

HAVE YOU BEEN “BORN AGAIN”?

Have you been born again? Can you easily answer that, or does it make you think?

Let's see what the Bible says about it. The major passage on this subject is John 3.

Before we go there, it's fascinating to notice that right through the book of John we often see that Jesus' words are misunderstood by His hearers, who think He is talking physically, but He is actually speaking spiritually. Here are a few examples:

- ◆ John 2:18-21 He said “Destroy this temple and in 3 days I'll raise it up.” They said “it was 46 years in the building and you'll raise it up in 3 days?” They understood Him to be talking of a physical temple, but He was speaking of the temple of His body. A figurative, spiritual temple.
- ◆ John 4:9-14 He told the Samaritan woman He could give her a drink of living water. She said “Sir, you have no bucket and the well is deep.” She understood physical water. He meant the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ John 4:31-34 He said “I have food to eat you don't know about.” They said “Surely no one has brought Him something to eat?” They understood physical food. He meant He had spiritual food “to do the will of Him who sent me and to complete His work.”
- ◆ John 6:32-35 He talked about the bread which came from heaven to give life to the world. They thought He meant physical bread. He meant Himself.
- ◆ John 8:31-33 He said “the truth will make you free.” They said “we have never been slaves to anyone.”
- ◆ John 9:39-41 He talked about blindness. The Pharisees said “Surely we are not blind, are we?” He was speaking of spiritual blindness.
- ◆ John 11:11-14 He said Lazarus had fallen asleep. The disciples said “Lord, if he has fallen asleep he'll be alright.” Jesus was talking about his death.

There are lots more examples! And John 3 is one of them. When Jesus talked about being born again, Nicodemus thought He meant physical birth, but He was talking of spiritual birth.

John 3:1-2 “Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. ² He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”

John 3:3 “Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

I used to think being “born again” didn't occur until the resurrection because “seeing” the Kingdom of God wouldn't happen until then. But it is quite possible that you can “see” the Kingdom of God now, by experiencing it now. The word “see” can be used in that way. For example, “I can see how you keep your promises.” “I can see your loyalty – I'd love to see your friendship” – meaning to experience it. People say “Ah, I see what you're getting at.”

In John 3:36 is an example: “whoever rejects the Son will not see life.” (= experience life)

So to “see” the Kingdom of God could mean now or at the resurrection. We need to keep reading to understand which. In John 3:3 the word “born” is “**gennao**,” which usually means to be born. It can be translated by the old word “beget,” but that word means “give birth to” as well. In Matthew 1, Abraham

begot Isaac” and “Isaac begot Jacob” – that’s “**gennao**.” It means gave birth to, not just conceived. If you look up “beget” in the dictionary, it says “generate, produce, procreate, give birth to.”

The word “**gennao**” is used in Acts 22:28 where Paul said “I was born,” – in Acts 7:20 “Moses was born.” It is translated “conceived” once in the New Testament, “begotten” a few times, and “born” lots of times.

Vine’s Dictionary of New Testament Words says “**Gennao** means born, brought forth, produced,” and shows that it is used once in Matthew 1:20 to refer to conception. So it is most likely **gennao** means “born” not “conceived.” There is another Greek word used for conceived (Sullambano).

John 3:3 – The word “again” is “*anōthen*.” According to *Vine’s*, “*ano*” means “above” and *anōthen* = “from above.” It is incorrectly translated again in the KJV, but the RV corrects this (p 43.)

John 3:31 is another example of the use of *anōthen* “from above.” In fact, every time John uses the word “*anōthen*” it means “from above!” When he wants to use the word “again” he uses a different Greek word!

Clearly this verse should be translated “born from above,” and the KJV is wrong in saying “born again.”

John 3:4 Nicodemus thought Jesus meant “born again” so he said “How can that happen when you are old?” – but actually Jesus was talking about being born “from above,” – spiritually.

This is the repeated theme throughout John, that people understood physical meanings when Jesus meant something spiritual.

In Verse 2, Nicodemus raved about Jesus’ miracles showing He was from God. Jesus responded by telling Him – those miracles are just physical things; what is important is the Spirit from above; you can’t understand or experience the Kingdom of God unless you are born from above, and have spiritual understanding!

Verse 5 “Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.”

So Jesus explained a bit more. He added the necessity for water in this new birth. Referring to baptism, and/or washing away of our sins by the water of the word. This happens at conversion. When we receive God’s Holy Spirit we are ‘born from above!’

Verse 6 “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”
There’s a physical life and a spiritual life.

Jesus was saying that humans can’t understand or experience the physical world unless they are born into it, as physical human beings. Similarly, they can’t experience the spirit world unless they are born spiritually into it.

Verse 7 “You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’”

Verse 8 “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”

He explains further. You can’t see the wind, but you can see what it has done – the leaves and trees blown around. So it is with the Holy Spirit – you can’t see it, but you see the results in someone’s life.

Born of the Spirit – a much better way to put it.

Verses 9-10 ⁹“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked. ¹⁰“You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things?”

Now let’s move out of John 3 and notice what the rest of the Bible says about being ‘born from above.’

John 1:12-13 ¹²“Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God— ¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”

Does this happen at conversion, or in the resurrection? Something amazing happens at conversion. But maybe we aren’t born again until the resurrection – this isn’t clear, so we’ll look at other verses.

“Born of God” – another way of putting it.

Romans 6:3-4 ³“Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death? ⁴We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”
We die at baptism and are reborn into a new life then.

Romans 8:5-6 ⁵“Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.”
We either live a physical life or one born from above, following the wind of the Spirit. We live one way or the other now – which is it?

Romans 8:14-16 ¹⁴“For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him we cry, “*Abba*, Father.” ¹⁶The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”
We are the children of God now.

Galatians 3:26 “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,”

Galatians 4:6-7 ⁶“Because you are His sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba*, Father.” ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are His child, God has made you also an heir.”
An embryo doesn’t cry “*Abba*.”

Hebrews 2:10 “In bringing many sons and daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what He suffered.”

Hebrews 2:11 “Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters.”
Jesus calls us brothers and sisters.

Hebrews 12:22-23 ²²But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, ²³to the

church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all, to the spirits of the righteous made perfect
We are the church of the firstborn.

1 Peter 1:23 “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”

1 Peter 2:2 “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,”

We are like newborn babies.

1 John 3:1-2 “See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him.

² Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

1 John 3:9 “No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.”

This refers to **continuing to sin**, not just sinning once or twice.

1 John 4:7; 5:1 ⁷ “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.”

⁵ ¹ “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves His child as well.”

Clearly we are born from above, born as children of God. What a wonderful privilege and honour this is! What a fantastic blessing! When we were converted and received the Holy Spirit, our lives were transformed to see and live in the Spirit realm! Unconverted human beings have no understanding of the Spirit realm. When we repent and believe, a whole new world is opened up to us!

But it is much better, I think, to understand or describe this as being born from above, rather than born again.

Many Christians would use the terminology “born again” and even make a point of asking people “Have you been born again?” That is taking the misunderstanding Nicodemus had, that we need to be born again. Jesus clarified it by saying we need to be born from above.

There is no difference between a “born again Christian” and a regular “Christian”. All true Christians have been born from above. This means a new birth, and it is okay to say we have been “born again,” but much clearer to say “born from above.”

What a wonderful blessing it is that we have a chance to put away this physical, carnal life and receive God’s Holy Spirit, which gives us a new birth from above, so we enter a new realm of spiritual understanding, we enter the Kingdom of God, and we become spirit born sons of God, children of God.

It is certainly a wonderful blessing to be **Born From Above!**