

In The Presence Of The King . . . Believe In Him! John 3:14-18

Welcome to Coram Deo Bible Church, and Merry Christmas.

If you're joining us for the first time, my name is Rob Willey, and we're glad you're here. What a great joy to gather and worship the Lord. I hope your heart is full. Same for those of you joining us via livestream.

John 3:14-18. This is the third message in a Christmas series we've been working through, called *In The Presence of the King*. Referring of course, to Jesus.

The one the wise men sought and worshipped as the *newborn* king. (Mt 2)

The one the Apostle John saw in his vision of heaven, as the *King of kings*. (Rev 19:16)

The one in whose presence, we're *always* in. 24/7/365. You couldn't flee him if you wanted to. He's in our *midst* the Bible says. (Zeph 3:17)

And the only rational response is to *believe*. In the presence of the King, believe in him! Because the consequences of rejecting him are devastating. Just like in days of old with *earthy* kings. Reject *them*, resist *them*, and your life was at risk. More than a genie who responds to our every whim, Jesus is King. Lord. Creator of the universe and ruler of all. The one in whom we *must* believe.

The question is, do you? That's the point. Do you believe, in the King, in whose presence you live? Look at v14. **(Intro)**

[14] And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, [15] that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

Jesus just said in v3, *unless one is born again* [spiritually] *he cannot see the kingdom of God* (3). He can't experience it; he can't be a part of it. And Nicodemus, one of the Jewish religious leaders of that day, said, "How can that be? How can you be born again? (9) To which Jesus says here in v14, "Believe in the Son of Man." Referring to himself. "Believe in me and you can be born for life. Eternal life." That's the idea.

And notice the Old Testament event he cites to illustrate it. V14. *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.*

He's referring to the episode in Numbers 21, when the Israelites of old were wandering the desert, and were bitten by fiery serpents as a consequence for their grumbling. So Moses prayed for them **(Nu 21:8-9)** . . . *[8] And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." [9] So Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.*

Why? Because *looking* was an expression of their belief. Their belief in God's promise to save their life. *****

So too, Jesus said, *he* would be lifted up, on a cross, so that those who look to *him*, would have *eternal* life. That's the analogy.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up [Jesus prophesied], *[15] that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.*

[16] "For God so loved the world [everyone], *that he gave his only Son, that whoever*

believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. [17] For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. [18] Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

➤ Because v16 is the most famous verse in the Bible, and the word believe so commonly used, we often lose sight of its meaning. Or fail to grasp it in the first place.

So let me start with a definition.

To believe in Jesus means to: acknowledge who he is, treasure what he's done, entrust your life to him, and live his way.

When you put it all together in the Bible, that's what it means to believe.

Far from just a check-off, biblical belief is heartfelt; personal.

Far from fire insurance, it's a way of life. Far from a religion, it's a relationship.

And far from theoretical, believing in Jesus is practical. Like saying I believe in this stool, and then sitting on it to show it.

Some years ago in Papua New Guinea, Wycliffe Bible translators were stumped when they discovered that the Saniyo language didn't have a word for "believe."

It just didn't exist. Nothing in their language conveyed the meaning of Scripture.

So after much discussion, they settled on this for John 3:16 . . .

God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever [hears, thinks about, grasps hold of, and follows the talk of Jesus continuously all the time] *should not perish but have eternal life.*

That's good. And it starts with acknowledging who he is.

➤ To believe in Jesus means to **acknowledge who he is**. Admit and accept that he's God in the flesh; God's Son. Acknowledge that.

And **treasure what he's done**. That when he died on the cross, he died for *you*.

Taking your sins on himself, and paying the penalty of death that *you* deserved.

That's what Jesus meant when he said that God *gave* his only Son. He gave him up to death. For you. Treasure that.

And **entrust your life to him**.

Depend on him. Not just when you're in trouble, but *all* the time.

To lead you and guide you. Provide for you and protect you. Love and keep you for all eternity. Entrust your life to him.

And last, **live his way**. For *his* purposes and *his* glory, instead of your own. Humble and obedient like the servant you are; a servant of the King.

That's what it means to believe in Jesus. And before we're done here, I'm going to give you an opportunity to express it. An opportunity to look to him in prayer. **(Summary)**

➤ But first, let me give you 3 *reasons* to do so; right from this passage. Reasons that are more important than anything in the entire world. So if you hear nothing else this morning, hear this.

Believe in him to receive eternal life (v14-16)

That's the first reason to believe.

Jesus was *lifted up* [v15], *that whoever believes in him may have eternal life*.

And then he elaborates on that with the most concise summary of the Gospel in all the Bible.

[16] "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*. Receive eternal life.

Believe and receive.

Eternal life, as in **life forever**. Starting right now.

When you believe in Jesus, it's not like you *wait* to get eternal life, when you die or something. You have it now. You're living it. And always will. It's life forever.

And, life **with God**. Eternal life is life forever, with *God*.

Right now, with his Spirit dwelling *in* us; and later, face to face.

Like the Apostle John said in Rev 21:3 – *God himself will be with them*.

They shall see his face, he said. (Rev 22:4)

Eternal life is life with *God*.

Most of which will be spent **in heaven**. Eternal life is life forever, with God, in heaven when we die.

And then, on the *new* heavens and *new* earth after Christ returns. That's what the Apostle Peter said.

We are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Pet 3:13).

Which means it will be **full of joy**. Eternal life is a joyful life. Because where righteousness dwells, joy is. Even now, on *this* side of eternity.

How much more on the other side where there's no *un*-righteousness? No struggle. No hardship.

And last, eternal life is **completely perfect**.

Death shall be no more [the Bible says], *neither shall there be mourning* [grief], *nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away*. (Rev 21:4)

That's perfection. Eternal life.

And that life is available to all who believe. *Whoever* believes, v16.

The question is, do you? Have you looked on Jesus and *told* him? Told him you believe? Have you *received* eternal life?

Second . . .

Believe in him to be saved from eternal death (v17)

V17 – *For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him*.

Saved from what? Eternal death. Perishing. Like it says in v16 – *whoever believes in him should not perish*.

That doesn't mean annihilation, where you cease to exist. It means the opposite of eternal *life*. What the Bible calls *the second death*; *the lake of fire*. (Rev 20:14)

A place (**Rev 14:11**) of eternal punishment where *the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night*.

They, referring to those who don't believe in Jesus. And *die* in their unbelief.

They go to a place of *darkness* Jesus said, where there's *weeping and gnashing of teeth*. A place of fear, remorse, and misery. Forever. (Mt 8:12)

Put all that together, and you get eternal death.

That's what God sent Jesus to *save* us from.*****

➤ Now, you might be thinking, "All that, just because we don't believe?" Yes.

Because God's not only loving, but holy; and just.

And *in* his holiness, he *will* not and *cannot* tolerate sin in his midst.

It's like the ultra-clean surfaces required on satellites and spacecraft. (**Photo**)

They go to great lengths to preserve a pristine environment, because even the smallest speck of dust could impede its function or taint its purpose. Dirt, is not tolerated.

And the same goes for sin in the presence of God's holiness. Including the sin of unbelief.*****

➤ What's more, in his perfect justice, he requires a punishment equal to the crime; a payment equal to the offense. Namely, death. Eternal death.

An infinite price, for the infinite sin, of rejecting an infinite God.

It's not his desire. In his perfect love, he doesn't *want* that. He doesn't want *any* to perish the Bible says. He wants *everyone* to believe. (2 Pet 3:9)

He *desires all people to be saved* it says (1 Tim 2:4). And gave his one and only Son to do it. To bear the punishment of death *for* us . . .

So that we could *be saved through him*. V17. But you have to believe.

Take a look at this video, of a couple who does. (**God@Work – Spaete**)

Miss out no more. Flirt with the disaster of eternal death no longer. Believe and be saved.

And last, in the presence of King Jesus . . .

Believe in him to escape condemnation (v18)

We don't usually think of salvation in these terms, but Jesus sure did. V18

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, v17, because the world is *already* condemned; *already* judged guilty. That's what it means.

Condemnation is the judgement of guilt by God.

Like when a courtroom judge lowers his gavel and declares a defendant guilty of a crime. He's condemned.

Only we're *born* that way. We're *born* condemned. That's the implication. Look at v18b.

Whoever does not believe [whoever is in a state of *un*-belief] *is condemned already*.

Since we're *born* in a state of unbelief, we're born condemned.

Not a single one of us comes out of the womb believing in Jesus.

The result of which, is eternal death. Every single one of us is facing eternal death.

Just like a convicted murderer standing in a courtroom, is facing life in prison.

We stand condemned.

And the only way to *escape* that condemnation, is to believe. Believe *in the name of the only Son of God*, v18. Namely, Jesus. You have to believe in Jesus.

You have to believe who he is, what he's done, and what he promises.

That he's God in the flesh, died for your sins, and gives you life. Eternal life.

Whoever hears, thinks about, grasps hold of, and follows the talk of Jesus continuously all the time – is no longer condemned, will not perish, and has eternal life. (**Summary**)

➤ If you've never made a decision in that respect, if you've never professed your belief to *God*, and repented of your *sin*, now is the time.

And I urge you to *pray* with me to do so. Let's bow our heads.

In the quietness of your heart, just call out to the Lord and say something like this:

“God, I believe; I believe in Jesus.”

“I believe he's God in the flesh, I believe he died for my sins, and I believe his promises.”

“So please forgive me of my sin, save my soul, and give me eternal life.”

“I'm done living my way, and want to live yours.”

Pray – Oh God. Thank you for the gift of salvation. The gift of eternal life. Would you guide and protect those who just prayed? Would you keep them from the evil one and the temptations of this world? And would you spur us *all* on to know you more? We love you, and are so very thankful for your love for us. (Praise God)

I want to encourage you to do 3 things:

A. Pick up a **New Believer Packet**.

B. *Tell* someone of your belief, your decision.

C. Stand with us to worship the one who just saved your soul.