

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BORN AGAIN?

By Elder Dr. Samuel L. Dixon

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:

The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

Jesus answered and said unto him, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Jesus answered, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

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Nicodemus was a member of the ruling party in the Jewish religion. Some criticise him for coming to Jesus at night because they think he was afraid to come to Jesus during the day. Others believe that he came to Jesus by night due to his busy schedule during the day. Regardless of his reason for coming to Jesus at night the fact remains he did come to Jesus and acknowledged that Jesus was a teacher from God. His acknowledgment opened the door for Jesus to teach him an important lesson which is applicable to every person who comes to Jesus Christ. Jesus taught that a person must be born again before he or she can enter into the kingdom of God. The word “except” is translated as “unless” in most modern translations. Unless an individual is born again they cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

What does it mean to be born again? Nicodemus wanted to know if he had to go back into his mother's womb and be reborn. Jesus made it very clear that there was not going to be a physical rebirth. There are some religions today which teach that you have to keep being reborn on this earth until you finally get it right and go to heaven. This is called reincarnation. The Bible nowhere teaches reincarnation. Instead Hebrews 9:27 from the Amplified Bible states: “And just as it is appointed for [all] men once to die, and after that the [certain] judgment.” There is no second chance. God gives us one lifetime to get it right. The only way we can get it right is to be “born again.” The phrase “born again” is best described in the Unger's Bible Dictionary.

“BORN AGAIN. The new birth is a creative life-giving operation of the Holy Spirit upon a

lost human soul, whereby in response to faith in Christ crucified ([John 3:14-16](#); [Galatians 3:24](#)), the believing one, “dead in . . . trespasses and sins” ([Ephes. 2:1](#)), is quickened into spiritual life and made a partaker of the divine nature and of the life of Christ [Galatians 2:2:10](#); [Col. 1:27](#); [1 Peter 1:23-25](#); [2 Peter 1:4](#)). The complete necessity of this spiritual transaction is the result of fallen man’s state of spiritual death, his alienation from God, and his consequent utter inability to “see” ([John 3:3](#)) or “to enter into” the kingdom of God ([John 3:5](#)). No matter how moral, refined, talented, or religious the natural or unregenerate man may be, he is blind to spiritual truth and unable to save himself ([John 3:6](#); cf. [Psalm 51:5](#); [1 Cor. 2:14](#); [Romans 8:7-8](#)). It is clear, therefore, that the new birth is not the reformation of the old nature but the reception of a new nature”.—New Unger's Bible Dictionary

As clearly illustrated being born again consist of a new birth. Our hearts must be filled with the Holy Spirit. Scripture teaches that when Christ comes into our hearts by person of the Holy Spirit then we are a new creature [creation]. This is illustrated from two translations of 2 Corinthians 5:17 listed below.

“Therefore if any person is [ingrafted] in Christ (the Messiah) he is a new creation (a new creature altogether); the old [previous moral and spiritual condition] has passed away. Behold, the fresh *and* new has come!”[Amplified Bible]

“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”[New Living Translation]

The new life in Christ is not a reformation of your current life but is a new creation. The Holy Spirit comes into your life and gives you a complete make over. You become a new person and your old way of thinking, acting and living is gone because your life is no longer directed by the way you think but your life is to be directed by the Holy Spirit. Your new life is to be directed by the Holy Spirit who lives in your heart and directs. Romans 8:14 states: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. “ When you are born again you become a son/daughter of God.

Jesus said you must be born of water. What does it mean to be born of water? Some teach that this refers to water baptism. Jesus taught that those who accept Him are to be baptized in water. See Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15-16. On the day of Pentecost after Peter preached the gospel of Jesus Christ 3,000 people accepted Jesus as their Savior and Peter said: “Peter replied, ‘Each of you must repent of your sins, turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ to show that you have received forgiveness for your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’.”[New Living Translation] The apostle Paul taught that water baptism is symbolic of the death and resurrection of Jesus. “For we died and were buried with Christ by baptism. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, now we also may live new lives. Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised to life as he was. We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.”[Romans 6:4-6]

Have you been born again? Are you experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit living inside of you and directing your life?

QUOTES

We must not be content to be cleansed from sin; we must be filled with the Spirit. -John Fletcher

The Holy Spirit is a helper, not a doer. -Karen Huybrechts