

# *What Does John 1:12 Teach Us?*

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Many Bible tracts from denominational groups usually contain the verse John 1:12 to tell the lost that by believing in Christ, they become children of God. They teach that the moment one believes in Christ, he becomes a child of God. They use this verse as a proof text. As a result, many people believe that they are following the teachings of Christ in the Bible. What is the truth about this?

Before believing in what people teach, we have to examine the Scriptures and test whether or not what people teach is really taken from the intended teaching of the verse. Examine this verse very carefully. The verse tells us that all who received Jesus Christ, He gave them the **RIGHT** to become children of God. Does it say that all who received Him are made children of God? These two things are different. Why did John say that He gave them the **RIGHT** to become children of God? Why not say plainly that those who received Christ were made children of God? John said in this manner because **believing** in Christ is **just the beginning**. Christ has other instructions to be followed in order to become a son of God. Discussions about these other instructions are found below.

If we examine this carefully, those who are given the right to become children of God are described further in verse 13. These people are those who are **BORN OF GOD** or **BORN AGAIN** (John 1:13). So if this is the case, we have to know how to become a son of God or how to be born of God. The Bible is clear. First, Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Unless one is **born from above**, he **cannot see** the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3 NAB) Many Bible translations use “**born again**” instead of “born from above” in this verse because of what Nicodemus asked in John 3:4. Anyway, Jesus answered the question of Nicodemus by saying, “Unless one is **BORN OF WATER** and **THE SPIRIT**, he **cannot enter** the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5). So it is clear that we need to be born of water and the spirit to become a son of God and be in the kingdom of God.

What does being “**born of water**” mean? Romans 6:3-6 is clear that one has to be buried in water and **raised to a new life** after getting out of the water. This is true because Galatians 3:27 tells us that **only those** who were **baptized** into Christ were the ones **clothed with Christ**. Those who are clothed with Christ are the ones who are now **sons of God** through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26).

So where is the place for the sinner’s prayer that people normally use? If you have read the entire New Testament, definitely you **cannot find even a single verse** or a **single example** where Peter and the rest of the apostles told anyone to utter such a sinner’s prayer before salvation took place. In fact, when Peter was asked by those who believed in his message on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:37), he never told them to believe, because they already believed. In fact, they were cut to the heart after listening to and believing in the gospel preached to them. That belief prompted them to ask, “Men and brethren what shall we do.” Did Peter tell them to utter the sinner’s prayer? **NO**. He replied, “Repent and let each one of you **be baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ **FOR the remission of sins** and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38).

Acts 2:38 also tells us that after baptism, the sinner is saved and is given the Holy Spirit. Could this be the meaning of the phrase “**born of the spirit**” that Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:5? If you examine the baptism of Jesus Christ, **three things** happened **after** He came up out of the water (Matthew 3:16-17). Right after He came up out of the water, the **heaven was opened**. This means that the baptized person **can now enter** heaven. Acts 2:38 says that a sinner has to be baptized to **obtain remission or forgiveness of sins**. Jesus also said to His disciples, “Whoever **believes** (in the gospel) **AND** is **baptized** will be saved.” (Mark 16:15-16).

The second thing that happened was the **descending of the Holy Spirit** like a dove. What does this mean? Part of Peter’s reply to the crowd’s question of what must they do to be saved was this, “... and you **shall receive** the gift of the **Holy Spirit**.” (Acts 2:38). The third thing that happened was the **voice coming** from heaven that says, “This is **My beloved Son** in whom **I am well pleased**.” (Matthew 3:17). What does this mean? As mentioned above, those who were baptized into Christ had put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). So all these verses tell us that salvation **takes place only after baptism**. Therefore, **baptism** is a **prerequisite** to receiving the grace of God. **Without baptism**, there is **no salvation** that took place because baptism answers **when** was the time that the person was **saved**. But **who** saves? It is **Jesus Christ** (Matthew 1:21; John 1:29). **What** saves? It is the **blood** of Christ (Hebrews 9:22; Matthew 26:28).

So dear reader, **John 1:12 does not support** the teaching that salvation is by faith only. Yes, we are saved by faith, but what kind of faith can save us? The faith that saves is the **faith that works**. John 1:12 should be **taken together** with the next verse **to understand** what Christ **really** taught about **being saved** or about **becoming a child** of God.

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