

JOHN 3:16
(part 1)

Sunday Morning: June 6, 2004

Text: John 3:13-16 "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven. 14. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15. That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 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."

About thirty years ago, I ran across a truth that the Lord impressed me to share and it was on John three, sixteen. John three, sixteen has been used and been blessed because many have come to know the Lord as Savior through it's application. But what the Lord shared with me in John three, sixteen is that the word, 'believeth' is a present active participle and I had been studying in the Book of Acts where Paul presented to the Philippian Jailer the plan of salvation and he told the Philippian jailer to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. He did not use the word 'believeth.' He uses the aorist tense of the word 'believe', meaning that it is an event. Punctiliar action is a technical term that they use in the Greek class anyway. But here in John three, sixteen we find the word 'believe' with an 'eth' on the end and usually, and I say almost without exception, when you find the word, 'believe' with 'eth' on the end, this is in the present tense, this is something that you need to keep on doing. And so therefore to interpret John three, sixteen with the word, 'believe' as a present active participle, I think needs some explanation and I want to share that a little bit this morning and the reason is already this week I have run into questions about this verse and this verse has stimulated a lot of activity with people because of tradition! And let me tell you, tradition throws a big cloud over the truth and I know for me to be saved, I need to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. For me to have an inheritance in His coming Kingdom, I need to believe in the present tense, I need to be faithful and I think that hopefully we'll see that between this Sunday and maybe next Sunday too. But I want to read John three, verses thirteen through sixteen. Verse fourteen, "whosoever believeth," is present active, "in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Or a better translation, "life for the age or age-lasting life." This sort of sets the context or the scene for us in our study this morning. Now, what is the context of John three, sixteen? Well, the key to the context is Moses. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up. So, Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness as a reference to the passage in Numbers chapter twenty-one. But I want to first of all begin with First Corinthians chapter ten. This also gives us the context of John three, sixteen where it says in verse one

CONTEXT OF JOHN 3:16

1 Corinthians 10:1-11 "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be **ignorant**, how that **all** our fathers were under the cloud, and **all** passed through the sea; 2. And were **all** baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3. And did **all** eat the same spiritual meat; 4. And did **all** drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. 5. But **with many** of them God was not well pleased: for they were **overthrown** (they died) **in the wilderness**."

Now, I emphasized the word, "all." This passage of Scripture here is talking about the Nation of Israel that was saved that came out of Egypt, under the leadership of Moses and all these were the Fathers of the people that had come that far and all passed through the sea, all were baptized, all had eaten the same spiritual food, drank of the same spiritual drink – these are

saved people. John three, sixteen is in the context of saved people doing what? They were moving from the land of leeks and garlic to a land flowing with milk and honey. They were moving from a land that wasn't very good, compared to a land flowing with milk and honey. And many of them perished before they got to the good stuff. They died in the wilderness and they died in the wilderness because of the way they were living and the things that they were saying. They were murmurers and complainers and gripers and so God took them out! In fact it says they were "overthrown," they died! They perished. Let me say this, dead men don't perish. If you aren't saved, you're dead in your trespasses and sins. And a dead man can't perish, only saved people can perish and when you perish as a saved person, what you're losing is your inheritance. Let's go on.

EXAMPLES

6. Now these things were **our examples**, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 7. Neither be ye idolaters, as *were some* of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8. **Neither let us** commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell **in one day** three and twenty thousand (23,000). 9. Neither let us tempt Christ, as **some** of them also **tempted**, and were **destroyed** [απολλυμι, perished] of **serpents**. 10. Neither **murmur** ye, as **some** of them also **murmured**, and were destroyed [apollumi, perished] of the destroyer. 11. Now all these things happened unto **them** for ensamples [τυπος, types]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."

They lusted after things that they weren't supposed to have, what does that say? We are not to be lusting after things that we are not to have. Verse seven, neither to be idolaters. They were worshipping a golden calf, and this is really interesting, that golden calf actually represented the god who led them out of Egypt. That's what Aaron made, a calf that was representative of Jehovah who led them out. And this was just not a potluck dinner; it got a little out of hand. I mean, after they got drunk, they got undressed, that's what happens when you get drunk. Anyway, "Neither let us commit fornication as some of them committed and fell in one day." One day – twenty-three thousand people! Man, can you believe the burial details to take care of twenty-three thousand people? That's a disaster! And God took out twenty-three thousand! "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." The word "destroyed" is *apollumi* meaning to perish. People were slain because they murmured against the Lord - they tempted Christ. "Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured and were destroyed, (*apollumi*) perished of the destroyer." The serpent was the destroyer and saved Jews were dying in the wilderness and missing their inheritance in the land and so it's warning us not to tempt Christ and not to murmur against what He'd provided. And we'll look at that in just a moment. Now, all these things happened unto them for ensamples or types, or pictures and they are written for our admonition upon whom the end of the ages are come. This is written for us! We're at the end of the ages. It's written for us. Now, let's look in Numbers twenty-one. This is where all this took place. This is where Moses lifted the serpent up to help people to keep from dying. Why did he want to help them to keep from dying? He wanted to help them to get their inheritance. Now, remember this, absent from the body, means being present with the Lord but in type and in picture, that's not what you want to do in the Old Testament. You want to stay alive so you can enter into the inheritance that God has for us. Now, Numbers twenty-one, verse five

THEY COMPLAINED

Numbers 21:5-9 "And **the people** spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for *there is no bread, neither is there any water*; and our **soul loatheth this light bread**. 6. And the LORD sent **fiery serpents** among **the people**, and they bit **the people**; and **much people of Israel died** [not any of the mixed multitude]. 7. Therefore **the people** came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD, and against thee; pray unto the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us. And **Moses prayed for the people**.

"The people," this is talking about saved people. Isn't it interesting how they talk! There's no bread; well, there's manna. There's no water, well, there was water, it came when they needed it. What happened was they just didn't like what they were getting. "We **loathe**," can you imagine telling God? "I loathe what you're doing for me." Have you ever prayed that? I haven't and I'm not going to either! Because I'm snake bitten enough! Anyway, they loathed that light bread. Now, a lot of people talk about the mixed multitude, this is not the mixed multitude, this is the people of Israel. A lot of people say, well, there was a mixed multitude so there must have been lost people in their midst and so it was the lost people that were being bitten. No, this is saved people perishing in the wilderness and being denied entrance into the land flowing with milk and honey. Now, in verse eight

WHEN THEY LOOKED UPON IT

8. And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he **looketh upon it**, shall live.

I was studying that word, "fiery serpent," it's really an interesting word. If it's plural, it's translated, 'Seraphim.' Where do we find Seraphim? In the heavenlies, absolutely! So here is a being, a serpent. And actually this serpent is a picture of the Devil because the Devil is up there where the Seraphim are as well as other angels. But anyway, it's interesting. I'm not making an issue out of it; I'm just pointing out something that was of interest to me as I was studying this. And so notice what they did. It says, when they look upon it, they shall live. Now, a lot of people want to say, that when they look at the Savior, they get saved. I don't know one single verse that tells us to look at the Savior to be saved. We are to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved, not look. Now, we'll go over that a little bit more as we go along here. And by the way, brass is a type or a picture of judgment. This is a serpent who has been judged, okay?

JUDGED SERPENT

9. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, **when he beheld the serpent of brass** [judgment, brass laver], **he lived** [they did not perish and thus lose his inheritance]."

And the reason why I'm saying brass has to do with judgment, remember the brazen laver? The brazen laver is where you cleansed your hands and your feet from dirt, which is a picture of cleansing from sin before the Priest went back into the Tabernacle. Now, it says when they looked at the serpent, they lived. In other words, they did not perish and thus they would not lose their inheritance. Now, in verse thirteen of John

THE SON OF MAN HAS ASCENDED

John 3:13 "And no man hath **ascended up** [also translated entered] **to heaven**, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven."

This word, "ascended up" is also translated "enter in or enter." So where is Jesus today? He is the Son of man and He is in the heavenlies. He has been raised into the heavenlies. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent, so was the Son of man lifted up and He's in the heavenlies. What's He doing there? Well, in Acts chapter five, verse thirty it says

RAISED UP AND EXALTED

Acts 5:30-31 "The God of our fathers **raised up** Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. 31. Him hath God **exalted** [lifted, the same word as in John 3:14] with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

Now, do you see the word, "exalted?" That's the same word as being "raised up" and actually in verse fourteen, I should say. I kind of got my verses reversed but the point is this, let me just read John three fourteen

AS MOSES DID

John 3:14 "And **as** Moses **lifted** [exalted] up the (brass) serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be **lifted** [exalted] **up** (Jesus is not the brass serpent):"

The word, "lifted up" is the same word as "exalted" in Acts chapter five, verse thirty. Jesus Christ was raised up and exalted, where? At the right hand of the Father. So what I'm trying to show you here is this, that the raising up of the brazen serpent for people to look at has to do with the High Priestly office of the Lord Jesus Christ and not salvation of the crucifixion on the cross. In John chapter twelve, verses thirty-two and thirty-three, they associate this lifting up with the crucifixion but I do not believe that this is what this is talking about, because of the context. Let me just read John twelve, thirty-two and thirty-three.

NOT THIS LIFTING UP

John 12:32-33 "And I, if I be **lifted up** from the earth, will draw all *men* unto me. 33. This he said, **signifying what death** he should die."

When He died on the cross, He died for all and so therefore all can be saved. But when Moses lifted up the serpent, he wasn't exalting the serpent, he was exalting the fact that that serpent had been judged and the One who was in heaven, who came to earth and is back in heaven is the One we're looking at. In Acts chapter two verse thirty-three

THIS LIFTING UP

Acts 2:33 "Therefore being by the **right hand** of God **exalted** [lifted up, same word as in John 3:14], and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

And what is He doing at the right hand of the Father? Romans eight, thirty-four

MAKING INTERCESSION FOR US

Romans 8:34 "Who *is* he that condemneth? *It is* Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the **right hand** of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

So, what are we encouraged to do in John three, sixteen context? We're to be looking at the Lord Jesus Christ, our High Priest, who has been exalted into the heavenlies. In Hebrews chapter two, verse fourteen how can we relate the brazen serpent on the pole being lifted up and looking at this serpent that has been judged? Well, I associate that judgment with Hebrews chapter two and verse fourteen

REDUCED THE FEAR OF DEATH

Hebrews 2:14 "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he **might destroy** [make idle]

him that had the power of **death** [τηανατοσ,_death of the soul], that is, the **devil** (that old serpent, Rev. 12:9);"

The word, "destroy," let me tell you this, the Devil is not destroyed today, he is alive and well, he is out seeking whom he may devour and he is the one that can cause us to perish. He is the one who can influence us to murmur and to complain against God and he is the one that can cause us to lose our rewards. He is the one who can cause us to perish. Now, what did the Lord do for us, He made him powerless. He does not have the same power that he had before the cross. Now, in verse eight of Numbers, it says

LOOK AT THE JUDGED SERPENT

Numbers 21:8 "And the LORD said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he **looketh upon it**, shall **live** (not perish, and lose their inheritance in the land flowing with milk and honey)."

So we are to be looking unto this situation upon the pole, which is in the heavenlies and we will see some of that in the next verse. Let me also emphasize the fact that just because the snake bites you once, doesn't mean you can't get snake bitten again, okay? Satan is just not going to bite you one time and if it doesn't work, he's going to leave you alone. That ain't the way it works! Satan is going to hound you and hound you, he's going to make you dissatisfied, if he can, with what God is doing in your life. He's going to make you want things you shouldn't have and you don't need. Just like a little child that's reaching for things that they can't see and they think they want that and you know, it's something that will hurt them and the Devil's going to want to stimulate you to get those things that you don't need. So, they looked upon this brazen serpent. In Acts chapter thirty-seven, verse thirty-one and thirty-two, it says,

MOSES BEHELD THE BURNING TREE

Acts 7:31-32 "When Moses saw *it*, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to **behold** [consider, same word as in Hebrews 3:1] *it*, the voice of the Lord came unto him, 32. *Saying, I am* the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not **behold** [consider, same word as in Hebrews 3:1]."

"Durst not behold," in other words, he wouldn't behold Him anymore. You see the word, "behold," it's the word, "consider" and we are to consider or to behold the Lord Jesus Christ. They were to behold the serpent and it would save them and it's the same thought and the same word as in Hebrews three, one where it says

BEHOLD OUR HIGH PRIEST

Hebrews 3:1 "Wherefore, holy **brethren**, partakers of the heavenly calling, **consider** [behold, consider] the Apostle and **High Priest** of our profession, Christ Jesus;"

"Consider," behold! Who are we to behold? We are to behold the High Priest. We're to look unto the High Priest. In fact it says in Hebrews chapter twelve verse one and two

LOOKING

Hebrews 12:1-2 "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset *us*, and let us **run with patience** [endurance] **the race** that is set before us, 2. **Looking unto Jesus** the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

This is not getting saved! This is helping us in our race. And I didn't include the verses in First Corinthians nine where Paul says, "we're running this race for an incorruptible crown, I keep my body under subjection lest having run my race and encourage other people, I myself be a castaway because I let my body's appetites take over, just like the children of Israel did when they were in the wilderness." They let their appetites and their dissatisfaction take over their life. So, we're to be beholding, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith. Now, in John three, fifteen it says,

BELIEVETH

John 3:15 "That whosoever **believeth** [present active participle (faith)] in him should [may] **not** [μῆ] perish (lose the reward of the inheritance), but [may] **have** eternal [age-lasting] life."

Actually it is "may not perish". I think it's interesting here that the subjunctive is being used. I know that I have trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior; I know that that can never be forfeited. There's no may or maybe in that. If you put your trust in Jesus Christ, you're saved! That can never be changed. But let me tell you, your inheritance can be changed. You may perish. Your lust and your desires may cause you to go after the sins of the flesh and Paul says, if you are into the sins of the flesh, you will not inherit the Kingdom of God. You CAN perish in that regards, but you will always be a part of the family. So when you find the word, "may" or "should" or "maybe," not perish, that is lose rewards. That's really what it's talking about, to perish is to lose your rewards. Perish is to keep being denied entrance into the land flowing with milk and honey and may have life for the age. This is talking about the Millennial Age, this is not talking about eternity! There are some people that want you to think that this is eternity, but it's not! Now, I associate the present active participle "believe" with 'faith.' If you believe in the present tense, you're being faithful. Is God happy with that? Absolutely! Without faith it is impossible to please Him. You live by faith; you think God's happy with that? Yes, indeed. He is a rewarder of those who are faithful, okay. Now in Romans chapter four, verses nine through eleven it says

PRESENT ACTIVE OF BELIEVE = FAITH

Romans 4:9-11 ". . . we say that **faith** was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. **10. How was it then reckoned?** when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. **11.** And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the **righteousness of the faith** which *he had yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be **the father of all** them that **believe** [present active participle (faith)], . . ."

So we're talking about faith and the righteousness associated with faith; that is the righteousness associated with pleasing God. This tells me that faith and the present active participle, "believe" are equal. They are the same. He is the father of those who live by faith. He is the father of those who believe in the present tense. In First John chapter five it says,

THE OVERCOMER BELIEVETH

1 John 5:4-5 "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that **overcometh** the world, *even* our **faith**. **5.** Who is he that **overcometh** the world, but he that **believeth** [present active participle (faith)] that Jesus is the Son of God (our high priest)?"

What is it that overcomes the world? Faith! Now, I can remember the day when a lady told me that every Christian overcomes the world because we all got saved by faith! At that time I didn't know what to say, but I knew that wasn't true! So, I had to wait and you know what? The Lord gave me the answer. We're not saved by faith; we're saved when we believe. Faith is a noun,

believe is the verb. But faith is what gives me faith for glory. So what do we see here? You see the word, "believeth"? That's a present active participle. So I associate faith with believe in the present tense, it's a participle. And who is the Son of God? He's my High Priest. Hebrews chapter four, verse fourteen.

THE SON OF GOD, OUR HIGH PRIEST

Hebrews 4:14 "Seeing then that we have a **great high priest**, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the **Son of God**, let us hold fast *our* profession."

So, who helps us have victory in our life? Who helps us to overcome? Our High Priest - Jesus the Son of God! The Son of man is passed into the heavenlies, He is the same, He is the Son of God, He is our High Priest and I believe that John three, thirteen through sixteen is teaching us that we need to appropriate the High Priestly office of the Lord Jesus Christ so that we don't perish, we don't lose our inheritance, where? In the land flowing with milk and honey, that's a better inheritance. In fact it says in Revelation chapter twenty-one and verse seven

OVERCOMERS INHERIT

Revelation 21:7 "He that **overcometh** (believeth that Jesus is the Son of God) **shall inherit** all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."

To be a son of God in that day is to rule and reign with Christ. And if I'm an overcomer by faith, by believing in the present tense, being faithful to God, I'm going to inherit all things too, I'm going to share in the Lord's inheritance. You know why? Because God has given the Lord everything and if Jesus has everything, you know what? I know He's going to share something with me and He's going to share something with you, if you will continue to look to Him in the heavenlies. He has been exalted to the right hand of the Father, to the purpose of us being victorious in our Christian walk.