

Men's Discipleship

God Saves Sinners - Part 1

The Gospel of John begins with a prologue that spans chapter 1 verses 1-18. This prologue sets the foundation for all that follows in the book of John. The prologue is written to introduce to the reader both the identity and the mission of "the Word" made flesh (verse 1 and 14).

John 1:1 **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God".** (NASB95)

John 1:14 **"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth".** (NASB95)

Take note that this **foundational text** is not only describing the first and second persons of the Godhead (the Father and the Son), but it is also describing the incarnation. The term "**incarnation**" is used by theologians, pastors, and bible study leaders to indicate that Jesus, the Son of God, came down from heaven and took on human flesh. **The incarnation affirms Christ's humanity.**

The incarnation was central to God's plan for humanity to glorify Him by providing a way for people to know God, experience His grace, and share in a divine life. And ultimately, fulfilling the purpose of glorifying the Son through His sacrificial work and resurrection, making believers partakers of that glory.

We understand God's plan for His people by how it is revealed in Christ's birth, life, death, and resurrection. First, it was necessary to be born "**under the law**".

Galatians 4:4 **"But when the fullness of time came, God sent His Son, born of woman, born under the law,"** (NASB95)

The reason this is important is that all of "us" have failed to fulfill God's Law. Christ came in the flesh, under the Law, to fulfill the Law "on our behalf". He would not fail.

Matthew 5:17 **"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them"** (NASB95)

Galatians 4:5 **"so that He might redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."** (NASB95)

Those born "under the Law" are all the people who could not keep the Law and are condemned by the Law. In other words, everyone. Christ came to be born under the Law so that He could fulfill and keep the Law and meet all its righteous requirements.

Secondly, it was necessary for the Savior to shed His blood for the forgiveness of sins.

Hebrews 9:22 **"And almost all things are cleaned with blood, according to the Law, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."** (NASB95)

A blood sacrifice requires a body of flesh and blood. And this was God's plan for the Incarnation:

Hebrews 10:5 **"Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, 'You have not desired sacrifice and offering, but You have prepared a body for Me;'"**

Without the Incarnation Christ could not die a real death and therefore would not be able to pay the penalty of sin that was due us - death. A real death was required by God; it was at the moment He decreed the penalty and said to Adam:

Gen. 2:17, **"...for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die".**

And in **Romans 6:23** we are told **"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."**

As you can see, God has declared that death is the penalty of sin. And therefore, anyone who sins is due the penalty of death. So, who does this encompass? Is it some people, is it most people, is every single person?

We are told that Adam after 130 years, **"begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth"** (Genesis 5:3). The sin that Adam committed corrupted all mankind by way of Adam's seed to his children, to their children's children, and so to all of mankind; **Romans 5:12** clears this up for us, **"Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned."**

This "original sin" separated us from the Father. Every single person who would ever exist from that day to the last day was condemned the moment Adam sinned, even though they had not yet been born. God condemned all of mankind from just one sin. And that should tell you how serious sin is to God! It is not tolerable! Paul tells us that this sin was imputed to all of us, **Romans 2:23** **"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"**. This statement is true even while we are not yet physically born.

This is where you may have heard the term **"Total Depravity"**. It doesn't mean that man is as bad as he can possibly be (some men are more depraved than others), but rather everything that makes up his being is corrupted by sin. It means he is unable to know God. He is unable **hear** or **see** Christ. He is unable **to believe** upon Christ.

In **Romans 3:10-18**, Paul lays out **God's case against mankind**, from head to toe, with **14** indictments. The supreme judge and the deciding jury **is God Himself**.

This is a devastating indictment for mankind. Paul uses Old Testament quotations to show that the whole of a person's inner being is controlled by sin. The mind, the heart, and the will. Measured by God's perfect righteousness, no human being is sinless in any way. No sinner seeks after God. God, therefore, must seek the sinner.

Romans 3:10-18

(v10) As it is written:

	"There is none righteous, no, not one;	(not even one does what is right in God's eyes)
	There is none who understands;	(they do not understand their own condemnation)
(v11)	There is none who seeks after God.	(they want nothing to do with God)
(v12)	They have all turned aside;	(they look elsewhere to other things, not to God)
	They have together become unprofitable;	(they are worthless and of no value to please God)
	There is none who does good, no, not one"	(nothing they do pleases God as it is not for God)
	"Their throat is an open tomb;	(their throats are an open grave of a dead corpse)
	With their tongues they have practiced deceit;	(their tongues speak lies and deception)
	The poison of asps is under their lips:"	(their lips spread death like poison when they speak)
(v14)	"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness";	(their mouths are full of malice and wrath)
(v15)	"Their feet are swift to shed blood;	(their feet run fast to destroy and kill)
(v16)	Destruction and misery are in their ways;	(their feet leave a trail of destruction and calamity)
(v17)	And the way of peace they have not known."	(their ways have never known peace)
(v18)	"There is no fear of God before their eyes."	(their eyes have no fear of God)

Because of this state that man is born into, man runs from God and continually commits trespasses and sins. Because of this state he is unable to do anything else. He is **spiritually dead**. He is fully separated from God. This is what being spiritually dead is. The only way for mankind to believe that **Jesus is Lord** is that this spiritually dead person has to be made alive in Christ; he has to be **"born again"**.

Jesus said, *"You must be born again" (John 3:7)*. The reason man cannot believe is because he is in this state of spiritual death; dead to the truth. John 3:3 tells us this, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3)*. Jesus didn't say it's unlikely, or probably not going to happen, he said *"he cannot see the kingdom of God"*. So, this verse is telling us (very clearly) that being born again is a prerequisite in order to see the kingdom of God. Note that Jesus did not say "believe and you are born again". Jesus said without being born again, you **CANNOT** see. To see and hear the spiritual truth, your spirit **must first** be made alive.

In *John 8:43* while speaking to the Jews, he said *"Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word"*. Jesus did not say they were unwilling to listen. He said they were not **"able"** to listen; they did not have the **ability** to listen. If Christ meant they were unwilling, He would have said so (I have no doubt about that). To hear, you must first be made alive (you must be born again). The Jews whom Jesus was speaking to heard His words with their physical ears, but they could not understand what He was saying because they were dead (dead to the spiritual truth).

Romans 10:17 says "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God". Now remember in the previous verse Jesus said "you are not able to listen to My word". Therefore, if they are not "able" to listen, then God did not give them the ability to hear His word. Not everyone who physically hears the Word of God comes to believe in Christ. They don't all "hear" His voice. But some do, don't they?

So, this introduces questions in our minds, doesn't it? How does one hear His voice? How does one see the kingdom of God? How is one born again? How does one come to believe?

We are told how in John 1:12 and 13. So, let's break this verse down, unpack it, and understand its meaning.

(The apostle John is the speaker)

JOHN 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name;"

- **"But"**

Conjunction: (but, and, or, because, while, etc.) A word that links two ideas, clauses, or sentences that are different, opposite, or surprising in relation to each other, showing a conflict or contrast between them.

But is contrasting **John 1:10-11**

"He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him".

So, this is what the "but" is contrasting (the world made through Him, the world didn't know Him and did not receive Him).

- **"as many as"**

As many as refers to a specific quantity out of a whole that meet a criteria. The ESV says **"But to all who"**. It is not "all", it is **"all who"**. A group within a larger group that is to meet some criteria.

- **"received Him"**

To have **"received"** Him carries the meaning of actively believing and acknowledging in Jesus Christ for who He truly is – God and the promised Messiah. Not just intellectually accepting and acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but hearing Christ's voice in the heart.

JOHN 10:27 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me".

This happens when the Holy Spirit lays out the testimony of Jesus Christ before you and performs (for lack of a better term) a resurrection of your spiritually dead self. You may be receiving the Word of God through speech or through reading, somehow the Gospel of Jesus Christ is being told to you. Even though your physical ears or eyes are taking this in, it's the work of the Holy Spirit within your inner being that is causing you to believe; when your inner person knows that what he or she is hearing is the truth. That is the moment you are born again. And that is the gift of faith you just received to believe.

This new birth is evidenced when you actively acknowledge and proclaim the testimony of Jesus Christ; And that happens when your mind catches up with your heart. You respond with this new faith through repentance of sins and by actively walking the remainder of your life in obedience to God's will; as He reveals His will to you.

- **"to them"**

Is clearly referring to the first part of this verse, "as many as" received Him". That's who the "to them" is. It is those who received Jesus Christ. He didn't say to every person on the planet, he said "to them". He is saying only to those who receive Him.

- **"He gave the right to become children of God"**

"He gave the right" are words used in many translations of the bible. Some translations use the words "authority" or "power". In the Greek it is ἐξουσίαν (pronounced eks-oo-SEE-an) meaning Privilege. The usage of the words "right, power, authority, and privilege", in this context, all refer to **"the rights of inheritance by adoption"**.

The only way to receive the "right" to become a child of God, is that God must first possess the authority to bestow this right; He is God and there is no greater authority than the authority of God; He must then **give the right**; Notice this section of verse 12 begins with the words **"He gave"**.

- **"to become children of God"**

To be a child of God means being adopted into His family through the holy redeeming blood of Jesus Christ. It means you are now forgiven of your sin that previously separated you from God. As an adopted son you can now have fellowship with God through His Son Jesus Christ. You are now an heir with Jesus Christ. You are internally transformed into a new creature.

(The apostle Paul is the speaker)

Eph. 1:4-6 *(NASB)* "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to **adoption** as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

(The apostle Paul is the speaker)

Romans 8:17 *(NASB)* "and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."

- **"to those who believe in His name;"**

"to those" are the same ones who received Christ earlier in this verse. The ones that received Him are the same ones who believe in His name. They are not a different group. It is these, and only these, whom He gives the right to become children of God. It is the "as many as" in the first section and the "to them" in the second section. Same group.

"who believe in His name;" first off, **"who"** signifies a people that believe in His name. Believing in His name means placing complete trust and reliance on who He is (God the Son, God incarnate) and what He did (He died to pay the "penalty" for our sins and He rose from the dead). And it means accepting His authority by obeying His teachings.

Believing in His name signifies **His saving power** (Yahweh saves), trusting His identity as the Son of God, and acting on that belief through obedience and commitment.

(The apostle John is the speaker)

JOHN 1:12 "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name;"

- So, Verse 12 is stating the free gift of the gospel of Jesus Christ which is:

To as many as received Him (not one more, not one less) and believing in His name, to them He gave the right to become adopted heirs with Christ.

We have a group that receives and believes in Christ Jesus; And they become "the children of God". The group is not everyone. It's "as many as" referring to a portion of a larger whole.

- Also, since we see that there is a group who DOES believe, we have to automatically ask ourselves:
 - Why?
 - Why do those spoken of in verse 12 believe?
 - What is the difference between the group that believes and the group that does not believe?

The answer is in the very next verse, verse 13. Verse 13 is the reason the "as many as" in verse 12 believe.

(The apostle John is the speaker)

JOHN 1:13 "who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

- John lists three mind numbing ways to tell us what "**IS NOT**" the reason those in verse 12 believe. John then shows us the **one singular way** (and reason) why those in verse 12 "**DO**" believe. This verse is telling you **why** the children of God believe on the name of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.
- The reason John is putting each detail in place prior to telling you how those in verse 12 come to believe is to make **absolutely sure** that you understand how those in verse 12 come to believe!
- And with that same thought process, John is making **absolutely certain** that you don't try to read anything into this verse that is not there. John is saying (and showing by his sentence usage) that what is about to be said is very important to understand.
- The first part of this verse reads "**who were born**". This is referring to the **spiritual birth**; being born from above. In John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God**". This "born again" is referring to the spiritual birth when the Holy Spirit testified to you that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior. And you knew it to be true and were then born again. That's what "**who were born**" is referring to.

- “**not of blood**” :: meaning it is **not** of our human decent such as our lineage, who our parents are, what our name is, what nation we live in, or what our national heritage is. There is nothing in the human bloodline that causes those in verse 12 to believe.
- “**nor of the will of the flesh**” :: meaning not from our own human effort. There is no action or deed by the flesh (in and of ourselves) which is the reason those in verse 12 believe.
- “**nor of the will of man**” :: It is not of man’s own will to believe in God. Period.
- And finally, after John describes three ways in which man “**DOES NOT**” believe, John tells us **the one and only reason why** those in verse 12 actually believe:
- “**but of God**” :: Remember, the word but is “contrasting” something. It is contrasting the **not** and **two nor’s** before it. Those in verse 12 who believe are those who were born spiritually
 - By the **work of God**
 - By the **power of God**
 - By the **choice of God**
 - **All driven by the will of God**

Those who are born again and believed (our group in verse 12), by no will of their own, by nothing they **said** or **did** or **thought**, and by no earthly lineage, **believed only because it was God’s sovereign choice (His will in action)** that those (and only those) in verse 12 would be the ones to believe upon Him.

There was no decision made by this group in verse 12 that was based on logic, reason, feelings, watershed moments, turning points, or life transformative experience, that is the reason they believe. There was no epiphany moment, no revelation, no wake-up call that is the reason they believe.

The reason our group in verse 12 believe is that it was “of God”. **It was all of God!**

Without God, no one will ever choose God. No matter what happens in their life.
It is God who seeks out His people.
It is God who testifies the truth of His Son Jesus to you.
It is God that caused your inner being to know you were hearing the truth.
It is God who regenerates their spirit (born again and made alive).
It is God who ultimately is the reason why they believe.
And therefore, **it is God who saves sinners.**

- One last point:

Anyone who calls upon the name of Christ will be saved.

Nothing in these verses is stopping anyone from believing upon Christ.

Unfortunately, even though that is true, no one will call upon Christ and believe unless God first does His work in them and makes them alive. You must be born again.

And that work is of God and the Holy Spirit. When people are saved from the wrath of God, they are saved from the wrath of God because it is God's will for them to be saved.

God Saves Sinners!