

H O U S E o f W I S D O M

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John 3, Part I - Born From Above

Born Again: This religious experience of a person usually involves regular attendance to a church and several visible changes in lifestyle. Similar terms used to describe this event are born anew, a new life, conversion or regeneration. While the process may be explained somewhat differently, all seem to combine the conversion and born again experiences. Not any commentary I checked explained how to be born again. At least six Bibles use the term “born from above.” Here are definitions from two common sources:

Webster’s Dictionary: *of, relating to, or being usually a Christian person who has made a renewed or confirmed commitment of faith especially after an intense religious experience.*

Jamieson, Fausset, Brown Commentary: *be born again — or, as it were, begin life anew in relation to God; his manner of thinking, feeling, and acting, with reference to spiritual things, undergoing a fundamental and permanent revolution.*

John 3:1-4: *1. There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 2. 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 you do, except God be with him. 3. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see^(g1492) the kingdom of God. 4. 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? Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews. Jesus referred to him as a “teacher” (KJ - master, verse 10) of Israel. There is evidence that Jewish leaders baptized non-Jew converts, referring to the new proselyte as a child newborn. But evidently, they were not familiar with the necessity of every person needing to be “born again” in order to see the kingdom of God. The term born^(g1080) again^(g509) is properly born from above. The same Greek word (*anōthen*^{g509}) for “again” appears in **John 3:31:** *He that comes from above^(g509) is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaks of the earth: he that comes from heaven is above all.* Jesus and John the Baptist were both speaking metaphorically. **James 1:17:** *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above^(g509), and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.**

John 3:5-6: *5. 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. 6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Note that in verse 3 a person must be born from above to SEE the kingdom of God, and in verse 5 a person must be born of water and spirit to ENTER the kingdom of God. The Greek word for see (*eido*^{g1492}), properly is to see - as with the physical sight or to perceive, understand with the mind. Jesus told the Jews that the kingdom of God is within a person (Lk 17:20-21). So, the kingdom of God is spiritual and inward (1 Corinthians 3:16); it is the way God understands things. Therefore, in John 3:3 Jesus is saying that a person must be born from above to perceive the kingdom of God. To enter the understanding of the kingdom of God one must be born of water and spirit - spiritual sources which make a spiritual birth.*

Two types of inward births are expressed in verse 6: flesh = the way humans understand (Rom 8:5-6), of which “earthly” is a symbol; Holy Spirit = the way God understands, of which “heavenly” is a symbol. **Isaiah 55:6-11:** *6. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: 7. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. 9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. 10. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and returns not there, but waters the earth, and makes it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: 11. So shall my word be that goes forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. So, heavenly water is a symbol for God’s words (cp Deuteronomy 32:2), and earthly water a symbol for man’s words (Proverbs*

18:4). The Hebrew word (*ruah*^{h7307}) and the Greek word (*pneuma*^{g4151}) both properly mean *wind, breath*. Breath forms the words we speak, and words express our thoughts, or understanding. Wind or breath is a symbol of a spirit, whether God's or man's.

To be born again, or from above, requires receiving God's understanding, which for the most part is hidden in symbols. While Isaiah uses rain and snow for God's words, there are other types of water mention in the written word - living water (Jeremiah 2:13; John 7:38); dew (Deuteronomy 32:2); hail (Isaiah 28:17). Then there are rivers, lakes and the sea, all representing some kind of understanding received by hearing the voice of the Spirit: **John 3:7-8**: 7. *Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born [from above]. 8 The wind <G4151> blows <G4154> where it lists <G2309>, and thou hearest <G191> the sound <G5456> thereof, but can <G1492> not <G3756> tell <G1492> whence <G4159> it comes, and whither it goes: so is every one that is born <G1080> of the Spirit <G4151>.*

Here is verse 8 more clearly stated: The Spirit <G4151> breaths <G4154> where is desires <G2309> and you hear <G191> the voice <G5456> thereof, but perceive <G1492> not <G3756> from where <G4159> it comes and where it goes: so is everyone that is born <G1080> of the Spirit <G4151>. When the truth is spoken, are you perceiving the still small voice? Are you letting the wind blow (Revelation 7:1) where it desires? I was baptized because I felt the Spirit moving in my heart. However, instead of teaching me to listen for the still small voice of the Spirit, I was taught to search the scriptures for truth. Without the Spirit no one can understand the book. To have spiritual ears requires understanding and takes practice in listening. **Isaiah 30:21**: *And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left* (RSV). Are you on the narrow path? Do not leave it. Are you in the ditch? Get back on the narrow path.

Recently, when I was doing some research, I read a comment that stated: "The smallest sin will keep you out of heaven." I did not give it serious thought at the time. However, in my mind I thought, "I don't agree with that statement." The next day I was entering an electric customer, and a common situation came up where the address already had a valid account, which would not allow me to enter a new customer at that address. I lose about 98% of these customers because it requires them to fax a copy of their lease, which can take two or three days to be able to set up the account. Typically, the customer wants to move in right away, as in this case. Well, I just had an account cancel. So I gave this account number to the customer and told him it was only temporary until I could get a new one. The account number would allow him to move in, but could create a situation with all kinds of complications if not quickly resolved. I woke up in the middle of the night thinking of this situation that I had created, and I began to feel an overwhelming sense of guilt. Then the Lord brought to mind the incident about the smallest sin. I realized that, while a wrong may seem insignificant when looking through worldly eyes, it is the feeling of guilt that will destroy the person.

John 3:9-11: 9. *Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? 10. Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master (teacher) of Israel, and know not these things? 11. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.* How many teachers in the churches today do not perceive heavenly things? **Matthew 5:3**: *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* (the kingdom of heaven is the same as the kingdom of God). To be *poor in spirit* is to recognize your own spiritual ignorance and be open to consider, while trusting that the Lord has your best interest at heart. **Mark 10:15**: *Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.* Ever notice the curiosity of little children? Adults should be as curious and open to receive spiritual things as a three-year old is to receive parent's instructions.

John 3:12-15: 12. *If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?* 13. *And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.* 14. *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:* 15. *That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.* The "born from above" metaphor that Jesus told Nicodemus was earthly things. As a new Christian, when I read about being "born again" I understood it to mean that the Holy Spirit moved me to be baptized in water, go to church and study the Bible in order to know how to live a Godly life. This is "baby milk"

Paul mentions in Hebrews 5:12-14 + 6:1-2. Now I realize that I was only “converted” and not “born from above.” I was taught to adhere to church doctrine. No one ever mentioned that I was to perceive and act on God’s impressions on my heart. How many Christians today believe they are born again, when they are only converted?

Acts 3:19: *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.* Blot sins out from where? Out of my fleshly way of thinking! Conversion is to turn from worldly ways toward Godly ways. However, to maintain spiritual growth, one must continually receive God’s thoughts via Jesus Christ, so that our thinking changes (cf Matthew 23:26), which changes our behavior. In verse 14, Jesus said, *as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up*, connecting the cross and Israel’s experience (Numbers 21:4-9) as a metaphor of self as the “whisperer,” the one doing the deceiving. Mankind’s adversarial attitude (serpent) toward God is represented by the picture of Jesus hanging on the cross with wounds, stripes and naked. It is a figure of what has happened to everyone of us. By our fleshly decisions and because of our darkness, we made ourselves naked concerning God’s character; and we have been wounded by words spoken or things done to us, and we have done the same to others. The wilderness is described in the Bible as a land of deserts and pits, a dry land that is the shadow of death (Jeremiah 2:6). It is a metaphor of the place in which we dwelled at conversion. We have to ask ourselves, “To which voice are we listening - the voice of the serpent, or the voice of the Spirit? When we study the cross from a heavenly (God’s) view, we can see ourselves, as portrayed through Christ’s crucifixion, if we listen.

John 3:16-18: *16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* Put yourself in God’s place for a moment: Could you hand over your child to someone who would beat, torture and kill that child in a most, slow, agonizing and cruel form of death known to man at the time? And yet, God did not condemn those who killed His only Son.

The effect on the heart of verse 16 has been minimized, even abolished, because of the distorted view of the Father and Son, caused by the “one God” concept taught by most today. It is the wickedness of mankind that has caused them stray from God, *professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man* (Romans 1:22-23).

What does it mean to believe in the name of *the only begotten Son of God*? Hebrew names are descriptive of character. When Isaac was conceived, the names of Abram and Sarai were changed to Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 17:5, 15); After Jacob wrestled with the angel, he was told that his name was to change to Israel (Genesis 32:28); Jacob’s twin brother was named Esau because of how he looked (Genesis 25:25). So, to believe in the name, or to bow in the name of Jesus (Philippians 2:10) is to acknowledge and receive his character, which is the same as the Father, and which we also can possess (John 17:21).

John 3:19-21: *19. And this is the condemnation ^(g2920), that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20. For every one [doing] evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21. But [the (one) doing the] truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.* The proper meaning of the Greek word *krisis* ^(g2920) is a *decision, judgment*. About 2000 years ago, leaders of the church, who also persuaded the people, made the decision to “love darkness” rather than to come to the light (John 1:9). Verse 19 is just as applicable to the religious bodies today as then.

Why do people hate light? I can tell you from my personal experience above, no one wants to have their sins exposed, nor do they want to separate from families or church, which very well could happen if they accept truth. The Bible refers to it as the shame of our nakedness being exposed (Revelation 3:18). Adam and Eve saw their nakedness (Genesis 3:7-11) - i.e. then guilt and fear. Only the truth will set you free (John 8:32). Walk in the light while you still have the opportunity. Amen.