

John 3:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Analysis

The purpose of being lifted up: 'That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.' This is the first of three references to Christ being 'lifted up' in John (also 8:28, 12:32). The condition is belief; the result is eternal life; the alternative is perishing. The scope—'whosoever'—opens salvation to all who believe. The cross, like the bronze serpent, becomes the instrument of deliverance for those who look in faith.

Historical Context

The Numbers 21 account describes Israelites bitten by serpents who were healed by looking at a bronze serpent on a pole. The serpent represented their sin and judgment; looking in faith brought healing. Similarly, Christ 'made sin for us' (2 Corinthians 5:21) was lifted on the cross, and those who look in faith receive life.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does the bronze serpent illustration help explain the necessity and mechanism of Christ's death?
2. What does 'whosoever believeth' teach about the scope of salvation's offer?

Interlinear Text

ἵνα πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτὸν μὴ ἀπόληται, ἀλλ'
G2443 whosoever G3588 believeth in him G3361 perish but
G3956 G4100 G1519 G846 G622 G235

ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον
have life eternal
G2192 G2222 G166

Additional Cross-References

John 3:16 (Faith): 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.

John 3:36 (Faith): 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 6:40 (Faith): And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 20:31 (Faith): But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Hebrews 7:25 (Parallel theme): Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

1 John 5:1 (Faith): Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

Isaiah 45:22 (Parallel theme): Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else.

1 John 5:20 (Eternal Life): 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.

John 1:12 (Faith): But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

John 6:47 (Faith): Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

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