forgiven, redeemed, given new birth. If you reject it, don't blame God. God made a way.

Your sin requires the penalty of separation from God for eternity. God has made a way for that not to happen.

2 Peter 3:9 says ***The Lord does not want anyone to perish but desires everyone to come to repentance.***

God must judge sin. He must. But he has made a way for you to escape that judgment by paying the full price of your sin in your place and on your behalf. And if we refuse that free gift we are demanding that God allow us to pay for our own sins for eternity. He will. That place is called hell.

Last time, John 3:16

**John 3:16 (ESV)**

***16 “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.***

Have – it’s a present possession. Have eternal life. When we put faith in Jesus Christ, it is finished. Just like Jesus spoke on the cross, it is finished. The work is finished. Listen, when God adopts you, he is not a temporary foster parent. It’s a permanent adoption. In Philippians 1:6 it says:

**Philippians 1:6 (NLT)**

***6 . . . God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.***

Guys, God began the process outside of time. He has drawn you to himself like he drew Nicodemus to himself at night. He has made a way. He has revealed the plan to you. The only thing that he can’t do for you is believe. The only thing he can’t do for you is to exercise your free will ability to either trust him or reject him. And if you will trust him that all he says will happen, will happen. I can’t even begin to even scratch the surface of what heaven is. Heaven is so incredible! We did a five message series on “Heaven” when we were in Revelation. Get it! Contact us. Go to the wordbymail table, or go online to wordbymail.com and do a search for “Heaven.” Just ask us, call us, email us, and say, “Listen. I want that five message series on heaven because I need to know where I’m going. Or I need to know what I am missing if I reject Christ.”

Learn about heaven. I can only tell you, you want to be there. Because it’s one of two places. You are made as an eternal being. You are either going to live forever with God or die forever outside the presence of God. That’s the truth of what the Bible says. God so loved – you, that he gave the only one of his kind, Jesus Christ, as a sacrifice for your sin to die in your place, to pay the full penalty of your sin, and if you will believe in him God will connect you to him through faith and you will avoid hell and you will gain heaven. You will not perish but instead you will have eternal life.

John 3:17, the next verse, confirms God's invitation.

**John 3:17 (ESV)**

***17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.***

That's why Jesus left his throne. He came to save you. He came to pay the penalty for your sin. Not to condemn you, but to save you from a condemnation you are already under.

So let me give you an opportunity to receive that gift right now.

Let's pray. *Father please, there is no bigger subject. There's no grander concept. Lord we can start here. We can spend our whole life here. No matter what we know of the Bible we can always return here. That you loved us so much that you gave yourself to die in our place that if we would believe in you we would not perish but have eternal life. Lord make that real right now.*

If that's you right now, I want to give you a chance to say "Yes Lord." I just want to give you a chance to say, "Lord, that's me." If that's you today and you've never received Christ, I want to ask you to stand right where you're at and say, "Yes Lord, that's me. That's me Lord. I need to be saved from the penalty that my sin is going to bring me. I need to know that what you did you did for me. I receive it right now." I know it's easier for me to just lead you in a prayer and let you pray without having to act. But, trust me, we are in a world that more and more is going to require you to act on your faith.

*Lord Jesus, give us the strength and the faith to act. Give us the strength and the faith to act. Lord we desire to receive you into our lives. To believe completely in who you are and what you've done and what you will do. Thank you Jesus. Thank you for your love that is so great for us that you came and died in our place. We throw ourselves completely upon you, with no other options, and we'll see you in glory, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen.*