

JOHN 3:16 IN CHAPTER CONTEXT

November 2016

Introduction

1. John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”*
 - (1) Here is one of the most quoted and least understood verses in Scripture.
 - (2) Denominational folk appeal to it as a be-all-end-all verse on salvation.
 - (3) In fact, the verse is a summation, not an explication.
2. What interpretative help is available on v. 16 from the immediate context (i.e. the rest of chapter 3)?

Discussion

I. **THE KINGDOM REQUIRES NEW BIRTH.**

1. John 3:3 *Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*
 - (1) Obviously, there is no salvation without “the kingdom.”
 - (2) You “cannot see the kingdom” without being “born again” (footnote, Gr. “from above”).
 - (3) “Unless” means no exceptions to this statement.
2. **Fact: To have eternal life, a believer must be “born again.”**

II. **NEW BIRTH REQUIRES WATER AND SPIRIT.**

1. John 3:5-8 *Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*
 - (1) Again, “unless” means there are no exceptions to v. 5.
 - (2) Both elements—“water and the Spirit”—are essential.
2. **Fact: To have eternal life, a believer must be “born of water and the Spirit.”**

III. **GOD’S LIGHT DEMANDS TRUE WORKS.**

1. John 3:20-21 *For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”*
 - (1) To “come to the light” is a choice and involves effort.
 - (2) “Works” are essential (in spite of many claiming them unnecessary).
 - A. My works do not save, but God’s works do (obeying God is doing God’s work).
 - B. John 6:29 *Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.”*
 - (3) Truth must be acted upon, not just accepted mentally.
2. **Fact: To have eternal life, a believer must do true works.**

IV. **BAPTISM REQUIRES PLENTIFUL WATER.**

1. John 3:22-23 *After this Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he remained there with them and was baptizing. 23 John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized*
 - (1) Why the emphasis on baptism? Because all have to be “born of water” (v. 5).
 - (2) Sprinkling perverts the definition of baptism, and requires little water.
 - (3) The Greek word translated “baptize” literally means to immerse, dip, plunge.
2. **Fact: To have eternal life, a believer must be “born of water,” requiring immersion in water.**

V. **ETERNAL LIFE DEMANDS OBEDIENCE.**

1. John 3:36 *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*
 - (1) Verses 16 and 36 both mention “whoever believes.”
 - A. Obedience is implied in v. 16, but explicitly stated in v. 36.
 - B. Belief that leads to eternal life is obedient belief—not belief by itself.
 - (2) John 1:12 *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,*
 - A. Salvation entails a believer willing to act on his faith; it requires continual commitment.
 - B. John 15:10 *If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.*
2. **Fact: To have eternal life, a believer must be obedient.**