

ILLINOIS LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

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In this month's bulletin we are going to take a very close look at a most familiar Bible verse, **John 3:16**, **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."** As usual, all Scripture quotations are taken from the faithful and reliable King James Version Holy Bible.

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." *Observe that "God" with a capital "G" has an only begotten Son. Therefore, all other gods are false gods, mere idols and figments of certain folks' imaginations, whether such gods are named Allah, or Brahman, or Vishnu, or Gautama Buddha, or Mother Earth, or Mother Nature, or the Great Spirit of various indigenous peoples. "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." (1 Corinthians 8:5-6) Indeed, there is one heavenly Father, and He has an only begotten Son who is the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Jesus Christ is God the Father's only begotten Son from eternity and was born in time of the Virgin Mary as He took unto Himself a real human nature and was made man. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2) Thus, the promised Messiah, the Christ, would "come forth" and yet His goings forth have been "from everlasting"— the Messiah therefore being true Man and true God but one Christ.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." (Matthew 1:18-23)

Accordingly, Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, was at just the right time conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus is "God with us" since He is true God in addition to being true man, for "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Galatians 4:4-5)

Jesus Christ is the God/man, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." (Colossians 2:9) Hence, the only begotten Son of God who must be believed in to be saved is none other than Jesus who is true God and true man but one Christ. "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an

understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” (1 John 5:20)

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Notice that God the Father’s love moved Him to send His only begotten Son to redeem the world. There was nothing good in man that moved God to send His only begotten Son to save us, for “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (1 John 4:9-10; Romans 5:6-8)

Make no mistake about it: Jesus Christ has paid for ALL the sins of ALL people, the whole world, for “all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” (2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

Take it to heart that only those who believe on God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as their personal Savior and Lord, will not perish, but have everlasting life, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Yes, “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John 3:36) *Unbelief rejects the salvation that Jesus Christ has earned for all people!* “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:16)

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9) *Note well that faith in Jesus Christ is a gracious gift of God, “Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.”* (1 Corinthians 12:3) *Indeed, God the Holy Ghost – who proceeds from God the Father and God the Son – graciously works faith in Jesus Christ in the hearts of sinful human beings. The Triune God does the saving, all of it, which is why Jesus Christ commands: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”* (Matthew 28:19)

Some false teachers say that Jesus only paid for the sins of those folks who are finally saved, and yet John 3:16 explicitly states: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Oh, Holy Scripture makes it clear that the false teachers are wrong in teaching limited atonement: “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 2:1-2)

*Some false teachers go so far as to say that God does not desire to save all people, but has consigned the greater part of mankind to hell from eternity. Nevertheless, Holy Scripture declares: "God our Saviour... will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (1 Timothy 2:3-6) **"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."***

I recently heard a false prophet on T.V. preaching on John 3:16 and perverting its words because he failed to compare Scripture with Scripture and rather attempted to force the verse to fit his own preconceived false doctrine. The T.V. preacher and his denomination believe that unbelievers will NOT suffer never-ending punishment in hell, but will rather be annihilated. Consequently, the false prophet in his sermon said John 3:16 teaches that since believers "should not perish" the unbelievers therefore will perish, and that means they will utterly vanish and cease to exist because a loving God could never be so cruel as to sentence folks to never-ending punishment.

Dear readers: beware of those who fail to support their interpretations and teachings with other passages from Holy Scripture! God is not only loving, God is also just! Moses wrote by inspiration of God— "I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." (Deuteronomy 32:3-4)

The false prophet who preached on John 3:16 apparently does not know English usage well nor does he know the Greek original word from which the term "perish" was translated in John 3:16. In common English usage, we sometimes speak of "perishables" in regards to fruits and vegetables; for instance, when produce has perished it is rotten, but it has not vaporized into thin air and ceased to exist altogether!

Furthermore, consider the following facts: The Greek original root word translated into English as "perish" is, according to Strong's Greek Dictionary, "απολλυμι Transliteration: **apollymi**; to destroy fully (reflexive to perish, or lose), literal or figurative :- destroy, die, lose, mar, perish." Additionally, Thayer's Greek/English Lexicon, page 64, includes the following in its definition of the Greek word: "*tropically, to incur the loss of true or eternal life; to be delivered up to eternal misery: Jn. iii 15, 16.*"

What is more, the Holy Bible teaches the never-ending punishment of all those who fail to believe on Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord, as the following Bible passages demonstrate:

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:2)

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28)

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an

hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matthew 25:41-46)

"And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:43-48)

"And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name."
(Revelation 14:11)

Take it to heart that faith in God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as one's personal Savior and Lord is absolutely necessary if one would personally receive the forgiveness of sins and salvation, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." (John 3:16-18) "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." (John 5:26-29)

Let us hold fast to God's Word now and always. Let us be ever grateful to God for His grace and mercy shown to us sinners. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:23-26) "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

m.e.l.