



READY FOR ETERNITY? John 3:16-36

There is a deadline coming for every person, the moment when *your response to Jesus* will determine *His response to you*. Are you ready for eternity? Today we discover how you can give 2 big thumbs up!

The Audacious Claim of Jesus

John 3:14-15 (CSB) ¹⁴ "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ so that **everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.**

John uses this term - **BELIEVE** - more than any other writer in the New Testament (90 times). To believe in Jesus is more than recognizing he walked the planet, taught with authority, and did amazing acts.

BIBLICAL BELIEF = TRUST & OBEY

Jesus makes the audacious claim that **eternal life** hinges on trusting and obeying HIM!

➡ **Surely this is blasphemous, unless it's true.**

* The expression "**eternal life**" is used here for the first of the 17 times it appears in this Gospel.¹

2 Thoughts before we dive into John 3:16.

1) *We don't know when the conversation with Nicodemus ends.* Did Jesus say what we read in v. 16 or is this the writer's testimony? Likely, it's from John, but it is no matter as ALL SCRIPTURE is God's Scripture.

Question: Does it make it any LESS true if John makes this claim rather than Jesus?

2) **NEVER READ A BIBLE VERSE!** Even though we know this verse very well, we STILL must read it in context to really appreciate how a person comes to experience **eternal life**.

John 3:16 (CSB) ¹⁶ For God loved the world in this way: He gave his **one and only** Son, so that **everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.** *monogenē* (see below)

Believing in **the one and only Son** of God promises **eternal life**, and this wasn't just a hope for Jewish people, but the whole **world** (all ethnicities of people).

▶ **Only Begotten?:** If you memorized John 3:16 from the King James Version, it went like this "*He gave his only begotten Son.*" [also used by NAS] Many wrongfully conclude "begotten" to mean "created" and claim that even before the universe was formed, the **Son** (Jesus) was *the first creation* [begotten] of the **Father**. The Greek term translated as 'only begotten' in KJV & NAS, *does not mean first created*.

★ Greek **monogenē**: *mono* = **ONE**; *genē* = **KIND** or **unique**. *Jesus is one of a kind.*

Everyone who believes in Him will not perish. Everyone who does NOT believe in Him...WILL PERISH. This is the double-edged sword of this passage that so many overlook. This offers *great COURAGE* for those who DO believe - **eternal life**, but should bring *great CONCERN* to those who DON'T believe - **perish**.

BIG TRUTH: Your response to Jesus will determine His response to you.

Have you genuinely TRUSTED Jesus or NOT? Does this passage give you COURAGE or CONCERN?

Spotlighting God's Mercy

John 3:17 (CSB) ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

God is JUST, but He is also MERCIFUL. God's Justice and Mercy are best seen at the CROSS. Sin must be punished, and at the CROSS, JESUS took the punishment that should be ours. We hear God's merciful heart through the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 18:23 (CSB) ²³ Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?" This is the declaration of the Lord GOD. "Instead, don't I take pleasure when he turns from his ways and lives?"

YOUR NOTES

Jesus came to offer mercy, but we shouldn't read John 3:16-17 without verse 18.

John 3:18-21 (CSB) ¹⁸ **Anyone who believes in him is not condemned**, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God. ¹⁹ This is the judgment: The light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does evil hates the light and avoids it, so that his deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be shown to be accomplished by God."

People DON'T LIKE to be confronted with their sin. Jesus is the **light** that we can run TO, not FROM.

John 3:22-23b (CSB) ²² After this, Jesus and his disciples went to the Judean countryside, **where he spent time with them and baptized**. ²³ John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water there.

Jesus **spent time with them** [his disciples] and He had *them* baptize there (see 4:2).

John the Baptist was somewhere close, **baptizing in Aenon** (Aramaic or Hebrew word meaning "springs").² John's disciples are having a tough time arguing about beliefs and feeling a competition brewing as people leave John to go see Jesus (Jn. 3:25-26). John wisely & humbly responds:

John 3:27-30 (CSB) ²⁷ John responded, "No one can receive anything unless it has been given to him from heaven. ²⁸ You yourselves can testify that I said, 'I am not the Messiah, but I've been sent ahead of him.' ²⁹ He who has the bride is the groom. But the groom's friend, who stands by and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the groom's voice. So this joy of mine is complete. ³⁰ **He must increase, but I must decrease.**"

What a humble servant! Oh that we all would make this the THEME of our LIVES! **He must increase, but I must decrease**. John trusts **the One who comes from above** (v. 31), **the Son who speaks God's words** (34-35). And the author of this gospel seams this tapestry together to point right back to where John 3:16-18 challenged us.

John 3:36 (CSB) ³⁶ **The one who believes in the Son has eternal life**, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him.

BIG TRUTH: Your response to Jesus will determine His response to you.

- **What's this mean for YOU?** Look at your daily decisions & see if they demonstrate true BELIEF/TRUST Jesus.
- **What's this mean for OTHERS?** Some of our family & friends are currently condemned by God. PRAY for them and SHARE Jesus with them.

* **Want to talk further?** Please contact **Jackie** (850-673-1582), **Justin** (704-618-6144), **Christy** (673-9764), or another follower of Jesus soon! Or call our **deacons & wives**: Tom & Martha Waddail, Steve & Debbie Bass, Freddy & Joyce Howard, Jere & Darlene Burnette, Alan & Christy Androski, Willy & Melissa Gamalero.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Read John 3:16-18.** How does reading this whole thought give the reader great courage or great concern?
2. Go back and look at notes from "Only Begotten" and Greek *monogenē* translated "only begotten" in KJV & NAS. How does understanding what the word means help to correct a person (e.g. Jehovah's Witness) who claim that 'only begotten' somehow means "first created"?
3. According to **John 3:18 & 3:36**, what is *the current spiritual condition* of those who have yet to truly trust Jesus? Why should this concern the believer & non-believer?
4. **Read John 3:19-21.** Why is it that people *run from Jesus* instead of *run to Jesus*? Give an example from your own life and then share how you came to see that turning from sin and running to Jesus brings forgiveness, hope, & purpose.
5. To the best of your ability, explain how God's mercy & God's justice were demonstrated at the cross. Which characteristic does our culture focus on, and why is it important that we recognize both equally?
6. **Read John 3:27-30.** How does John the Baptist's response when people are leaving his ministry impact you? What are some practical ways that Jesus might increase while we decrease?
7. What else challenged or encouraged you from today's teaching? (Look back over your notes and share!)
8. Share how you can pray for one another this week and make a phone call to check on each other this week.