

John 3:16-4:4 – The Gospel and the application (He must increase, and I must decrease.)

For God So Loved the World

Joh 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.

There are two things that we need to note here. One is that we must be born again. The other is that the Son of Man must be lifted up. They are related. It takes the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ—He must be lifted up. Since He has been lifted up, since He bore our penalty, the Spirit of God can regenerate us. And we must be born again—that is the only way God can receive us.

The motivation for all of this is that God so loved the world. God never saved the world by love, which is the mistaken thinking of today. It doesn't say that God's love saved the world, because the love of God could never save a sinner. God does not save by love, friends. God saves by grace! "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph_2:8-9). Now, how does God save? God saves by grace. But God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever (you can write your name in here and I can write mine) believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Notice that with the word believe is the little preposition in which means to believe in Christ. That is, we trust Him as the One who bore the penalty for our sins. This is a personal thing. We must each believe that He died in our place and in our stead. My friend, you must believe that He died for you. – McGee

This is one of the best known verses in all the Bible, doubtless because it states the gospel so clearly and simply. It summarizes what the Lord Jesus had been teaching Nicodemus concerning the manner by which the new birth is received. God, we read, so loved the world. The world here includes all mankind. God does not love men's sins or the wicked world system, but He loves people and is not willing that any should perish.

The extent of His love is shown by the fact that He gave His only begotten Son. God has no other Son like the Lord Jesus. It was an expression of His infinite love that He would be willing to give His unique Son for a race of rebel sinners. This does not mean that everyone is saved. A person must receive what Christ has done for him before God will give him eternal life. Therefore, the words are added, "that whoever believes in Him should not perish." There is no need for anyone to perish. A way has been provided by which all might be saved, but a person must acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior. When he does this, he has eternal life as a present possession. Boreham says:

When the church comes to understand the love with which God loved the world, she will be restless and ill at ease, until all the great empires have been captured, until every coral island has been won. – BBC

Joh 3:17-18 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. "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.

We see here that, when Jesus came the first time, He was not a judge. He made that very clear to the man who wanted Him to give a judgment between himself and his brother. He said, "... Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" (Luk_12:14). He didn't come as a Judge the first time. He came as the Savior. He will come the next time as the Judge. But now He says that God didn't send Him into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. Whoever does not believe in Him is condemned. Friend, if you don't believe, you are already condemned. Why? Because "he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." That wonderful name is Jesus—His name is Jesus because He is the Savior of the world. Anyone who will believe in that name is no longer under condemnation but has everlasting life.

Remember that He is talking to Nicodemus, a Pharisee. The Pharisees believed that the Messiah, when He came, would be a judge. The Old Testament presented two aspects of the coming of the Messiah. One was His coming as a Savior, coming to die, coming to pay a penalty; the other was His coming as the Judge. They reasoned that the Messiah would be a judge when He came because the Old Testament presents that aspect. In Psa_2:9 we read, "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron...." Daniel speaks of Him as a judge of the whole world (Dan_7:13-14). Psalm 45 talks about His ruling the world in righteousness, and Isaiah 11 and Isaiah 42 speak of His judgments in righteousness. The Lord Jesus is making it very clear to Nicodemus that God sent not His Son this time to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. The "world" is the Greek word kosmos—God's redemptive

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purpose embraces the entire world. He did not come to condemn or to judge the world but to save the world.

In Christ there is no condemnation. Those who are not in Christ are already condemned. There are a great many who feel that the world is on trial today. It is not. The world is lost. You and I live in a lost world, and we'll not wait until the final judgment to see that we are lost. Our position is something like a man who is in prison being asked whether or not he will accept a pardon. That is the gospel. It is not telling a man that he is on trial. He is already condemned. He is already in prison waiting for execution. But the gospel tells him a pardon is offered to him. The point is, will you accept the pardon? How wonderfully clear that is. The gospel is to save those who are already lost. - McGee

Joh 3:19-21 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. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

This is the judgment, you see, of the world. The day that the world crucified Christ—on that day the world made a decision. It must now be judged by God. The condemnation, or the judgment, is that light is come into the world, but because men's deeds were habitually evil, they loved the darkness. Rats always scurry for a dark corner when light enters a room. Today I received a letter from a girl who said that, before she was saved, she never cared for our Bible-teaching program. Naturally, she did not want the light at all. Only those who turn to Christ want the light.

Notice that in this verse our Lord approaches so many things from the negative point. "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." We hear today of the power of positive thinking. Believe me, friend, there is a lot of power in negative thinking and negative speaking. Listen to other things He said. "... I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" and "... the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mar_2:17; Mar_10:45, italics mine). "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world." And He says that every one that doeth evil hateth the light. In other words, whoever habitually practices what is wrong hates the light. "Light" and "truth" are used in the same way. "He that doeth truth cometh to the light." Error and darkness are always in contrast to light and truth. This ends His interview with Nicodemus.- McGee

John the Baptist Exalts Christ

Joh 3:22-24 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. For John had not yet been thrown into prison.

3:22 The first portion of this chapter described the Lord Jesus' witness in the city of Jerusalem. From this verse to the end of the chapter, John describes Christ's ministry in Judea, where doubtless He continued to proclaim the good news of salvation. As men came to the light, they were baptized. It would appear from this verse that Jesus Himself did the baptizing, but we learn in Joh_4:2 that it was done by His disciples.

3:23 The John referred to in this verse is John the Baptist. He was still preaching his message of repentance in the region of Judea and baptizing those Jews who were willing to repent in preparation for the coming of the Messiah. John also was baptizing in Aenon ... because there was much water there. This does not prove conclusively that he baptized by immersion, but it certainly implies as much. If he baptized by sprinkling or pouring, there would have been no necessity of having much water.

3:24 This verse is given in explanation of John's continued ministry and of the continued response of devout Jews to it. In the near future, John would be thrown into prison and beheaded for his faithful testimony. But in the meantime, he was still diligently carrying out his commission. – BBC

Joh 3:25-26 Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"

This is a very interesting statement. The disciples of John, I would assume, are jealous. They are suggesting that he

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should not mention the name of Jesus. They feel it would be best if he didn't. And then they imply that he should not have borne witness to Him to begin with because all are going to Him—well, now, that is hyperbole—but it reveals they were jealous and were afraid John was going to lose all his followers.

Now this man John makes a very clear statement. There is not a jealous bone in the body of John. – McGee

Joh 3:27-30 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.

One cannot escape the tremendous force of this, friend. John the Baptist is the last of the Old Testament prophets. He is actually not in the church. He makes it clear here: "He that hath the bride...." Who is the bride? The church. "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom." Then who is John? He is the friend of the Bridegroom. He will be present at the marriage supper of the Lamb, but he is not a part of the church by any means. He is the last of the Old Testament prophets who walks out of the Old Testament onto pages of the New Testament to announce the coming of the Messiah.

"A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." Again and again this truth will come out. Jesus said, "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (Joh_6:65). How tremendous these statements are! And then John says that Christ must increase but that John must decrease. His ministry is now coming to an end. – McGee

A HUMBLING EXAMPLE OF THE PETTY JEALOUSIES AND PARTY SPIRIT WHICH MAY EXIST AMONG PROFESSORS OF RELIGION (verse 26). – Biblical Illustrator

1. This spirit is but too common in the churches. Men care more for the increase of their party than for the increase of Christianity, and cannot rejoice when it spreads outside of their own denomination or congregation.
2. True Christians must watch and pray against this spirit. It is contagious, injurious, and brings contempt on religion. Wherever good is done we should acknowledge it and be thankful ([Php 1:18](#)).

The way to true honor is humility, No man was ever so praised by Christ as John. – Biblical Illustrator

Joh 3:31-32 He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.

John makes it very clear that the Lord Jesus Christ is superior, and he gives them this wonderful testimony concerning the Lord Jesus. – McGee

Jesus is the One who comes from above and is above all. This statement was designed to show His heavenly origin and supreme position. To prove his own inferiority, John the Baptist said that he himself was of the earth and was earthly and speaks of the earth. This simply meant that, as to his birth, he was born a man of human parents. He had not heavenly rank and could not speak with the same authority as the Son of God. He was inferior to the Lord Jesus because He who comes from above is above all. Christ is the supreme Sovereign of the universe. It is only proper, therefore, that men should follow Him rather than His messenger.- BBC

But when the Lord Jesus spoke, He spoke with authority. He told men what He had seen and heard. There was no possibility of error or deceit. Yet strange to say, no one receives His testimony. The expression no one is not to be taken in an absolute sense. There are individuals who accept the words of the Lord Jesus. However, John was looking

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at mankind in general and simply stating that the Savior's teachings were rejected by the majority. Jesus was the One who came down from heaven, but comparatively few were willing to listen to Him. - BBC

Joh 3:33 He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true.

3:33 Verse 33 describes the few who did accept the words of the Lord as being the very words of God. By their acceptance, they certified that God is true. So it is today. When people accept the message of the gospel, they take sides with God against themselves and against the rest of mankind. They realize that if God has said something, it must be true. Notice how clearly verse 33 teaches the deity of Christ. It says that whoever believes the testimony of Christ acknowledges that God is true. This is just another way of saying that the testimony of Christ is the testimony of God, and to receive the one is to receive the other also.

Joh 3:34-35 For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure. The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.

Jesus was the One God has sent. He spoke the words of God. To support this statement, John stated that God does not give the Spirit by measure. Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit of God in a way that was not true of any other person. Others have been conscious of the help of the Holy Spirit in their ministry, but no one else ever had such a Spirit-filled ministry as the Son of God. The prophets received a partial revelation from God but “the Spirit revealed in and by Christ the very wisdom, the very heart of God to man with all its infinitude of love.” - BBC

This is one of the seven times in John's Gospel where we are told that the Father loves the Son. Here that love is manifested in giving Him control over all things. Among these things over which the Savior has complete charge are the destinies of men, as explained in verse 36.- BBC

Joh 3:36 He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

“He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life.” You have it right now! Friend, you couldn't have it any clearer than that. John the Baptist preached the gospel, as you can see. He told the message that men are lost without Christ, but they have everlasting life through faith in Christ. What a testimony this man had. What a tremendous witness to the Lord Jesus Christ! – McGee

Joh 4:1-4 Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. But He needed to go through Samaria.

This, apparently, was immediately after the incident in chapter 3. It was in the month of December and probably near December 27. This was the time that John the Baptist was in prison. When John was imprisoned, Jesus left Judea and went back into Galilee.

Why did He retire from Judea? Well, He did not want to precipitate a crisis. You see, the Lord Jesus was moving according to schedule, a heavenly schedule set by the Father. He has made it very clear that He came to do the Father's will. Speaking of His own life, He said, “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father” (Joh_10:18). They can't touch Him until His time has come. When we reach the thirteenth chapter of John, we will see that His time had then come. “Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father ...” (Joh_13:1)—you see, He's moving on His Father's schedule, friend; He has come to do the Father's will.

So He departed again into Galilee. He went back up where His headquarters were, which, we believe, were in the city of Capernaum. – McGee

Are you on the Father's schedule and not yours? Does the Father ever tell you to go through Samaria?