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## **John 1:12**

*Recently Pastor P.D. Kurts received some very good questions from a friend about the gospel and how John 1:12 fits in with our understanding of humanity's salvation in Christ. Here's how he replied:*

I am finding that the more I learn the more I realize I don't know. I think this is a testimony to just how big God really is. After reading through this passage and giving it a great deal of thought and prayer I'd like to share some thoughts with you. I have enjoyed studying it because I've learned some things I had never seen before, which is exciting to me!

Answering any question, especially a challenging one like this in John 1:12, should always begin with answering the question "Who is Jesus?" because He is the way, the truth, and the life. So who is He?

*Acts 17:28* He is the one in Him we live and move and exist (apart from Jesus nobody can live or move or exist.)

*Ephesians 1:23* Jesus fills everything (including people) everywhere with His presence.

*Colossians 1:16* Everything has been created through Him and for Him.

*Colossians 2:2-3* God's secret plan is Christ Himself. In Him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

*2 Corinthians 5:19* God reconciled the world to Himself through Christ.

From that foundation we can then move on to search out the meaning of a scripture that may be confusing. For the most part, as is often the case, there are several clues within the text (John 1:1-18) about what John is saying:

*John 1:4,7,9* Jesus gives light to everyone (note the inclusive nature of the wording in these verses.)

*John 1:5* Darkness (and whatever that is) cannot overcome the light (Jesus.)

*John 1:12* Notice here that John doesn't say we become a child of God when we believe or that we get born again when we believe. The phrase "to become" is in the second aorist tense (Greek) which just means that the verb is considered without regard for past, present, or future time. There is no direct or clear English equivalent for this tense, though it is generally rendered as a simple past tense in most translations.

*John 1:13* I think this verse is the key to understanding what John means in verse 12. He says they were (or have been) reborn even though "to become" in verse 12 sounds like something which will happen but hasn't already. This is a difficult translation into English because there is no aorist tense in English. Hence there is what appears to be an abrupt shift in tense from verse 12 to 13.

Here is the key though. John goes on to say that this rebirth is not a result of anything human (which would include belief). Rather, it comes from God alone.

I used to believe that one was not born again until they accepted Christ. Then I started looking at the concept of adoption in the scriptures. I feel that the Apostle Paul chose the analogy of adoption to help us understand that we have been made God's children strictly because it was His desire to do so and not because our acceptance of it was required (just as an infant has nothing to do with his or her adoption into a family.) If our acceptance was required in order to become a child of God then Paul would most certainly have used an analogy other than adoption.

A few verses on adoption and being born again:

*1 Peter 1:3* We are born again through the resurrection of Jesus.

*Ephesians 1:4-5* Before time began God's unchanging plan was to adopt us (not just the believers in Ephesus) into his family.

*Ephesians 2:6* We were raised from the dead with Christ (i.e. when Christ rose from the dead.)

*Colossians 2:12* When Christ died we died and when He rose we rose.

*Galatians 4:1-7* The adoption process from beginning to end is a result of what God has done through Jesus.

Think of it this way: When you and I were chosen and adopted in Christ before time began (Ephesians 1:4-5) neither of us at that point had lived and therefore had the opportunity to accept Christ!

I hope this helps. These are concepts that have taken me years to wrap my mind around because I was taught a lot of things growing up that were completely wrong and so I struggle to loose myself of that baggage in order to understand more fully who Jesus is and who I am in Him. My misunderstanding in the past of these very important things drives me to search out the truth, even if it's not what I always thought to be true.

~ P.D. Kurts