

ARE YOU ALREADY



BORN AGAIN?

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Have you been born again? It's a catchy phrase. It invokes thoughts of piety and gives the appearance of true Christianity. It claims to describe spiritual maturity—the release from sin and the receipt of salvation. It has become the litmus test for many professing Christians to determine whether one is “saved” or “lost”—whether one will “go to heaven” or “hell” after death.

Many professing Christians think they are already born again, and they readily share their convictions with others, presenting what would seem to be a convincing case for the need to be “born again” in this life. In reality, they miss one of the most important teachings of the Bible—what man's ultimate potential is and how to attain it.

To quote from a Catholic article, “Catholics and Protestants agree that to be saved, you have to be born again... When a Catholic says that he has been ‘born again,’ he refers to the transformation that God's grace accomplished in him during baptism. Evangelical Protestants typically mean something quite different when they talk about being ‘born again.’ For an Evangelical, becoming ‘born again’ often happens like this: He goes to a crusade or a revival where a minister delivers a sermon telling him of his need to be ‘born again.’... But is the minister right?”

Good question. But more importantly, we need to ask, “Are either one of the two viewpoints correct?” According to Catholic teaching, “Since all Catholics have been baptized, all Catholics have been born again... If the Evangelical has not been properly water baptized, he has not been born again.”

Are we born again when we “accept” Christ? Do we become born again at the moment of our baptism? In both cases, the answer is an emphatic “NO,” as we will see from the pages of the Bible. But, even if one *were* to become born again at the time of proper baptism, a *baby* cannot be “properly” baptized. Our free booklet, *“Baptism—a Requirement for Salvation?”* makes this truth abundantly clear and explains why the baptism of babies or little children is not acceptable in God's sight.

What, then, is the correct Biblical understanding regarding the important question of being “born again”? We will explore God's

Word to gain a clear explanation, but first we must understand one important principle, or key, in order to rightly comprehend Biblical concepts. The clear and unambiguous Scriptures must be studied first before focusing on more difficult ones. In other words, let the Bible explain itself.

Christ Explains Born Again in John 3

In John 3, Jesus Christ explained *when* man becomes born again to Nicodemus, a leading Pharisee and ruler of the Jews. Nicodemus visited Christ by night, apparently because he did not want to be seen talking to Jesus. He confessed, in verse 2, that he and the other Pharisees knew that Christ was “a teacher come from God,” and that God was with Him.

Nicodemus, as well as the other Pharisees and Sadducees, believed that the Messiah would come soon to free the Jews from Roman occupation and to restore the kingdom, or rulership, to Israel. They envisioned that the kingdom would be an earthly government. Christ went right to the crux of the matter. He explained that the kingdom was nothing like any human kingdom. Rather, the Kingdom of GOD would be ruling OVER man.

He also explained that no human being could be IN the Kingdom of God, and that in order to enter God’s Kingdom, one had to become a Spirit being—a member of the God Family. Christ also made it clear that just *KNOWING* Him would not be enough either. Knowledge requires action. When we *KNOW* that we need to change, we *MUST* then *CHANGE*. Only those who bring forth fruits worthy of repentance (Matthew 3:8), and produce the fruit of the Spirit (compare Galatians 5:22–23), will enter the Kingdom of God. So, Jesus answered Nicodemus in John 3:3, 5–6, 8: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... 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... 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.”

Anyone who can read these verses with an open mind and set aside any preconceived notions, ideas and interpretations, would have to

admit that Christ could not possibly have spoken about a “born again” experience *in this physical life*. Notice it again: **One who is born of the Spirit IS spirit**. He is like the wind which cannot be seen but can be felt—like a powerful hurricane or tornado. Christ also said that unless one is born again, he could not see nor enter the Kingdom of God. In other words, as long as someone is flesh and blood—not spirit—he cannot see or enter God’s Kingdom.

Misinterpretations of John 3:6

Since most commentaries promote the wrong concept that we *are* already born again, they are compelled to “explain away” Christ’s clear statement that a born-again person *must be* spirit. Notice in the following examples how they try to misinterpret and twist Christ’s words in order to make them fit with their preconceived erroneous ideas:

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, explains the term “is spirit” as “partakes of and possesses His spiritual nature.”

A similar statement can be found in *Matthew Henry’s Commentary*, page 1518: “... it is spirit, v. 6. Those that are regenerated are made spiritual. The dictates and interests of the rational and immortal soul have retrieved the dominion they ought to have over the flesh.” [The idea of an immortal soul is another wrong concept. Compare our free booklet, “*Do You Have an Immortal Soul?*”]

These commentaries, and many others, re-interpret Christ’s clear statement that in order to be “born again” we must BE spirit, as saying that we must be “spiritual.” Charles B. Williams, *The New Testament: A Translation in the Language of the People*, even renders this phrase as, “whatever is born of the Spirit is spiritual.”

This is a blatantly false rendering. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* and *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible* confirm that the correct translation is “spirit”—not “spiritual.” The Greek word for “spirit,” used twice in John 3:6, is “*pneuma*.” The Greek word for “spiritual” is “*pneumatikos*,” a word that is *not used* in John 3:6. The word “*pneumatikos*” is used, for example, in 1 Corinthians 12:1 in talking about “spiritual gifts.” However, the word “*pneuma*” NEVER means “spiritual.”

To translate the word “*pneuma*” as “spiritual” in John 3:6 is dishonest,

especially since the word is translated in the first part of the phrase as "Spirit." Nobody, to our knowledge, translates John 3:6 in this way: "Whatever is born of the Spiritual is spiritual." Why then would one want to render the word "*pneuma*" as "spiritual" in the second part of the same phrase? Only to make it fit with pre-conceived wrong ideas.

Others render John 3:6 differently but still convey the wrong concept that we are already born again. Rather than translating, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," they say: "Flesh gives birth to flesh" (J.B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English*); or "...it is the spirit that gives birth to spirit" (*The New English Bible*). These "interpretations" are not literal renditions. They actually obscure and change the intended original meaning.

The Englishman's Greek New Testament, An Interlinear Literal Translation, gives the following literal rendering, word for word, of the original Greek: "That which has been born of the flesh flesh is; and that which has been born of the Spirit spirit is."

The truthful conclusion is inescapable: Those who HAVE BEEN BORN of the Spirit ARE Spirit.

Entrance Into the Kingdom of God—How and When

Paul clearly understood that we, as long as we are human beings, cannot enter the Kingdom of God, as he says in 1 Corinthians 15:50: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption." Paul is saying that there is only one way for a Christian to inherit or enter God's Kingdom. He explains it in verses 51–53: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be *changed*—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on *incorruption*, and this mortal must put on *immortality*."

Paul is telling us in this passage that we must first be changed into spirit. Only then will we be able to see and enter the Kingdom of God (compare, again, 1 Corinthians 15:50). We read in verses 42–45: "So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is

raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam [Jesus Christ] became a life-giving **spirit**."

Christ became a **Spirit being**. We, too, in the resurrection to eternal life, will become Spirit beings, and we "shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2; compare, too, Philippians 3:20–21). As Spirit beings, we will be able to see God, both God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. As flesh and blood human beings, we cannot see God in His glorified state. (We read, in Exodus 33:18–23, that Moses wanted to see God's glory. God responded, "You cannot see My face; for no MAN shall see Me, and live" (v. 20)).

As glorified beings we will be able to see God in His glory, "as He is," as 1 John 3:2 says. This Scripture refers to the returning Jesus Christ "in the glory of His Father" (Mark 8:38). We will be able to see the glorified Christ, as He is, and we know from Titus 2:13 that Christ IS God. We will then be glorified beings ourselves (Romans 8:30). Further, when we, as glorified beings, see God, we actually see the Kingdom of God, as God IS the Kingdom—the governing, ruling Family of God. So then, it can be said that when we enter the Kingdom of God, we enter the Family of God, thus becoming members of the very Family of God. (For more information, please read our free booklets, "*The Gospel of the Kingdom of God*," and "*God is a Family*.")

Christ told Nicodemus that we would become spirit, but not until we are born again. He explained that we would be invisible to the human eye, as God is invisible to the human eye. We would be like the wind that cannot be seen, although its power can be felt. Jesus Christ Himself became spirit when He was born again—when He was resurrected—not before.

Christ—the Only Begotten Son

Christ is called the only begotten Son of God. For instance, we read in John 1:14,18 "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth... No one has seen God [the Father] at any time. The only begotten Son [margin: "God"], who is in the bosom of the Father, He [Christ] has declared Him [the Father]." References to Christ as the "only-begotten Son" can also be found in John 3:16, 18.

In the Greek, the word for “only begotten” is “*monogenes*.” It means, literally, “only-born” or “chief” (*Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*). *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* defines it as “only-born, i.e. sole,” pointing out that the word “*monos*” in “*monogenes*” means “sole” or “single” and by implication, “only” or “alone.” These Scriptures do not tell us that Christ is the only one who had been or will be spiritually begotten of God—that is, who had been given God’s Holy Spirit. As we will see in this booklet, it is the potential of all of mankind to become spiritually begotten, and ultimately born, of God. Everyone who has received the Holy Spirit has been spiritually begotten of God, but *no one, except Christ*, has been born again—born of God—changed from human to Spirit.

When referring to Christ, the term, “only begotten Son,” shows that Christ was miraculously conceived by Mary through a miracle from God. Christ’s *physical* begetting and birth were unique. No other human being has ever been physically begotten by God the Father, through His Spirit, in a human mother’s womb. In that sense, Christ is, and always will be, the ONLY begotten Son of God. Further, Christ will always have the preeminence over all of God’s children. (Remember that the Greek word “*monogenes*” also means, “chief.” Hebrews 11:17 refers to Isaac as the “only-begotten” or “chief” son of Abraham. Although Abraham had another son, Ishmael, God viewed Isaac as Abraham’s “chief” son—the “only-begotten” son of Sarah.) Christ will always be the “chief” Son of God the Father, but we, too, have the potential to also become God’s sons and daughters, under Christ.

There have been others who have been spiritually begotten of God, but not in the same way that Christ was begotten of the Holy Spirit at conception. The Bible tells us that David was begotten of, and had received, God’s Spirit (Psalm 51:10–11). We also read that the Spirit of Christ was IN certain people of the Old Testament (1 Peter 1:11).

Only Christ Has Been “Born Again”

Though others have been begotten of the Holy Spirit before Christ, no one but Christ was resurrected to eternal life (compare Hebrews 11:39–40). That is to say that no one, except Christ, has been BORN AGAIN. Christ was the only begotten Son in the way that He was conceived by Mary as flesh and blood, and He is the ONLY BORN, or

BORN AGAIN, Son through the resurrection from the dead. Romans 1:1–4 reads, in the *Moffat* rendering: “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God (which he promised of old by his prophets in the holy scriptures) concerning his Son, who was BORN of David’s offspring by natural descent and installed as Son of God WITH POWER by the spirit of holiness [which is a Spirit of power, compared with a mighty wind] WHEN HE WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD...”

The *New Jerusalem Bible* also reads that Christ was “designated Son of God in power by resurrection from the dead.”

Paul is not saying here, however, that Christ BECAME the Son of God through the resurrection. Christ was already called the Son of God while still alive, and in fact, had been the Son of God before His birth as a human being (For proof, please read our free booklet, “*God is a Family.*”).

What Paul is saying is that Christ, the Son of God, once again, became a powerful SPIRIT BEING through the resurrection. At that time, the glory and the power He had *before* He became a human being were restored to Him.

Christ sustains the universe with His mighty word of power (Hebrews 1:1–3). He walked through closed doors after His resurrection (John 20:26). He made Himself invisible (Luke 24:31), and He manifested Himself in a different form (Mark 16:12). He has a glorified, spiritual body (Revelation 1:14–16; John 17:5), but He appeared as a human being (John 21:1–14). He went to God in heaven and returned to this earth within a very short time of less than a few hours (compare John 20:17 with Matthew 28:9).

When we are born again—born of spirit—we will have the same kind of power that Christ has, and we will also possess the same kind of glorified body that Christ has. We will be invisible to the human eye, as the wind is, but we will be able to manifest ourselves to humans, as a human being, not as a glorified Spirit being, just as Christ did after His resurrection. Though some have received God’s Spirit at this time, they do not yet have the same kind of power or glory that Christ has. They are not yet composed of spirit. Simply put, they are not yet born again.

Christ—the Firstborn from the Dead

Christ did not *need* to be baptized. He had the Holy Spirit while still in His mother's womb. He, in fact, had been conceived in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit. He was only baptized to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15), giving us an example to do likewise. He was *not* born again when He was baptized. He did not even receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of His baptism, since He already had the Holy Spirit from His mother's womb, "without measure" (John 3:34, *Authorized Version*). Rather, He *became* born again when He was resurrected to Spirit. It was at that time that He became the *firstborn* among many brethren. Romans 8:29 tells us that we are to be "conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the *firstborn* among many brethren." We also read in Colossians 1:15, 18: "He is the image of the *invisible* God, the *firstborn* over all creation... And He is... the beginning, the *firstborn from the dead*."

Christ was the *first* human who became *born again* as a Spirit being. The Greek word for "firstborn," "*prototokos*," designates the person who is born first. It can refer to the firstborn Son of the spiritual Family of God, and it can also refer to the firstborn son in a physical family. We read, for example, in Hebrews 11:28 that Moses kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood by faith, "lest he who destroyed the *firstborn* should touch them." Christ was also, quite literally, Mary's *firstborn* Son (Compare Matthew 1:25; Luke 2:7. The Greek word, "*prototokos*," used here does not mean "only" or "only begotten" son. *That* concept is conveyed by the Greek word "*monogenes*"; see discussion above). Since Christ was Mary's *firstborn* Son, it goes without saying that Christ as a human being had younger brothers. In fact, He also had sisters (compare Matthew 13:53–58).

The same Greek word, "*prototokos*," is also used in Revelation 1:5. The *New King James Bible* translates the entire passage quite accurately in this way: "... and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the *firstborn from the dead*, and the ruler over the kings of the earth." (The *Authorized Version's* rendition, "first begotten of the dead," is clearly wrong. The context here is the resurrection from the dead. The *Ryrie Study Bible* comments that "Christ was the first [man] to receive a resurrection [glorified] body which is immortal.")

Rulership at the Time of the New Birth

When we are Spirit beings, we will be ruling with and under Christ, as born-again members of the God Family in the Kingdom of God. Notice how this future time of our rule here on earth is referred to in Scripture. Christ told His disciples in Matthew 19:28 (*Elberfelder Bible; Luther Bible; Menge Bible*): “Assuredly, I say to you that *at the new birth*, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” E.V. Rieu, *The Four Gospels*, translates, “...when the world is born anew.” Gaus, *The Unvarnished Gospels*, states, “in the time of rebirth...”

All of these translations reflect the understanding that Christ equated the time of the “new birth” with the time of the *future rule* of His disciples in God’s Kingdom, *after* they had been resurrected. *At that time*, they would be born again, not before then. This understanding is also confirmed by the *Broadman Bible Commentary*, vol. 9, p. 241, where we read: “To be sure, the Pharisees did envision that in the day of the Messiah the entire world would be renewed, and they called this transformation a ‘rebirth’ (cf. *paliggenesia* in Matt. 19:28).”

In Matthew 24:8, Christ compared certain events just prior to His return with “the beginning of sorrows.” The Greek word for “sorrows” describes “labor.” The *New International Version* translates, “the beginning of birth pains.” The *Revised Standard Version* states, “the beginning of birth-pangs.” The *New American Bible* says, “the beginning of labor pains.” The *New English Bible* renders the phrase as, “...with all these things, the birth-pangs of the new age begin.”

The fact that Christ stated that His disciples would rule in the Kingdom of God, after His return, shows that the “rebirth” or “new birth” is going to occur *after* the resurrection of the just.

Church Born in One Day

The Church of God is oftentimes compared with a *nation*—the holy nation of God (1 Peter 2:9). The sixty-sixth chapter of the book of Isaiah confirms, too, that true Christians will be born again—in the resurrection to eternal life—“in one day,” or, as Paul said, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet” (1 Corinthians 15:52). Isaiah 66:8–9 states: “Who has heard such a thing? Who has

seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a *nation* be born at once? For as soon as Zion [symbolic for the Church] was in labor, She gave birth to her children. Shall I bring to the time of birth, and not cause delivery?' says the LORD. 'Shall I who cause delivery shut up the womb?' says your God."

We will be born again at the time of our resurrection—not before then. All who believe and teach that they are already born again while still in this flesh, are mistaken.

A Born-Again Christian CANNOT Sin

Additional Scriptural proof that we are *not yet born again* is found in 1 John 3:9, where we read: "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed [the Holy Spirit] remains in him; and he *cannot* sin, because he has been born of God." Notice, too, 1 John 5:18, "We know that whoever is born of God *does not* sin."

According to these passages, one who is born again CANNOT and DOES NOT sin. The only being that CANNOT sin is God. Even Jesus Christ, when He was here on earth as a human being, COULD HAVE sinned. He was in all points tempted as we are, though He did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). The fact that He was tempted shows that it was *possible* for Him to sin. It also shows that He was fully man, as God cannot be tempted to sin (James 1:13). When it comes to Christians, however, they DO sin from time to time, even after receiving the Holy Spirit.

We read in 1 John 1:7–10: "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son CLEANSSES us from all sin. If we say that WE HAVE NO SIN, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."

Notice that John says two things here. He emphasizes that we DID sin in the past, and also, that we still DO sin now. He uses the past *and* the present tense. He is talking to Christians—those who have received the Holy Spirit. Yes, Christians DO sin from time to time! They CAN sin, which means that they CANNOT already be born again, because those who are born again CANNOT sin. God will bring many sons and daughters into His Family through a resurrection or change to

immortality. THEN, they will be BORN AGAIN God beings, and as such, they will be UNABLE to sin.

Some who want to uphold their teaching that we are already born again translate 1 John 3:9 as, “cannot abide in the state of sin.” However, this is not what the Scripture says. Rather, the correct translation, word for word from the Greek, reads, “... he is not able to sin.” The Biblical truth is very plain: One who is born again is UNABLE to sin.

The “Born-Again” Process

Using the process of human conception, gestation and birth as an analogy, we can gain a clearer understanding of the concept of being born again into SPIRIT. In this physical life, one is not born immediately at the time of conception. There is a time interval between conception and birth. A human baby must be conceived. A human baby must grow in the womb (the period of gestation). A human baby gains life of its own through birth.

The same principles apply to our spiritual birth. Although we will be born again at the time of our resurrection or our change to immortality, something else must happen first so that we CAN become born again. The Bible describes this prior event as spiritual conception or “begettal.” Simply put, before we can be born again, we must be begotten again—a spiritual begettal. This spiritual begettal takes place at the time of our baptism, after repentance, and after coming to an understanding of, and belief in, Christ’s sacrifice and the gospel of the Kingdom of God. At the time of baptism we then receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, through the laying on of hands, as a down payment—a guarantee—(Ephesians 1:14; 2 Corinthians 5:5) of our ultimate new birth at our resurrection to spirit.

In applying the analogy of human birth to spiritual birth, the receipt of God’s Spirit at conversion is a type of spiritual begettal. With the receipt of God’s Spirit, we acquire God’s divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), but there is still another step in the process. Just as an embryo must grow and develop, we must also *grow* spiritually and develop the fruit of the Spirit—the actual character of God. God considers those who have received His Spirit as being His children (2 Corinthians 6:17–18). Finally, Spirit-begotten children become SEPARATE SPIRIT BEINGS upon being born again—at their resurrection and change to immortality.

Romans 8:11 tells us that "...if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit [which] dwells in you." 1 Corinthians 6:14 adds, "And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power." In other words, God will resurrect us by His Spirit, which is a spirit of power (Acts 1:8; 2 Timothy 1:7).

To come to the point of being "born again" is a process. It starts with the moment we receive God's Holy Spirit, in the same way that a human being begins to live in his mother's womb at the time of conception. God baptizes us through His Holy Spirit into the Church, which is called "the mother of us all" (Galatians 4:26–27, 31). A human baby grows in his mother's womb until he is ready to be born. Likewise, we are to grow in our Christian lives in the womb of the Church, increasing in the "grace and knowledge of Christ" (2 Peter 3:18; compare Ephesians 4:11–13), until we can become born again—Spirit beings.

A father begets a child, while the mother delivers it. After the father has initiated the process, there is an intervening time of about nine months before birth, or parturition, occurs. During this intervening time, the mother nourishes and protects the unborn child in her womb for the entire gestation period. The same is true for our spiritual begetting, growth and birth. During the spiritual "gestation" period, after our conversion, it is the duty and responsibility of the Church, of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 5:23), to nourish and protect the begotten children of God. These spiritually begotten children of God, *the Father*, need nourishment from good spiritual food supplied by God, and they need to absorb the food so they can grow spiritually, *striving* to become perfect in this life. In this way, they can become *born again* children at the time of Christ's return. As Christ became born again at the time of His resurrection, so shall we.

Notice Luke 20:35–36: "But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, BEING SONS OF THE RESURRECTION."

We will be born-again children of God when we have been resurrected—not before then. Christ calls us the "sons of the *resurrection*" for a reason!

Process of Salvation

The process of “being born again” can also be compared to the process of salvation. When we obtain forgiveness for our *past* sins (Romans 3:25), we have been *saved* from those sins (Matthew 1:21), and from the death penalty for those sins (Romans 6:23). This does not mean, however, that we have, at that time, reached our ultimate salvation. Rather, when we sin and repent and obtain forgiveness, we are “*being saved*” (Acts 2:47; compare 1 John 1:9), looking forward to our final salvation when we will be changed into spirit beings. Only those who endure until the very end *will* ultimately *be* saved (Matthew 24:13; 10:22). Christ also said: “He who believes and is baptized **WILL BE saved**” (Mark 16:16). Baptism **BEGINS** our journey to salvation, but ultimate salvation doesn’t come until later. We read in Romans 5:10: “For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, *we shall be saved* by His life.”

As we explain in detail in our free booklet, “*The Gospel of the Kingdom of God*,” our ultimate salvation is identical with entering the Kingdom of God and inheriting eternal life. In Mark 10:17–30, a rich young man asked what he needed to do to inherit eternal life (v. 17). Christ equated inheriting eternal life with entering the Kingdom of God (vv. 23–25). The disciples understood that He was talking about salvation (v. 26). Again, Christ emphasized that “entering the kingdom” and reaching salvation meant receiving “in the age to come, eternal life” (v. 30).

That is why we have to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). We can start on our way to ultimate salvation, but we can still fail, by giving up. Paul warns us not to neglect “so great a salvation” that awaits us (Hebrews 2:3).

Spiritual Abortion Possible

After we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit and have begun our journey to our final birth into the Kingdom of God, we can still become spiritually “aborted,” so to speak. Though we have been begotten, we have not yet been born. It is simply incorrect to say: that the Bible does not recognize such a possibility of “abortion”; that once we have been “begotten” we have already been “born”; or that the way to our final birth has been guaranteed and assured (compare Revelation

2:5; 2:21–23; 3:14–16). Rather, we must continue to “overcome,” be “faithful until death,” keep Christ’s “works until the end” and “hold fast” what we have been given (Revelation 2:10–11; 2:25–26). We must allow God to continue to lead and direct our lives, and we must stay obedient and submissive to Him (2 Peter 1:5–11; James 4:6–10).

Some who do understand that there is a spiritual growth process between “conception” and “birth,” nevertheless state that the Greek word designating the beginning stage of conception never refers exclusively to that stage. They understand that conception is included, but claim that it also *always* includes the actual final birth. Begetting *can* include birth, and it does in many cases (compare Matthew 1:1–16). However, this is not true in every case. Otherwise, it would negate the Biblical possibility of a “miscarriage” or an “abortion” of someone who, due to lack of spiritual growth in the “mother’s womb,” is *not found worthy* by God to enter His Kingdom (compare Hebrews 10:26–31, 36–38; Matthew 22:8).

A Lesson from Physical Abortion

As there is the possibility of a physical miscarriage or abortion, so there is the possibility of a spiritual miscarriage or abortion. To suffer a miscarriage is a tragedy, whether physically or spiritually. Every parent—expecting and anticipating with joy the birth of his child—hopes that his child will be born as a healthy baby. God, our Father, also hopes, and is confident, that we will be delivered into His Kingdom as healthy born-again Spirit beings (Philippians 1:6; Romans 8:31–32).

God, our Father, will never abort us, unless we force Him to do so, by refusing to grow and to obey Him. Tragically, in this world that is ruled by Satan the devil (John 14:30), parents sometimes decide to abort their child. They don’t realize that abortion is murder in God’s eyes, but it is—it DESTROYS human life. All human life belongs to God. Only God has the right to take human life. No human being has the right, unless directly ordered by God Himself (compare Genesis 22:1–2), to take the life of another human being.

Some have said that an embryo is not yet a human being. They are wrong. A human being comes into existence when the egg of a woman is fertilized by a male sperm. A brief overview of the development of human life in the womb of the mother clearly reveals that an embryo is a living human being.

By the time a human embryo is only 7 to 9 days old, several hundred cells have been formed, and contact with the uterus has been made. Blood cells begin at 17 days and a heart as early as 18 days. The baby's eyes begin to form at 19 days. By the end of the 20th day, the foundation of the child's brain, spinal cord and entire nervous system has been established. The heart begins to beat heavily on the 21st day. By the 24th day, it beats 65 times per minute. By that time, all of the embryo's organ systems can already be seen and compared with the organs of an adult. At the end of the first month, the primary brain is present and the eyes, ears and nasal organs have started to form. By the beginning of the second month, the unborn child looks distinctly human. By the sixth week, the mouth and the face of the child are formed. The lines in the hands start to be engraved by eight weeks and remain a distinctive feature of the individual. The hands and the feet are fully developed by the eighth week. At that time, the child occasionally places his thumb into his mouth.

Earliest reflexes begin with the 42nd day. Brainwaves from the child's brain have been noted at 43 days. After the eighth week, everything is present that will be found in the full term baby. Between the eighth and the twelfth week, the child can already feel pain and can suffer. A nine-week-old baby in its mother's womb reacts with strong movements toward the slightest touch. Before the aborting doctor touches the nine-week-old victim with his instruments, the tiny baby moves strongly with its arms, trying to place its thumb into its mouth. The body moves strongly, and the heartbeat increases to 200 times per minute. The child RESISTS being killed.

Abortion violates God's commandment against murder (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17)! *It is also painful for the innocent child.*

In applying human abortion to the spiritual realm, however, spiritual abortion, unlike human abortion, is self-inflicted. When God aborts a spiritual child, it is because His child has *rejected Him*. It is the *child* who commits spiritual suicide, and it is equally painful for both the Father and the child. God does not want anyone to perish (2 Peter 3:9). He desires that all come to the understanding and knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). Some, though, will resist, and God will not force anyone to accept His way of life. Those who want to commit spiritual suicide are free to do so (Matthew 22:13; 24:51; 25:30, 41, 46).

The Spiritual “Born-Again” Process in John 3

To more fully understand the process from spiritual conception to spiritual birth, let’s look again at Christ’s statements in John 3. He said that one must be born again—changed to Spirit—in order to be able to see the Kingdom of God. He said, too, that the person who is born of the Spirit IS spirit. He also said that one cannot enter the Kingdom of God unless he is first born of water and the Spirit (verse 5). In every case, the Greek word for “born” is “*gennaō*.”

As we already mentioned, we cannot enter God’s Kingdom unless God’s Spirit dwells within us, and we cannot receive the Holy Spirit (except in very unusual and exceptional circumstances) unless we are first baptized. Baptism, then, is a prerequisite to being born into the Kingdom through a resurrection, or change to immortality.

Christ told Nicodemus that “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). With proper water baptism, the laying on of hands and the prayer to God the Father, one will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. At that time, one is a spiritually *begotten* child of God. We read in Galatians 4:4–7, in the *New International Version*: “But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under [the penalty for violating God’s] law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit [which] calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ So you are no longer a slave [of the basic principles of this world, v. 3], but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an *heir*.” Note that we are *heirs*—not yet *inheritors*—but we WILL inherit the Kingdom of God in the future.

After the necessary growth, one can become a *born again* child of God at the time of the resurrection or change to immortality. So then, water baptism, in that sense, is necessary to become born again and “heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:4–7).

Herbert W. Armstrong wrote about this in “*Mystery of the Ages*,” page 186 (soft cover edition): “The Pharisees knew about water baptism. They had used it for years in converting gentile proselytes to Judaism. They knew of John the Baptist’s baptism—a baptism of repentance ‘for the remission of sins’ (Mark 1:4). Jesus’ meaning should have been PLAIN to Nicodemus—that water baptism was an initiatory rite

preparatory to the start of being BORN of the Spirit. Jesus made it doubly PLAIN when he said, ‘That which is born of the flesh IS flesh.’ That which is born of humans IS mortal HUMAN—composed of flesh and blood—composed of MATTER from the ground. ‘That which is born of the Spirit IS SPIRIT’—no longer human but composed of SPIRIT, immortal! No longer composed of matter or flesh. Jesus explained even further. ‘Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.’ Then he compared one born again to INVISIBLE WIND—invisible to human eyes. ‘The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or wither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit’ (John 3:8, RSV).”

“Born Again” or “Born From Above”?

Many commentaries state that Christ did not talk to Nicodemus about a *second* birth, and that Christ’s words should be translated as “born from above,” rather than “born again.” The Greek words are “*gennaō anōthen*.” The *Nelson Study Bible* explains that the word “*anōthen*” could be translated as “again” or “from above.” The *Ryrie Study Bible* points out that the word is correctly translated as “again” in Galatians 4:9, where we read, “But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire *again* to be in bondage?” In this passage, the word can *only* mean, “again.”

However, this distinction seems to be one of semantics, unless those commentaries want to say that *we are already* born “from above.” This is, of course, what many suggest. The *Nelson Study Bible* is no exception, but they are forced to admit that Nicodemus did not understand it that way at all. They say (emphasis added): “The birth that Jesus spoke of was either a new birth or a heavenly birth—or both. *It seems* that Jesus was speaking of a heavenly birth because He later used the analogy of the wind, coming from some unknown, heavenly source, to depict the spiritual birth. *But Nicodemus clearly understood Jesus to be speaking of a second birth—being born again.* Jesus explains this new or heavenly birth in [John] 3:6–8, contrasting being born of the flesh with being born of the Spirit.”

Even if one were to use the expression, “born from above,” the truth remains that we are not yet spirit, and the “second” birth—or

the birth “from above” —requires that we ARE spirit. So, in either case, we have NOT yet been BORN “again” or “from above.”

“See” or “Perceive”?

The *Nelson Study Bible* does not agree with the Biblical teaching that we are not yet “born again,” and neither do many other commentaries. Listen to this convoluted reasoning: “The Greek word translated *again* can mean either ‘from above’ or ‘anew.’ The new birth... is the act by which God imparts spiritual life to one who trusts Christ. Without this spiritual birth, a person cannot *perceive* spiritual things... nor can he or she enter the kingdom of God” (*Nelson Study Bible*).

These statements lump together the entire process of begetting, growth and birth, as if all were one and the same. We did see, however, that one is not born again unless one IS spirit. The moment God imparts spiritual life through the gift of the Holy Spirit, is NOT the moment one becomes “born again.” Rather, it is just the *BEGINNING* of the process that leads to a new birth—the conversion from flesh to spirit.

The statement quoted above also misconstrues Christ’s words that one cannot SEE the kingdom of God unless first born again. The *Nelson Study Bible* attempts to say that Christ only meant that one needs to be born again in order to “perceive” spiritual things, not that we actually need to be able to SEE God—a “perception” of the powers of the Kingdom is all that Christ was allegedly referring to.

This interpretation of the words of Christ is incorrect and misleading. We discuss this issue at length on pages 14–19 of our free booklet, “*The Gospel of the Kingdom of God.*” To briefly summarize here: When Christ spoke in John 3:3 about “seeing” the Kingdom of God, the Greek word “*eidon*” is used. On the other hand, when a *perception* of spiritual things is conveyed, the underlying Greek word is NOT “*eidon*,” but “*horao*.” In John 3:3, Christ was *not* referring to the *perception* of spiritual things, but He was speaking about the ability to *quite literally SEE* [Greek: “*eidon*”] God the Father and Jesus Christ. [Another example, where “*eidon*” is used, is in reference to the transfiguration on the Mount. Some of Christ’s disciples SAW *in a vision* the glorified Christ coming in His Kingdom (Matthew 16:28), together with the glorified Moses and the glorified Elijah. Christ introduced this vision by stating that the disciples would be able to SEE the Kingdom of

God with power, Luke 9:27, Mark 9:1. In each case, the Greek word for “see” is “*eidon*,” not “*horao*.”]

Born of Water and Spirit

When Christ spoke to Nicodemus about being born of water and the Spirit, He brought into focus the *growth process*, which starts and ends at a certain point. Commentaries offer several possible explanations as to what they think Christ might have meant with this phrase. We present here some of their explanations:

- (1) It stands for the act of repentance, which John the Baptist’s baptism signified (Luke 3:3, 7–8).
- (2) It refers to water baptism as a requirement for salvation (Acts 2:38).
- (3) Water is to be understood as a symbol for the Holy Spirit (John 4:13–14; 7:38). Thus the phrase could be translated, “born of water, even the Spirit.”
- (4) Water is to be understood as a symbol of the word of God (John 15:3; Ephesians 5:26).

Correctly understood, Christ explained in John 3 that we have to be *baptized* in order to receive God’s Holy Spirit, and that after a certain period of time, we will be *born again, as Spirit beings*, when Christ returns. Considering all of Christ’s statements to Nicodemus, it is clear that a new or second birth is described, which is from God through the Holy Spirit. This new birth is a process that starts with receiving the Holy Spirit and ends, after sufficient spiritual growth, with a change from flesh to spirit. Until this change has occurred, one is not born again (or from above), because one who is born of the Spirit IS spirit.

Definition of “Gennao”

Some claim that the word “*gennao*” (translated as “born” in John 3) can only mean “born.” As we will see, the word “*gennao*” can refer to an event that happens during this physical life. Based on this, many claim that we—flesh and blood human beings—are *already* born again in this life. As we saw from John 3, *this* concept is clearly false, as we are NOT yet born again. We are not yet spirit, but still flesh and blood human beings.

On the other hand, the Greek word “*gennao*” can refer to an event,

a process that *begins* in this life at the time of proper baptism and that eventually *culminates* in our resurrection or change to immortality.

The Greek word “*gennao*” *not only* means “born,” *it also means* “begotten.” The word “*gennao*” is defined as “to procreate (prop. of the father, but by extens. of the mother); fig. to regenerate: —bear, beget, be born, bring forth, conceive, be delivered of, gender, make, spring” (The *New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Number 1080). *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible* defines “*gennao*” as “to beget, bring forth.”

W.E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 1965, writes regarding “*gennao*”: “... to beget, in the Passive Voice, to be born, is chiefly used of men begetting children...; more rarely of women begetting children.”

We find that in many cases, the word “*gennao*” has been rendered, or should be rendered, as “begotten.” The Greek word “*gennao*” can both mean “beget” or “born,” depending on the context, and it can even describe the process of the entire “pregnancy,” lasting from conception until delivery. Since it is up to the translators to decide when to use “begotten” or “born,” no translation has been found to be completely accurate.

“*Gennao*” Can Refer to Conception

We read in the first chapter of Matthew that Mary was found with child of the Holy Spirit (v. 18). When Joseph discovered that Mary was pregnant, he wanted to leave her. An angel appeared to him in a dream, saying, “...do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which *is conceived* in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she *will* bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins” (vv. 20–21).

As the margin of the *New King James Bible* correctly points out, the literal meaning of the Greek word translated, “conceived,” is, in this case, “begotten.” The Greek word is “*gennao*.” Jesus was already (physically) BEGOTTEN in Mary’s womb, but He was not yet born. This shows that the word “*gennao*” can mean “begotten,” and in this example, it can ONLY mean, “begotten.”

Due to incorrect or misleading translations, many have concluded that they are *already* born again. The fact that the word “*gennao*” can

mean “begotten” and “born,” and that it also describes a process of growth from conception to birth, has been hidden from them.

Incorrect Translations

Notice the following examples that point out the confusion in translations, and that show, when correctly understood, the *growth process*.

John 1:12–13

John 1:12–13 is rendered in the *New King James Bible* as follows: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were BORN [“*gennao*”], not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

It is God who calls man to salvation, but not because of works, so that no man should glory in His sight (Ephesians 2:8–9). Those who believe in Christ and obey Him will receive eternal life (John 3:36, *Revised Standard Version*: “He who *believes* in the Son has eternal life; he who does not *obey* the Son [*New Revised Standard Version*: “whoever disobeys the Son”] shall not see life, but the wrath of God rests upon him.”). Being baptized and receiving the Holy Spirit BEGINS our spiritual travel toward the Kingdom of God. At that time, we have been *begotten* of God and His Holy Spirit. We have not yet been born. With this understanding, we know that the translation of John 1:12–13, as rendered by the *New King James Bible*, is false. The correct rendition is given, for example, by *Dr. Menge* and the *Zürcher Bible*, as follows: “...who were BEGOTTEN... of God.” *Dr. Menge* gives the rendering “born” in parenthesis, as an alternative, but as we have seen, “*gennao*” can only mean “begotten” in this passage.

1 John 2:29

Another example is 1 John 2:29. The *New King James Bible* writes, “If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born [“*gennao*”] of Him.”

John is speaking in the present tense. He is not talking about the future resurrection to eternal life. He is saying that everyone who practices righteousness is “born” of God. Since no one is already born again, except Christ, we know that the translation of the *New King James Bible*

is wrong, and that the correct rendering is, “begotten.” Notice how the *New American Bible* translates this verse: “If you consider that he is righteous, you also know that everyone who acts in righteousness is BEGOTTEN by him.”

The *Elberfelder Bible* and *Dr. Menge* give both alternatives (“begotten” and “born”) as possible renderings. The *Zürcher Bible* translates this passage as, “...everyone who does righteousness is *begotten* of Him.” The *Berkeley Version of the New Testament* writes, “... is his offspring.”

1 John 4:7

A third example can be found in 1 John 4:7: “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born [“*gennao*”] of God and knows God.”

Again, since John is speaking to the Christians of his time, the word “*gennao*” cannot be translated as “born” in this passage. True Christians love and know God, but they are not yet born again. Therefore, the rendering of the *New American Bible* in this case is quite correct, which states, “...everyone who loves is BEGOTTEN by God and knows God.” The *Zürcher Bible* concurs, while the *Elberfelder Bible* and *Dr. Menge* offer both alternatives.

1 John 5:1

A fourth example is found in 1 John 5:1. When reading the rendition of the *Authorized Version* or the *New King James Bible*, we see the difficulties that the translators had with this passage. The Greek word “*gennao*” appears three times in this passage, and, in this case, it should be consistently translated as “begotten.” However, the *Authorized Version* states, quite *inconsistently*: “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is *born* [“*gennao*”] of God: and every one that loveth him that *begat* [“*gennao*”] loveth him also that is *begotten* [“*gennao*”] of him.”

Most of the translations don’t even try to render the passage literally. The *Revised Standard Version* says, “Every one who believes that Jesus is the Christ is a child of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child.”

The *Zürcher Bible* translates quite consistently and accurately: “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is *begotten* of God;

and everyone who loves him who *begat* him, loves him, too, who is *begotten* of him."

The *New American Bible* reads, "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is BEGOTTEN by God, and everyone who loves the father loves [also] the one BEGOTTEN by him."

1 John 5:4

Let's also take note of 1 John 5:4 as another example. The *New King James Bible* states, "For whatever is born [*"gennaō"*] of God overcomes the world." Since the present tense is used, the correct rendering must be "begotten." A born-again Spirit being does not have to overcome the world anymore. Christ said that He *overcame* the world when He was here on earth as a human (compare Revelation 3:21). The *New American Bible* and the *Zürcher Bible* translate, consistently: "For whatever is BEGOTTEN of God overcomes the world." *Dr. Menge* and the *Elberfelder Bible* give both alternatives ("begotten" and "born"). *Henry Alford* states, "...because all that is begotten of God..." The *Twentieth Century New Testament* writes, "Because all that has received new life from God conquers the world." *Knox* renders it in this way, "Whatever takes its origin from God must needs triumph over the world."

Correct Translations

The translators of the *Authorized Version* and the *New King James Bible* clearly understood that the Greek word "*gennaō*" CAN mean, "begotten." Let's look at a few Scriptures that were correctly translated in this regard.

1 Corinthians 4:15

The *New King James Bible* renders 1 Corinthians 4:15 in this way: "For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have BEGOTTEN [*"gennaō"*] you through the gospel."

Through the preaching of the gospel and subsequent baptism and the receipt of the Holy Spirit, these Christians had become BEGOTTEN children. They were not yet BORN AGAIN children. The *Elberfelder Bible*, the *Zürcher Bible*, and the *Luther Bible* all concur that the translation here should be "begotten."

Philemon 10

In Philemon 10, Paul states, “I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have BEGOTTEN [“gennao”] while in my chains...” Again, Onesimus became a *begotten* Christian, while Paul was in prison—he was *not yet born* again. J.B. Rotherham states, too, “... whom I have begotten in my bonds.”

Hebrews 1:5; 5:5; Acts 13:33

Another passage that is correctly translated by the *Authorized Version* and the *New King James Bible* is Hebrews 1:5: “For to which of the angels did He ever say: ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten [“gennao”] You’? (NKJB).” Compare, too, Acts 13:33 and Hebrews 5:5.

Clearly, “begotten” is the correct rendering here, as it refers to Christ’s conception in Mary’s womb. When the Father spoke these words, Christ was not yet *born* as a human being—let alone as a resurrected Spirit being. The *New American Bible*, *Zürcher*, *Luther*, *Elberfelder*, and *Rotherham* likewise say, “begotten,” while the *New Jerusalem Bible* reads, “...today I have fathered you.”

James 1:18

Another example is James 1:18. The *Authorized Version* translates, “Of His own will BEGAT [“gennao”] he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” We are not yet born again—only begotten.

What we can see from these different renderings is that the translators were very well aware of the fact that the word “gennao” can mean “begotten” and “born.” They knew that these two English words do not convey the same meaning. They also knew that the context dictates which rendering to choose. To put it bluntly, they knew—or at least, they should have known—that we are only begotten, not yet born again. Regardless, they decided—perhaps in order to follow the “dictates of their hearts,” or to satisfy preconceived notions and ideas—to use the erroneous translation “born” rather than “begotten” in many instances.

Deliberate Deception?

A classic example of this kind of ignorance, or possibly even deliberate confusion, is the blatant inconsistency in the *New King James*

Bible's translation of 1 Peter 1:3 and 1 Peter 1:22–23. Let's notice it (v. 3): "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has BEGOTTEN us AGAIN [Greek: "ana-gennao"] to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... (vv. 22 & 23) Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been BORN AGAIN [Greek, "ana-gennao"], not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever..."

Which translation is correct in this context? "Begotten" or "born"? Obviously, since it is talking about the same event and timeframe, it has to be one or the other. The rendering of the *New King James Bible* is clearly false, in any case. Since Peter talks to Christians who were alive at his time, the correct rendering is, in both cases, "begotten." They were "begotten again" to a living hope through the resurrected Christ who was now living His life within them, through the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:10; 8:3–4; Galatians 2:20). They had been begotten again of incorruptible seed—the Holy Spirit—and through the Word of God. Again, this passage is not talking about a time when they would be born again to immortality. We can see from this how translators, held captive by wrong concepts, got confused and chose inaccurate renditions (compare Isaiah 28:13). They did not have the knowledge of God that would have guided them to choose the correct alternative.

It is also interesting how some translators, apparently confused by the different meanings of "gennao" when judged by the context, have tried to "avoid the issue" altogether, and have instead given their "interpretation" of what they thought was being conveyed in a given passage. In the case of 1 Peter 1:23, the *Twentieth Century New Testament* renders it this way, "... your new Life has come, not from perishable, but imperishable seed." Sometimes "human interpretations," as stated in commentaries, may be quite accurate, but not always, and we should NEVER use human interpretation as a basis for doctrinal understanding.

Firstborn or First-Begotten?

We mentioned earlier that Christ has been called the firstborn from the dead. The Greek word for firstborn is "*prototokos*." However, the

word “*prototokos*” can ALSO refer to a first-begotten person—one who has not yet been born. As with the word, “*gennao*,” it all depends on the context. W.E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, defines “*prototokos*” as “first-begotten, firstborn,” and states that the Greek word is derived from “*protos*,” meaning “first,” and from “*tikto*,” meaning “to beget.”

In Hebrews 1:6, the *Authorized Version* states, “And again, when he [the Father] bringeth in the firstbegotten [“*prototokos*”] into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.” The *New King James Bible* says here, “firstborn.” The *Authorized Version*’s rendering could not be correct in this case, as Christ was not the first “begotten.” As we saw earlier, others had been begotten of the Spirit before Christ’s appearance as a man.

In addition, Vine explains that this passage seems to make reference to Christ’s Second Coming. He says: “Heb. 1:6, R.V., His Second Advent (the R.V. ‘when He again bringeth in’ puts ‘again’ in the right place, the contrast to His First Advent, at His Birth, being implied).” This would show, too, that the correct rendering in this case of Hebrews 1:6 must be, “firstborn.”

Some claim the word “*prototokos*” only refers to rank. Although rank is included [a “firstborn” son would inherit a double portion of his father’s inheritance, compare Deuteronomy 21:17], the word clearly also refers to the *timing* of one’s begetting and birth, as we saw from all the Scriptures. The firstborn son had certain additional rights (compare Genesis 25:31, 33–34; 27:36), because he was born *first*.

In Hebrews 12:23, the word “*prototokos*” is used for Christians who died in the faith. Although both the *Authorized Version* and the *New King James Bible* give the rendering, “firstborn,” the correct meaning in this case is “first-begotten,” as no Christian has yet attained to the new birth—the resurrection from the dead. Hebrews 12:22–23 reads: “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn [“*prototokos*,”] who are REGISTERED IN HEAVEN, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect...”

The Christians who died in the faith, and whose spirits returned to God at the time of their death (Ecclesiastes 12:7), are registered in

heaven (Luke 10:20). They have not been resurrected from the dead, so they are not yet *firstborn*—but they are first *begotten*—the firstfruits (compare James 1:18). They were called out of this world “first” (Ephesians 1:11–14) and they received the Holy Spirit, and it will be they who are going to be in the FIRST resurrection (Revelation 20:5; 1 Corinthians 15:23–24). Christ is the *first* of the *firstfruits* (Acts 26:23; 1 Corinthians 15:20). He is, up until now, the *ONLY* firstborn, the only one who has been born again from the dead. Those called by God WILL BECOME *firstborn* as well. They will be in the *first* resurrection, born again *first*, when comparing them with the *rest* of the vast majority of mankind who will be called to salvation *later* (always excluding Jesus Christ, of course, who was the very FIRST of all the subsequent firstborn). (For more information regarding those who will be called later, please read our free booklet, “*God’s Commanded Holy Days.*”)

“...as Little Children”

Sometimes, the Bible compares converted Christians with little children. Some claim that this proves that we are not “begotten” children of God, but that we are already “born again” children of God.

We understand, of course, that a baby in its mother’s womb is the unborn child of his or her parents. The fact that the Bible calls us children or “sons of God” (Romans 8:14) does not disprove the concept that we are not yet *born* children of God.

Some quote 1 Peter 2:1–2 to substantiate the concept that we are already “born again.” The passage reads, “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby.” Notice that Peter does not say that we are already born again. When we are born again, we are spirit, and we don’t need to grow anymore in overcoming malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy or evil speaking.

Peter is simply making a comparison. He says that AS newborn children grow, so WE must grow spiritually in this life, having been begotten of God’s Holy Spirit. Christ also said that we must become and behave AS little children, in order to inherit the Kingdom of God (Matthew 18:3–4). With that analogy, He meant that we must have the humility of little children.

However, we are not to stay little children in spiritual understanding.

Rather, Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:14 that “we should no longer be children [let alone newborn babes], tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may GROW UP in all things into Him who is the head—Christ.” Paul also says, in the previous verse (v. 13), that we all need to “come to... a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Paul realized that sometimes Christians don’t show the progress in their spiritual growth that they should. He wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:1–3: “And, I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal...”

Notice, again, that this is a comparison. While Peter told the disciples to desire the “pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,” Paul chides them for being unable to go beyond receiving “milk,” because they were still carnal. Both instances use figurative speech to tell the disciples the same thing: “Get rid of carnality and grow in the spiritual character of God.” Notice the additional statement by Paul in Hebrews 5:12–14, again showing that, as teachers, we must go beyond just absorbing milk and that “solid food belongs to those who are of full age” (v. 14).

These comparisons and metaphors don’t show, as some believe, that we are already born again. Frankly, they have nothing to do with the “born again” question, except for the fact that they show the need to grow in Christ’s knowledge. Neither can one use those Scriptures to say that the Bible does not teach a “fetal analogy.” Rather, one has to look at all of the Scriptures in context.

For instance, Christ gave a parable in which He compared the decision of a person to follow Him, with a king who was considering whether to wage a war (Luke 14:31–32). His point was that we must count the cost before we make an important decision, in order to see whether we have enough to carry it out (verses 25–33). If one takes the analogy too far, one would have to conclude that Christ was endorsing our involvement in war, something that He was not conveying at all, as shown in many other Scriptures (compare, for instance, Matthew 26:52).

The “Fetal Analogy” Is Biblical

Some do claim, however, that the Bible nowhere says that our spiritual begetting, growth and birth can be compared with the physical begetting of a child, his growth in his mother’s womb, and his delivery from the mother. They claim that the human reproductive process does not picture the process of spiritual salvation—the Father’s act of bringing many sons and daughters into His glorious God Family (Hebrews 2:10). We have shown in this booklet that the “fetal analogy” is clearly taught in Scripture, and as we will discover now, there are even further astonishing parallels that clearly support the analogy.

To reiterate, each human being starts from a tiny ovum in the body of the mother. It is then fertilized by a life-giving sperm cell from the human father. Life can only begin when that sperm cell enters the ovum and impregnates it. Once the human ovum is fertilized, it becomes the begotten human life—the embryo. After several weeks, it is called a fetus, until it is born. This pictures, precisely, our spiritual begetting and birth.

We might compare our minds with the “egg” or “ovum.” We might also compare God’s Holy Spirit with the “sperm” of eternal life. At baptism, God begets our minds with the Holy Spirit. We can then begin to grow spiritually, developing the mind of Christ. Just as a physical embryo or fetus must mature before his birth, so we, too, as spiritually begotten sons and daughters of God, must mature and become more and more perfect before spiritual birth into God’s Family and Kingdom can take place. The analogy is unmistakable! But, we can draw even more startling lessons from this analogy!

Medical Discoveries About the Unborn Child

Medical authorities tell us that ovulation usually occurs about the 14th day before the next monthly menstrual cycle, and that the egg must be fertilized by the male sperm during a 24-hour period. The fertilized egg then travels from the fallopian tube to the uterus where it implants itself. This travel begins on the 15th day of the first month and takes up to seven days to complete. Fifty days after fertilization, the embryo is called a fetus. By that time, it has developed a heartbeat, arms, legs and a blood-producing liver. By the seventh month of pregnancy, the ears have fully developed. By the 10th day of the seventh

month, the blood of the fetus changes to allow oxygen to circulate independently of the mother. By the 15th day of the seventh month, the lungs of the fetus have developed sufficiently to allow it to survive in case of a premature birth.

Spiritual Discoveries about God's Annual Holy Days

God has instructed us to observe weekly and annual Holy Days. Our free booklet, *"God's Commanded Holy Days,"* explains these days and their dates and meanings in much detail. To briefly summarize here, God's first annual festival, Passover, occurs on the 14th day of the first month. It pictures Christ's sacrifice for sins, individually repented of by those whom God calls in this life. Passover is followed by the Days of Unleavened Bread, a seven-day period, symbolizing the removal of sins from our lives. The Days of Unleavened Bread begin on the 15th day of the first month. Fifty days later, the annual Holy Day of Pentecost is observed. It pictures the giving of God's Holy Spirit to the New Testament Church. The next Holy Day is the Feast of Trumpets, which is celebrated on the first day of the seventh month. It pictures Christ's return to this earth and the resurrection of His disciples. The Day of Atonement is observed on the 10th day of the seventh month. It symbolizes the reconciliation between God and all of mankind through Christ's sacrifice, as well as the removal of Satan. This day is followed by the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day, an eight-day period that commences on the 15th day of the seventh month. It pictures the salvation of all mankind, to be governed by the Family of God here on earth.

The Astonishing Parallels

By now, you have undoubtedly caught the similar time elements involved between pregnancy and birth of a human child, and the annual Holy Days that picture the plan of God. Let's review those time elements:

- (1) Physical life is begotten on or about the 14th day before the next menstrual cycle. Passover is celebrated on the 14th day of the first month of God's holy calendar.
- (2) The physical journey of the fertilized egg begins on the 15th day of the first month and lasts for about seven days. The

Days of Unleavened Bread begin on the 15th day of the first month of the Hebrew Calendar and last for seven days. If the physical journey of the fertilized egg is not completed successfully, there will be no birth. Likewise, if sin is not removed from our lives, neither will we be born again into God's Kingdom.

- (3) After about fifty days, when the primitive skeletal system has been completely developed, the *embryo* (Greek for "to swell" or "to teem within") is called a *fetus* (Latin for "young one" or "offspring"). It can now be recognized as a "human." Pentecost is celebrated fifty days after the first Sunday that falls during the Days of Unleavened Bread. When the Church received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, it began to be recognized as being the body of spiritually begotten children by beginning to display God's characteristics through the indwelling Holy Spirit.
- (4) By the seventh month, the ears of the fetus have been fully developed. The Feast of Trumpets is celebrated on the first day of the 7th month. It pictures Christ's return at the last or seventh trumpet, and the resurrection to eternal life (1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:52). Christians who died in the faith will "hear" the 7th trumpet and the voice of Christ calling them out of their graves (John 5:28–29).
- (5) By the 10th day of the seventh month, the fetus can breathe on its own because its blood has changed. (Prior to this time, the baby could only receive his oxygen through the blood of his mother.) Atonement is observed on the 10th day of the seventh month. While, at Passover, we are reminded of Christ's sacrifice for those who *individually* accept it, at Atonement, the whole world will *collectively* begin to accept Christ's sacrifice. Satan will be removed and will no longer be able to deceive mankind as he does today. Christ's shed blood was ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY, so that the world can begin to "breathe" on its own, freed from Satan, and begin to follow God. The whole world will then have the opportunity to receive God's "breath" or "Spirit" (the Hebrew word, "*ruach*," can mean "breath" and "Spirit") when Satan's spirit is removed.

- (6) By the 15th day of the seventh month; i.e., 7.5 months after fertilization, the lungs of the fetus have sufficiently developed to permit it to live outside the mother's womb. The Feast of Tabernacles begins on the 15th day of the seventh month. It lasts for seven days. By that time, Christians, having been born again, will rule the world. They are no longer fed and nourished by the Church, their spiritual mother. Rather, they will have become members of the God Family.
- (7) A child has been born. But, the parents may still have additional children. With each new child, the entire cycle of human conception, pregnancy and birth starts all over again. This new cycle is pictured or foreshadowed by another, final annual Holy Day. After the seven days of Tabernacles, there is a separate one-day festival, called the Last Great Day. During that time, all who died having never heard of God the Father and Jesus Christ (through whose name ALONE we must be saved, Acts 4:12), will receive their first opportunity to accept God's Way of Life. For them, too, birth into the Kingdom of God will be made possible.

Are all of these parallels just coincidental? Or, do they reveal God's master plan in action? It is God who forms the inward parts of every human being (Psalm 139:13-14). God designed the timetable, and He also decreed when to keep His annual Holy Days.

God created man. God decreed that we should understand, by looking at the development of the physical embryo or fetus, the process of our spiritual birth into the Family of God. He told us in Romans 1:20: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."

Why It Matters

Why did we write this booklet? Why did we bother explaining and emphasizing in detail the truth about the "born again" question? After all, we have referred to this issue in several of our previous publications, which have also been quoted throughout this booklet. Why does it even matter? Is it really that important to understand whether we are only *begotten* again or already *born* again? Isn't all of this just a matter of semantics?

We must emphatically say that it DOES matter! It is absolutely *VITAL* and *CRITICAL* that you understand the truth on this matter!

The writer of this booklet and all of the reviewers on the editorial team once belonged to a different church organization. For the purpose of this booklet, it does not matter whether or not you, as the reader, are familiar with that organization. Even if you have never heard of that organization, the following should still be very revealing as to why it is important that we understand, and never deviate from the truth of the “born again” teaching. The organization referred to had taught the truth of the “born again” question for decades. A few years after its founder died, the new leadership began to introduce doctrinal changes. One of the very first changes had to do with the “born again” question. Articles that had been written in the past, proving from Scripture that we ARE NOT yet born again, were re-written, attempting to now show, from the *same* Scriptures, that we ARE *already born again*. The change was subtly introduced, and at that time, it did not seem to be a big deal for many. After all, it was just a change in terminology, was it not?

It might have seemed so, but, sadly, it was not.

It went much deeper. It opened the floodgate to future, more drastic changes. When the change on “born again” came, some noted that this would ultimately lead to a change regarding the nature of God and the potential of man. A few years later, those changes, anticipated by some, actually had taken place. How could anyone have foreseen this development?

Simply, because the correct “born again” understanding goes hand in hand with other important Biblical concepts and teachings. When we understand that Christians—those who have received the Holy Spirit—are “*begotten*” of the Father, we also understand that the Father is *reproducing Himself* through us. We understand that God is a Family, and that God wants to enlarge His Family through us. We also understand that Christ, the SON of God and the *firstborn among many brethren*, will marry His church at the time of His return (Revelation 19:7–9; Matthew 22:2; 25:10; Ephesians 5:31–32).

One important principle taught in the Bible is that a kind only reproduces according to its own kind (This is, by the way, one of the many proofs showing that the Evolution Theory is false. For further

information on that question, please write for our free booklet, “*Evolution—a Fairy Tale for Adults.*”). The fact that a kind only reproduces after its kind shows that Christ will NOT marry a church that is physical. Christ is God—a Spirit being. Christ will only marry Spirit beings. We understand that we are not yet Spirit beings. We also understand, however, that we WILL BE Spirit beings at the time of our resurrection and change to immortality. THEN we WILL BE spirit. THEN we WILL BE born again. THEN Christ WILL marry us. And NOT BEFORE!

All of these Biblical concepts go together. After we are begotten of God’s Spirit, we have to *grow* in Christ’s knowledge. We have to *become* perfect (Matthew 5:48). The receipt of the Holy Spirit is just the BEGINNING of our journey toward perfection and ultimate entrance into the Kingdom of God.

We understand, too, that the Kingdom of God has not yet come. Christ has not yet established the Kingdom of God on earth. He will do so when He returns. At that time, we will be IN the Kingdom of God. Why? Because we WILL BE God—and God is a Kingdom—the Family of God RULING over creation.

We understand that the gospel message is the good news of the Kingdom of God. It is the message from the Father and Christ that Christ proclaimed. It is the same message that His Church MUST continue to proclaim until He returns, and even after His return. It is the good news that God will rule over all things, and that man CAN become God. Today, Satan is the ruler of this earth—not God. So, the gospel of the Kingdom of God is the gospel OF Christ, the message that Christ brought. It is also a message ABOUT the Kingdom of God. Since Christ’s death made it possible that man can become God, and since Christ will rule as King *of kings* and Lord *of lords* in this Kingdom, under God the Father, the gospel message also includes information about the Kingdom of God—the Family of God—and Christ Himself. However, the gospel message goes beyond the person of Christ. It’s a message brought by Christ—not a message limited to the personage of Christ. It is the message OF Christ and OF the Kingdom of God. It is not merely the gospel *about* Christ.

We understand that our ultimate salvation is still in the future—that we *will be* saved when we enter God’s Kingdom—at which time we will be God.

We understood all of this in our former association. Then, as we said, the floodgate of change came. It started with the “born again” teaching. Then another change came, followed by another. In time, it was no longer taught that the gospel was a message of Christ *about and of* the Kingdom of God. More and more, we heard the terminology of a gospel *about* Christ, or that Christ *was* the gospel. At the same time, we were taught that the Kingdom, although still future to an extent, had already arrived, that we were already in the Kingdom, and that Christ would only come to “inaugurate” the Kingdom.

We were also taught that we were already saved. All of these “new” teachings were “logical” extensions of the false understanding of “born again.” IF we were already “born again,” then we could see and enter the Kingdom. Therefore, so the reasoning went, since we “*were* already” born again, we “*were* already” in the Kingdom and already saved. Since we *were* already saved, we were gradually taught that we didn’t have to “grow” anymore in Christ’s knowledge as how to keep the law, since the law was allegedly no longer in force and effect. No more Ten Commandments, let alone any commanded observance of God’s annual Holy Days, as Christ supposedly did away with them all! Christ’s statement that we cannot see the Kingdom was incorrectly interpreted, as discussed before, in a way that He was merely talking about “perceiving” the powers of the Kingdom. Of course, these so-called new concepts also required a “re-definition” of what the Bible says about the Kingdom of God.

Then, we were told that it is incorrect to say that God IS a Family—rather, we should say that God HAS a family. With that “subtle” change, the truth of the nature of God began to become obscure. If God were not a Family, then God was not reproducing Himself, either. Again, we see the “logical” consequence of the “born again” change. This, then, led to the ultimate change regarding the nature of God. God was no longer perceived as consisting of two Beings (God the Father and God the Son), but as just ONE Being. Since God was no longer a Family, there was no longer a duality in the Godhead, either. Clear Scriptures proving the duality of the Godhead were re-interpreted, twisted, or simply ignored.

In fact, these ideas were not new. Paul and others warned that similar events and developments were already occurring in their time,

and that they would continue to occur (compare Galatians 1:6–9; 2 Timothy 2:17–22; Jude 3–4; 2 Peter 2:1–3). Scripture reveals that another falling away from the truth would again happen in the end time. Paul said that the Day of Christ’s return “will not come unless the falling away comes first” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). (If you want to do an in-depth study of some of the Biblical concepts raised in this booklet, in order to make sure that you are not deceived by wrong teachings, please request our literature that is listed at the end of this booklet.)

We were also taught that God, although one Person, represents Himself within a “threefold mode of being.” A “clever” argument was presented that a person can have three functions—that of a father, a husband, and a president. In other words, God was described as consisting of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, but these three “functions” were not Persons, but “*hypostases*.” This concept had been adopted from a Greek Orthodox idea that stemmed from pagan Greeks like Plato and Aristotle. It was then reasoned that Jesus Christ was a *created* being who did not exist prior to His human birth. So, we suddenly were introduced to God (one Person in three *hypostases*), and Christ (another—created—person), who was or somehow became a son, but separate and apart from the “Son”-*hypostasis* of the God-Person. We were even told that the Son was still in heaven (as one of the three *hypostases*), while Christ was here on earth, and that the Son remained alive when Christ, the physical person, died. With that idea, the supreme sacrifice of Christ had been denied and rejected.

To add further to the confusion and heresy, we were subsequently told, without *any* explanation, that God was a Trinity, the same concept taught by the Catholic Church and most Protestant churches—one Person in three *Persons* (no longer “*hypostases*,” as previously represented). Christ had now become part of the Trinity, although it remained unclear what He was before He became man, what He was when He was here on earth, and what He became after His resurrection. God, in any event, had become a *closed* Trinity. Since He was no longer a Family, man could not become a part of that Family. It was taught that God would “adopt” Christians, but Christians would never become God’s *real* sons and daughters. God was no longer *reproducing Himself* through man. It was taught that God was *CREATING* or building a somewhat figurative “family.” However, God was no longer adding to

the very Family *that He is* and that *He always has been*. Christians were no longer understood as becoming members of the very God Family, with God being their *true and real* Father, and Christ being *their true and real* elder Brother.

So, obviously, it does matter! Without the “born again” change, the subsequent changes could not have occurred. It is, therefore, imperative that we not tamper with the correct understanding of “born again.” If we do, even in seemingly unimportant areas of “terminology” or “explanations,” we will change the proper understanding of what “born again” means, and we will thereby open a floodgate of change, *again*. In the end, we might very well find ourselves being totally void of *all* correct Biblical understanding. It happened before to those who apparently understood the truth at one time. Let us not think that it could not happen again. “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says...” (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22).

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