

Eternal Life

January 29, 2023

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

John 3:16; Colossians 3:1-4; John 10:24-30

Session Outline

1. Eternal Promise (John 3:16-21)
2. Eternal Focus (Colossians 3:1-4)
3. Eternal Security (John 10:24-30)

Theological Theme

Whoever believes in Jesus receives salvation and eternal life with Him. The promise of a secure eternity in heaven provides motivation to share with others how they too can know Jesus and be certain where they will spend eternity.



Leader Guide

Eternal Life

Introduction

Today is the conclusion of our study "What is the Gospel?" Take some time today for the following reflections:

- ❓ Take time to share about prayer experiences over this month.
- ❓ Share about conversations you've had with lost friends over this month.

Session Summary

The good news of the gospel is not limited to life on earth but extends to believers for eternity. Scripture makes it clear that we will live forever in one of two places. Those who place faith in Christ receive the blessings of life with Him on earth and the reward of eternity in heaven. There is no expiration date on the love of God for His people, regardless of what the world might say.


Too many people focus on living a long life on earth instead of living a deep and meaningful life that is devoted to following Jesus. When you are more connected with the realities of God's kingdom than you are focused on living your life to the standards of the world, your life will be one of influence for the sake of the gospel. Every Christ-follower should

be committed to sharing the promise of the gospel with the people they encounter because everyone will live eternally—either with God or without Him.


1. Eternal Promise (John 3:16-21)

John 3:16 ends with the promise of eternal life. Anyone who places his or her faith in Jesus is promised eternal life. Some translations use the term everlasting life. Either one stresses the length and duration of the love God has for us. His love for us will never change and it will last for eternity. In a world where everything has a limited shelf life or an expiration date, God's love stands forever.

Though we deserve the punishment for our sins, God did not send Jesus to bring condemnation. He sent Jesus to reveal the love God has for us and to give the opportunity for salvation to any who believe. Though there will be condemnation for those who reject Jesus, the promise is that when we turn from our sin and accept Jesus, eternity is our reward. Anyone who rejects the offer of faith through grace makes the choice to face God's condemnation. God offers salvation freely to everyone, but it is each person's responsibility to receive this gift of grace.

 Why is it important to recognize that each person must choose what to do about Jesus?

When you compare eternity in heaven with eternity in hell, it seems to be no contest, yet there are those who continually reject Jesus. Why? Though Jesus came to offer rescue from the condemnation we deserve for our sin, He taught that many people are drawn to darkness over the light. People love their sin and love darkness because their works are evil (see John 3:19).

 What does it mean to love the darkness? What are some ways you see this taking place in the world? Where are you tempted to love the darkness over the light of Jesus?

The darkness offers hidden protection. It is also indicative of the state of the souls of those who do not know Jesus. Jesus is the light of the world and in Him is no darkness. Those who place their faith in Jesus are inviting His light into their lives. Whereas those who reject Jesus choose to stay in the dark. Evil flourishes in darkness and the light has no fellowship with darkness. Rejecting one is the equivalent of accepting the other. There can be no middle ground.


When we live by the truth, we choose the light over the darkness. We do this by living up to what is true and right in an honest, righteous life. We reflect the light that is Jesus to the dark world around us when we are intentional about living like Him. The choices we have every day offer

continual opportunities to be the light and share that light with those around us. Clinging to the promise of eternity with Jesus motivates us to keep choosing the light.

 Application: Why is important to know and cling to the promise of eternity with Jesus?


2. Eternal Focus (Colossians 3:1-4)

Paul spoke to the issue of making right choices and living righteously daily. The promise of eternity should be a motivation for right living, but how do we know the right choices to make?

 Which do you struggle with the most, knowing what to do for righteous living or knowing how to do it?


Paul wrote to believers like us who had been raised with Christ by placing their faith in Him. Once you have been raised with Christ you are empowered to live a righteous life that reflects your faith and looks like Jesus. No longer should your goal be to fit in with the world and like those who are still lost. Our goal is to be like Jesus. That means living differently than the world and making choices that reflect the truth of our faith.

Paul said to start with what you seek. People who don't know Jesus only think about the things of the world that are temporary. Yet those who know Christ and have been changed by Him seek the things that are above. We should seek heavenly things where Christ is now sitting at the right hand of God. This specifically denotes the sovereign rule Jesus now exercises. We need to recognize that our Savior is powerful, holy, righteous, and in control. When we better understand who Jesus is and the kind of power He has, it will make it easier to surrender to His authority.

 How does it change your perspective of Jesus when you recognize His complete authority?


We seek after what our minds are fixed on. We go where we gaze. This is why Paul instructed us to set our minds on things above. When our hearts and minds are connected to heavenly things, we will see a difference in the choices we make on earth. Setting our minds on and seeking after heavenly things is all about our focus and mindset. When our minds are set on something, we think about it. We meditate on it. We study it and seek to know more about over everything else. That doesn't mean we ignore our work or family responsibilities; it means heavenly things take priority.

Further motivation for believers comes from knowing Jesus is now hidden in heaven, but He will reappear gloriously, and we will be with Him. This is referencing the return of Jesus in His Second Coming. Notice that in talking about Jesus, Paul described Christ as “your life.” Think about what that means. There are many things people may focus on to the point that others see it as being “their life.” This can be career, sports, success, material possessions, or anything else that dominates our thoughts and actions. True believers will seek to grow in their faith to the point that others see Jesus as their life.


 Application: What do you need to do so your mind is set on things above and Jesus is your life?

3. Eternal Security (John 10:24-30)

We live with eternal focus because we have the promise of eternity. Further, we have eternal security. In John 10, Jesus spoke about this. He was responding to questions from the religious leaders. They were putting the blame for their own unbelief into Jesus’s shoulders because they did not like the answers He gave to their questions. Instead of accepting the truth He spoke and accepting responsibility themselves, they preferred to remain in their unbelief.

 When have you struggled to accept the truth and been tempted to blame someone or something else?

Jesus spoke plainly and used an analogy that was familiar in that day. He referred to Himself as the shepherd and the people as the sheep. His audience would have been quite aware of the relationship between sheep and the shepherd. There was no reason for them to misunderstand what He was saying, yet they did. Why? As Jesus pointed out, they did not believe because they were not among His sheep. The relationship between sheep and shepherd is intimate, and they know and recognize each other because of the time spent together. Sheep respond to the voice of their shepherd because they know and trust His voice. As believers, we are the sheep who need to recognize and respond to the voice of Jesus, our Shepherd.

 How well would you say you know and listen to Jesus’s voice? What are some ways we grow in this?

The reward for the sheep who know and respond to the Good Shepherd is eternal life. Jesus promised that those who are among His flock will receive eternal life and never perish. This is not about physical death but refers to where we will reside for eternity. Though our physical lives may be destroyed through sickness, disease, or anything else, our souls will be safe forever with Christ.

Held in the Hand of God

Jesus stated that His sheep are given eternal life and that no one can “snatch them out of my hand.” When a person comes to Christ as Savior and Lord, nothing can remove that person from the state of salvation against their will. If one is truly saved, then that person can rest assured that they are held in the hand of God, protected from any assault to their state of redemption.

The promise of eternity also includes a promise of security. In a world where we are constantly focused on shelf life and relationships that may not last, it builds confidence to know our eternity is completely secure. Jesus said no one can snatch even one of His sheep from His hand. Once we have Jesus as our Savior, we are now His sheep, and nothing can change that—not our own actions, our wrong choices, or what anyone else has to say or think about us. This is security the world cannot replicate. Consider the comfort of knowing this level of safety and security about eternity. Christ-followers are held secure by the Father in the same hand that created the world and no one and nothing can ever threaten that reality.



Application: How should knowing that you are held safely in the Father's hand affect your daily life? What needs to change based on this reality?

Conclusion

In a world where everything expires from relationships to food, there is great comfort in knowing that the love of God is for anyone who believes, and it never runs out or goes bad. God promises eternal life to those who accept Jesus as Savior and choose salvation. He makes it clear that Jesus did the work for us to be saved and the offer is for anyone and everyone. Once we become Christ-followers, we receive eternal life with Him. In response, we are to invite everyone we know to experience the same salvation.

Another goal is living a righteous life. When we live like Jesus, others will be drawn to our faith. We will stand out from the world and call attention to who Jesus is in our lives. Paul wrote about how we can live righteous lives, and it starts with setting our minds and focus on heavenly things over things of the world. Because we are dead to sin and raised to new life in Christ, our lives should reflect that to everyone. What we focus on and set our minds on will drive the way we behave and make choices. When we set our minds on Jesus, we will become more like Him.

Further, God gives us security in our salvation. Jesus described this concept using the analogy of sheep with a shepherd. The sheep know their shepherd, and He loves and protects them. When we receive salvation and develop our relationship with Jesus, we come to know Him and recognize His voice. Jesus said no one and nothing can ever snatch us from His hand. Eternal security is a defining factor of our faith. Once we surrender our lives to Christ, we have Him forever.

- ❓ Who do you know who needs to receive Jesus as Savior? How will you share with them?
- ❓ What do you need to do differently to move toward righteousness as you follow Jesus?
- ❓ How does knowing you are secure for eternity affect the way you live today? What will you do differently in light of this reality?

Prayer of Response

Thank the Lord for His perfect plan of salvation. Ask for the sensitivity to know who you need to share with so that they too can embrace the promise of eternal life with Christ. Praise the Lord for being your Good Shepherd and commit to knowing and responding to His voice.

Next week we start a study on Acts; Watch for Mission Trip opportunities as a way to live out Acts.

Additional Resources

- *John* by Kenneth Gangel
- *John 1-12 for You* by Josh Moody
- *Exalting Jesus in Colossians and Philemon* by Danny Akin

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Questions to Guide Your Group's Discussion

1. What does this passage say?
2. What did this passage mean to its original audience?
3. What does this passage tell us about God?
4. What does this passage tell us about man?
5. What does this passage demand of me?
6. How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (*How can you use this information this week at work or with friends and neighbors?*)
7. How does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

*Adapted from Seven Arrows by Matt Rogers pastor of The Church at Cherrydale, Greenville, SC

DxD This Week

Call to Action

The promise is for a life both deep and long. Share the promise of the gospel this week with one of the people you have been praying with and for.

For Next Week

Session Title

- You Will Be My Witnesses

Main Passages

- Acts 1:1-8

Session Outline

1. Final Moments (Acts 1:1-3)
2. Final Instructions (Acts 1:4-5)
3. Final Promise (Acts 1:6-8)

Memorize

“For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

- John 3:16

Historical Context of John

Purpose

The purpose statement in 20:30–31 indicates that John wrote with an evangelistic purpose, probably seeking to reach unbelievers through Christian readers of his Gospel. If the date of composition was after AD 70, the time of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, it is likely that John sought to present Jesus as the new temple and center of worship for God’s people in replacement of the old sanctuary.

Author

A close reading of the Gospel of John suggests that the author was an apostle (1:14; cp. 2:11; 19:35); one of the Twelve (“the disciple Jesus loved,” 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:20; cp. 21:24–25); and, still more specifically, John, the son of Zebedee (note the association of “the disciple Jesus loved” with Peter in 13:23–24; 18:15–16; 20:2–9; 21; and in Lk 22:8; Ac 1:13; 3–4; 8:14–25; Gl 2:9). The church fathers, too, attested to this identification (e.g., Irenaeus). Since the apostolic office was foundational in the history of the church (Ac 2:42; Eph 2:20), the apostolic authorship of John’s Gospel invests it with special authority as firsthand eyewitness (Jn 15:27; 1Jn 1:1–4).

Setting

The most plausible date of writing is the period between AD 70 (the date of the destruction of the temple) and 100 (the end of John’s lifetime), with a date in the 80s most likely. A date after 70 is suggested by the references to the Sea of Tiberias in 6:1 and 21:1 (a name widely used for the Sea of Galilee only toward the end of the first century); Thomas’s confession of Jesus as “my Lord and my God” in 20:28 (possibly a statement against emperor worship in the time of Domitian); the reference to Peter’s martyrdom, which occurred in 65 or 66 (21:19); the lack of reference to the Sadducees, who ceased to be a Jewish religious party after 70; and the comparative ease with which John equated Jesus with God (1:1, 14, 18; 10:30; 20:28).

Special Features

The Gospel of John is different from the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—in that more than ninety percent of its material is unique. John’s Gospel does not focus on the miracles, parables, and public speeches that are so prominent in the other accounts. Instead, the Gospel of John emphasizes the identity of Jesus as the Son of God and how we, as believers, should respond to his teachings.

Extended Commentary

John 3:16

3:16–18 God, out of love, gave his one and only Son (cp. 1:14, 18), so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. John’s favorite designation for Jesus is the Son sent by the Father (3:34–36; 5:19–26; 6:40; 8:35–36; 14:13; 17:1), imagery taken from the Jewish concept of the shaliach (messenger), according to which the sent one is like the sender himself and faithfully pursues the sender’s interests (13:16, 20). Jesus is that “sent one” par excellence (9:7), and he in turn sends his disciples. Being sent implies that the commission, charge, and message are issued by the sender rather than originating with the ones sent. The messengers’ role is to fulfill their commission according to their sender’s will.¹

Colossians 3:1–4

3:1–17 In 2:23, Paul criticized the asceticism of the false teachers by stating that such practices offered no help in curbing sinful fleshly desires. In these verses he offered positive advice on true spiritual living that effectively remedies sinful cravings of the flesh.

3:1–2 So if resumes the implications of believers’ identification with Christ begun in 2:20. It signals a shift in the epistle from doctrinal instruction (chaps. 1–2) to practical application (3:1–4:6). The objects of believers’ efforts and thoughts are Christ and things above rather than earthly things. These commands contrast true spiritual living with the false spirituality promoted by earthly “philosophy.”

3:3 The basis for the commands (vv. 1–2) lies in believers’ union with Christ. Hidden connotes that God fully completed the action in the past with permanent results.

3:4 At present Christ dwells at God’s right hand in heaven and is hidden from the view of those living on earth. At some future point he will appear in the fullness of his glory. When this occurs, believers will also appear with Christ in glory.²

John 10:24–30

10:24–25 The demand, If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly, seems like double talk (Lk 22:67). If they had not understood Jesus’s claim to be the Messiah, why did they repeatedly try to kill him? (Jn 5:18; 7:25; 8:59). Indeed, Jesus responded that he did make this claim.

10:26–29 Snatch (vv. 28–29) denotes the use of force. The comment contrasts with the figure of the hired man in vv. 12–13 who abandoned the flock in times of danger, and recalls OT statements that no one can rob from God’s hand (Is 43:13).

10:30 Jesus’s claim that he and the Father are one (cp. vv. 33–38; 5:17–18) echoes the Shema, the basic confession of Judaism (Dt 6:4) and amounts to a claim to deity. Jesus’s unity with the Father is later said to be the basis on which Jesus’s followers are to be unified (Jn 17:22).³

References

1. *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.

Author Bio

Kenneth Gangel (John)

Dr. Kenneth O. Gangel (1935-2009): A prolific author and an experienced leader has been influential in the field of Christian education for over forty years. He's written numerous articles and over 50 books, while pastoring, teaching, raising a family and leading schools. His impact reaches around the world through students, co-authored books, and working with leaders of churches and schools.

Josh Moody (John 1-12)

Josh Moody (Ph.D., University of Cambridge) is the senior pastor of College Church in Wheaton. He is a pastor, author, conference speaker, and college campus speaker. He is the president and founder of God Centered Life Ministries. His books include *7 Days to Change Your Life* (Abingdon Press 2017), *How Church Can Change Your Life* (Christian Focus 2015), *Preaching to the Affections* (Christian Focus 2014), *Journey to Joy* (Crossway 2013), *Jonathan Edwards and Justification* (Crossway 2012), *No Other Gospel* (Crossway 2011), and *The God-Centered Life* (Regent 2007; IVP UK 2006).

Danny Akin (Exalting Jesus in Colossians and Philemon)

Daniel L. Akin is the president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. He holds a Ph.D. in Humanities from the University of Texas at Arlington and has authored or edited many books and Bible commentaries including *Ten Who Changed the World* and *A Theology for the Church*.