

John 3:14–16

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

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.

“FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD”
JOHN 3:16

INTRO:

Someone has said the hardest passages to preach on are the ones that are the most familiar. If this is true, then my task today is a very difficult one. We have arrived at what may be the best known verse in the Bible. People who have never read the Bible can quote this verse. What does it mean? What did Jesus say when He spoke this verse to Nicodemus?

Thus far in our study, the Lord Jesus emphasized to Nicodemus the necessity of the new birth. He has underlined Nicodemus’ lost condition and that God’s plan of salvation was clear in the Old Testament Scriptures. When we left them last time, we saw the Lord pointing to the type of Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness. All they needed to do was look in faith and be saved. In our text today, our Lord completed the picture for Nicodemus. He needed to understand God’s plan of redemption and so He states it in one little verse. ***“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.”***

I. God so loved the world

II. That He gave His only begotten Son

I. God so loved the world

A. Our attention is captivated in this verse by the statement, ***“God so loved the world.”*** Why did He love the world?

1. This is where we frequently get into trouble. We love the little bumper stickers that say, “Smile God loves you.” We love them because we like to think there is something in us that makes us loveable to God. We like to think like the Israelites did in coming into the land that it was something in us that made God love us. This is not the truth.

2. God does not love us because of who we are, but in spite of who we are. This is why the Apostle Paul marveled in **Romans 5:7-8**

“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

You and I might give our own lives for someone we consider righteous and good. But we were nowhere near righteous or good when Christ died for us. We were the embodiment of everything God naturally hates. He did not love us because we deserved in any way to be loved.

3. Why then did He love us? The Lord God told us in the words He said to Israel in **Deuteronomy 7**.

“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you.” (6-8a)

He loved us because it is in His nature to love us. He loved us, saved us, and made us His people, simply because He chose to love us.

B. The backdrop against which we must see this incredible love is the fact of the awful condition we were in when He loved us. We will never understand the depth of our heavenly Father's love in sending His Son to be our Savior unless we first understand our perilous condition.

1. In **John 3:36**, John described our precarious position without Christ.

“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.”

2. The wrath of God lives with the person who has not Christ and the moment will come when it will take its vengeance upon the one who does not believe upon the Savior. The Bible says God is angry with everyone who does not have His Son as his or her Savior! When we were in this condition, when we were loving our sin instead of loving the eternal God, God loved us and did something about our condition.

II. That He gave His only begotten Son

A. God did not just say He loved us. He did something about our condition. He gave His only begotten Son. **(1)** He gave Him to die to make restitution for our sin. **(2)** He gave Him to bear the righteous wrath of God poured out on our sin. **(3)** He gave Him to carry our sin away.

B. God's giving His Son meant His condescension. In **Philippians 2:5-8**, the Apostle Paul wrote about what the Lord Jesus did for us.

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

He loved us enough to become a human being like us.

1. What does this mean? What if your favorite child came to you one day and said, *“God has called me to be a missionary to lepers. I am going to live in their abject poverty with them. I will wrap myself in their dirty rags and live with lice and vermin. I am going to endure their rejection so that I might do God’s will.”* If you were this child’s father or mother, you would probably protest. *“Surely, you can serve God in some other way!”* This is nothing compared with what God the Father did through Christ for us.

2. In obedience to His heavenly Father, Jesus emptied Himself of His glory which He had before the world began (**John 17:5**), and became like us, so that we might be saved!

C. Not only did the Lord Jesus become a man and live among us, He endured the hatred humankind harbors in its heart toward God. He came to be rejected of men, ***“a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief”*** (Isaiah 53:3).

1. Remember this section from John’s prologue.

“[The Lord Jesus] was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.” (John 1:10)

Our Lord endured the rejection of the world around Him, the Gentiles, who should have known Him through the general revelation. They did not know Him. He also came to the people God had uniquely prepared for Christ’s coming. The revelation of the Old Testament was all about the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah Who would come. Yet, when He came just as promised, they rejected Him. There was no room in the inn because there was no room in their hearts!

2. Ultimately, He came to be made to be sin for us, so that He might be rejected of His Father. The cry from the cross should echo in our souls.

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’” (Matthew 27:45-46)

How can we begin to understand what it was like for the Father to reject His Son, His only Son Whom He loved? Why did He do this?

3. He came and willingly endured the rejection and die for us because of what it says in our text. ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.”*** All this was done so that some might believe in Him, receive Him and be saved to spend eternity with Him.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes on Him, should not perish, but have eternal life.”

D. What then is necessary if we are to receive this wonderful gift of eternal life? Our Lord Jesus said it succinctly in this verse.

“That whoever believes into Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

1. Remember what we read in the end of **John 2**. There were those who believed but didn't believe. Jesus did not commit Himself to them. It is important that we do not have faulty faith. It is not quantity of faith that matters. It is quality of faith.

2. Saving faith **(1)** knows the facts, **(2)** assents to the facts, and **(3)** commits itself to the Savior. Remember the chair principle. If we do not trust Christ alone to save us, if we do not cast ourselves upon Him to save us, we cannot be saved. This is not a life insurance policy. This is a believing into Him. We must have Him to have salvation.

Charles Spurgeon put it well when he said, *“One thing more is needful; and that is personal trust. First comes assent to the truth, then acceptance of that truth for yourself, and then a simple trusting of yourself wholly to Christ, as a substitute. The essence of faith is trust, reliance, dependence.”*

Will you trust the Lord Jesus alone to save you today?

Why Should He Love Me So?