

an answer to a question about

The “Born Again” Doctrine

by
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Question: What does it mean to be “born again”? When are we “born again”? Mrs. L.B., New York.

Answer: The “born again” doctrine to which you refer is very prominently taught in evangelical Christianity today. Special interest has been shown in this doctrine since the election of President James Earl Carter, who is a Southern Baptist by religious persuasion. Evangelical Christians believe that one is “born again” when he has repented, has been baptized, and has received the Holy Spirit. They insist that they are “born again” at that very moment even though they are still in their fleshly bodies. Evangelical Christianity teaches that this “born again” experience makes one a child of the Most High immediately, and that all the requirements for salvation have been completed with nothing remaining to be done by the indi-

vidual.

The passage of Scripture that is used as a foundational text to prove this doctrine is John 3. Let us examine this passage carefully to see what it actually says; then let us compare it to other harmonizing Scriptures that set forth the explanation given by the Bible.

In John 3:3 Yahshua the Messiah said to Nicodemus, “...Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of Yahweh.”

You will notice here in this verse that two words are crucial to our complete understanding of the text. The first word is γεννηθη **gennethe**. It is the third singular, first aorist, subjunctive passive form of the verb γεννάω **gennaō**.

The second word that is crucial to our understanding of the text is

the word ἀνωθεν **anōthen**. This word specifically means, **from above**, although it has been rendered by some translators as **anew** or **again** (**King James**). The **Arndt and Gingrich Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament** informs us that the word has the primary meaning **from above** but offers as a secondary consideration the adjunct nuance of meaning, **anew**. The root of this word has been traced to the word ἀνω (**ano**) meaning **above** or **upwards**. Are you beginning to comprehend a little more clearly what Yahshua the Messiah tried to convey to Nicodemus? He was telling Nicodemus that he would be “born anew, **from above**.” Interestingly, this same word ἀνωθεν **anōthen** is used in verse 31 of this same chapter (John 3), and there it has been translated as **from above**.

Please take special note of this fact because it is most significant to our understanding and reveals the occasional inconsistency in the **King James** translation.

Perhaps the best rendering of this verse into the English language has been done in the **Charles B. Williams** translation, "Yahshua answered him, 'I most surely say to you, no one can ever see the Kingdom of Yahweh, unless he is born from above.'" Consequently, it is easy to observe that the new birth is from above, from the Almighty Heavenly Father, from the very heavens.

Let us continue on now with the remainder of John chapter 3. Undoubtedly, you have the same question in your mind that Nicodemus expressed in verse 4, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" Yahshua answered the question in verse 5 when He said, "If any one be not born of water and spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of Yahweh," **Benjamin Wilson** translation. Please note the omission of the articles (a, an, the) from the correct English translation since they do not appear in the Greek. The Aramaic version, however, does show the word **spirit** with a definite article.

Here then we learn an immediate lesson. In order to be born from above we will need to fulfill some requirements. First of all, we must repent of our previous sins and be immersed into the Name of Yahshua the Messiah, Acts 2:38. Then, we will receive the down payment of the Holy Spirit, 2 Corinthians 1:22, "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest [down payment] of the Spirit in our hearts." Please see also 2 Corinthians 5:5. However, the new birth does not occur the

moment we are baptized. It actually occurs much later as we shall see.

We might also consider the fact that we cannot enter into the Kingdom of Yahweh (meaning also His family), except we are born in a human birth and then later are born from above by the Spirit of Yahweh. Almighty Yahweh has outlined a way for us to enter His family. It is through an adoption process, being born as a human being and then through our education and development of character throughout our lives learning to be like the Most High Heavenly Father Yahweh.

Yahshua the Messiah continues by explaining just exactly what He means in John 3:6 and 7. "**That which is born of the flesh IS flesh; and that which is born of the**

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Spirit IS spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again [from above]," emphasis ours.

Yahshua the Messiah explains that when someone is born as a human, that is what he is. He is a human being, nothing more. Flesh reproduced in its own likeness is flesh. However, when someone is born from above, when he is born

of the Spirit, **he becomes spirit.** He receives a spirit body **at that time.** You and I are not spirit. Nowhere in the entire Bible do we find that a human being is spirit. He has the breath of life which is sometimes called spirit. However, to be "born of the spirit" means to be given a **spirit body.**

Presently we are flesh and blood, a created being with limitations. We have received only the **earnest** or the down payment of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. We have not been changed into spirit bodies. To be changed into the spiritual body will occur at the resurrection. Please notice the time sequence in which this will occur, 1 Corinthians 15:52-55.

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

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Then Yahshua the Messiah goes on to explain this even more thoroughly in John 3:8, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The description given by Yahshua the Messiah is of a person who has been born from above and given a spiritual body. He becomes like the wind. You cannot see the wind, but you can hear it. You can feel it passing by as it caresses

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your cheek. You can hear the murmur of the breeze through the trees. But you cannot see a physical appearance. It is invisible. You can see the effect of strong wind, but you cannot actually see the wind itself. Yahshua the Messiah says everyone who is born of the Spirit (meaning born from above), will be like the wind.

It is obvious that all human beings are flesh and blood. We have a physical form seen by the eyes of another person. We are not invisible to the human eye. You can find an illustration of spirit creatures in 2 Kings 6:15-17. Please see also Hebrews 1:7. Although spirit beings cannot be seen by human eyes, they are there nonetheless. The difference between angelic beings who are spirit and those who are born from above is that the first are **created**, the latter **adopted** into the family of the Most High.

Now let us consider several other important points. First of all, when we look into the Scriptures, we can see the account of one human being who was born anew from above. That individual was Yahshua the Messiah. The Apostle Paul makes this quite clear in 1 Corinthians 15:20-22. "But now is Messiah risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in

Messiah shall all be made alive." Consequently, the Apostle Paul is trying to show the great difference between the physical Adam and Yahshua the Messiah.

He explains this aspect more thoroughly in 1 Corinthians 15:45-49.

And so it is written, 'The first man Adam was made a living soul;' the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Messiah from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

Note especially verses 47 and 48. The root of the name **Adam** is "red clay" or "earth." He and his descendants were to have physical bodies made from the dust of the earth. We have exactly this physical appearance. We are flesh and blood. Interestingly, the word **blood** in Hebrew (*dam*) is cognate to the name Adam.

Yahshua the Messiah also followed this pathway to a new birth. He was made in the likeness of Adam, as a flesh and blood human being. However, He was different from Adam in that He did not sin when He was tempted by Satan the devil. His character was flawless. He followed the way

of Yahweh's righteous commandments; therefore, He could give His life as an atonement sacrifice to cleanse the human family from their sins. He fulfilled this mission by dying upon the tree of Calvary. He was buried, but He rose again the third day.

Now let us notice carefully what Paul said in Colossians 1:15, a passage which refers to Yahshua the Messiah. "Who is the image of the invisible Mighty One, the Firstborn of every creature." Yahshua the Messiah was the firstborn from the dead. He is the one who leads the way for His assembly to enter into the very family of the Most High. He was the first of the human family to be born anew from above.

Let us notice also what is recorded by the Apostle John in Revelation 1:5 "And from Yahshua the Messiah, Who is the faithful Witness, and the First Begotten [born] of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him That loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." A comparison of Colossians 1:18 and Revelation 1:5 will prove that the Greek word **prototokos** appears in both verses. It should not have been translated "begotten" but rather "born." Yahshua the Messiah is indeed the firstborn from the dead. We can see this confirmed by Romans 8:29, "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." Again the word **prototokos** has been correctly translated "firstborn" in this passage. The same word is employed in Hebrews 1:6.

Clearly then, Yahshua the Messiah is the only being in this universe who has had a second birth from above. He was born

once of flesh and blood, of a human mother, while He was resurrected from the dead and given a new life, a spiritual body from above by the Heavenly Father.

The Bible even has a description of the person who has been born the second time. This person has received the spiritual body. He has been changed by a resurrection from the dead. He has been given immortality. Yahshua the Messiah is the only human who was born anew from above. Let us read Revelation 1:12-18 from the Benjamin Wilson translation found in the **Emphatic Diaglott**.

And I turned to see the voice which was speaking with me; and having turned I saw Seven golden Lampstands, and in the Midst of the Lampstands one like to a Son of Man, invested with a garment to the foot, and girded about at the breasts with a golden Girdle; and His head and hairs white as white wool, as snow; and His eyes as a Flame of Fire; and His feet like to fine Brass glowing with fire, as in a Furnace; and His voice as the Voice of many Waters; and having in His Right Hand seven Stars; and out of His mouth proceeding a sharp two-edged broad Sword; and His appearance as the sun shines in his strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead: but He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Fear not; I am the first and the last, and the living one; I was even dead, but, behold, I am living for the ages of the ages; and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

The description of Yahshua the Messiah is of one who has great power. Such a body is glorious to behold. It demonstrates the superiority of the spiritual body over the physical. Yahshua is the first one who has had two births, the first as a human being and the second birth into the spiritual body that will live forever which is the blessing from the Most

High. If we are faithful we shall receive this changed body also, when the Messiah returns to establish the Kingdom of Yahweh and the resurrection takes place.

Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of Yahweh: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of Yahweh, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure, 1 John 3:1-3.

Obviously then, those who have repented, have been baptized in water, and have received the down payment of the Holy Spirit have not been born again. **They have been BEGOTTEN again, not born from above.** A period of growth and development is necessary. This growth is the education of the mind and the development of a righteous character similar to that of the Most High, our Heavenly Father. Our

earthly education continues on until the time of our death which becomes a necessary transition from the physical to the spiritual body. Our natural body is planted in the grave, or should we be alive when Yahshua returns, it will be supernaturally changed. All those chosen ones who are in the graves will rise again with a marvelous, powerfully magnificent spiritual body, while those who are alive will be changed instantaneously and will also rise to meet Yahshua the Messiah in the air. Those people will then be adopted, taken into the Kingdom or the family of the Most High. They will be sealed with His Name. They will at that time receive the family name of the Most High Heavenly Father to use as their own forever and ever. Are you planning for that marvelous experience of being resurrected to become a part of the family of spirit creatures who will rule this universe? It is a free gift from the Most High, but you must qualify to receive it. □

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