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# The Greatest Gift

**JOHN 3:16-17**

## Introduction

1. Over the last few days leading up to yesterday, Christmas Day, and perhaps even in the days to come, many of us have received or will receive gifts.
2. They come from family members, friends, fellow students, co-workers, employers, employees and a host of others.
3. Those gifts come in all shapes, sizes, and dollar amounts.
4. Some gifts will be eaten up or used up before too much time has passed.
5. Others may last for months or years before finally wearing out.
6. Still others will be treasured for many years to come because of their great sentimental value.
5. One gift, however, outshines all of these because of the One who gave it, the nature of the gift itself and the eternal blessings provided.
6. Today, I would like for us to consider that gift and a number of things which the Scriptures tell us about it.

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## I. The Giver: God

“God . . . gave”

### A. OUR CREATOR & SUSTAINER

1. The quality of any gift is determined by the nature of the person who gives it.
2. Our God is incomparable.
3. Isaiah called Him “the Creator of the ends of the earth” (Isaiah 40:28).

4. In Romans 4:17, the apostle Paul wrote that He “calls into being that which does not exist.”
5. Paul told the philosophers in Athens that God “gives to all mankind life and breath and everything” (Acts 17:25, ESV).

**2a****B. THE ETERNAL KING OF ALL CREATION**

1. He is Sovereign. There is no one above Him.
2. Through His prophet, Isaiah, God said, “. . . I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me” (Isaiah 46:9).
3. In Psalm 90:2, Moses wrote, “Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God.”
4. The apostle Paul said that He “alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light” (1 Timothy 6:16).
5. Truly, there is no one who is above Him.

**2b****C. THE GIVER OF EVERY GOOD AND PERFECT GIFT**

“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.” (James 1:17, NASB95)

1. “The Father of lights” — the One who created the starry universe.
2. With Him “there is no variation or shifting shadow.”
  - a. He isn’t like the shadow which grow shorter as the sun rises or lengthen as it sets.
  - b. He is unchanging.

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## II. The Motivation Behind The Gift

### A. GOD'S LOVE FOR THE WORLD

“For God so loved the world . . .” (v. 16).

1. In the fourth chapter of his first epistle, the apostle John tells us two things about love:
  - a. “Love is from God” (1 John 4:7).
  - b. “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16).
2. In Ephesians 2:4, Paul tells us that everything which God did on our behalf was because He is “rich in mercy” and “because of His great love with which He loved us.”
3. Here, in John 3:16, we learn that God’s gift is because of His great love for the world.
4. In other words, God’s love is not limited to a few people, or even to a group of people, but is for the whole world.
5. It doesn’t matter today who you are, where you come from, or what your past history might be, God extends His love to you through this greatest of all gifts.
6. The question we must each answer for ourselves is, will we accept it or refuse it?

**3a**

### B. TO SAVE THE WORLD

“ . . . that the world might be saved . . .” (v. 17)

1. God offers His gift to us in order to save us.
2. There is a natural question which each of us will most likely ask ourselves: “Why do I need to be saved?”
3. All of us need to be saved because we are each afflicted by a very severe malady — sin.

4. What is sin?
  - a. It is a transgression against God — we cross a boundary which He has set (i.e., murder, adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, coveting (Exodus 20:13-17) ).
  - b. It is a failure to do what we know we should — a missing of the mark.

“Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17, NASB95).
5. Sadly, all of us are guilty of sin in our lives.
  - a. In Romans 3:10-12, Paul quoted from the psalmist David (Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3), who said,

“There is none righteous, not even one;  
There is none who understands,  
There is none who seeks for God . . .  
There is none who does good,  
There is not even one”
  - b. A little later in Romans 3:23, he wrote, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
6. We each need someone to take our sin away, because we cannot do it for ourselves.
7. This is where God’s gift comes into play.

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## **II. The Gift: Jesus**

“He (God) gave His only begotten Son”

### **A. GOD’S ONLY BEGOTTEN SON**

1. In Galatians 3:26, the apostle Paul wrote that “you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”

2. In Romans 8:14, he also wrote that “all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”
3. But Jesus is God’s “only begotten (*monogenes*) Son”
  - a. One and only
  - b. Radically distinctive
  - c. Without equal

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**B. GOD’S PERFECT GIFT**

1. How many of us on different occasions, perhaps, even this year, believed we had picked out the perfect gift, only to be disappointed.
2. Jesus is God’s perfect gift to us for a number of reasons.
  - a. Our sin separates us from God.

- 1) The prophet Isaiah put it this way in Isaiah 59:1-2 :

“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not so short that it cannot save;  
Nor is His ear so dull that it cannot hear.

But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your  
God,

And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not  
hear.”

- 3) In Romans 6:23, the apostle Paul wrote that “the wages of that sin is death” — eternal separation from God.

**5a**

- b. We need someone who has lived a sinless life to suffer our punishment in our place.
  - 1) In 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul said that He “knew no sin.”
  - 2) Jesus is the only One who “in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

**5b**

- c. He willingly chose to take our place.
- 1) In Philippians 2:6, the apostle Paul tells us that even though Jesus “existed in the form of God,” He “did not regard equality with God” as something to be held onto.
  - 2) Instead, He “emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men” (v. 7).
  - 3) “Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (v. 8).
  - 4) How often have we sung about this:  

**He left the splendor of Heaven  
Knowing His destiny  
Was the lonely hill of Golgotha  
There to lay down His life for me.**

**5c**

- d. Through Jesus’ sacrifice, we are now the recipients of what Paul called, “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3).
- 1) Through the forgiveness of our sins, we become “holy and blameless” before God (v. 4).
  - 2) Through Jesus Christ, God adopts us as sons to Himself (v. 5).
  - 3) Reserved for us in heaven is an inheritance which Peter said “can never perish, spoil or fade” away (1 Peter 1:4, NIV84).
  - 4) Best of all, God has given us “the Holy Spirit . . . as a pledge of our inheritance” (Ephesians 1:13,14).
3. There is no better gift than Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusion**

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1. This gift is no different from any other that we have been offered in our lives in the sense that we each choose either to accept or reject the gift.
2. Here in John 3:16, Jesus told Nicodemus, “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).
3. In John 8:24, Jesus told the Pharisees in Jerusalem, “unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”
4. On both occasions, he was speaking to people who needed to decide if they believed that He truly was the promised Messiah.
5. You and I must make that same decision. We either believe He is who he claimed to be or He is a liar or a disillusioned individual.

**6a**

6. Shortly before His ascension back to His Father in Heaven, He gave His disciples a command. Mark records it for us in Mark 16:15-16 of His gospel:

“Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned” (ESV).
7. God loved you so much that He sent His Son into this world to die for your sins.
8. The question is do you believe this and do you believe Jesus to be the Son of God?
9. Are you willing to turn from the sin in your life and confess that truth before those gathered here today?
10. Will you then be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins?
11. If so, Jesus promises that you will be saved.
12. God offers you His gift today, please don't refuse it.