

What Does John 3:16 Really Mean?

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Introduction:

- I. John 3:16 has for centuries been perhaps the best known and most loved verse of the New Testament.
 - a. There are several reasons for that. It discusses God's love for mankind, Jesus' sacrifice of his life, and mankind's hope for eternity—it is a good summary of the gospel.
 - b. However, like every summary, it cannot contain all of the information that one would need to know to be saved. The Bible as a whole must be loved, studied, and imitated before one can truly know what is necessary for salvation.
 - c. This is the problem with a prevalent interpretation of John 3:16. Many people, unaware of the other things that the Bible says about salvation, misunderstand John to say that all one has to do is to believe, and they will be saved.
 - i. Brothers and sisters, we must know the Bible better than this. If salvation could be comprehended from one passage of Scripture, why would God waste time with the rest of the Bible?
 - ii. No. We must know the Scriptures “from Genesis to the maps.”
 1. Also, we must study the Bible contextually, rather than picking verses here and there.
 2. “The Bible is its best commentary.” We must use the contexts of the passages we study in order to completely understand what the biblical author is trying to tell us. Today we will do this with John 3:16 and its context.
- II. Context
 - a. Nicodemus, a Jewish teacher, came to Jesus at night (why?) and admitted, “We know that thou art a teacher come from God.” He has come to ask this God-given teacher about salvation.

Discussion:

- I. One of the biggest keys to understanding biblical context is the use of conjunctions. If you do not understand a conjunction, look it up in a dictionary or concordance.
 - a. The importance here cannot be stressed. These conjunctions (for, therefore, because, and, but, so, etc.) are used to express how each verse relates to the verses around it. Is that not the most important thing to know when trying to understand context? How does this verse relate to the rest of the passage? We must understand these conjunctions.
 - b. In John 3:16, he begins with “For.” This word shows us the *reason* for the previous three verses.

- a. 19 – This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.
 - i. This is the condemnation that a bronze serpent was set up in the wilderness, and Israelites would rather be bitten and die than look upon it, because they are rebellious against God.
 - 1. Do you see how foolish it is to reject salvation?
- b. 20 – Everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.
- c. 21 – He that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.
 - i. Either you fear judgment because it will expose your hidden lack of spirituality, or you cannot hold in your excitement, because you are saving everything for your treasure in heaven. That is what John 3:16 means.
 - 1. God has given you a way out of eternal punishment. He requires you to believe in him, be faithful to him, turn away from your sins, and be baptized into Christ. Then you can see the kingdom.
 - 2. However, just like the Israelites were rejected by God even after their “baptism” in the Red Sea, we too can be rejected. If we fall away from God after we have been baptized, we must still turn away from our sins and look upon him for forgiveness.
- d. If I were to know the time for Judgment to be right as we sing this invitation song, would your first thought be, “No, not yet,” or “Yes, finally?”
 - i. If you are not ready, how can we help you get ready today? If we can, please come while we sing.