

## **Why We Must Be Born Again**

### **Part 1**

#### **Introduction**

If you know any Christians, you're undoubtedly familiar with the phrase, "You must be born again." But just what does being "born again" mean? And why do Christians insist that it is essential to anyone seeking eternal life?

First, let's look at its meaning. Some people try to make a distinction between being a Christian and being born again, believing that being a Christian often means being a nominal Christian, while being born again means being deeply devoted to Christ. There is nothing in Scripture to make such a distinction. If we are Christians, we are born again. If we are born again, we are Christians. The term "born again" can also be translated "born anew", "born from above," or "born from God."

In this study we will primarily use "born again", because it is the most familiar and because it is easiest to understand.

#### **Our Study**

The term "born again" comes from the gospel of John.

#### **The Scripture: John 3:1-3**

*"There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, 'Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him.' In reply Jesus declared, 'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.'"*

1. Who came to see Jesus? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Who was Nicodemus? \_\_\_\_\_
3. When did he come? \_\_\_\_\_

The Bible doesn't tell us why Nicodemus came at night. Most likely, his visit could have been political suicide had it been known. Jesus was held in contempt by most of the ruling council and we can assume that Nicodemus was not yet a follower. Perhaps this was the only time Jesus was free from the crowds.

#### **The Scripture: John 3:4-7**

*"'How can a man be born when he is old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!' Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives both to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'"*

4. What was Nicodemus' question? \_\_\_\_\_
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5. How did Jesus respond to him? \_\_\_\_\_

6. What two births does Jesus describe? \_\_\_\_\_

**The Scripture: John 3:9**

*"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.*

7. What was Nicodemus' next question? \_\_\_\_\_

**The Scripture: John 3:10-12**

*"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, 'and do you not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?"*

8. What was Jesus' criticism of Nicodemus? \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus was testifying about earthly things and Nicodemus did not understand. How could he understand when Jesus spoke of heavenly things?

**Our Fleshly Birth**

Our first birth is the birth of the flesh. Let's go back to the beginning of Genesis to see what the Bible has to say about this birth.

**The Scripture: Genesis 1:26-27**

*"God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness....So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."*

9. What did God do? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Whose image was man made in? \_\_\_\_\_

Most of us know the story of man's fall. Apart from losing his intimacy with God, man lost another very important attribute.

**The Scripture: Genesis 5:3**

*"When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth."*

11. What happened when Adam was 130? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Whose likeness was he created in? \_\_\_\_\_

**The Scripture: Genesis 2: 16-17**

*"The Lord God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from the trees in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it, you will surely die.'"*

13. What was God's command to Adam? \_\_\_\_\_

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14. What would happen if he did? \_\_\_\_\_

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Before the Fall, Adam and Eve had an intimate, face-to-face relationship with God. Now everything changed. Yes, after the Fall, his fleshly birth, but he did lose his spiritual birth. That is why he had to be born again.

**The Scripture: Genesis 3:8-10**

*"The man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as He was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, 'Where are you?' He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid...so I hid.'"*

15. What did Adam and Eve do when they heard God walking in the garden? \_\_\_\_\_

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16. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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But exchanging fear for intimacy was not the only change. Adam and Eve were banished from the garden.

**The Scripture: Genesis 4:1-2**

*"Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain ...Later she gave birth to his brother Abel."*

17. What happened next? \_\_\_\_\_

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Without man's spiritual birth, his downfall was evident and quick. Cain became jealous of Abel. The Lord warned Cain about his attitude, but Cain refused to listen.

**The Scripture: Genesis 4:8**

*"Now Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let's go out to the field. And while they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.'"*

18. What did Cain do? \_\_\_\_\_

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Man became more and more evil.

**The Scripture: Genesis 6:5-7**

*"The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The Lord was grieved that He had made man on the*

*earth and His heart was filled with pain. So the Lord said, 'I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth'.*"

19. What was God's attitude toward his creation? \_\_\_\_\_

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20. What did He decide to do? \_\_\_\_\_

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The result of His decision was the Flood in which all of mankind, with the exception of Noah and his family, drowned. Even after the Flood most of mankind continued to sin to the point where the prophet Jeremiah would say:

**The Scripture: Jeremiah 1 7:9**

*"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure."*

21. How does Jeremiah describe the heart? \_\_\_\_\_

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Many centuries later both Jesus and Paul echoed His thoughts:

**The Scripture: Matthew 15:19**

*Jesus said, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders."*

22. What did Jesus say comes out of men's hearts? \_\_\_\_\_

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Paul also describes the unregenerate heart.

**The Scripture: Romans 8:6-8**

*"The mind of sinful man is death....The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God."*

23. How does Paul describe the mind of sinful man? \_\_\_\_\_

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These are pictures of the person born in the image of Adam. Such a person can never enter the kingdom of heaven.

24. What is the solution? \_\_\_\_\_

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If we go back to Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus, we see Jesus' solution.

What is it? We must be born again--born again spiritually in God's image--recreated in Jesus' image.

In the second part of this study, we will look at God's solution to the problem of man's lack of a spiritual birth.

## The Answers

1. Nicodemus
2. A member of the Jewish ruling council
3. At night
4. "How can a man be born when he is old?"
5. "No one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.
6. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."
7. "How can this be?"
8. That as Israel's teacher he did not understand what Jesus was saying.
9. He created man.
10. God's image
11. He had a son, Seth.
12. Adam's
13. That he must not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil
14. He would die (spiritually).
15. They hid.
16. They were afraid.
17. Eve gave birth to two sons, Cain and Abel.
18. He enticed his brother Abel into a field and killed him.
19. He was grieved that He had ever made man.
20. To wipe mankind from the face of the earth
21. Deceitful above all things and beyond cure
22. Murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander
23. As death and hostile to God. It cannot submit to God's law. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.
24. We must be born again.

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