

My attempt to unwrap some of the glories
of the best known verse in the Bible!

John 3:16

[The following three messages were first presented using Power Point]

A series of three papers based on

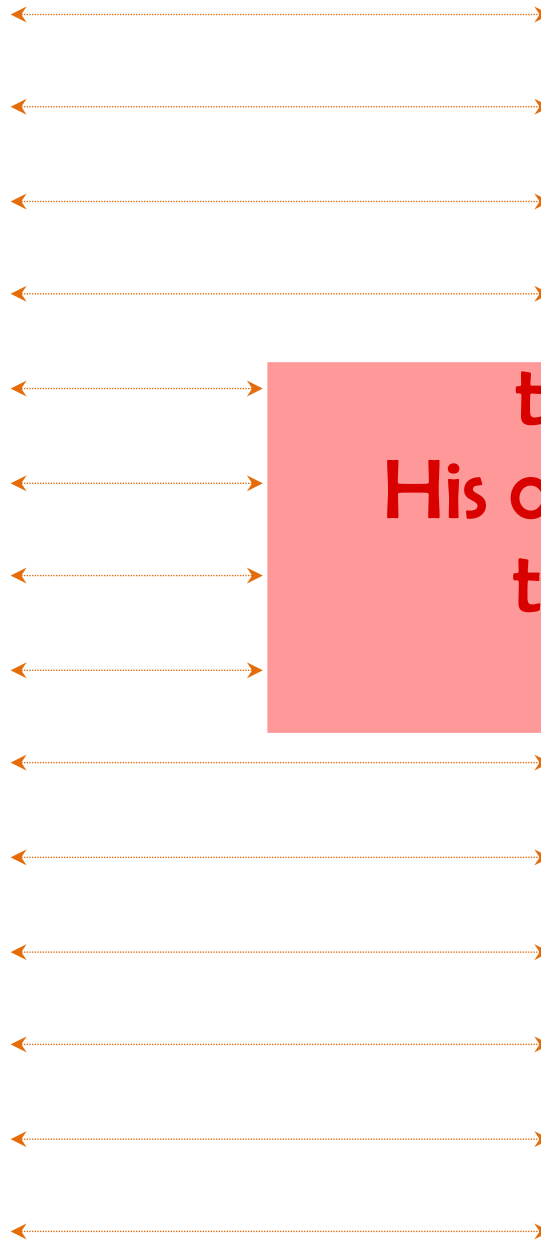
John chapter 3, verse 16.

By John Nixon

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For
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John 3:16. Reading John 3:1-21. (Part 1 of 3.)

Do you ever feel confused when you discover that there are so many different religions all claiming to be the way to God? Some of these will even claim to believe about Jesus and teach a lot about Him, yet they teach very different ways of Salvation!

Here we read about a man – Nicodemus - a very strict religious man, a Pharisee who was confused by the different messages claiming to come from God. His confusion was about the teachings of Jesus and the conflicting teachings of his own religion. He had come to the conclusion that Jesus really was a teacher who had come from God! He even said to Jesus "... no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him," (Jn 3:2.) Nicodemus certainly believed that Jesus was special! Would such faith in Jesus make him acceptable to God?**No!** Jesus told him why he was not yet acceptable to God. But *would he accept Jesus' authority?*

What Jesus said confused him even more! Nicodemus, "**you must be born again!** (Jn 3:7.) Although Nicodemus believed some right things about Jesus *that did NOT make him acceptable to God, nor fit for the Kingdom of Heaven!*

Jesus on another occasion said; "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, *but only he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.* **Many** will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!' (Matt 7:21-23.) So you see, Jesus said **many** will have great respect for His Name and use it in their teaching and preaching *yet not necessarily be doing the will of God the Father in heaven!*

Knowing **about** Jesus and believing **about** Him is not enough! "**You must be born again!**" ..No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again"! (Jn 3:7,3.)

Nicodemus at first thought it must mean entering a second time into his mother's womb, so he wondered how that could ever happen! (Jn 3:4.)

Jesus said **two** different births were needed – one is "of water" – "of the flesh" – the natural birth from the waters of the womb; The second birth – being "born again" is not of water but "of the Spirit" – *it is not a physical experience but a spiritual one.* (Jn 3:5-6.)

Nicodemus asked "How can this be?" (Jn 3:9.)

Over the centuries since Jesus said these words to Nicodemus many have come up with different explanations and conditions for being "born again" so again there can be confusion.

Different people give you different explanations of what they believe it means to be born again. But to find out what **Jesus** meant we don't turn to the various religions to see what they have to say, we have to turn to the **Holy Bible** where Jesus' message is recorded for us.

Let us examine what Jesus meant by being "born again" and HOW it could come about! It is summed up in the best known Bible sentence - in just 26 words - **Read John 3:16.....**

We want to spend some time on this wonderful explanation given by Jesus Himself. He had just reminded this Jewish teacher of something Moses did in the desert thousands of years earlier – "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, *that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life..*" (Jn 3:14-15.)

Jesus knew this teacher would want answers to **why** and **how** that could be possible so He quickly went on to say

"FOR" – Jesus is about to outline *the reason and explanation for such a statement to be possible.* - the "because of" – "for because"!

There had been **a work in progress on-going since eternity past!** An eternal **PROJECT** - **God at work!** – a plan that God had in place before the creation of the world and a project that is certain to succeed. Jesus is about to reveal it clearly to Nicodemus, *and will also predict the glorious outcome of it in detail!*

"For He (GOD) chose us in Him (Christ) before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight." (Ep 1:4.) Before time began the Omniscient (all knowing) God foreknew those who would avail of His amazing mercy and grace. God's amazing PROJECT would be the means of bringing many sons to glory! (Hebrews 2:9-11.) This glorious PROJECT is the Gospel of God that we declared today. (Rom. 1:1-7.) Let us find out about the project:

“FOR...**GOD**” – The architect of this project is **God** Himself. “God the Blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords;” (1 Tim 6:15. NKJ) The **POTENTATE** - the Monarch or Ruler – THE One who possesses all power to determine and to fulfil His eternal purposes - *even though He had granted to His highest creation, **mankind**, the freedom to either obey or disobey His commands!* “The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all.” (Ps 103:19.)

The Lord clearly foreknew the glorious outcome of His eternal Project!

I have a “Sat Nav” and am amazed at its ability to instantly instruct me to “Turn back” if I go a wrong way. I can choose to ignore it and persist on the wrong path. If my foolish decision to go my own way ignoring the way mapped out for me results in me being hopelessly lost *that does not reflect on the quality or ability of the Sat Nav* but only on my own foolish independence and choice to **do it my way!**

Perhaps that is a very weak illustration of what happens when you or I decide to go our own way (Is 53:6.), and ignore the clear instruction and direction given by the Almighty Potentate – the Ruler over all who has revealed His Project in His Word, the Holy Bible. Our foolish choice to ignore God **does not prove God to be weak or inadequate in any way, it only confirms what He foreknew the consequences would be!**

But let us learn another lesson from the Sat Nav before we move on.

If I later realise I am hopelessly lost and then choose to turn to it again and accept its directions, what happens? I find it is immediately ready and able to redirect me *from wherever I have ended up* and to lead me back onto the right course! If this little apparatus can do that, *how much more is our Gracious and Almighty God ready and able and willing to direct you and me aright today if **we turn to Him!*** Wherever **you** are right now in relation to **God, wherever your own foolish rebellion and disobedience towards God may have brought you to,** know this, that God is able and willing to direct you and bring you onto the right path to heaven and God *if your will repent and turn to him now!* The Almighty RULER OVER ALL, the Majestic **POTENTATE** has a glorious **PROJECT** in hand and freely offers its immeasurable benefits to each one of us. *But it's your choice to either **accept** or **reject** His offer.*

Your decision will not affect His Greatness nor restrict His Power. Let's us move on..

“FOR **GOD ...SO LOVED**” –

Here we see an expression of the **PASSION** God has for sinful mankind. The whole of mankind has expressed its puny rebellion against the Almighty Potentate saying, “We will not have this Man **to rule over us!**” (Lu 19:14.) / “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way;....” (Is 53:6.)

Yet this Potentate does not choose to crush us into submission and take away our freewill, nor does He readily give up on us or abandon us. He shows His love for us while we are yet sinful and disobedient. (Rom 5:8.) He is “..able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen..” (Eph 3:20-21.)

God, out of great love, passion and concern for the rebellious, guilty and condemned sinners, was moved with compassion to an *unbelievable demonstration of His sacrificial love.* God was ready and willing, *at tremendous personal cost,* to come to our rescue and save the sinner from the condemnation he/she rightly deserves.

“My Lord, what love is this that pays so dearly, That I, the guilty one, May go free!
Amazing love, O what sacrifice, The Son of God given for me. My debt He pays, and my death
He dies, That I might live, that I might live.” (Song by Graham Kendrick.) **FOR GOD SO LOVED!**

God says: “I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn. Turn from your evil ways! **Why will you die...?**” (Ez 33:11.)

It is very obvious that it is NOT God's choice that many are going to Hell! (See Matt 18:14.)

This is the same God who, when He looked on the multitude and saw them as sheep without a shepherd, was *moved with compassion* and wanted to help them. (Mk 9:36.)

What a glorious Gospel we have for our fellow countrymen in these days! Have you told the people around you that God loves them with such a tremendous passion? He has a

passionate love *for every person in our land!* How can I be so confident about this? Here is the clear message of the Gospel of God: “FOR GOD SO LOVED

THE WORLD” – Here He makes known the scope or extent of His love – the **PARAMETER** - the full measure or reach of His love; the limits He has set! – Its wideness and depth are not restricted by nationality, or religion, or age, or education, or language, or skin colour, or even depravity! God so loved **the world - that excludes no one!** No matter what direction you measure God’s love it is unfathomable!

“... I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp **how wide and long and high and deep** is the love of Christ, and to **know this love that surpasses knowledge**—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God.” (Eph 3:17-19.)

How wide? God’s love reaches to “**ALL He has made**”! (See Psalm 145:9, 13, 17.)

There are no “no-go” nations or peoples! The Jews would have excluded the Gentiles, but God didn’t! Jesus stretched out His arms on the cross indicating how wide His love was for this sin-cursed condemned world. Christian beware that **you** don’t exclude any person, or nationality, or condition, or depravity from the scope of the Gospel. God didn’t! God so loved **the world!**

If you have been limiting God’s love today you need to REPENT!

How long? How long does God’s love endure? Any reader of the Bible will quickly conclude that “His love endures forever.” (Psalm 136. .. 26 times!) For example, see how the rebellious nation of Israel reluctantly responded to God’s discipline and turned in repentance back to God *time after time* in their distress – and God was ready and willing to deal with them in love and forgiveness! Who can measure the length – the perseverance – of His love?

Knowing that God loves **the world** with such love, and knowing that He commanded us to go into **all the world** and preach the Gospel to **every creature** we are without excuse if we wilfully withhold the truth of the Gospel from any man, woman or child whatever their colour or creed or nationality.

Let us see God’s response to the need of the depraved and condemned world.

“FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD.....

THAT HE GAVE” – Paul describes what God GAVE in this way:

“God presented Christ Jesus as a **sacrifice of atonement** through faith in His blood.” (Rom 3:25.). “God made Him who had no sin **to be sin for us**, (That is **how deep** the love of God reached to rescue you and me!) so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” (2 Cor 5:21.)

What great depth of love God has shown towards us to go to such extremes to rescue you and me! Psalm 40 assures us that God reaches down into the slimy pit and into the mud and mire to lift up those who call upon Him.

The word used in some versions of the Bible is **PROPITIATION** – meaning that which is necessary to satisfy the offended Person. *But it is vitally important to note that it was **GOD** who provided and presented the PROPITIATION that was needed to satisfy His own demand! It is NOT you and me trying to earn favour with God by influencing Him by our achievements! The sinner is on death row, condemned and helpless to do anything to avoid the **wrath** of the Judge. Here we learn that **the Judge Himself** so loved us that He freely and graciously intervened and **gave for us** all that would be needed to fully satisfy GOD’S HOLINESS AND JUSTICE!*

GOD GAVE the “Sacrifice Of Atonement” (**PROPITIATION**) that would fully cover the debt we owed to Him for all our sins! Our great God gave **Himself!** - **here was the only way the full price demanded to clear guilty sinners like you and me could ever be met!**

“and He (Jesus) is the propitiation for our sins;” (Such a Divine sacrifice could know no bounds in its sufficiency) *“and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.”* (1Jn 2:2 ASV)

God Himself has provided the **PROPITIATION** – the sacrifice of atonement for the world – the price that satisfied the requirements of the law that had condemned every one of us!

“It is finished!” God has done it all!

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins”. (ASV) (1Jn 4:10.)

NOTE: "Atonement" is sometimes explained as "at-one-ment" - the thought of *being reconciled* to God. *But "atonement" implies much more than a making of friends.* (The KJ version has promoted that interpretation by rendering the word for "reconciliation" in Rom 5:11 as "atonement", but I don't see these two words as being interchangeable) Reconciliation is **part** of the wonderful consequences of **the atoning sacrifice**. The PROPITIATION – ***the Atoning sacrifice - was the requirement that would fully satisfy God's righteous demands on our behalf.***

In the OT it was illustrated in the focal point of the Tabernacle. The **Ark of the Covenant** where the "Mercy Seat" was incorporated – *the place where God said He would meet with His people.* "Put the altar (of incense) in front of the curtain that is before the ark of the Testimony—before **the atonement cover** (the "Mercy Seat") **that is over the Testimony—where I will meet with you.**" (Exodus 30:6.) The "Mercy Seat" was overlooked by two golden Cherubim – angels looking on as it were in amazement at God's justice and wrath being satisfied. The priest would approach this Holy Place just once a year bringing with him the proof that the **atoning sacrifice** had been made on the main altar. Blood from the sacrifice that had been made outside the Tabernacle was brought and presented under the gaze of the golden cherubim, *and God accepted it on behalf of the peoples' sin.* Here was a **visual aid** that God gave the people of Israel to indicate that God could look on the blood of the sacrifice and be satisfied. This was known as "**the Mercy Seat**" - *the place of propitiation* where God's justice was satisfied.

This was only a shadow of the reality to follow. Only the Blood of **the Lamb of God** (Genesis 22:8.) would truly and fully satisfy the demands of God's holiness and justice against sin. (See John 1:29. Hebrews 9:22, 26-28. 10:9-14.)

So Atonement - PROPITIATION - is referring to the very costly means . † . whereby God's justice and wrath against my sin was fully satisfied. *It is that tremendous cost which satisfies the holy and just demands of God on our behalf, and that He Himself GAVE for us.* It is not to be confused with our state before God

Atonement - PROPITIATION –*the conditions to fully satisfy God's justice.*

Reconciliation has to do with *the consequences for us of God's justice having been satisfied – we can now be reconciled to Holy God! (More about that later on in the verse) Our reconciliation with God could only come about **after He gave** the sacrifice of atonement that satisfied His just punishment of our sin.* The condemned person on death's row is offered a free pardon! *It can be accepted or rejected!*

* Why should an offended God **give** – *freely provide* – an adequate provision to fully satisfy the justice and condemnation *that our sins demanded from Him?* It is because He "so loved" you and me *despite our awful sinfulness!*

"Why should I gain from His reward?" Some would respond, "*I cannot give an answer!*" But surely we should say, "His love' - my only answer!"

We will have to return to this verse at another time to find out more about the glorious Gospel of God. Meantime read and re-read John 3:16.

End of Study 1 on John 3:16.

To be continued.

Reading John 3:1-21. (Part 2 of 3)

Jesus surprised the very religious Nicodemus by indicating to him that all his religious zeal and achievements had not made him acceptable to God. Jesus said, “You must be **born again!**” ..No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again”! (Jn 3:3,7.)

Nicodemus couldn't understand how anyone could be born again! Jesus goes on to explain **how** and **why** everyone who believes in Jesus could have eternal life? (John 3:15.) With 26 words in our English Version of the Bible Jesus explained to Nicodemus how this seemingly impossible thing could be. **John 3:16.** God's glorious solution for a sin-cursed world.

Here is what we have considered in the first 9 words: “For” – the reason such a Gospel is available can only be understood when we begin to realise the fantastic **PROJECT** that has been in progress since eternity past. / “..God” the Architect of this project - the **POTENTATE** – *the Ruler over all*. You must be willing to submit to what He has made possible for unworthy you and me. / “...so loved” - the **PASSION** – even while we were yet sinners He willingly came to our rescue. / “...the world” - the **PARAMETER**. (the extent of His response.)

Some would want to alter the Word of God and say that the parameter set by God could only have been *a fraction of the world!* This robs God (Mal 3:8.) of the limitless love, grace, power and mercy He has displayed, **and** it robs sinful mankind of any assurance of acceptance through the Gospel – Who could be sure that they would be numbered within *the fraction of the world* if that is all God is said to have loved?!!

Ever since the evil one influenced the thinking of our first parents in the Garden of Eden the “Word of God” has been under attack! God said, “You will die” “No! You will not certainly die”! (Gen 3:3-4.) / God created our world in six days. – No! It has taken billions of years to evolve our world to what we have today! / A Moslem man wanting to show the Bible was unreliable asked me how long Jesus had said he would be in the grave. I answered “3 days and 3 nights” He then asked what day did I believe He died. I answered “Wednesday”! He was surprised! He knew that the traditional day to celebrate the crucifixion is Friday! But the Bible tells us Jesus was crucified the day before the Sabbath – not the **weekly** Sabbath; the **Passover** Sabbath (John 19:14, 31.), which was Thursday on the year 30AD, the probable date for the crucifixion. In that case Jesus **was** 3 days and 3 nights in the earth, *exactly as He said He would be!* (**Note Deut 18:22.**)

Although the accuracy of the Word of God is continually under attack it is never disproved! Did God mean that He so loved **the whole world** when He said **the world**? **Why would I believe otherwise?** God did not restrict His gracious offer to one particular group of people or nationality – no one is worthy! He shows His love for all mankind young or old (it is not God's will that one of these little ones should perish. Matt 18:14.) “Every nation, tribe, people and language” (Rev 7:9.) will be represented in that great company in Heaven./ “...that He gave” - the **PROPITIATION**. The strict demands of Holy and Just God against our sin could be fully satisfied! *But not by you or me, only by God Himself!*

Propitiation was provided by God and as a result sinners can be **Reconciled** to Him.

As we look further into the verse we will see more of God's inexhaustible love and fantastic provision for sinful mankind.

The story is told of two brothers – one who diligently studied hard and ended up as a judge; for the other life was “a beach”! He wasted his life and squandered the opportunities he had. He got involved in all kinds of sinful living and crime. The day came when the rebellious brother ended up in court and appeared before a judge – the judge being his own brother! The prosecution case was clear; the young man was guilty of serious crime. The judge had to pass sentence. **Guilty!** So he sentenced his brother - it was to be either a long prison sentence or a very large sum of money! Having squandered his life and all that he had prison now seemed inevitable! Then the judge left aside his robes and came down to where the condemned man stood and offered to write a cheque for the full amount of the fine. The guilty condemned brother humbly accepted the amazing generosity of the judge - the court demands were settled and the condemned man walked free – justified.

But such a story does not even begin to compare to what God did for you and me. It is one thing to pay the fine for a criminal but in Psalm 49:8 we read “.. **the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough.**” So God could **not** just write a cheque to clear **our** debt!

Let us hear what Jesus said to Nicodemus:

“FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE**HIS ONE AND ONLY SON**” –

Here we see how HIGH God’s love reached to accomplish what His eternal Project had set out to do – to put Salvation within reach of all men! What a sacrifice! God sacrifices **the PRE-EMINENT** One! - The One who bears a name above every name; The exalted One; The precious, all-glorious, adorable, Beloved One of Heaven; the One in whom God was pleased to have all His fulness dwell. (Colossians 1:19.) God was ready and willing to take His one and only Son from the highest place that Heaven affords and give Him up for us all!

In Matthew 3:17 and 17:5. “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

Listen to the testimonies of some who had close encounters with Jesus:

Peter said: “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth.” (1 Pet 2:22.)

John wrote: “In Him is no sin.” (1 Jn 3:5.)

Hebrews 4:15 says, “He was tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin.”

Pontius Pilate had to admit, “I find no basis for a charge against Him.” (John 19:4.)

Pilate’s wife referred to Him as “that innocent Man”. (Matthew 27:19.)

Judas Iscariot said he had betrayed “innocent blood”.(Matthew 27:4.)

The Roman centurion said, “Surely this was a Righteous Man.” (Luke 23:47.)

The thief on the cross said, “This Man has done nothing wrong.” (Luke 23 :41.)

The early Church: “Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against *Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed.* They did what Your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.” (Acts 4:27-28.)

“There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin; HE ONLY could unlock the gate of Heaven and let us in. ... He died that we might be forgiven, He died to do us good, That we might go at last to Heaven, saved by His precious blood.” (hymn by Mrs Alexander.)

“When Christ came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You prepared for Me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings You were not pleased.’ Then I said, ‘Here I am—it is written about Me in the scroll—I have come to do Your will, O God.’ And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” (Hebrews 10:5-10.)

The all-powerful, all-wise, all-knowing God **realised that there was only one way to satisfy His own Just and Holy demands!**

What an insult to God’s amazing sacrificial love that man today should dare to suggest that what **God gave** falls short of being sufficient for the sins of the whole world – they say God is only able and willing to save a selected few and all others were only created for destruction! *Surely that is a pathetic portrayal of God’s unlimited love and His unspeakable sacrifice for a condemned mankind!* Others will claim God’s sacrifice needs to be supplemented by man’s endeavours to make satisfaction for his sins and expiate them by penance and prayers and good works and spiritual exercises.

But Jesus’ triumphant cry from the cross “IT IS FINISHED” shows us there is no more to be done or could be done! Unbelievers don’t believe God did enough to clear mankind’s debt in order to offer us His righteousness! (Rom 10:2-4.)

Will you accept that what God did in sending His Son to be the Saviour of the world He did for YOU, and because of such love and sacrifice you can have peace with God?

This is what it means to be “born again” – no longer to be under the curse of the sting of Adam’s DEATH but to inherit Jesus’ LIFE – Eternal Life - by faith in His amazing gracious provision for you.

Once you have discovered this Glorious Gospel you will want to make it known to others? How callous I would be if I knew a cure for some terminal illness but I was not willing to share what I knew with those around me who were dying with such an illness!

I know the cure for mankind's greatest illness – that illness that causes **fighting, greed, violence, hate, selfishness, evil thoughts, lust, unfaithfulness, cheating, immorality, unbelief, ungodliness, fear, separation from God.** *I have found the cure!*

“YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN”! And who can this apply to?

Let us read on to find more about that right here.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, **THAT WHOEVER ...**"

Here we are reminded again of the parameter set by God. God is revealing to us who it is that can benefit from His fantastic passion and love for sin-cursed humanity. Who are the **PRIVILEGED** who will have the opportunity of being offered such grace and kindness?

The Scripture reminds us that God loves “ALL He has made” (Psalm 145:9, 13, 17) :-

“He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, also for the sins of **the whole world.**” (1John 2:2.)

Your Father in heaven is not willing that **any** of these little ones should be lost. (Matthew 18:14.)

“...but now God commands **ALL people everywhere** to repent.” (Acts 17:30.)

Jesus said, "Go into **all** the world and preach the good news **to all** creation. (Mark 16:15.)

The **invitation** is unlimited in its scope! Who are the privileged to be given this invitation?
– **ALL are privileged to be invited!**

In Luke 14:16-22 Jesus told the parable of a man having prepared a banquet for **many** guests – *but not all the invited guests responded and accepted the invitation, or the terms of it.* The master's response was, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' *There was to be no restriction as to who was to be invited.* "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, *but there is still room.*' *The implication is that you could never invite too many! There would always be room for more!*

We must never restrict the limits of God's parameter – we are not to be selective in making the invitation known. We realise that there will be many who will not accept God's gracious terms and will turn down His invitation. **Not everyone is going to be saved!**

I don't suppose that everyone was saved in the days of Moses and the serpent on the pole (John 3:14-15.) – not because God couldn't save them all, but because I have no doubt that many would have refused to believe God's grace and power *and did not LOOK AND LIVE!* Remember God extends His goodness and mercy to “the evil and the good” to the “righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:45.) God demonstrates His love to ALL mankind, yet not everyone responds to His love with true motives. Some are only hardened by God's grace to them! (Compare **Pharaoh** in Egypt; and **Judas Iscariot** – *how privileged he was!*) Jesus did NOT say that everyone privileged to be **invited** would enjoy the riches of God's grace and mercy. We are left in no doubt as to which of all those invited would benefit.

So who **are** the beneficiaries going to be of this amazing grace Jesus speaks of here? The call of God is to go out to WHOEVER– “to all creation”; to every creature. (Mark 16:15.)

Yet not everyone will benefit from the invitation? (See Matt 22:14.)

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, THAT WHOEVER **BELIEVES**" - the genuine **PARTAKER** is the one who **puts his faith** in what God has done.

God looks for believing faith. *“Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.”* (Hebrews 11:6.)

Think of the many that were healed by Jesus when He walked upon this earth. People who BELIEVED and came to **PARTAKE** of Jesus' grace and power:

Royal **official's son** healed (Jn 4:42-53.) / **Jairus' daughter & Woman with the issue of blood.** (Lu 8:40-56.) / **Bartimaeus.** (Mk 10:46-52.) / **The 10 lepers** (Lu 17:12-19.) / etc.

Each of these came in faith to **PARTAKE** of the grace of God. *Their faith was seen to be genuine* being accompanied by appropriate action. John the Baptist called for a genuine repentance from those wanting to partake of God's blessing: “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.” (Matthew 3:8.) James said: “I will show you my faith by what I do.” (James 2:18.)

So, if my faith is in God and in what He accomplished for me *how can I show my faith?* Will my life be one of constant struggle and anxiety because I am not sure if I have done enough to please and satisfy God? NO! / Will I be unsure of my acceptance by God because my good works and prayers may not be enough? NO! / Will I be wondering if I have enough church

attendances and enough sacraments to be acceptable to God? NO! / Will I be striving to do more in order to please God thinking that that will make me surer of getting into Heaven? NO! / Will I be thinking of ways I could possibly make satisfaction for my sins to God? NO!

*Reasoning like that is **not** faith in God but faith and hope in what I can do!* I will show my faith by acknowledging that there is no more sacrifices to God for my sins! (see Heb 10:11.) I will show my faith by **PARTAKING** freely of the wonderful salvation God has provided for me in Christ. *My faith is only in what God did for me.*

A Christian Song - "He paid a debt He did not owe. I owed a debt I could not pay. I needed Someone to wash my sin away. And now I sing a brand new song: **AMAZING GRACE** the whole day long, for Jesus paid my debt that I could never pay."

What have we to believe? Believe "**IN HIM**" – The very religious Saul of Tarsus had depended on his religious heritage and his own zeal to commend him to God - but to no avail - "...circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. **But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.** What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. **I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.**" (Philippians 3:5-8.) "Saul" became the great missionary "Paul" by being willing to **PARTAKE** of the righteousness of Christ **in faith**.

Is there someone here today who is thinking that all the things they have done for God or for their religion or their church will surely gain them favour before God and assure them of acceptance with God? Do not entertain such vain and hopeless thoughts! (Ephesians 2:8-10.) If that is where **you** are at *then you do NOT believe IN HIM* – you are **not** depending on the atoning sacrifice that God provided at such tremendous cost to Himself. You need to come to that place Paul spoke of when he considered everything he thought of as commending him to be as rubbish, that he might depend only on Christ's merits.

Have you come to that place yet? – ready and willing to acknowledge that all your righteous endeavours are like filthy rags to a Holy God? (Isaiah 64:6.) Have you been willing to **PARTAKE** of Christ's righteousness by **BELIEVING IN HIM**?

Make sure that you are believing **in Christ**, and in Him **alone** for acceptance with God? You then discover that God has committed Himself to bring about a very special outcome for all those who trust IN CHRIST – God tells us He has **PREDESTINED** all who will trust **in HIM** to certain unbelievable riches of God's grace! (Ep 1:11.) For all who are "born again" by believing **in Jesus** God has predestined (planned in advance) amazing blessings such as: **A,B,C,D,E...**

Adopted by God as His children. "He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ," (Ephesians 1:5-6. Gal 4:4-7. 1 John 3:1-3.)

Baptised into the Body of Christ - included in Him by the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 12:13. Eph 1:13.) Eph 3:6. "...members together of one Body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Conformed to Christ's likeness. "For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed *to the likeness of His Son,*..." (Romans 8:29)

Dependent upon the Spirit sent from God. "Those who are *led by the Spirit of God* are sons of God." (Rom 8:14-17.) To walk in step with the Spirit of God. (Gal 5:25.) To be Quickened, Empowered and Controlled by the Holy Spirit. (Rom 8:1-13.)

Ensured for eternal glory! "those He predestined, ... He also glorified." (Rom 8:30. John 17:24.) To be with Jesus and to see His glory!

Fully pardoned. Justified! No condemnation! (Rom 8:1-4. 5:1.)

Glorifying to God. - to the praise of His glory "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory." (Ephesians 1:11-12, 14. Matt 5:16.)

Holy to the Lord. - Sanctified unto God. (John 17:17. 1 Thess 4:3.)

What a fantastic **package** God has predestined to all who are "born again" by faith in Jesus!

To be continued...☺

Reading John 3:1-21. (Part 3 of 3.)

What a wonderful message Jesus gave to Nicodemus in a nutshell - Such a compact summary of the Gospel of God. In this Nicodemus learned about a new concept! "Born again"! It came as a shock to Nicodemus to discover that with all his religious service and prayers he still was not acceptable for God and Heaven. He needed to be "born again – but he hadn't a clue what that meant! Yet unless he was "born again" *he would not see the Kingdom of God!*

There are various religions and groups that have hijacked the term "born again", and use it for something very different than Jesus intended. Some speak of being born again *by baptism*. You find this in various Protestant churches and in the Catholic Church. Other religions also use the term giving it their own meaning; so what are we to believe?

JESUS' answer to Nicodemus clearly stated that being born again *was a work of the Spirit!* If we want to be sure we have a right understanding of what Jesus meant it makes sense that we must not be influenced by the interpretation others have put on the phrase and let Jesus Himself explain what He means. The great Teacher emphasised that He meant being "Born of the Spirit" (John 3:6-8.). He summed up in one sentence how it could be that everyone who believed in Him may be born again of the Spirit to a new and Eternal Life. That amazing sentence is in **John 3:16** - (the English translation uses 26 words!)

We have been looking at the words Jesus used and so far we have seen:

"**For**" – Here Jesus is about to outline the reason such an amazing Gospel is available to sinful mankind. It is because of an amazing **PROJECT** that God had planned in eternity past to be brought to completion "when the time had fully come.." (Galatians 4:4.) according to His blueprint. The Architect of this project is... "**God**" - the **POTENTATE** – the Ruler over all, and He has revealed His plan. The Almighty Ruler whom we have all rebelled against, and before whom we all stand condemned, demonstrated amazing love - "...so loved" - the great offended Ruler and King displayed unbelievable love for sinful mankind with a **PASSION** that leaves us astonished! Many people just won't accept that God loves "**the world**" - the all-inclusive **PARAMETER**. It is unacceptable and unbelievable to many that God could or would love all mankind – but that is what Jesus said! God so loved the world "**that He gave**" (See Rom 3:22-28.) - Can you believe it? – the Holy God, who condemns every sinner, comes up with a plan – a project that provides the full price His justice demanded from us! - the **PROPITIATION** that fully satisfies His just and holy requirements for sin and so can completely clear our debt. And how did He do that? He gave... "**His one and only Son**" – the **PRE-EMINENT** One... "The highest place that heaven affords is His by sovereign right, The King of kings, the Lord of lords, and heaven's eternal Light." (Christian song) God sent His one and only Son.... "**that whoever**" – How greatly **PRIVILEGED** sinful mankind is to have such a gracious God able and willing to demonstrate such boundless love to all! Everyone is to be included in the invitation that offered the blessing of God's amazing generosity freely to all. But Jesus clearly indicates that although all are privileged to be offered God's grace not everyone is going to receive it! – "Whoever **believes**" – God looks for the response of faith - the **PARTAKER** of God's provision *by faith and trust*. "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6.)

What does God require you to believe? Believe "**in Him**" In Jesus Christ – this is a very important phrase in understanding the Gospel. We come across it often in the New Testament as we have noted in the past. God foreknew all those who would **believe IN HIM**. (Romans 8:29. 1 Peter 1:2.) and in an amazing display of His love and grace He **PREDESTINED** (planned in advance) that they would all be recipients of many wonderful blessings **IN CHRIST**.

Here I will quickly review some of the predestined blessings I highlighted that God includes in His glorious package of Salvation:

- * **Adopted** by God as His children. "He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ,." (Ephesians 1:5-6. Gal 4:4-7. 1 John3:1-3.) To be led by the Spirit. (Rom 8:14-17.)
- * **Baptised** into the Body of Christ - included in Him by the Holy Spirit. (1 Cor 12:13. Eph 1:13.) "...Included in Christ ...Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ." Now Quickened, Empowered & Controlled by the Holy Spirit. (Rom 8:1-13.)

- * **Conformed** to Christ's likeness. "For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son,..." (Romans 8:29)
- * **Dependent** upon the Spirit sent from God. "Those who are *led by the Spirit of God* are sons of God." (Rom 8:14-17.) To walk in step with the Spirit of God. (Gal 5:25.) To be Quickened, Empowered and Controlled by the Holy Spirit. (Rom 8:1-13.)
- * **Ensured** for eternal glory! "those He predestined, ... He also glorified." (Rom 8:30. John 17:24.) To be with Jesus and to see His glory!
- * **Fully pardoned.** Justified! No condemnation! (Rom 8:1-4. 5:1.)
- * **Glorifying to God.** - to the praise of His glory "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be *for the praise of His glory.*" (Ephesians 1:11-12, 14. Matt 5:16.)
- * **Holy to the Lord.** - Sanctified unto God. (John 17:17. 1 Thess 4:3.) His "saints" here on earth!

These are some of the rich blessings that are predestined by God for all who will be born again - predetermined by God for *those who will believe in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.*

Let us go on to finish out our survey of John 3:16 today! I have been thrilled to see something of the great love of God as revealed by Christ in these words:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him...

❖ **SHALL ..**" We are about to hear a positive and specific **PROMISE** that God commits Himself to keeping for those who will believe **in Him** – confirmation of a predestined blessing that the believer **in Him** will certainly receive! He did NOT say "might" or "maybe" or "has a one in a million chance"!

Some people can get so excited about the LOTTO and the one chance in many millions of winning some instant prize! The only thing they are guaranteed is that they lose whatever they spend on LOTTO tickets – money they likely could little afford to throw away! But what God is offering is NOT a lottery, and the outcome is of far far greater value that the sum of every lottery ever won in this world!

The Gospel of God is NOT offering you a chance of getting something. NO! This is God speaking in very positive terms - **SHALL** - "...it is impossible for God to lie. We who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf." (Hebrews 6:18-20.)

God is committing Himself to a sure and certain outcome on our behalf. "Shall..."

So what is this further promise that God has predestined for those who will believe in His Son?... "THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL...**NOT PERISH**" – This is indeed sweet music in the sinner's ears – assured of a complete **PARDON**. Having known about the awful curse Holy God has pronounced against our sin – that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23.) – that the soul that sins shall die (Ezekiel 18:4,20.). Now to hear – THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM **SHALL NOT PERISH!**

Jesus underscores the requirement of personal faith when He later says in **verse 18**.... "Whoever believes in Him *is not condemned,*"

But remember, the PARDON does not extend to all!

".. whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." (John 3:18, 36.)

Many will be **lost!**

But it will not be because God did not love them! God expresses His love for the world and **everyone** He has made: (Read Psalm 145:9, 13, 17.) He is "loving towards ALL He has made."

"Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked? declares the Sovereign LORD. Rather, am I not pleased *when they turn from their ways and live?*" (Ezekiel 18:23.)

Listen to His plea in Ezekiel 33:11. "As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. *Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die,....*"

Is God ready and willing to save you?..... **YES!** So how could you ever be lost?.....

Only by refusing His grace and kindness and choosing to remain subject to His wrath.

Compare someone having an addiction to something that is killing him. Suppose a doctor is willing to freely offer something that has been proven to help overcome the addiction in others, but this addict refuses to consider it or to seek the help that is available. The addict's health deteriorates and he dies a horrible death. Whose fault is it? Certainly no one could blame the doctor! It is absolutely no reflection on him, or on the cure he had freely offered. You could even go so far as to say it was not the addiction – because there was a cure available. *It was the persons' own choice to reject the cure that resulted in his death! It was **suicide!***

In a similar way God is not to blame for those who will be refused a place in Heaven and who will be turned into hell. It is not God's fault – He loved them and provided a fantastic and free offer of deliverance - *“but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.”* (John 3:18, 36.) [See Acts 13:46-47.] **Spiritual suicide!!!** In hell surely they will forever say, “God loved me so much He even provided a way that I could have been rescued from this certain death for my sin, *but I in foolish pride refused to accept His mercy and grace.*”

In love God says to you just now, “Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die,....” No one will ever be able to say “God did not love me or care about my soul”!

Condemned sinners who by faith in Jesus Christ as their only hope and only Saviour become partakers of His great Salvation **are not condemned**, (John 3:18. 6:40, 47.) This is the great MERCY of our wonderful and loving Creator, turning the wrath we deserve from a Holy God away from us. Mercy is - *not getting from God what we deserve.*

But whoever does not believe stands condemned already – they will NOT receive mercy from God in the last day – “because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.” (John 3:18.) The condemnation still stands against all who reject the Son “God's wrath remains on them.” (John 3:36.)

For the Believer there is a blessed assurance! JUSTIFIED! (Romans 5:1. 8:1.) – THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT PERISH – “**BUT HAVE**” - this speaks of an assured **POSSESSION**. “Not perish” spoke of something *you will not have*, but now we learn of something *you certainly will have*. No “ifs” or “buts” or “maybes”! God is graciously giving to us what we certainly do not deserve - the GRACE of God - *Getting from God what we do not deserve* – the unmerited favour given to all who believe.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the **gift** of God....” (Ephesians 2:8.)

As with any “gift” *you must choose* to either accept it or reject it! Many reject it!

Are you ready and willing to trust God's Mercy & Grace – and receive His Salvation by faith? “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.” (Acts 16:31.)

Saved? What does that mean? Not only the deliverance from the wrath of God, but much more.. We jump to the last word of the verse to find out what is on offer!

“**BUT HAVELIFE**” (last word of the verse) - the **PRESENT (or GIFT)** God freely gives to all who believe. Because of the curse of sin every one of us has experienced **DEATH – spiritual death** in which *we all “lived (!) at one time gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature”* (Ephesians 2:1-2.) We “**lived**” - *but not able to live to please God* – **dead** to being able to satisfy the demands of the Holy and Just God. But here we see God offering us a *free undeserved present* - The gift of God is **Life**. Life that restores the fellowship and communion with our great Creator Himself! **The relationship and fellowship of spiritual Life that was ruptured by sin in the Garden of Eden can be restored!** “**Now this is Eternal Life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.**” (Jn 17:3.)

“I tell you the truth” Jesus says, “he who believes has Everlasting Life.” (John 6:47.)

NEW BIRTH; NEW LIFE; LIVING FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD!

“God's gifts and His call are irrevocable (unalterable).” (Romans 11:29.)

Can you trust Him?

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance *that can never perish, spoil or fade...*” (1 Peter 1:3-5.) — Now that's....

“**ETERNAL LIFE**” (word before the last in the verse) – that’s **PERMANENCE** for you! - An inheritance that *can never perish, spoil or fade* - kept in Heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”

So this is even better than what Adam and Eve had before the Fall! Their spiritual life was conditional on **their** obedience and love towards God, which turned out to be very short lived! (See Romans 8:3.)

But what **God** is providing for us IN CHRIST is **PERMANENT** – “**ETERNAL LIFE**”!

“Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15.)

Here is an assurance policy statement for you! *It is a very very long term policy!* An **eternal** assurance secured and sealed by God Himself. He will not – He cannot go back on His promise of **Eternal** Life to those who believe in His Son.

We were Spiritually DEAD because of sin, cut off from the Holy God. He has provided a way to deal with sinful man and bridge the awful gap separating us from God.

Some will say – “Thank You Lord Jesus. YES! I believe in Your sacrifice!”

Those who do will be RECONCILED to God. His adopted children! (John 1:12-13. Galatians 4:4-7.)

BUT Others will say - “NO! I don’t need to believe. Sure God wouldn’t condemn anyone!” Those who refuse to believe in the Son are going to be REJECTED. “I never knew you! Away from Me you evildoers” (Matthew 7:23. 25:41.)

Remember! **YOU must be born again!** Don’t make up your own way how to be born again, or take what someone else understands about what it means. Jesus has made it clear what being born again means – it is NOT an involvement with some sacramental experience or encounter with some religious experience or exercise, or something a religious person can do for you. Listen to Jesus: “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but **the SPIRIT gives birth to Spirit.**” (John 3:6.) ... “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that **everyone who believes in HIM may have eternal life.**” (John 3:14-16.)

REVIEWING **John 3:16.**

For	the PROJECT /
God.....	the POTENTATE /
so loved	the PASSION /
the world.....	the PARAMETER /
that He gave	the PROPITIATION /
His one and only Son..	the PRE-EMINENT /
that whoever	the PRIVILEGED /
believes	the PARTAKER /
in Him	the PREDESTINED /
shall	the PROMISE /
not perish	the PARDON /
but have	the POSSESSION /
eternal	the PERMANENCE /
life	the PRESENT (Gift)

Have you believed in Jesus as your only Priest and Saviour to be born again by His Spirit? “No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again” (John 3:3, 5.)

Would you like to speak further to me or some other born again Believer about these things?....

You must be born again!

What a glorious Gospel!

What an awesome God!

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