

**The Big Day – Who is God?**  
**The Need, Condition, and Path of Eternal Life**  
**November 13, 2022**

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## **BELONG**

Start the group with an opportunity for community. We want this to be a place where the body of Christ can **belong** by sharing their lives with one another in genuine fellowship.

1. What are things in your life that you tend to ‘miss’ because they have become so familiar to you?
  2. When you hear the phrase “you must be born again,” what does that mean to you?
  3. Has the Gospel lost its impact to us as Christians because of how much we’ve heard it repeatedly?
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## **BELIEVE**

Move into the relevant Bible passages and read along together. This is where the body of Christ can learn together to **believe** in Jesus more and love Him better.

The greatest truths are many times those things which are right in front on us, but they can also be the easiest to miss if we are not paying attention.

For Christians, the Messiah is so familiar to us because we have heard Him preached our entire lives. It is for this same reason that the simple truth of who Jesus is can so easily allude us.

### **John 3:1-16**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> 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.” <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” <sup>4</sup> 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?”

<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that

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<sup>1</sup> The Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV), John 3:1-16.

which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup> 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.”

<sup>9</sup> Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup> If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

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

Verse 16 is perhaps the most recognizable verse in the entire Bible. The text is so well-known that we are in danger of missing its true meaning due to an overfamiliarity.

The Gospel can be summarized in this way: you have a *need* (the need for eternal life), and Jesus has come to fulfill that need.

## 1. The Need for Eternal Life

Why does one need eternal life?

The answer to this question almost seems obvious:

- You need eternal life because you are going to die – As the famous quote of Benjamin Franklin goes, “in this world, nothing is certain except death and taxes.” Death is a fact of life that all must face. It is the destiny of every man; if one lives, one must also die.
- You need eternal life because of what happens after you die – According to Scripture, every man will spend eternity in one of two places: Heaven or Hell. Heaven is appointed to those who follow the Lamb and have accepted forgiveness for sins through the Cross. Hell is appointed to those who have rejected Christ, having no substitute for sins and suffering punishment.
- You need eternal life because of the coming judgment – When you draw your final breath, God will judge you. He will determine your final resting place. Without Jesus and His sacrifice in our place, we are forced to face a holy God to be judged on the basis of our own merits, to which we will be found wanting. With Jesus, His perfect life is accounted to us, and such judgment is avoided.

This simplest of concepts to the Christian can be summed up in a single verse from the book of Hebrews.

## Hebrews 9:27<sup>2</sup>

<sup>27</sup> And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes the judgment,

There is a second truth from this text that may also go unseen. There is a specific *condition* required for one to obtain eternal life that Jesus explains to us.

## **2. The Condition for Eternal Life**

If John 3:16 is the summary of what Christ is offering, John 3:1-15 is the context.

Nicodemus is a perfect example of someone who misses what is right in front of him. Take a moment to think about who Nicodemus is:

- A Pharisee
- A member of the Sanhedrin
- A life-long learner of the Scriptures

In other words, Nicodemus is a *good* person or what many would describe as a *godly* person. He not only knows God's Word, but He follows it to the letter. This man comes to Jesus seeking to learn how one can obtain eternal life.

Jesus' answer is this: to obtain eternal life (and admittance into Heaven), you must be *born again*.

In other words, despite Nicodemus' knowledge and piety, only by being born again can he obtain eternal life. In fact, if he has not been born again, Jesus says he isn't as godly as he might think he is. One cannot truly understand the things of God without first being born again.

Because of the Fall of Adam and Even in the Garden, sin has entered the world, and through sin death. The human body is cursed, destined to break down and decay over time until the flesh can no longer hold on, and death takes hold. To avoid this, and obtain eternal life, you require new life. This spiritual life redeems what is cursed and fixes what is broken.

The image of verse 5, being "born of water and the Spirit," conveys the idea that the Spirit of God acts upon us so powerfully that our soul is washed clean as though with water. Baptism, a ritual Christians are all too familiar with, is a symbol of this spiritual truth. The old is wiped away, and the person is made new!

To be clear, being born again means this:

- Being a good person is not enough to save you – Nicodemus, like the Jews of his day, believed that entrance into the Kingdom of God was granted by a life of good works and obedience to God. Jesus did away with this assumption.

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<sup>2</sup> The Holy Bible, English Standard Version (ESV), Hebrews 9:27.

- What others in your life think about Jesus is not enough to save you – Nicodemus comes to Jesus and speaks in the plural. “We know.” Perhaps Jesus had become a topic of conversation in the Sanhedrin. It doesn’t matter what others make of Jesus. You must make a personal decision and be personally born again.

Other religions teach that effort alone will earn you eternal life. Christ, distinct from all other faiths, says all such attempts are in vain. Rather, to meet the need of eternal life, you must be born again.

### 3. The Path to Eternal Life

Nicodemus’ response is very common. He asks, “How can these things be?” To the uninitiated, Jesus’ explanation makes little sense. Nicodemus thinks Jesus means you have to be *literally* born again: go back into your mother’s womb!

Jesus has a twofold response which explains how someone can be born again, the path to eternal life:

1. We can be born again because God, in Jesus Christ, has reached down to us – “No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.”

Our efforts are useless, but Jesus has entered the pages of history to provide a way. Rather than our own effort, it is the life of Jesus that can justify us and provide new life.

2. We can be born again because God, in Jesus Christ, died that we might live – “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,”

This is a reference to the Old Testament. While the Hebrews were wandering in the wilderness of Sinai, serpents had overrun the camp as a punishment for their sin against God. Facing death, God provided a solution. A bronze serpent would be placed upon a pole so that whoever gazed upon it would be saved from their affliction.

In the same way, Jesus was lifted up on a pole (the Cross) to save all people (not just the Israelites), not only to spare them the consequences of physical death, but spiritual death. The Son of Man through this has won for those who would accept his substitution for eternal life.

To sum up, the path to eternal life is Jesus the Messiah Himself.

John 14:6<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The Holy Bible, New Living Translation, John 14:6.

Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”

Jesus not only provides a way, but He *is* the way. To be born again, you must repent of your sin, and accept Jesus as the only one who can save you. His death on the Cross was not a defeat, but an astounding victory. Rather than suffering the punishment for our sin, Jesus suffered it for us. His perfect life, which we could never live, is now accounted to us, and the Father sees the glory of His Son rather than the wretchedness of our sin.

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## **BECOME**

Wrap up the discussion by asking some closing questions. We can **become** more like the people God is calling us to be by reflecting on what we’ve learned and applying it.

1. Have you been born again? If you have, what did it look like for you to be born again? How has following Jesus changed your life?
2. What is a takeaway about Jesus and the Gospel message that you have gained a fresh perspective on having read the passage from John?
3. How can you continue to approach a familiar passage like John 3:16 to ensure it doesn’t lose its transformative power? How can you keep it from becoming unremarkable?