

The Power To Become

by Mark Legendre

I. INTRODUCTION:

- A. There is a widespread doctrine in the religious world today that says a person becomes a Christian when they "believe in Jesus" as the Son of God. This teaching is sometimes described as "receiving Jesus as your personal Saviour" by allowing Jesus to "come into your heart." BUT IS THIS DOCTRINE REALLY TAUGHT IN THE BIBLE? AND DOES A PERSON REALLY BECOME A CHRISTIAN SIMPLY BY BELIEVING IN JESUS? (Let's answer these questions today!)
- B. The lesson begins by reading John 1:6-13:
- i. John the Baptist was sent by God into the world to bare witness to the "true light" of men, Jesus Christ." Jesus came into the world for the express purpose of "saving man from his sins." (Mt. 1:21; Lk. 19:10) Jesus first came to his Jewish brethren who for the most part did not "receive him."
 - ii. To those who did "receive him," Jesus gave them the "power to become" sons of God, even to them that "believe on his name."

II. "THE POWER TO BECOME?" (THE SONS OF GOD)!

- A. Notice the use of the terms "receiving him" and "believing on his name."
- i. These terms are used synonymously in this verse. (That is, they mean the same thing.)
 - ii. When a person "believes in Jesus," then this is the same as "receiving him."
 - a. The phrase of verse 11 "received him not" means that they did not "believe in him to the point of obedience." Thayer's Greek Lexicon defines the word "receive" in this verse to "accept or acknowledge one to be such as he professes to be; not to reject, not to withhold obedience." The Greek word used here is 'PARALAMBANO.'" (THAYER'S - pg. 484; #3880)
 - b. The phrase of verse 12 "received him" comes from the Greek word "LAMBANO" which means to "receive what is offered; not to reject or refuse a person in regards to obeying that person." (THAYER'S - pg. 370; #2983) (John 12:48)
 - iii. Let us paraphrase John 1:11-12 by inserting our definitions that we have learned:
 - "He came unto his own, and his own did not accept or acknowledge him to be what he professed to be, nor did they obey him. But as many as "received what he had to offer them

(his words) and were willing to obey him," to them gave he 'POWER TO BECOME' the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

- b. Since the terms "receiving him" and "believing on his name" are parallel terms, we then can draw the conclusion that to "believe on the name of Jesus" would mean that a person "acknowledges that Jesus is who He claimed to be and therefore obedience should be rendered to His words."
 - c. Notice with me now that this "attitude of mind" gives a person "the power to become" a son of God; IT DOES NOT MAKE HIM ONE!
 - d. The phrase "power to become" comes from a Greek word "EXOUSIA" which means the "right or privilege" and the "freedom to act." (Word #1849)
 - e. Thus to paraphrase verse 12 we would read, "But as many as acknowledge Him to be what He professes to be, to them gave He the right or freedom or privilege to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in Him to the extent of obeying him."
- B. Thus we can see that a person does not become a Christian by simply "receiving Jesus" or believing in Jesus;" he only has the "right or privilege" to become a Christian by acting upon his beliefs.
- C. Bible examples where this "right or privilege" WAS or WAS NOT exercised:
- i. Where the right was exercised:
 - a. Acts 2:37-41 (They believed Peter's teaching concerning Jesus and obeyed Jesus in baptism.) [Gal. 3:26-27; "children of God by faith?"]
 - b. Acts 8:5-14 (They believed and they obeyed; thus they had "received the word of God?")
 - c. Acts 8:30-38 (The eunuch exercised his right to "become a son of God." He believed in Jesus and obeyed Him in baptism.)
 - d. Acts 18:8 (They heard, they believed, and they exercised their privilege to be baptized.)
 - e. Where the right was not exercised:
 - John 12:42-43 (They believed but did not confess their belief in Christ. They did not exercise their right to "become a son of God")
 - Acts 26:26-28 (Paul knew that Agrippa believed the things that he had taught him concerning Jesus, but Agrippa did not exercise his right to "become a Christian")

III. CONCLUSION:

- A. If you believe in Jesus as the "only begotten Son of God," then it is your "right or privilege" to act upon that belief by "obeying God" by being baptized into Jesus Christ for the "remission of your sins."

(Acts 2:38) - (Heb. 5:8-9)

B. CONSIDER THESE SCRIPTURES: (Gal. 3:26-27; Mk. 16:16; Acts 22:16; Rev. 1:5)

C. Acts 8:35-39

D. TO FAIL TO EXERCISE THIS RIGHT OR PRIVILEGE BECAUSE OF YOUR BELIEF IN JESUS IS TO FIND YOURSELF IN THE SAME CIRCUMSTANCE AS AGRIPPA, WHO WAS "ALMOST PERSUADED TO BE A CHRISTIAN," BUT STILL "ALTOGETHER LOST."