

*Get Ready!*

**The Gift That Keeps On Giving**  
by Jeff Bull  
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**Text**

Matthew 1:1-25; 2:1-12

**Key Quest Verse**

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

**Bible Background**

The God we worship is infinitely capable as author of life, sustainer of all creation, and designer of the plan for all time. He had everything orchestrated before the creation of the first thing! He knew in advance all that would happen and planned accordingly. The most incredible aspect of God’s plan is the gift of His Son, Jesus. Before God spoke the words “let there be,” God knew that mankind would sin and be in need of a savior. He formulated a plan (Logos – John 1) that became flesh (vs. 14) in the life of Jesus. On account of (or because of) Jesus, all things could be created (Colossians 1).

It is interesting to examine the birth of Jesus from the viewpoint of God planning for it all to happen. There are numerous Old Testament accounts prophesying the birth of Christ. Many of them are very specific, defining the place, the family line, and the virgin birth. The selection of parents for Jesus, the requirement of a census that brought them to Bethlehem, and the placement of the magnificent star in the heavens to lead the Magi, are all further evidence of our God controlling everything and perfectly presenting His plan of redemption to His people. All creation should marvel at His awesome works!

*Get Ready!***Lesson Quest****What I want my students to:**

- Know:** God gives us the very best gift in the birth of Jesus.
- Feel:** God's love for us is unique and can't be matched by anything the world has to offer.
- Do:** Accept God's gift of love and share it with others.

**Leader's Devotion**

In today's world of instant gratification, few of us have the patience to wait for anything. Meals are in minutes, movies are available with the push of a remote's button, shopping can be done with the click of a mouse and if we can't have it now, we're rarely willing to wait for it.

Jesus' birth came after 400 years of silence; there were no prophets to speak to God's people nor scriptures recorded between the Old and New Testaments. Just silence as God waited for the right time to fulfill His promise to send Israel a Messiah and the world a Savior. And you thought the time between Thanksgiving and Christmas was a long time to wait!

Yet, God makes the waiting worthwhile. The Messiah He sent was probably not what the Jews expected, He was much more. Instead of a king that freed a generation from political oppression, He was the Son of God that freed every person for all time from sin and death. Instead of a gift bringing temporary excitement, we received a promise of full life and life eternal. We've all been disappointed with presents that weren't what we were hoping to get, didn't turn out to be as exciting as we'd imagined or didn't last very long before breaking. But, in Jesus we receive eternity; we receive immortality.

In the birth of Jesus, we see the fulfillment of prophecy and years of waiting, hoping and believing. God didn't hold back when He gave us Jesus. He kept His promise to generations of people and their children's children. He gave the very best He had to give.

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**Get Set!**

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**Option A**

**Materials:** A gift-wrapped box with a new pair of socks inside

**Procedure:** I remember when I was a child (a long time ago!) receiving Christmas catalogs in the mail. I would spend hours combing through the Sears catalog, folding over the corner of the pages that pictured the toys I yearned to find under the tree with my name on them Christmas morning. It was always so much fun to imagine getting everything I wanted, while in the back of my mind I realized I couldn't have everything I wanted. I have my own children now and they start their Christmas lists before Halloween and by the time Thanksgiving has come and gone, their lists are pages long and they've already worn out their mother's and my patience with their begging. We're going to pass around this Christmas package and take turns sharing with everyone what you'd like to find in this present if it was for you.

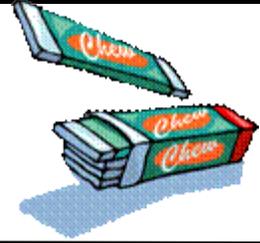
Pass the gift around and encourage each student to be as detailed in describing their wish gift and explaining why they want it and what they would do with it. After everyone has had a turn, ask for volunteers to guess what they think is in the gift, and after a few have shared their ideas ask for another volunteer to open the gift. Be sure and let everyone see the socks that were in the package.

**I think we've all received a Christmas gift that was less than satisfying. Can you share your memories of the worst gifts you've received?** Give everyone an opportunity to share an example or two each. **Now, let's look at the flip side; have you ever gotten a gift you never expected that just caught you totally by surprise and was better than anything you'd expected?** Take a few moments for sharing/discussion. **Everybody likes to get presents, but the best present is the one that is more than we anticipated and lasts the longest.**

**GO TO THE BIBLE STORY**



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**Get Set!**

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**Option B**

**Materials:** Enough pieces of gum, candy, or other “goodie” for the entire class

**Procedure:** Stand at the door of your classroom and hand every person that enters one of the goodies and say, **Here’s a gift for you.** Don’t give them any further instructions, but if anyone asks, tell them they can eat the goodie. At this part of the lesson, bring his/her attention back to the goodies and tell them a little about it: where you saw it, bought it, why you picked this particular kind, etc. Then, tell them that the items cost 50 cents each and tell them they each owe you the money for them. After allowing them to complain, comment, etc. ask, **What’s wrong? It’s only 50 cents and you really don’t expect me to pay for all of them, do you?** Let the students finally come to the conclusion that you said it was a gift and gifts aren’t paid for. **Everyone turn to Romans 6:23. Do I have a volunteer to read it? For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. What are wages?** (earnings from doing a job or service). **Let’s compare wages with gifts.** Discuss why the “gift” you gave them as they came in, turned out to not really be a gift (because they were asked to pay for it). **What makes a true gift? A gift is only a gift when nothing is expected in return. If God doesn’t expect anything from us in response to His gift of eternal life, why do Christians go to church, give money, help others, etc.? Why aren’t these things an effort to earn eternal life? Explain to the class that we behave the way we do, not SO God will love us and give us immortality, but BECAUSE we love God!**

**GO TO THE BIBLE STORY**

# Get Set!



## Bible Story

Starting with Matthew 1:2 go around the room having everyone take a turn reading through verse 16 with each student reading just one line each. The first reader will start with “Abraham was the father of Isaac” and end at the comma with the next reader picking up with “Isaac the father of Jacob,” again ending at the comma and so on through the end of verse 16. Everyone may need to take several turns, but this will help illustrate the time line of Jesus’ ancestors. The teacher should conclude by reading all of verse 17.

**Genealogies were very important to the Jewish people. Lineage and family trees were critical for tracking which tribes people belonged to and as a means of passing history from generation to generation. Matthew starts his record of Jesus’ birth by first listing the generations from Abraham to Christ. He wants his readers to understand the background and have the proper foundation for believing that Jesus is the Messiah that God promised to send. He then tells the story of how Jesus’ mother Mary was a virgin and yet found herself pregnant. She and Joseph were to be married, but when he discovered she was going to have a baby, he decided to divorce her since he wanted to avoid a scandal. However, an angel told him in a dream that he was not to do so and should make her his wife. Joseph obeyed and they named the child Jesus when He was born. Matthew’s editorial comment in verses 22, 23 informs us that this happened to fill God’s promise to His people.**

**Most Jewish leaders of that time were waiting for God to send them a leader to rescue them from slavery to Rome and to rightly establish Israel as an independent, free nation. Their studies of the Old Testament verses made it clear to them that God was going to deliver His people. It was only natural for them to envision, and teach, that this deliverer was going to be a warrior king.**

**It is doubtful that anyone expected their hero to be an infant, born to a virgin in a small town’s manger surrounded by animals and shepherds. Yet, this infant grew to be a man who taught a new message of peace and love to the point of death on a cross. While He did not rescue Israel by mounting a horse and wielding a sword, He won a greater victory against death that would last much longer than any victory against earthly enemies.**

**What the people expected, and even wanted, was a king to rule over them on earth after winning their independence and freedom. What they got was something much better. Jesus freed them from the slavery of sin – from its grip on their lives and from the punishment of death that it brings. Sometimes what we think we want is not really what is best for us, and what we receive instead is better than we could have ever expected.**

**Go!****Surprise Inside**

**FOOD:** Check for food allergies!

**Materials:** Individual size boxes of crackerjacks – enough for every student in the class. (Be aware of food allergies, especially since crackerjacks have peanuts in them, and peanut allergies can be very serious.)

**Quest Connection**

We pay for the crackerjacks, but we get a special surprise gift for free. In the same way, God gives us an unexpected, undeserved gift in His Son, Jesus. Eternal life isn't something we can earn, buy or even deserve, yet God gives it to us with no strings attached.

**Procedure:** Crackerjacks are a popcorn/peanut treat that has a surprise in every box. Sometimes there is a toy, a miniature book, a plastic ring, etc. Let's all open our boxes and see what surprises are waiting for us.

**Close**

**Prayer:** Father, thank You for being so good to us, in spite of ourselves, and for giving us something none of us really deserves. Thank You for Jesus and the eternal life He has purchased for each of us. Help us to remember that God sent His Son so we could live a full life and not fear death. May we share the joy we find in Jesus with others who don't yet know Him. Thank You. Amen.

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**Go!**

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**Traditions****GUEST QUEST**

**Materials:** Invite someone to come into your class and share some holiday traditions that he or she has kept over the years. Ask he or she if they have a special nativity set to bring in to share with the class. Ask your guest to read the story of Christ's birth from his or her favorite source.

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**Quest Connection**

**How many or your families have special traditions for the holidays?** Share some of your own personal traditions with the class (going to church, singing in the annual Cantata, making cut-out cookies). **I have invited** (guest's name) **to share some traditions that his or her family enjoys each holiday season.** Guest shares traditions and then reads the story of Christ's birth.

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**Close**

**Thank you so much for sharing with us today.** Ask guest to lead the class in a prayer.

**Option:** Have students write on a pre-cut paper shaped like a star, a tradition that their family shares at the holidays. Display them on a bulletin board or a tree.

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**Go!**

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**Gifts That Give****CHRISTIAN LIVING**

**Materials:** Photocopy worksheet “ Gifts That Give” for each student, magazines, catalogs, glue stick/tape and scissors

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**Quest Connection**

The best gift we can give back to God is using the gifts He has given us to help others and as a means of showing praise to God. A gift that only brings us pleasure, while enjoyable, is limiting. Someone once wrote that “joy shared is joy doubled.” When we share God’s blessings with others, we not only help others, but also experience more joy ourselves.

**Procedure:** Have students cut out pictures of merchandise from the magazines and catalogs. They should glue each item in the boxes on the worksheet. In the blanks below each box write the ways the product could be used to benefit others for God.

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**Close**

Look through gifts you have on your worksheet and pick out one or two for someone else (not necessarily another class member) and share with the class why you thought they would enjoy getting that item and what you learned today about God’s gift of His son to us.

**Go!****Nativity Sharing****CHRISTIAN LIVING**

**Materials:** Nativity sets from various members of your congregation, tables to display sets, cards that will stand up, thin felt pins, tape player and tape of sacred Christmas carols (optional)

**Quest Connection**

**Our class is going to add a special feature at our church this holiday season. We are going to ask members of our church to bring in their nativity set to share with our congregation on (choose a specific date). Where do you think would be the best place to set-up our display so that we are sure that everyone will see it? (entryway to church, social hall, etc.)**

**Procedure:** Our part will be to set-up the tables, make cards with the name of the person who brought in the nativity set and to get the word out to people about what we want to do. (church bulletin announcement, announcement at a service, signs displayed – be sure to have your students do this, not you!)

**Optional:** Have your students take turns reading the story of Jesus' birth from the book of Luke on the day that you have your display set-up, during a service. Play the Christmas carols by the display.

**Close**

**It will be interesting to see all the different types of nativity sets. Do any of you have any at home that you could bring for our display?**

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**Go!**

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**Gift Tag Cookies**

**FOOD:** Check for food allergies!

**Materials:** Graham crackers (a whole one for each student), can of white frosting, small tubes of writing icing, a very small screw driver, thin ribbon

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**Quest Connection**

**Who can tell me the greatest gift ever given? (Jesus gave His life for us!) We are going to make edible gift tags to remind us of that great gift!**

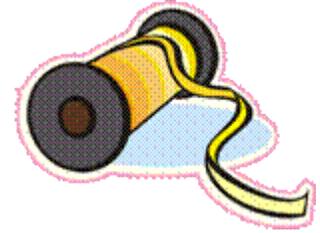
**Procedure:** Give each student one large graham cracker (with the 4 small sections still together). Students will very carefully drill a hole large enough for the thin ribbon to slip through easily. Students will carefully ice the graham cracker with the white frosting. The small writing tube of icing will be used to write the scripture reference, Romans 6:23. The thin ribbon will go through the small hole and be tied together at the ends.

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**Close**

Students can eat the gift tag cookies themselves or give it to someone. Have the students look up the verse once again in their Bibles.

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**Go!**

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**Christmas Nails**

**Materials:** 2 penny nails, thin satin ribbon, several copies of worksheet “Christmas Nails” with poems cut apart

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**Quest Connection**

**As Christians, we need to remember that the birth of Jesus is important, but even more important was His death and resurrection. We are going to make an ornament to go on a tree to help us remember the most precious gift we have ever received!**

**Procedure:** With 8 inches of the thin satin ribbon, make a loop and glue on the top of the nail. Measure out another 8 inches of ribbon and tie a bow over the loop at the top of the nail. Punch a hole in the paper of one of the poems and tie it to one end of the bow.

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**Close**

**Think of someone that you can give this ornament to. Who remembers our Key Quest Verse?** “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

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**Go!**

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**Magi Magic****ARTS/CRAFTS**

**Materials:** 3 different sizes of terra-cotta pots, strong glue, acrylic paints, 3-dimensional objects (jewels, pearls, buttons), fabric, clear acrylic spray

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**Quest Connection**

**Let's look in our Bibles in Luke the second chapter. Would anyone like to read this for us? In your mind, what do you think the wise men looked like? We are going to make our own wise men.**

**Procedure:** Stack, upside down, 3 different sizes of terra-cotta pots. The largest pot will go on the bottom, medium-sized pot in the middle, and the smallest pot on the top, which will be the head. Glue the pots together. Paint the pots to look like one of the wise men, include the face on the top pot. Add the jewels and fabric to embellish the figure. Yarn, cotton or artificial hair found in craft stores would also add to this project.

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**Close**

**Does anyone have any ideas where we could display our wise men around our church building? Another option would be for you to give your wise man to someone as a gift.**

**Go!****Birth of Jesus****VIDEO**

**Materials:** The video “The Birth of Jesus” from the series *The Visual Bible for Kids*. This may be for rent at your local Christian bookstore or video store, but if you are not able to find it to rent it is well worth the price to purchase it (approx. \$15). If it is not on the shelf ask for it to be ordered – ISBN #0-8499-8671-0

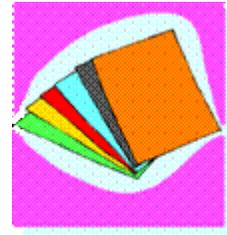
**Quest Connection**

**Procedure:** This is a 30-minute video with an excellent retelling of the Christmas story in a family setting. If you choose to use this after teaching the lesson, it will sum up and re-emphasize everything you have been teaching while bringing the story to life for your students. The video is hosted by Kirk Cameron as he retells the birth of Jesus using word-for-word NIV text from both Luke and Matthew.

After watching the video, allow time for discussion about how the character Jason seemed to feel embarrassed about sharing the Christmas story with his friend Sam. **Do you sometimes feel that way around friends that you know aren’t Christians?** (Allow for response.) **What would have happened if mom would have let them go to the mall instead of staying to hear the story?** (Sam wouldn’t have heard about the birth of Jesus and understood that it was real instead of make-believe.) **At the beginning of the movie, Sam thought that the story of Jesus’ birth was pretend, like a fairy tale, what made him change his mind?** (Hearing the facts told word-for-word from the Bible, understanding that real people witnessed it and wrote it down, seeing that others accepted it as fact and had studied it directly from the Bible.) **What are some ways that you can share the true meaning of Christmas with some of your non-church friends?** (Invite them to church would be a good response – see what else they can think of and encourage them to follow through.)

**Close**

**Sometimes we get so used to hearing the story of Christ’s birth, that we forget there are still people around us that don’t understand what Christmas is all about.** Take time to pray for your students that they might be able to share this story and also for their non-Christian friends that they might be willing to accept it.

**Go!****Jesus, Name Above All Names****BIBLE SKILLS/ARTS AND CRAFTS**

**Materials:** Construction paper (or colored copy paper) scissors, markers, Bibles

**Quest Connection**

**Procedure:** Assign each student one of the twelve scriptures listed below. Have them look up the verse and locate in it another name for Jesus. Have them use the materials provided to make a symbol that represents the name, then write the actual name on the symbol. (For example, Jesus is referred to as “the light of the world” in John 8:12. The student with that verse could cut out the shape of a globe and the shape of a light bulb, and then connect the two shapes.) Students may need help locating the name in each verse. Let them be creative and have fun with this activity.

Matthew 2:2 (king); John 1:29 (lamb); John 3:2 (teacher); John 6:35 (bread of life); John 8:12 (light of the world); John 10:9 (gate); John 10:11 (good shepherd); John 15:1 (true vine); Luke 4:23 (physician); Revelation 22:16 (star); Matthew 13:55 (carpenter’s son); Revelation 5:5 (lion of the tribe of Judah)

When students are finished, let each person share the name they were assigned and explain the symbol they created. Then say, **Matthew 1:21 tells us that an angel of the Lord told Joseph that the child Mary would have should be named Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins – and He did become our savior when He died for us on the cross. What are some of the things that Jesus did in His lifetime that would cause us to use these other “names” for Him?** For example: He was compared to a good shepherd, because He took care of His flock (the people).

**Close**

Close with prayer thanking God for everything that His gift of Jesus has brought us.

**Go!****The Truth About the Wise Men****OBJECT LESSON**

**Materials:** Photocopy of “The Truth About the Wise men,” Bibles, pencils, markers, nativity set that includes the wise men

**Quest Connection**

We are going to talk about a mistake that everyone makes in the story of Christ’s birth. I am first going to show you this nativity set. I want you to take a good long look at it and tell me if you can guess the mistake. Give students time to guess. Let’s turn in our Bibles to Matthew 2:1-12. Would anyone like to read it?

**Procedure:** Now I want you to look at your worksheet, and let’s look at our text to answer the questions.

Answers:

1. There is no number given.
2. At His house, not the stable.
3. No exact age is given, but it wasn’t the same night that he was born.
4. The gifts that we can give today are our talents, our lives and following His example.
5. People that follow God’s word should try to follow the examples that Jesus has given us.

**Close**

We know that the exact details of Christ’s birth are not what is important. It is the understanding of who Jesus is and what a major part of God’s plan that He fulfilled!

# Gifts That Give



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# Journal Page



**Sing the following song:**

Joy to the world, the Lord is come, let earth receive her king.  
Let every heart prepare him room.  
Let heaven and nature sing, let heaven and nature sing,  
Let heaven, let heaven, and nature sing.

This popular hymn expresses the joy we feel about Jesus' birth. It is important for us to learn how to express that joy throughout the year. What greater joy could we possibly have than the knowledge that God keeps His promises, and because He does, someday we can live forever with Him in His kingdom!

Get creative and write a song to express your joy for God's love for us.

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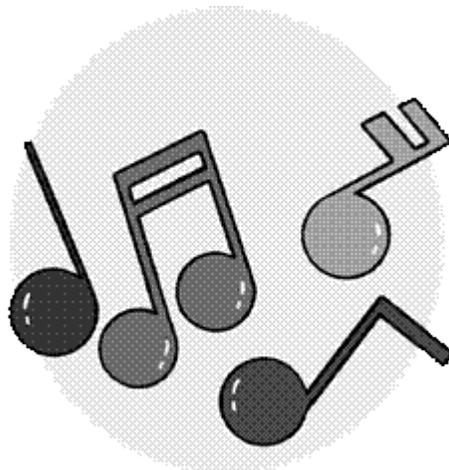
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# Christmas Nails

Cut apart poems, give one per student

When on this tree this nail you see  
Remember Christ died for you and me!

When on this tree this nail you see  
Remember Christ died for you and me!

When on this tree this nail you see  
Remember Christ died for you and me!

When on this tree this nail you see  
Remember Christ died for you and me!

When on this tree this nail you see  
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When on this tree this nail you see  
Remember Christ died for you and me!

# The Truth About the Wise Men

**According to the Bible:**

**1. How many wise men came to visit Jesus?**

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**2. Where did the wise men visit Jesus?**

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**3. How old was Jesus when the wise men saw Jesus?**

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**4. How and what gifts can we give Jesus today?**

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**5. How would you explain the phrase, "Wise men still seek Him!"**

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# Who Gets The Best Gifts?

God is the best gift giver of all! Do you know that with the birth of Jesus many gifts were given to us! Look up the Bible Verses below to list the gifts God gave us through His precious Son!



Romans 6:23

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Acts 2:38

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1 Peter 1:3

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## We Do!



1 Corinthians  
15:57

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Acts 13:38

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1 Peter 5:4

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*“For God so loved the world that he gave His one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).*