

Born Again of The Spirit

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Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, Yeshua:

One of the most critical verses we find in scripture is in Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. Jesus told him, *"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3, NKJV).ⁱ Being born again is undeniably essential for our salvation. But what exactly is our new birth?

The word "again" that Jesus spoke is often translated as "from above," which places our rebirth on a new, higher spiritual level.ⁱⁱ Nicodemus was confused about how one can be born again. Jesus rebuked him for his ignorance, saying, *"Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?"* (John 3:10). Jesus was clear, saying, *"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'"* (John 3:6-7). Jesus was speaking of a spiritual birth, not a physical one. And the prophets of Israel had already foretold of this promise. We read, *"Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh"* (Ezekiel 11:19).

We are all sinners because our first birth was conceived in iniquity, so a second birth is required.ⁱⁱⁱ Being born again means that we have a new "spiritual" birth.^{iv} As such, we become a "new creation" in Christ.^v In our rebirth, we are forgiven, justified, and cleansed from sin and every stain of sin.^{vi} We receive in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and quickening of God's Spirit.^{vii} And we are promised the resurrection, the uniting of our new spirit with a new physical yet incorruptible body.^{viii}

Our regeneration is essential to our salvation, and the Kingdom of God cannot be seen without it.^{ix} We must be born from above, and the symbol of this rebirth is the ordinance of water baptism. Here, we publicly declare that Jesus is Lord, identifying with His death, burial, and resurrection. Though we wait for our bodily resurrection, sin is no longer part of who we are.^x John said, *"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"* (1 John 3:9).

But John also said, *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us... If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us"* (1 John 1:8 & 10). So, is John somehow conflicted? And, if a believer sins, do we assume this person is not born again?

The Bible tells us we have a physical (temporal) and spiritual nature. Paul says, *"There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body" (1 Corinthians 15:44)*. And he affirmed this dual nature, physical and spiritual, existing as *one* created being when he said, *"As we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man" (1 Corinthians 15:49)*. The key here is *also*. Our natural appearance inherited from Adam will remain part of our identity, even in the resurrection. However, God has given us a new heart and spirit and made us a new creation, and our spiritual nature, which is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, has come from Christ.^{xi}

So, while we now have a new spirit connected to God that sets our hearts on the things of His Kingdom, the brain and mind that process the deeper aspects of man's soul, which Paul refers to as *"the flesh,"* must be renewed daily.^{xii} He said, *"The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please" (Romans 7:23)*.^{xiii}

However, we need to understand that our physical bodies were not created to be sinful. Rather the desires and lusts of our old nature found deep in our mind and soul causes the body to sin. One drives the other. As we read, *"We all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others" (Ephesians 2:3)*; *"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11)*.^{xiv} When our bodies respond to our lustful thoughts and impulses, the sins we commit in the flesh leave its stains upon it. Therefore, the resurrection is also required after our regeneration.

Paul's old sinful nature tormented him, even causing him to desire to leave his physical body to be with the Lord.^{xv} He said, *"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" (Romans 7:15)*. Paul sounds conflicted. On the one hand, he said, *"But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me" (Romans 7:17)*. But like John, he also understood the Lord had sanctified and set apart our new nature so that it cannot sin or be corrupted by our old sinful nature, lest we crucify Christ a second time.^{xvi}

Being born again means not practicing or making a habit of living a life of sin. We have a new nature within. Paul expounded that being forgiven did not give us a license to sin, but he assured us that we are never under any condemnation when we do sin.^{xvii} God might discipline us, but in Jesus, we are never condemned.^{xviii} Our new creation is protected, fully sealed, and preserved for the day of our resurrection. As Paul said, *"Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)*.

However, the Lord declared, *"For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19)*. Thus, we understand that man's flesh will die and return to the dust of the earth. With our perishable bodies, the Lord will bury His righteous judgments against our flesh forever for the sins we have

committed in the flesh. We praise the Lord that this decaying body will return to the dust of the earth where it came from so that we may receive God's new eternal body.

But we also need to understand that our spiritual body, the new creation in Christ, will never be fully complete without our physically resurrected body. In Christ, our resurrected bodies will be wholly united with our new spiritual nature—the new creation—to become one perfect being fully transformed into the image of Christ. We read, *"For our citizenship is in [the Kingdom of] heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself"* (Philippians 3:20-21).

The false universal teaching that we are all children of God is unbiblical. We were all orphaned when God cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden. We read, *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the [e]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 1:12-13). We have no claim to be part of His family, nor can we even see or enter His Kingdom unless we are born again of God's Spirit.^{xix} A sinful orphaned person cannot make themselves a child of God. It is impossible.

Without a new birth, we remain dead in our sins, and dead people cannot make themselves alive. Man cannot in any way, either by virtue or effort of his own, bring himself into the position of Divine sonship. No, it is only possible to be reborn, resurrected and brought into sonship through God's word and the Holy Spirit's regenerative power.^{xx} Both are needed, and the Holy Spirit is the agent to bear witness to God's word and the one that regenerates our souls when we receive it. As we read, *"Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever"* (1 Peter 1:23). Our new birth is truly a gift of God.

Arthur W. Pink said, "Let us realize that the sinner is not ignorant, needing instruction; he is not weak and in need of invigoration; he is not sick and in need of doctoring. He is dead and needs to be made alive."^{xxi} Jesus said, *"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me"* (John 5:39); *"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death"* (Revelation 1:18). The Holy Spirit coming into the heart of the believer brings the life of God, enabling us to partake of the divine nature.^{xxii}

Our regeneration continues until we are united with the Lord. Another theological term is "ongoing" or "progressive sanctification." We must initially believe by faith that Jesus is our Lord and Savior, and we must repent and submit to His Lordship, trusting Jesus for our forgiveness and atonement. We are now sanctified and set apart by the Lord for the day of resurrection—a new creation and child of God.^{xxiii}

Being a child of God means we become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.^{xxiv} But we must also be renewed daily by the Spirit of God. Paul said, *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even*

though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16).^{xxv} We are saved but not yet fully transformed into the image of Christ. God requires the journey of life, its trials, triumphs, and tribulations, to change us incrementally. Paul said, "But we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3-5).

Our faith can only grow when we are challenged to trust the Lord. And our victories over this world and our old sinful nature will only come when we put on the armor of God and surrender to the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit. Yes, God *will* give us more than we can handle so that we do not confront the trials of life without casting all our care upon Jesus, for He cares for us.^{xxvi} As we read, *"Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7)*. On the other hand, the unregenerated soul is not only dead but alienated from the life of God.^{xxvii} And worse, their soul belongs to the kingdom of darkness and the prince who rules it. They belong to Satan. Hence, Jesus said, *"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do" (John 8:44)*.

But Jesus came to destroy the works of the Devil and will take possession of the creation at the Father's appointed time—all of it, both in the spiritual and natural realms. We read, *"Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession" (Psalm 2:8)*; *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18)*. When Jesus returns, He will remove the spirit of darkness that covers the earth, and deep darkness that deceives the people, so that only the Spirit of God remains.^{xxviii} As the prophets declared, *"They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord As the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9).^{xxix}*

God is not sending anyone to hell. He is merely inviting all who are willing to enter His Kingdom. Jesus said, *"Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding" (Matthew 22:9)*. Yet, no unclean or sinful thing may come near God's Kingdom.^{xxx} Those who reject His invitation are not only cast out; they are judged along with the demons and all who belong to Satan. And all will be thrown into the place of outer darkness and the lake of fire.^{xxxi} Jesus warned us, saying, *"But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 8:12)*. Jesus' referral to the "sons of the kingdom" is a warning to the natural descendants of Abraham, the Jewish people. And Paul amplified this warning to the Gentiles, saying, *"For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either" (Romans 11:21)*.

We must believe the message of the gospel, and we must accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to receive the Holy Spirit and become born again. This is how we enter God's eternal Kingdom. But this Kingdom is not exclusively spiritual, as some incorrectly believe. Christ's Kingdom is both physical *and* spiritual. Jesus taught His disciples to pray; emphasis added: *"God's Kingdom and His purpose for the creation will be established on earth (the physical real) as it is already established in heaven (the spiritual realm where our regenerated new creation dwells)."^{xxxii}*

However, no unclean or sinful thing may come near God's Kingdom. Therefore, our regeneration and resurrection are essential to enter the Kingdom of God.

Only those who believe in the atoning works of Christ and are born again of the Spirit will enter it. Our joy will be everlasting, and for this, the redeemed in the Lord sing a new song: *"You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth"* (Revelation 5:9-10).

Our new birth is clouded in mystery. It is a miracle of God, and no person can observe the regeneration of the human soul, and no one can fully understand it. But we can easily witness the fruit of the Spirit resulting from God's divine operation. Jesus answered Nicodemus: *"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 3:5-8).

The new birth makes the believer a child of God.^{xxxiii} And it makes us a new creation and partaker of the divine nature, enabling us to live a life of victory over sin and the temptations of this world.^{xxxiv} Our souls are being renewed and transformed daily into the perfect image of Christ—the incarnation of our Heavenly Father. Hence, we also are becoming just like Him, regenerated and, later, resurrected men and women of God who will be perfectly created in the likeness and image of God.

Amen!

ⁱ All Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Bible (NKJV) unless otherwise noted, Thomas Nelson Inc., 1982.

ⁱⁱ Duffield, Guy P. and Van Cleave, Nathaniel M. *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology*. Foursquare Media. 1910.

ⁱⁱⁱ Psalm 51:5. Galatians 5:19-21.

^{iv} 1 John 1:12-13, 5:1. John 3:8.

^v 2 Corinthians 5:17. Galatians 6:15. Ephesians 2:10, 4:24.

^{vi} Titus 3:5.

^{vii} Titus 3:5. Colossians 3:10. Romans 12:2. Psalm 51:10.

^{viii} Romans 6:2-7. Ephesians 2:1, 5-6. 1 Corinthians 15:42, 50.

^{ix} John 3:3, 7. 1 Corinthians 2:14.

^x Psalm 51:5.

^{xi} Ezekiel 11:19. 2 Corinthians 5:17.

^{xii} 2 Corinthians 4:16.

^{xiii} John 3:6. Romans 8:7, 9.

^{xiv} James 1:14-15.

^{xv} Philippians 1:21-23.

^{xvi} Hebrews 6:4-6.

^{xvii} Romans 7:7, 8:1.

^{xviii} Hebrews 12:26. Romans 8:1.

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- xix John 3:3.
- xx Titus 3:5. John 1:13, 3:5-8. James 1:18.
- xxi Arthur W. Pink. Source unknow.
- xxii 2 Corinthians 5:17. 2 Peter 1:4.
- xxiii John 1:12. Galatians 3:26. Matthew 5:44-45.
- xxiv Romans 8:16-17.
- xxv Ephesians 4:23. Philippians 2:12.
- xxvi 1 Peter 5:7.
- xxvii Ephesians 2:1. Romans 8:6. Revelation 3:1. 1 Timothy 5:6.
- xxviii Isaiah 60:2.
- xxix Habakkuk 2:14.
- xxx Revelation 22:15.
- xxxi Matthew 8:12. Galatians 4:30. Revelation 12:9, 14:9-11.
- xxxii Ephesians 2:4-6.
- xxxiii Matthew 6:9, 7:11. Romans 8:16-17.
- xxxiv 2 Corinthians 5:17. 2 Peter 1:4. 1 John 2:29, 3:9, 3:14, 4:19, 5:1. Psalm 119:97. 1 Peter 2:2. Matthew 5:44-45. Ephesians 4:23-24.