

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “BORN AGAIN?”

“Born again” is a precious term to those of us who have actually been born again. We first read of this in John 3, an account where Jesus spoke with Nicodemus.

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”

Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

(John 3:1-8)

I find it interesting that many claim to be born again but still cannot explain what it actually means. To some, it simply means that they have been given a new beginning. To others, it simply refers to a religious experience they have had. What is really sad is the fact that, because of this confusion, there exists millions who think they are born again when they really are not. In the end, many will find that all they really had was a

heavenly way to go to hell. Yes, sadly, this will be true of many who only thought they were “born again.”

To be born again refers to a second birth—a spiritual birth into God’s family. We’ve all been born once, evidenced by the fact that we are here. This is what we call the physical or flesh birth. The second birth occurs when one believes in Jesus (trusts, relies upon, or places confidence in). Some additional Bible verses that speak of this new birth are:

*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. **But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:** who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

(John 1:10-13)

Notice, verse 12 says that it is those who receive Him by believing in His name are born into God’s family, thereby becoming His child and no longer just His creation.

*Having been **born again**, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, **through the word of God** which lives and abides forever.* (1 Peter 1:23)

Here, we see that this new birth comes through the written word of God. This is consistent with Romans 10:17 that tells us “*faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*,” and Romans 1:16 that says “*the gospel is the power of God unto salvation*.”

Peter refers to this new birth when he says:

*Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, **as newborn babes**, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.*

(1 Peter 2:1-3)

The apostle Paul, when writing to the church in Corinth, wrote these words:

*And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, **as to babes in Christ**. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?*

(1 Corinthians 3:1-3)

This church in Corinth was considered the most immoral church of the entire New Testament. In fact, one could not tell any difference in them from the unsaved, when examining their lifestyle.

The key issue here is that they were born again but were not growing. Just as a physical baby must be fed milk and cannot endure meat, the same was true with these immature Christians. They had not yet grown enough to be able to be fed spiritual meat!

When a person is born again, he receives a second nature—a new nature—a nature that cannot sin, but existing within him remains the old nature—called “the flesh,” that is prone to sin. A battle, a literal war within oneself, occurs on an ongoing basis. This battle is described in Galatians 5:16-17.

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

James also spoke of this battle in his epistle.

Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. (James 1:13-14)

A passage that is often misunderstood is found in 1 John 3, leading up to and including verse 9. Here is verse 9.

Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

Many, in their desire to reconcile this verse with chapter 1, verse 8, which says “if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us,” elect to say this verse really should have been translated, “does not practice sin.” To this, I say “Hogwash!” If a Christian no longer practices sin, it is only because he has become so good at it that he doesn’t any longer need practice. The old nature (the flesh nature) is never eradicated and will continue to see that we indeed do practice sin. It is only the new nature that cannot sin.

The apostle Paul wrote of his continuing spiritual battle in Romans 7:14-19:

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

Yes, when one becomes a believer, he is at that instant born into God’s family and many things immediately change. The Bible describes three of these changes in John 5:24:

*Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and **believes in Him who sent Me** has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.*

The changes are:

- He possesses everlasting life.
- He shall not come into judgment.
- He is already passed from death unto life.

Jesus referred to this when He spoke to Martha in John 11:24-26:

Martha said to Him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

It is because the Bible clearly teaches that one who has believed in Jesus possesses eternal life and will never die that we can be assured of having received this new birth.

***He who believes in the Son of God** has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. **He who has the Son has life;** he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. **These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life,** and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.* (1 John 5:10-13)

*(NOTE: All quoted scripture is from the New King James Version of the Bible, published by Thomas Nelson Publishers) (Scripture Emphases Mine.)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:
GENE GREESON**

Suncoast Community Church
12855 110th Avenue North
Largo, FL 33774 Phone: 727-595-1739
Email: genegreeson@gmail.com

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Written by Gene Greeson
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***“Nicodemus didn’t understand
it and neither do many today.”***