

All Who Received Him

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Preacher: Bill Dunlop

- [0 : 00] Let me read again from John chapter 1. Verse 9, the true light which enlightens everyone was coming into the world.
- He was in the world. The world was made through him. Yet the world didn't know him. He came to his own, and his own did not receive him.
- But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- Here's how John saw it. Light burst into the world.
- The life giver came close to all those who depend on him for every second of their existence.
- [1 : 18] The king came among the common people, and announcing his arrival in advance, to his own specially favored nation.
- The Lord appeared. And they didn't want to know him. He came to his own, and some of them said, he's just Joseph's son.
- We don't know where he came from. And the same thing has been played out through the centuries.
- People who have not wanted to give him the time of day. John doesn't go in for telling us about the onlookers and the admirers.
- He doesn't tell us about shepherds and visiting philosophers and old priests and prophetess in the temple. But what he does do is he goes to the reason why some received him, and some admired him, and some worshipped him.
- [3 : 03] And I want to spend just a little bit of time with you now, looking at what John says to us as to why it was that there were some who wanted him and took him.
- Let's look at three things about the receivers, the ones who received Jesus Christ. Here we're going to see John telling us what it takes to be a receiver of the greatest gift of all.
- Now, first of all, belief in Christ's name. To all who did receive him, verse 12, who believed in his name.
- Now, receiving is believing here. And believing is receiving.
- Guests may come to your house, and you receive them. You welcome them.
- [4 : 28] You give them coffee, or a bowl of soup, or a great meal. Heads of state come to the nation, and they are received with respect.
- They may be given the ultimate reception of a royal banquet. But the reception that we're asked to give to this king is of an altogether different plane.
- We receive him by believing in his name. We believe that is all that he's told us about himself.
- that he's the son of God. That he's a king over all other kings. That he's the life giver, the savior of the world.

Can I just say a little bit about an expression that's commonly spoken of amongst us?

[5 : 52] Because people will say, when they became a Christian, they received Christ into their hearts. Now, that's okay.

And that is a truth. Jesus spoke about him and his father coming to those who love him.

and he says to his father, we will make our home with them. And so it is true that Jesus by his spirit comes and we receive him in our hearts.

If that's the main way in which you describe your conversion, I want to suggest to you that it misses something. Because it suggests to me that you receive Christ primarily as a friend.

It's as if you are taking him in. Almost that you're sharing a flat with him. It tells me that he's a lodger with you.

[7 : 12] But it doesn't tell me that he's your absolute Lord. And that's the thing that we want to keep at the forefront of our thinking about our conversion.

That we receive him by believing in his name. That he is the greatest one. That he is the everlasting God.

that he takes away my sins. And that he owns me. Because he's paid for me with his own blood.

So, the first thing. Belief in Christ's name. Belief that Jesus has taken my sins.

And that he is my God. And my King. And here's the second thing.

[8 : 22] Belief in his name. Becoming his children. verse 12.

To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

Those who believe in Jesus are given this title. Children of God. I want to point out here two things.

First of all, becoming a child of God is a gift to you. It wasn't yours naturally.

Now, it is actually true that the New Testament does speak about every human being as God's offspring by virtue of being his creation.

[9 : 37] But in a special, unique way, God becomes our father by believing in Jesus.

Jesus in fact, it's interesting that when Jesus told the parable of the wheat and the tares, the tares, that is, those who did not believe in Jesus, they are described as sons of the evil one.

And there is this great divide. those who believe in Jesus have the right to become children of God, a right that is given to nobody else.

That's the first thing. Becoming a child of God is a gift. The second thing you'll notice here that becoming a child of God comes by adoption.

adoption. It's a right that's given to us. It's a status that the Lord blesses us with. And elsewhere in Scripture that it tells us God sent his son who was born of the virgin that we might be given the right of adoption.

[11 : 06] And it's this special privilege and unique standing that we have in Christ that we are adopted into his family.

The Roman world went in for adoption in a big way but it was a different kind of adoption for what we have.

It was when a childless father and mother would go looking for some young man especially and they would look for a boy in his teens who had athleticism, intelligence, looks, and they would say I'd like to have this young man to carry on the family line and they would adopt him.

Now the interesting thing about God is that he looks around and he doesn't find anyone who fits like that. But he's willing to take in boys and girls and men and women who potentially could dreadfully damage his family name.

And he takes in those who were dirty and disreputable from the moral sewers. People who who spoilt their lives.

[12 : 49] And he says I'm going to take you in and I'm going to adopt you. We lived in Zambia in the 80s and we got to know a young man who came about the church a lot.

He was a kind of gentle lad and more than anyone his clothes were second-hand rags.

And as we got to know him we heard he'd been adopted. And there was a sort of sadness about him. And I asked one or two others about this lad John Mubita and I said what is it about John?

And they told me well he's been adopted by an uncle. And they told me his uncle's one of the wealthiest men in the town. But John is not treated by his uncle in the way that his uncle treats his own children.

Not given the clothes, not afforded the school fees, not given the prospects that his own sons and daughters were given.

[14 : 19] And I used to think how different that is from God. He gives us the love and the affection and the generosity that he gave and gives to his unique son.

Remember Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and Jesus said to her, go and tell my brothers that I have not yet gone to my father and your father.

And Jesus praying before his death to his father says to him, I want you to take them and to let them know that you have loved them even as you have loved me.

And that's the extraordinary thing about our being adopted, that we are taken in and given a home and an inheritance and the love that he's been pouring out on his unique son since before time began.

We become children of God. Here's what one of the writers says, and I wonder if you can grasp this. If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of being God's child and having God as his father.

[16 : 20] The name father is the Christian name for God. Do you know him?

Do you call him father in that intimate way? Have you received Jesus? Belief in the name of Jesus.

Becoming God's children or adopted as God's children. And then the third thing. born of God.

Verse 12 and 13, to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, flesh, nor literally of the will of a male, but born of God.

born of God. born of God.

[17 : 54] Elsewhere, John speaks about it as being born of the Spirit, or born anew. Paul's word for it is that we undertake or undergo regeneration.

creation. And I want us to look at what it means to be born of God. Here's what somebody has said.

to be born of God is to have a great and drastic change carried out on our fallen inner nature by God himself.

It's a great and drastic change that God himself brings about on our fallen inner nature.

There's two observations I want to make from these two verses. The first is to be born of God is to experience something supernatural.

[19 : 35] There are three negatives here. Born not of blood, the New International Version says not of natural descent.

That is not as a result of any inherited bias. The Jews couldn't call themselves sons and daughters of God simply because they were descended from Abraham.

Nor can you and I call ourselves children of God simply God because our mother or father was a believer.

We are born not of blood. Secondly and thirdly not of the will of the flesh and not of a male.

The New International Version translates that not of human decision or of a husband's will. And both of these refer to the sexual intimate union that a man and a woman have which produces a child.

[20 : 59] And John's saying your birth, your spiritual birth, your being born again has nothing to do with that.

This is something altogether supernatural and divine. You sang about it last Sunday.

Wesley spoke about it in his greatest carol. Jesus came. And how did he put it? Born was Jesus, born to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth.

And you see, the coming Savior came so that we might be born a second time. Nothing to do with our natural birth from our mother, but everything to do with a birth that God himself has given us.

This drastic inner change is exclusively his work. We cannot bring it about. He does it unaided.

[22 : 33] faith. People can try to fake faith. They can try to simulate some kind of trust in Jesus.

But you cannot fake this supernatural miraculous birth that takes place in your character. often, at first, it goes unnoticed.

No change of physical appearance. No necessarily any great elation or emotional surge, you may have it.

These things may or may not accompany this supernatural new birth. But I'll tell you what does happen.

sooner rather than later, changes start to take place.

[24 : 03] The person who's been born of God starts to have a new desire for God. A new interest in coming to worship him.

a new discovery of truths about God and a new appetite to look at his word, his scriptures. A new enjoyment of meeting together with those who are also following Jesus.

And a new determination to do God's will and to keep his commandments.

And these are the telltale signs of that miracle that's happened within that great and drastic change.

church. There's a fad that people, I suppose they've always had it, but it seems that people have it especially today, that they're looking for miracles.

[25 : 27] And churchgoers are looking especially for miracles. miracles. Well, I want to tell you that this great and drastic change in someone's inner character is the greatest miracle that you're ever going to see in your lifetime.

Believe me, it is the greatest miracle that is ever going to take place in your lifetime. life and in the life of the people about you.

And it's something incredibly beautiful to see. So the first thing is, it's supernatural.

But as we close, notice too that it's essential. essential. to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born of God.

That is, those who received him and believed in his name were born of God. the believing and the new birth are conjoined.

[27 : 02] They are inseparable twins. You do not have one without the other. It's really a most unfortunate thing that people speak about two types of believers, two types of Christians as the born-again ones and the rest of them.

Well, I want to tell you there is only one type of Christian, and it's the type who's received this drastic inner change, who's been born of God.

And maybe if you're saying to yourself, well, I'm quite interested in believing in Jesus, and I love the idea of being in his family, but I don't go for this born-again business.

My friends, you can't pick and choose like that. There has to be God coming and doing that extraordinary inner transformation of your character to make you a new woman, a new man in Christ.

Now, whether you're, or if you're not a Christian yet, you may be saying, what can I do about this?

[28 : 35] If this is supernatural and it's God's work and I can't do anything to bring it about, what can I do? Well, here's what you can do. You can simply ask him.

He's the kind of heavenly father who loves to give good things, and especially to give his Holy Spirit to those who ask him.

You must ask him. He'd love to come. And to those of you who are believers this morning, I want you to see what an immense thing has happened in your life.

I want you to see the magnitude of it, to be able to say those words that Mitch read at the beginning. See how great is the love that God has for us, the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God.

See how great is that love that you've been adopted into his family. And then see the staggering truth that you've actually been born anew.

[30 : 08] people look on at us, your friends, your colleagues, and maybe they're hill walkers, or maybe they go to every match home and away of their team.

And they look at you, and they're a bit surprised, but they simply assume, well, you do church like they do hill walking or football.

They may think you're kind of devoted to it, but it's just a hobby. You know, that kind of perception can so easily rub off on us.

Just a hobby. Just something we do. We made a decision years ago, and we're going on with it. Well, I want to tell you that John is saying to us something far, far bigger has happened.

You've been taken into a new family, and you've been made a new creation. creation. The scale of it is seismic, and it's the scale of that change that God has brought in your life that helps you every day to live with the pain that you have and to face up for the problems that you'll be coming against tomorrow.

[31 : 46] See this and marvel. all. Let's pray. Thank you, dear God. Thank you for the unspeakable gift of the gospel.

Thank you for that right to call you Father. Thank you for that inner transformation. We bless you in Jesus Christ.

Amen. for to you whúblic who to a wife' a wife?

one woman