

John – An In-Depth Study

[Part 6]

John 3:14-15 [NIV] *“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 refers to the account of Israel’s complaining about their conditions in the wilderness that God had to correct by sending a plague of venomous snakes, and many people died. The Israelites repented and cried out to God for mercy.

God instructed Moses to make an image of a serpent and hold it up in the midst of the camp, then all who look on the serpent would be healed and saved. [**Numbers 21:4-9**]

John used this account of rebellious Israel as a type of forecast of what would happen to Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ must be lifted up so that rebellious humans, when they look to Him and turn their thoughts to God, will also be healed and saved.

The Greek word used by John for “*lifted up*” is “*hupsōō*” meaning “*to elevate or exalt.*”

This is referring to two events in Jesus Christ’s life.

When Jesus was lifted up on the cross. [John 8:28; John 12:32]

When Jesus ascended back up to God’s Throne. [Acts 2:33; Acts 5:31; Philippians 2:9]

Both of these events are inextricably connected, one could **not** have happened without the other.

Two words we need to meditate on are used in this passage of scripture.

Believes – the Greek word is “*pistēuō*” meaning **to have faith in a person, commit to and trust that person.**

It is this commitment and trust that God is looking for in us to extend His mercy and forgiveness.

This is something that is very difficult for any human to do, we always want to do something to earn God’s mercy and forgiveness.

John 15:4 [NIV] *“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”*

Without Jesus Christ dwelling in us we can accomplish nothing of value. Jesus Christ does this through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. [John 14:15-18]

Philippians 4:11-13 [NIV] *“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”*

Through this indwelling of Jesus Christ in us we can accomplish all that God wants us to do for Him.

This will not earn us forgiveness and salvation but will be a way in which we can say thankyou to Jesus Christ and God the Father. [Romans 12:1]

Eternal life – John gives us a very simple but clear description of what eternal life is.

John 17:3 [NIV] *“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”*

The word translated “*know*” is “*gnōskō*” meaning an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ and God the Father.

The same word is used of the intimate relationship between a man and a woman in the marriage union. [Luke 1:34]

Remember the Church is to have this intimate relationship with Jesus Christ at His return. [**Revelation 19:7-9**]

This scripture tells us that Christians should be preparing for that marriage now. The word translated “*righteousness*” or “*righteous acts*” is “*dikaioma*” meaning a righteous deed.

Paul mentions this preparation in:

Philippians 2:12-13 [NIV] *“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to **work out** your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is **God who works** in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”*

Note we are to “*work out*” what God has “*worked in*.”

This is referring to the work of the Holy Spirit in us that flows out from us in acts of love, faithfulness, kindness and all the other fruits of the Holy Spirit in us.

[Read **Galatians 5:22-23; John 7:38-39**]

This means we can experience eternal life now [**1 John 5:11**] notice present tense, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, a gift from God. [**Luke 11:13**]

John 3:16 [NIV] *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

This simple sentence tells us so much about the Creator God.

It tells us that the origin and initiative in all salvation lies with God. Sometimes Christianity is presented falsely in a way that we have to pacify and persuade God to be forgiven by Him and receive salvation.

Some present Christianity in a way that tells us, again falsely, that Jesus had to do something to turn a stern, angry, unforgiving, legal God of the Old Testament into the gentle, loving, forgiving God, presented by Jesus Christ.

This scripture tells it was the loving Father God who out of His great love for humanity was willing to allow His Only Son to be tortured, crucified and humiliated, that we could be given eternal life instead of our deserved eternal death.

This scripture tells us that the central character of God is love [Greek word “*agapé*” meaning an unconditional love that continues to flow towards others irrespective of their response or rights, a sacrificial love that is away from self and focussed on others.]

This scripture tells us that the extent of this love that God is all encompassing. The whole of humanity, the unlovable people as well as the lovable people.

God’s love for each human being is as if there was **no** other person created to love.

John 3:17 [NIV] *“For God did not send his Son into the world to **condemn** the world, but to save the world through him.”*

The word translated “*condemn*” is the Greek word “*krinō*” meaning to decide, mentally or judicially judge or call to question.

This is referring to the first coming of Jesus Christ, when He became a substitute death for humanity’s deserved eternal death due to our rebellion against our Creator God.

1 John 4:10-17 [NIV] *“This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No-one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Saviour of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him.”*

Here we see what was behind God sending Jesus Christ into the world the first time. To express His love for all humanity that would allow us to respond, if we choose to, by reflecting that love of God in our personal relationships with others.

This response fulfils the original plan that God presented to His chosen, example human nation, through Moses. [**Deuteronomy 6:5** and extended by Jesus Christ **Luke 10:27**]

John 3:18 [NIV] *“Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”*

We choose our own judgement by believing Jesus is our Saviour or not.

Acts 4:8-12 [NIV] *“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: ‘Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.’ Salvation is found in no-one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.’”*

Only through belief in Jesus Christ as our Only Saviour can we be saved from being judged fit only for eternal death.

Many people react negatively to the fact that there is no other person we can call on for salvation save Jesus Christ.

This is **not** something the true Christian Church decided but is the stated fact given to us by Jesus Christ, God the Father’s spokesman [Word].

No human being can give us absolution of our sins even if they claim they have this authority.

Any person or religious organisation who reacts in hostility to Jesus Christ or what He teaches is in the darkness of deception, under the power and deception of Satan. [Revelation 12:9; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19]

If a person will look at the character of Jesus Christ and compare themselves with Him, God will reveal that person’s real nature.

John 3:19-21 [NIV] *“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”*

A person, as long as they continue to walk in the light of God’s Word, Jesus Christ and the Christian Bible, will see where their lives, thoughts and actions, need to be re-educated by God’s Holy Spirit. [Romans 12:2]

Such a person will be judging themselves and not awaiting the judgement of Jesus Christ at His Second Coming. [2 Corinthians 5:10; Matthew 7:1-2; 1 Corinthians 11:31-32]

John 3:22-30 [NIV] *“After this, Jesus and his disciples went out into the Judean countryside, where he spent some time with them, and baptised. Now John also was baptising at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptised. (This was before John was put in prison.) An argument developed between some of John’s disciples and a certain Jew over the matter of ceremonial washing. They came to John and said to him, ‘Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan, the one you testified about, well, he is baptising, and everyone is going to him.’ To this John replied, ‘A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, ‘I am not the Christ but am sent ahead of him.’ The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom’s voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less.”*

It is clear that people were leaving John the Baptist and following Jesus, John’s disciples were worried about this, they did not like to see their teacher take a back seat or second place.

John the Baptist could have felt injured, neglected and unjustifiably forgotten, but John had a mind that was above such feelings.

John the Baptist told his disciples that he had never expected anything else, for he was only the herald not the king.

So many people look for great things to do for their Saviour, Jesus Christ.

It would save a lot of resentment and heartache if we realised that there are certain things that are **not** for us.

We need to accept what God has prepared and qualified us to do and put our whole heart into that task.

In the end judgement all service ranks the same with God.

John the Baptist told his disciples that **no** person could receive more talents or opportunities than God gave to them.

Always remember that other peoples’ success is the result of what God has given to them.

In the illustration that John the Baptist gives to his disciples, Jesus is the bridegroom and John was the friend of the bridegroom.

The friend of the bridegroom acted as the liaison between the bride and her family and the bridegroom.

He arranged the wedding, took out the invitations, presided at the wedding feast and brought the bride and the bridegroom together.

John the Baptist's task had been to bring the people of Israel and Jesus together, after that his work was completed and he would fade into the background as did the friend of the bridegroom.

Remember as Christians we are like the friends of Jesus Christ. [John 15:13-15] It is our task to bring people to Jesus Christ and then let the Holy Spirit bring them to repentance and reveal the meaning of God's Word to them. [John 16:7-8; John 16:13; John 14:26]

John 3:31-35 [NIV] *“The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no-one accepts his testimony. The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands.”*

These verses may have been the words of John the Baptist but more likely the comments of the apostle John, after many years of meditating on the words and life of Jesus Christ.

John begins by asserting the supremacy of Jesus Christ.

If we want information about God we need to go to the One who has existed before time was created by God.

If we want to know information about heavenly life, we go to one who has come down from heaven.

Only then can we have true information from a witness who was there.

Put simply, because Jesus alone knows God the Father, He alone can give us facts about God the Father.

It is John's grief, and can be that of all true Christians, that so few people accept the message that Jesus brought to humanity, the only true information about the mind of God the Father.

John then tells us that because on Jesus the Son of Man, God the Father poured the Holy Spirit in full measure, keeping nothing back, He must be the Messiah, God's chosen and anointed One. [**Hebrews 1:1-3**]

John then sets before humanity the same choice that God set before Israel under the Old Covenant. [**Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Joshua 24:14-15**]

John 3:36 [NIV] *“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.”*

What really matters in life is how we react to Jesus Christ.

If we accept Jesus Christ into our lives, to guide our lives through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we will know eternal life.

If we reject Jesus Christ or are indifferent to the message He brought from God the Father, we will know eternal death. Not that God sent His wrath but such a person brought God's wrath upon themselves.

This is the choice that every human being will eventually face whether they like it or not.