

Check It Out Tracts

JOHN 3:16

Check It Out

By John W. White

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." The first half of John 3:16 is very plain. It tells us what God has done for the all of mankind. He gave His only begotten Son as a lamb to be slain for the sins of the whole world. This verse is misunderstood when the context and words like **believeth**, **not**, **perish**, and **everlasting life** are overlooked. The purpose of this tract is to look at the context and these words to try to grasp an understanding what the Lord was trying to teach Nicodemus.

CONTEXT OF VERSE 16

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a ruler of Israel. He had a better understanding of the Word of God than the Sadducees because of the position of the Pharisees in **Acts 23:8** "For the Sadducees say that there is no **resurrection**, **neither** angel, nor **spirit**: but the **Pharisees** confess both." Nicodemus believed in the resurrection of the dead, therefore, Jesus would be able to take him from his knowledge of the earthly things pertaining to the law to an understanding of heavenly things in the coming resurrection of the saved dead. Nicodemus struggled with what the Lord was trying to teach him even though he was a master (teacher) of Israel. **John 3:10** "Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"

SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD

John 3:3 "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The phrase "kingdom of God" is used in verse 3 and in verse 5. Jesus was trying to teach Nicodemus about heavenly things therefore the kingdom of God is a reference to the kingdom of the heavens. The kingdom of God is synonymous with the kingdom of the heavens and this is substantiated by many parallel passages in the Gospels. One example is in the following two passages: **Matthew 13:11** "He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the **mysteries** of the **kingdom of heaven**, but to them it is not given." and **Mark 4:11** "And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the **mystery** of the **kingdom of God**: . . ." Jesus told Nicodemus in **John 3:3** ". . . Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born again**, he cannot **see** the kingdom of God." If you are not part of the family of God you will not **see** the kingdom of God that Jesus Christ will establish during His 1,000 year reign.

ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus did not respond directly to his question but adds further light on being part of the family. **John 3:5** "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born** of **water** and of the **Spirit**, he cannot **enter** into the kingdom of God." (The manuscript a does have "heaven" rather than "God" in verse 5.) Verse 5 tells us that as a child of God there is a blessing beyond just **seeing** the Kingdom of heaven and that is **entering** into the kingdom of heaven. The word "and" dictates that both, being born of water and being born of spirit, are required to enter the kingdom of the heaven. Part of the context of John 3:16 is verse 5 which speaks of entering into the kingdom of God or of heaven. Entering into the kingdom of God is to participate as a king or as a lord in the 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ.

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ASCENSION OF JESUS

Another part of the context is that of Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, ascending to the right hand of the Father as our high priest. You find His ascension referred to in **John 3:13** "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven."

AS MOSES LIFTED UP

The conjunctive phase "and as" ties us back to verse 13. Just as Jesus ascended up to heaven so did Moses lift the brass serpent up in **John 3:14** "**And as** Moses **lifted** up the **serpent** in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:" Because verse 13 is in the context of verse 14 the lifting up of the brass serpent is not a reference to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Only saved people are in the context of Moses and the serpents in the wilderness. This is confirmed in **1 Corinthians 10:9** "Neither let us tempt Christ, as **some of them** (the fathers in verse 1 and not the mixed multitude. They are not mentioned) also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." Who were these that tempted Christ and were destroyed by serpents in the wilderness? The answer to this is found in **1 Corinthians 10:1-4** "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that **all our fathers** were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2. And were **all** baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3. And did **all** eat the same spiritual meat; 4. And did **all** drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." All of these under the cloud included the children of the children of Israel that were given jewels and raiments. This incident of the serpents was with saved people and not lost people needing to be saved.

THE SERPENTS

Numbers 21:5-6 "And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for *there is no bread*, neither *is there any water*; and our soul loatheth this light bread. 6. And the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died." These people who were perishing were sinners in need of a "daysman" as in **Job 9:33** "Neither is there any **daysman** betwixt us, *that* might lay his hand upon us both." Serpents were causing them to die and therefore serpents were their enemy. The serpent made out of brass, in type, indicated that their enemy had been judged. The Lord provided the brass serpent, in type, as their daysman in **Numbers 21:8-9** "And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. 9. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld [look intently at; by implication, to regard with pleasure, favor or care] the serpent of brass, he lived." Jesus Christ is our advocate with the Father to day so that we do not have to perish because of our sin. Just as we struggle with sin so did the children of Israel in the wilderness. One snake bite and one look at the brass serpent did not make them immune to further snake bites. They had to continue to look up to be healed.

WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH, VERSE 15

The way to be born into the family of God is simply presented in **Acts 16:31** "And they said, **Believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." The aorist tense of the verb is used to be saved and not the present tense of the verb. If the present tense of the verb had of been used, then as long as we believed we would be saved and part of the family. Using the aorist tense of the verb means that salvation is an event based upon an act of our volition to believe what Jesus Christ did for us upon the cross. In John 3:15 and 16 the word

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believeth is in the present tense **John 3:15** "That whosoever **believeth** [present active participle] in him should not perish, but have **eternal** [age, an adjective] **life**." The present active participle of *believe* indicates faithfulness. The present active of *believe* is equivalent to faith. Faithfulness in looking at the brazen serpent insured life. The one looking at the brazen serpent had to have faith that he would be healed by looking. If they did not believe that the brazen serpent would save them from perishing they would perish in the wilderness losing their present life but also a life of plenty in the land flowing with milk and honey.

ETERNAL LIFE

Be warned! Trying to associate *eternal life* with salvation will create un-resolvable theological problems unless you believe you can work for your salvation. Our salvation is based upon the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross where *eternal life*, better translated *age life*, is based upon our works. By being faithful in well doing we are seeking age-lasting life in **Romans 2:6-7** "Who will **render** to every man according to his **deeds**: 7. To them who by patient continuance in **well doing** seek for glory and honour and immortality, **eternal life**:" Reaping age-lasting life is based upon our continuing in well doing in **Galatians 6:8-9** "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that **soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting** [age, an adjective]. 9. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap (eternal life), if we faint not." The Lord will render to every child of God according to his well doing at the judgement seat of Christ. Those who do not faint in well doing will receive the desired life in the coming kingdom of Christ.

JOHN 3:16 WORD STUDY

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

GOD

Who is the God that so loved the world? He is the God of **Genesis 1:1** "**In the beginning God....**". He is the "**....God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory**; that your faith and hope might be in God." **1 Peter 1:21**. "*Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles?* Yes, of the Gentiles also:"

SO LOVED THE WORLD

The adverb "so" could be translated ***In this way***. The first phrase would be translated: "For in this way God loved the world". What a way to express that love in His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The parsing of the verb "Loved" is aorist, active, indicative. The action of the aorist tense is punctiliar or action that occurs at a point. The aorist tense is usually translated in the past tense ***God loved***. The active voice tells us that God did this on purpose. God did not just love the world with words only, but with a wonderful deed of the giving of His Son. **Ephesians 2:4** "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his **great love** wherewith he loved us,"

HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON AS A SAVIOUR

God ***gave*** (aorist, active, indicative) punctiliar action, Jesus Christ to die for the sins of the world. To graph the action of the aorist tense you use a dot (•). **Hebrews 9:26** "...But now **once** in the end of the world (αἰών, age) hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." **Romans 5:8** "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." **John 1:29** "...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Jesus Christ saves those who believe or receive him as their personal saviour as in the case of Nicodemus. **John 3:3** "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto

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thee, Except a man be **born again**, he cannot **see** the kingdom of God." The phrase "**born again**" would be better translated **may be begotten from above**. The verb **born** [γεννάω] is aorist, passive, subjunctive. To be born into the world is an event that can happen only once. To be born into the family of God is also an event that only happens one time. Paul used the aorist tense of the verb **believe** when he told the Philippian jailer how to be saved. **Acts 16:31** "And they said, **Believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ, **and thou shalt be saved**, and thy house." If Paul had used the present tense of the verb **believe** then when one stopped believing, then he would be lost. The aorist tense of the verb **believe** in Acts 16:31 is in agreement with the aorist tense of the verb **born** in John 3:3 and John 3:7.

HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON AS A HIGH PRIEST

Not only did God give Jesus Christ to be the saviour of the world, but God gave Jesus Christ to be our high priest. **Hebrews 5:5-6** "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an **high priest**; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, **to day have I begotten thee**. 6. As he saith also in another *place*, Thou *art* a **priest** for **ever** (αἰών, an age) after the order of Melchisedec." Jesus Christ had a new beginning when he became our High Priest for this age of grace. **Hebrews 9:11** "But Christ being come an **high priest** of **good things to come**..." **Romans 8:34** "... *It is* Christ **that died**, yea **rather**, that **is risen** again, who is even **at the right hand** of God, who also **maketh intercession** for us."

THAT

The word **that** is from the Greek word ἵνα and it could be translated **in order that**. In order that those who have been saved and who are being faithful to the Lord might hold fast to their profession. **Hebrews 4:14** "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* profession." **Hebrews 10:23** "Let us **hold fast** the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;)"

WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM

The word **believeth** is a present, active, participle. It is in the nominative case and has the definite article, so this participle is treated as a noun. The present tense of the verb **believe** is used for those who are living by faith and are being faithful to the Lord. **Acts 13:39** "And by him **all that believe** (present active participle) **are justified** (present passive indicative) from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." **Romans 3:28** "Therefore we conclude **that a man is justified** (present passive infinitive) **by faith** without the deeds of the law." **To live by faith is to be believing** and that can be stopped at any time, but the action of the aorist tense of the verb **believe** can not be stopped or reversed once the action has been done. **Luke 8:13** "...When they hear, **receive** [present, middle] the word with joy; and **these have** [present, active] no root, which **for a while believe** [present, active], and in time of temptation (adversity) **fall away** [present, active]." The ones believing are the ones **who continue to hear** and **become rooted and grounded** in the Word of God; therefore they **do not faint** when they are tried. When a child of God stops believing he then starts falling away and the process of justification also stops. To fall away is to become chargeable before God.

NOT

The Greek word for "not" is μή. In the Greek there are two words for **not**. They are the words μή and ούχ. In *Dana and Mantey's Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, page 265 we find insight into the meaning of these two words. In paragraph 241 they say the word μή ". . . is the weaker, milder negative, denying subjectively and with hesitancy. 'In a word, μή is just the

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negative to use when one does **not wish** to be **too positive**. *Μή* leaves the question **open** for **further remarks** or entreaty. *Ού* closes the door abruptly." A summary is given at the bottom of page 265 and following: "The general distinction between *ού* and *μή* is that *ού* is objective, dealing only with facts, while *μή* is subjective, involving will and thought... In the NT *ού* is almost entirely confined to the indicative, while *μή* monopolizes the other moods." "Or, according to Dr. C. B. Williams..., "*ού* expresses a definite, emphatic negation; *μή* an indefinite, doubtful negation. If a negation was to be asserted unequivocally, *ού* was always used; if hypothetically, *μή* was invariably used" All of the above information is given to show that the thought of not perishing is dependent upon the faithfulness of the one who is believing. If you stop believing, you can perish, but because the negative *μή* is used that means you can start believing again.

SHOULD PERISH

The phrase **should perish** is translated from the Greek verb *ἀπόλλυμι*. The parsing of "**should perish**" is aorist, active, subjunctive. *Ἀπόλλυμι* is translated **destroy, die, lose, lost, marred** and **perish**. Only those who have life can die or perish Only those who are whole can be destroyed or marred. not those who are dead in their trespasses and sins. Only those who that belong can be lost. Those who are not saved are already dead in their trespasses and sins and cannot perish. As already referred to above, in the **context** of John 3:16, is **John 3:14-15** "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever **believeth** in him **should not perish**, but **have eternal life**." Those who perished in the wilderness failed to enter into the choice inheritance in the land flowing with milk and honey. All of this happened unto them to teach us that we also can lose our reward or a better inheritance by the way we live. The following passages clearly indicate that our inheritance is based upon our faithfulness and service. "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the **reward of the inheritance**: for ye **serve** the Lord Christ." **Colossians 3:24** "Look to yourselves, that we **lose** (*ἀπόλλυμι*) **not** those things which **we have wrought** (*ἐργάζομαι* labor for, trade, work, do), but that we receive a full reward." **2 John 1:8** Those that perished in the wilderness did not lose their salvation, just their inheritance. We are exhorted as disciples to **perish now**, to die to self, in this age so that we can enjoy our inheritance, reward, in the coming millennial age. **Matthew 16:24-27** "Then said Jesus unto his **disciples**, If any *man* will come after me, let him **deny himself**, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will **save his life** (*ψυχη*, soul) shall **lose** (*ἀπόλλυμι*) it: and whosoever will **lose** (*ἀπόλλυμι*) **his life** (*ψυχής*, soul) **for my sake** shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and **lose** (*ἀπόλλυμι*) his own **soul** (*ψυχη*)? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul (*ψυχή*)? **For** the Son of man shall come **in the glory of his Father with his angels**; and then he shall **reward every man according to his works**." We shall receive the reward of our inheritance when Jesus Christ comes in the glory of the Father with his angels. If we do not perish now, then we will not have any rewards then, and the life we could of had will not be enjoyed because it will perish.

HAVE

The parsing of the verb **have** [*ἔχω*, to have] is present, active, subjunctive and should be translated "he may have". The verb **have** implies that we have, at the present time, agelasting life. **Agelasting life** is not a present possession, but something we will receive in the age to come according to **Mark 10:30** "But he shall receive... in the **world** [*αἰών*, age] **to come** [present participle, **the one coming**] **eternal** [*αἰώνιος*, agelasting] **life**." The verb **have** [*ἔχω*] in this context could be better translated **esteem** or **regard**. King Herod wanted to execute John

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the Baptist but could not because the people **counted, esteemed or regarded** John as a prophet. **Matthew 14:5** "...he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet." (See tract ἔχω, to have, to hold, to esteem) If we continue believing we will continue to **esteem** or **regard** life for the age and do what ever is required to one day receive agelasting life. The present tense of the verb "have" means action of esteeming should be continuous. If we continue to **regard** and **esteem** life for the coming kingdom age, we will be faithful to sow "... to the Spirit (and) shall of the Spirit **reap life everlasting**. 9. And **let us not be weary in well doing**: for in due season **we shall reap, if we faint not.**" **Galatians 6:8-9** When we stop believing, in the present tense, and stop esteeming, in the present tense, we are growing weary in well doing and are in danger of fainting. If we faint we will perish and forfeit an inheritance with those of the seed of Isaac in the heavelies.

ETERNAL LIFE

What is the meaning of **have eternal life**? (See tract Eternal Life Check It Out) Eternal life is the opposite of perishing or the losing of one's inheritance. The word **eternal** is translated from the Greek word αἰώνιος and is an adjective describing **life**. Αἰώνιος comes from the noun αἰών which is translated or interpreted many ways, but it should be translated **age**. Translating αἰώνιος as **eternal** is interpretation and not translation. αἰώνιος is an adjective that describes a person, place, or a thing. **Mark 10:30** "But he shall receive.. in the **world [age] to come [the one coming] eternal [agelasting] life.**" The parallel passage to Mark 10:30 is **Matthew 19:28-29** "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And ... shall inherit everlasting life." The time that the Apostles will inherit agelasting life is when they will be ruling over the twelve tribes of Israel. Christ will be sitting upon the throne of his glory. That time is known as the 1,000 year reign of Christ which is also called the **millennial age**. Our inheritance is dependent upon what we do now in this life. Do we perish in this age and live in the age to come or do we live in this age and perish in the **millennium**, the age to come? **Romans 2:6-7** "Who will render to every man **according to his deeds**: To them who by patient continuance in **well doing** seek for glory and honour and immortality, **eternal [agelasting] life**:" It is through **well doing** that we are rewarded agelasting life. **Galatians 6:7-8** "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for **whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap**. For he that **soweth to his flesh** shall of the flesh **reap corruption**; but he that **soweth to the Spirit** shall of the Spirit **reap life everlasting**. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season **we shall reap, if we faint not.**" If we faint we will perish but if we remain faithful, continue to believe, we will reap life for the coming age. **2 Timothy 2:12-13** "If we **suffer** [present, active of ὑπομέω, endure], we shall also reign with **him**: if we deny **him**, he also will deny us: If we **believe not** [one word ἀπιστέω, present active], **yet** he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself." We will reign if we continue to believe, else we will perish!

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