

## How Are You Born Again?

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In modern Christianity the phrase “born again” is often used to describe the experience that many claim occurred in their lives when they accepted Jesus Christ as their savior. After this event, it is usually understood that a person can live the rest of their lives knowing they will inherit everlasting life no matter what they do during the interim. However, when scripture is examined closely, this teaching does not hold much water. In fact, it is contrary to God’s word on a number of levels which will be examined in this study.

First, the scriptures that are used to validate the teachings associated with the claim that someone can be born again after accepting Jesus Christ need to be reviewed,

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>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.” <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born **again (from above)**; cf. SGD 509, *another*), he cannot see the kingdom of God.” <sup>4</sup>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?” <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water (repents and is baptized in accordance with scripture; cf. Ac. 2:38) and (receives) the (Holy) Spirit (from Almighty God **above** after repentance and baptism), he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh (remains physical), and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (at the first resurrection from the dead; cf. 1Cor. 15:51-54; Rev. 20:4-6) (Jn. 3:1-6; Ed. notes in parentheses; NKJV used throughout unless otherwise noted).

Nicodemus viewed being born as strictly a physical experience, while Jesus Christ pointed out that it had nothing to do with the physical realm. Instead, Christ told him that being born from above was entirely a spiritual matter and it could not occur while someone was still in a flesh and blood form. This is why the apostle Paul stated that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (cf. 1Cor. 15:51-54), and being born from above referred to a future resurrection from a physical to a spiritual form at Christ’s second coming (cf. 1Thes. 4:13-17). Because these concepts were difficult for Nicodemus to comprehend, Christ continued to provide more details,

Do not marvel that I (Christ) said to you (Nicodemus), ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup>The wind (which cannot be seen with the naked eye) blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it (so you are aware of it), but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit (not visible in the physical realm) (Jn. 3:7-8; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Christ made it abundantly plain at this point that anyone who is born from above cannot be seen by the human eye because they would now be a spirit-being through a resurrection from the dead. Christ was an exception in the sense that he had already existed in the spirit realm and gave up his position in order to become the sacrifice, once and for all, to cover the sins of mankind and the fallen host of heaven (cf. Rom. 6:10),

No one has ascended to heaven but he who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man... (Jn. 3:13a; cf. Eph. 4:9-10).

This last scripture proves that no human being has yet ascended to heaven, and consequently no one will be born again (from above) until a resurrection from the dead at Christ's second coming.

The apostle Peter described being "born again" using an entirely different Greek word (SGD 313) than was used in Christ's discussion with Nicodemus (SGD 1080). Peter confirmed that being born again (from above) was a process that would only reach its fulfillment when the corruptible seed no longer existed, and this cannot occur until a resurrection from the dead,

Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever <sup>24</sup>because 'All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers and its flower falls away, <sup>25</sup>but the word of the Lord endures forever'... (1Pt. 1:23-25a).

The apostle Paul compared receiving God's Holy Spirit after repentance and baptism as having received an earnest or down payment, metaphorically speaking, which precedes our being born from above at the resurrection from the dead,

In Him (Almighty God; cf. vs. 3) you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (after repentance and baptism), <sup>14</sup>which is the guarantee (down payment, earnest) of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:13-14; Ed. notes in parentheses).

Jesus Christ purchased us with his shed blood (Heb. 9:22) and our ultimate redemption will not occur until his second coming,

Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which he (Christ) purchased with his own blood (Ac. 20:28; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Because no one will be "born again" until Christ's return, there is the possibility that some could turn their back on God and return to the way they used to live prior to their repentance and baptism. If this were not the case, God would not have inspired the following scriptures to be written,

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, <sup>5</sup>and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, <sup>6</sup>if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put him to an open shame (Heb. 6:4-6).

...But he who endures to the end will be saved (Mt. 10:22b).

So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I (Jesus Christ) will spew you out of my mouth (Rev. 3:16; Ed. note in parenthesis).

Not everyone who says to me (Jesus Christ), 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven (Mt. 7:21).

For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. <sup>21</sup>For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. <sup>22</sup>But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire' (2Pt. 2:20-22).

One of the dangers with the false teaching and doctrine regarding being "born again" is that it gives people a false hope that they can make a simple decision without understanding all the ramifications and responsibilities that go along with it, including repentance of past sins, baptism and living a new life in accordance with God's law and commandments (cf. Mt. 19:16-17). In this deceptive teaching, it is believed that an individual is now saved once and for all; there is nothing else that needs to be done in order to inherit everlasting life. There is very little difference between this lie and the one that the father of lies told Eve (cf. Jn. 8:44), because both proclaim a version of the false doctrine of the immortal soul,

And the woman (Eve) said to the serpent (Satan), 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; <sup>3</sup>but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat, nor shall you touch it (she added to the law of God), lest you die.' <sup>4</sup>And the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die' (Gen. 3:2-4; Ed. notes in parentheses).

In summary, once an individual repents of living in sin (cf. 1Jn. 3:4) and is baptized they can begin living a new life (cf. Rom. 6:4; 7:6) in accordance with God's law and commandments, but they must continue in this obedient new way as well as growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ until they die, or until Christ's return, whichever comes first,

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ... (2Pt. 3:18a).

There is no magic bullet like the "born again" doctrine that guarantees everlasting life after a one-time decision to accept Jesus Christ. Instead, everlasting life is the result of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf followed by living a new life in harmony with the law and commandments of God. Keeping the law and commandments does not earn anyone everlasting life, but continuing to disobey God after someone has repented of sin will result in quenching God's Holy Spirit (cf. 1Thes. 5:19) and eventually returning to the ways of the world (Rev.18:4).

This document is the collaborative work of individuals who believe God's truth should be given freely (Mt. 10:8; 1Cor. 2:12; 2Cor.11:7; Rom. 10:14-21) and the message of the one true God should be made available to all nations (Mt. 24:14) as a prerequisite to the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings (Mt. 17:10; 19:17; Mk. 9:11; Lk. 1:17; Rev. 19:11-16).

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