

# COMMENTARY ON JOHN

## LESSON NUMBER 5

“ JOHN 1:12 *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:* <sup>13</sup> *Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*” .....John 1:12-13)

### **BUT AS MANY AS RECEIVED HIM**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

At the threshold of our review of the Gospel of John, I want to again remind you of the revealed objective of this writing. *“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”* (John 20:31). Two epochal objectives: (1) *“That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.”* (2) *“And that ye might have life through His name.”* Believing, is calculated to be the means of having *“life through His name,”* or because of Him and His work. With an objective like that, we can expect an emphasis on Deity, as opposed to stress being placed on what men are to do. The secret to men doing the will of God, is for the **emphasis** to be placed on the Lord Jesus, in the capacity of *“the Christ,”* and *“the Son of God.”* *“The Christ”* means the Anointed One – The One on whom the blessing has been conferred, and the One through whom everything is accomplished. He is both the Distributor and the Receiver, the Blessor and the Blessing. He is the *“Seed”* (Gen 3:15; Gen 12:3), and *“Prophet”* of Moses (Deut 18:15), the *“Shiloh of Jacob”* (Gen 49:10), the *“Son”* (Isa 9:6), *“Child”* (Isa 9:60), *“Man”* (Isa 32:2), and *“Servant”* of Isaiah (Isa 42:1). He is the *“Righteous Branch”* of Jeremiah (Jer 23:5), *“David their King”* (Hos 3:5) of Hosea, and *“the Sun of Righteousness”* of Malachi (Mal 4:2). He is the Jewish Messiah – the One they were cultured to look for and anticipate. He was, as it was declared to Joseph and Mary, *“a Light to lighten the Gentiles”* (Lk 2:32). Some men look for a Utopia – an ideal society, and others look for a guiding principle of life, and a sure means of realizing success and happiness in this world. But John will show us a Person – yes, THE Person on whom everything related to God and the world to come is suspended. He is the One who will address the matter of sin. He is the One who will overcome the arch-foe. He is the One through whom men will be made righteous, and suited for glory. The truth of the matter is that Jesus dwarfs all other personalities. He is the theme of the Gospel, the Object of hope, and the means to the obtaining of glory. It is most fitting, therefore, that John begins his Gospel with an extensive dialog about the Son of God. He is the One on whom we are to believe. He is the One in whom we are to be found when the world is consumed with fire.

### **BUT AS MANY AS RECEIVED HIM**

“John 1:12a *But as many as received Him . . .*”

**BUT.** Other versions read, *“yet,”* <sup>NIV</sup> and *“however.”* <sup>GWN</sup> Grammatically, this word is a continuative primary particle. That is, it is a continuation of the thought previously stated, as compared to a thought that was ended, or terminated.

The preceding sentence is, *“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”* However, that is not the end of the matter. The fact that those who were cultured to receive the Messiah did not do so, by no means was the end of the issue. The salvation of God was something purposed before the world began. The Savior Himself was determined to be slain *“from the foundation of the world”* (Rev 13:8). The Kingdom, that was to be inherited by the saved was *“prepared”* for them *“from the foundation of the world”* (Matt 25:34). Those designated to be saved were *“chosen to salvation”* *“from the beginning”* *“through sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth”* (2 Thess 2:13).

According to appearance, it may have looked for a season as though God sent His Son into the world in vain. And, in fact, if God was not working throughout the entirety of salvation, that would have been true. However, the purpose of the Sovereign God is not aborted or put on hold because of the response of men. He had not prepared any other people. All of the promises, and all of the prophets were given to the Jews, to ready them for the coming Savior. But they did not receive Him!

During His earthly ministry, Jesus told the people who rejected Him what He was going to do. He told them they had fulfilled their own Scripture: *"Did ye never read in the scriptures, The Stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the Head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?"* (Matt 21:42). Then He told them what God was going to do. *"Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"* (Matt 21:43). The purpose of God would continue on, whether that generation of the Jews received Him or not.

Paul used the same reasoning when certain Jews rejected His preaching. *"Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles"* (Acts 13:46). Now John will describe the continuance of God's purpose, even though the people for whom it was prepared initially rejected *"the Christ of God"* (Lk 9:20).

**AS MANY.** Here the Spirit sets forth a limitation – *"as many."* Other versions read, *"to all,"* NIV/NRSV *"all those who did,"* BBE *"to everyone who,"* GWN *"such as,"* MRD *and "yet some people."* CEV While I admit this is a bit technical, **the text is setting forth a limit** – *"as many as."* It may appear as though *"all that"* is the same as *"as many as"* – but it is not. *"As many as"* focuses on Divine assessment, while *"all that"* concentrates on human response. The first expression accents what God had determined before the described response. Admittedly one may conclude from the rest of the statement that the described action is what God desired. However, to me, the first expression provides us with a clearer view of what God required.

**AS RECEIVED HIM.** Other versions read, *"did so take Him,"* BBE *"did welcome Him,"* CEB *"did accept Him,"* NAB *"whoever did want Him,"* MESSAGE *and "receive and welcome Him."* AMPLIFIED Most versions read *"received."*

The idea is that the Lord's Christ was received as He was presented to them. John presented Him as *"the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world"* (John 1:29). Jesus presented Himself as *"The Way, the Truth and the Life"* (John 14:6), *"the Light of the world"* (John 8:12), *"the Bread of life"* (John 6:35), the *"Door"* (John 10:9), *"the Good Shepherd"* (John 10:11), *"THE Son of God"* (John 10:36), *"the True Vine"* (John 15:1), and One who came *"to bear witness of the truth"* (John 18:37). Both Paul and John said He was the *"Savior"* (1 Tim 4:10; 1 John 4:14). Paul also said He was *"the blessed and only Potentate"* (1 Tim 6:15), the *"One Mediator between God and man"* (1 Tim 2:5), and *"an High Priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens"* (Heb 8:1). He is *"the Head"* of the church, which is His body (Col 1:18). Peter said He is the One who is bringing us to God (1 Pet 3:18).

**The point is that Jesus is to be received in these glorious capacities.** Men cannot decide how they want to receive Him – perhaps as a mender of their marriages, someone to make all of their dreams come true, etc. To attempt to receive Jesus in any capacity, other than the ones that have been revealed, is, in fact, synonymous with rejecting Him. When He was on earth, there were some who were willing to receive Him as a supplier of bread, a healer, and someone that was interesting. They could receive him as Mary and Joseph's son, or even as a carpenter – some even as an enthralling Teacher. But when it came to receiving Him as a Savior from sin, as the Captain of their salvation, and as the sole Person to be followed and trusted, most of the people balked. That was simply asking too much.

It ought to be apparent to us, that we are living in a generation that, for the most part, has not been willing to receive Christ as He is presented to us in the Gospel. But it is only those who receive Him as God has presented Him that are received.

### **TO THEM GAVE HE POWER TO BECOME THE SONS OF GOD**

1:12b . . . *to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name . . ."*

**TO THEM.** This expression belongs exclusively to those who have *“received Him,”* Jesus Christ, as He has been presented by God in the Gospel – *“the record God has given of His Son”* (1 John 5:10-11). This commitment applies to no one else. Those who have received *“another Jesus”* (2 Cor 11:4), or a *“false Christ”* (Mk 13:22), will **not** receive this benefit. The reception has to be of the real Jesus, the One that was sent by God.

**GAVE HE POWER.** Other versions read, *“gave the right,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“He authorized,”* <sup>CEB</sup> *“prerogative,”* <sup>GENEVA</sup> *“gave authority,”* <sup>YLT</sup> *“the privilege,”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *“He made to be,”* <sup>MESSAGE</sup> and *“gave the authority (power, privilege, right).”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The word translated *“power”* is *“EXOUSIA,”* and is used 103 times from Matthew through Revelation. In the Authorized Version it is translated *“authority”* (Matt 7:29) and *“power”* (Matt 9:6). The lexical meaning of the word is, *“POWER OF CHOICE . . . PERMISSION . . . AUTHORITY . . . RIGHT (PRIVILEGE) . . . THE POWER OF JUDICIAL DECISIONS.”* <sup>THAYER</sup>

Here we learn that becoming one of the sons of God is by no means an automatic process. It has to do with the ability of the receiver being empowered to make a proper choice. It also involves the authority to take advantage of the privilege that is being offered. Like Ahasureus stretching forth his scepter gave Queen Esther the right to draw near to him, so the authority of the Lord enables a the one who hears the Gospel to believe it and act upon that faith, thereby receiving Jesus. Everyone submitted to the message is not granted this privilege. Some are *“blinded.”* As it is written, *“What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded”* (Rom 11:7). In the synagogue in Ephesus *“some were hardened and believed not”* <sup>NKJV</sup> (Acts 19:9). They were **not** given power to become the sons of God.

The *“He”* who gives this power is Jesus Himself, for He is the subject being delineated (1:1-5,9-11). That is part of the authority *“in earth”* that has been *“given”* to Him (Matt 28:18).

A believer receiving Jesus is like a lame man picking up his bed and walking. It is like a dead man like Lazarus coming out of the tomb in which he was buried, and a man with a withered hand stretching it out.

**TO BECOME THE SONS OF GOD.** Other versions read, *“to become children of God,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“to become God’s children,”* <sup>CEB</sup> Men often speak of receiving Christ – and certainly that is a proper expression, for our text speaks of *“as many as received Him.”* However, behind that are some other factors. Such people are being given to Jesus by the Father (John 6:37,39; 17:9; Heb 2:13) – and, Jesus has received them to the glory of God (Rom 15:7). They have been *“given to believe”* (Phil 1:29). They have been *“drawn”* to Jesus by God (John 6:44). **All of that is under the general heading, “to them gave He power to become the sons of God.”**

**EVEN TO THEM.** The Spirit underscores the boundary He has already established: *“as many as received Him.”* The privilege of becoming the sons of God is given to no one else! Now He will further clarify the identity of these people.

**THAT BELIEVE ON HIS NAME.** Other versions read, *“believe in His name,”* <sup>NKJV</sup> *“had faith in His name,”* <sup>BBE</sup> *“put their trust in His person and power,”* <sup>CJB</sup> *“believed in Him,”* <sup>GNV</sup> *“who believed Him,”* <sup>NLT</sup> *“All they needed to do was to trust Him to save them,”* <sup>LIVING</sup> *“trust in His name,”* <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> *“put their faith in Him,”* <sup>CEV</sup> and *believe in (adhere to, trust in, and rely on) His name.”* <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

The *“name”* refers to Christ’s Person – who He is. For example, *“His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace”* (Isa 9:6). And again, *“this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”* (Jer 23:6). This is what the Lord IS, and those who *“believe on His name”* trust in Him to act toward them in those varied capacities.

The one who believes on the name *“Wonderful”* refuses to be enamored by anyone else. Those who believe on the name *“Counselor,”* will not receive direction from another. Those who believe on the name *“the Mighty God,”* will not seek deliverance from any other quarter. The one believing on the name *“Everlasting Father”* will not seek sustenance or care elsewhere. Those who believe on the name *“The Prince of Peace”* will never compromise with the enemy, or seek peace by any other means. Those who believe on the name *“The Lord Our Righteousness,”* will not seek to develop their own righteousness.

**You see, you can have no more of Jesus than you believe and trust Him to be.** Your faith establishes what you can see and receive. It is what makes you a child of God, *“For ye are all the*

children of God **by faith in Christ Jesus**" (Gal 3:26) – and "the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 1:14). As was said of Apollos, "And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much **which had believed through grace**" (Acts 18:27). Such people, and **only** such people, have been given "power to become the sons of God."

### WHICH WERE BORN

<sup>1:13</sup> . . . **Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.**"

New life must be "**born,**" or birthed. Thus we read of being "**born again**" (John 3:3,7; 1 Pet 1:23), "**born after the Spirit**" (Gal 4:29), "**born of Him**" (1 John 2:29), "**born of God**" (1 John 3:9; 4:7; 4:18), "**begotten us again**" (1 Pet 1:3), "**begotten of Him**" (1 John 5:1), and "**begotten of God**" (1 John 5:4:18).

**WHICH WERE BORN.** The ones who are "**born**" are the ones who received Christ, were given power to become the sons of God, and believed on the name of the Son of God. The legitimacy of their life is confirmed by their birth – the time when they were "**delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's Dear Son**" (Col 1:13). It occurred when they were "**baptized into Christ**" (Gal 3:26), and became a "**new creature,**" with old things passing away, and all things becoming new (2 Cor 5:17). From yet another perspective, it was when they were raised from death in trespasses and sins to be seated with Christ in the heavenly places (Eph 2:1-5). From still another vantage point, this birth occurred when they were "**by one Spirit . . . baptized into one body**" (1 Cor 2:13). When they were born again, they moved from being enemies and alienated to being reconciled (Rom 5:9-10; Eph 4:18), and from being vassals of the devil to being God's "**workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works**" (Eph 2:10). But, how was this birth initiated and brought to its intended culmination?

**NOT OF BLOOD.** Other versions read, "**not of natural descent,**" <sup>NIV</sup> "**not because of** **bloodline,**" <sup>CJB</sup> "**not** **in a physical way,**" <sup>GWN</sup> "**not by natural generation,**" <sup>NAB</sup> "**not** **by human parents,**" <sup>NET</sup> "**not from human stock,**" <sup>NJB</sup> "**not with physical birth,**" <sup>NLT</sup> "**not a physical rebirth,**" <sup>LIVING</sup> "**not in a human way,**" <sup>IE</sup> "**not by human descent,**" <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> "**not merely in a physical sense,**" <sup>ISV</sup> "**not** **by nature,**" <sup>CEV</sup> "**not in the way physical babies are born,**" <sup>ERV</sup> "**not merely in a genetic sense,**" <sup>ISV</sup> "**not blood-begotten,**" <sup>MESSAGE</sup> and "**neither to bloods.**" <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Most of the versions, in my judgment, miss the point being made by the Spirit. Up until the birth of Christ, the people of God were determined by fleshly descent – from Seth until Mary and Joseph. The priesthood was established by the blood line, with Melchisedec being the only exception (Heb 7). Proper lineage for inclusion in Israel was traced back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. However, that is not the manner in which the sons of God are generated. Sonship cannot be passed through the bloodline – not even to the second generation.

**NOT OF THE WILL OF THE FLESH.** Other versions read, "**nor of human decision,**" <sup>NIV</sup> "**from an impulse of the flesh,**" <sup>BBE</sup> "**human desire or passion,**" <sup>CEB</sup> "**physical impulse,**" <sup>CJB</sup> and "**that of physical impulse.**" <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup> The "**will of the flesh**" refers to a physical impulse or desire, and that is expectation at its lowest level – apart from rationality, or reason. This would also involve the setting of an environment that would constrain a decision based upon raw emotion – something that is widely practiced in professed evangelistic appeals to sinners.

**NOT OF THE WILL OF MAN.** Other versions read, "**a husband's will,**" <sup>NIV</sup> "**man's desire,**" <sup>BBE</sup> "**human intention,**" <sup>CJB</sup> "**husband's desire to have a child,**" <sup>GWN</sup> "**by a man's decision,**" <sup>NAB</sup> "**a husband's<sup>32</sup> decision,**" <sup>NET</sup> "**a . . . human plan,**" <sup>NLT</sup> "**the will of a human father,**" <sup>WEYMOUTH</sup> and "**the will of man [that of a natural father].**" <sup>AMPLIFIED</sup>

Again, some versions thoroughly confuse the reader. The point being made is that being given power to become the sons of God is not the result of a human plan or strategy – a sure-fire program by which a person can "become a Christian." Divine authority is never attached to a humanly devised plan. What men have, in their own wisdom, concocted, will not be used by God to accomplish what happens when a person is born again.

**BUT OF GOD.** Those who receive the privilege of becoming the sons of God are themselves "**His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them**" (Eph 2:10). They are a creation, and only Deity can create! Furthermore, they are a new kind of creation – a "**new creature**" (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). "**His workmanship**" is

*"His act,"* <sup>BBE</sup> *"God's accomplishment,"* <sup>CEB</sup> *"God's making,"* <sup>CJB</sup> *"His creation,"* <sup>CSB</sup> *"His handiwork,"*  
<sup>NAB</sup> *"God's work of art,"* <sup>NJB</sup> and *"God's masterpiece."* <sup>NLT</sup>

In redemption, God is working through the Son, into whose hands He has delivered *"all things"* (John 3:35; 13:3). He has *"committed all judgment unto the Son"* (John 5:22), and has given Him *"power over all flesh"* (John 17:2).

No man is in any sense given the authority to cause the new birth – no matter who he is. All imparting of new life is, by the will of the Father, and that will is in the hands of the glorified and exalted Christ. When it comes to the matter of those who are dead in trespasses and sins, the Son of God has spoken. *"For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will"* (John 5:21). There you have it. Jesus is the sole Administrator of the Kingdom, invested with all power in heaven and earth. Nothing occurs in that Kingdom without His consent, power, and action.