

## The New Birth

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The term *born again* is used in Scripture only three times. (cf. Jn. 3.3, 7; 1Pe.1.23) John chapter three is where two of these appears. This was the night when Nicodemus came to Jesus.

*Joh 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

*Joh 3:7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

Here Jesus reveals two *manners* or methods of births. One is *of the flesh* (produced by the works of the flesh) and the other is *of the Spirit* (that is, produced by the works of the Spirit).

*Joh. 3. 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*

*6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

The order of these births is always, that which is of the flesh, then that which is of the Spirit.

*1Co.15.46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.*

The phrase *be born again* (vss. 3, 7) is a passive verb, *be born*, with an adverb, *again*. The passive verb tells us that the subject contributes *nothing* in this birth. The subject is the recipient of the birth. The adverb tells us the extent of the birth; that there is another birth. Nicodemus' natural mind understood this much.

*Joh 3:4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

The first birth brings men into a natural sphere of existence and the new birth into a spiritual sphere of existence. The new birth imparts a new understanding and a new will. This is the new creation of God.

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*2Co 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

Men in their natural state cannot comprehend the gospel of Christ because it is a spiritual message directed to a spiritual people.

*1Co.2.14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*

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Being born again is not the renovation of the old. The old nature is not changed. The old man remains the same as it ever was. But in the new birth God implants His *incorruptible seed* and with it *overlays* a new nature.

*1Pe 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*

Nicodemus came to Jesus because he couldn't comprehend the things of Christ. This occasion gave opportunity for Jesus to explain to him why he *couldn't* understand. Jesus never asked him if he was born again and He never told him *how* to be born again. However, the word that Jesus had sown in his hearing was sufficient to prove the work of the Spirit in him.

*Joh 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:*

*15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

Understanding this message and believing that Jesus is the Christ is proof of the new birth.

*1Jo 5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.*

Since the subject is passive and contributes nothing in the new birth, then who is the actor? As the first birth is the result of the work of the flesh, *that which is born of the flesh is flesh*, so the new birth is the result of the work of the Spirit, *that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*. This is said three times in this chapter. (vss.5, 6, 8). The Spirit of God is the great and sovereign Actor! He is the Great Effector of the new birth. It is not the result of any *genetic disposition*; it is not the result of any work that we might do; and it is not through the efforts of other men, be they good or evil.

*Joh.1.12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*

*13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

To be true to the Word of God on this point we must exclude the efforts of men preaching the gospel as a cause of the new birth. The gospel cannot impart life. It does manifest life when once it is resident in the hearer.

*2Ti.1.9 Who (God) hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,*

*10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:*

*11 Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.*

*1Jo 5:13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.*

## *The New Birth*

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Here, we have only considered the Spirit of God's work in the new birth. But the Triune God is involved in it also. In 1Pe.1.3 it is because of the abundant mercy of the Father: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ...* In Joh 5.25, it is because of the voice of the Son of God. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.* And, in Joh. 3.6 it is because of the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

The work of new birth is reserved by God for Himself. Nowhere does the Bible say to *repent*, or *believe*, or *do good deeds*, or *do penance*, or *be baptized*, or *take of the Lord's Supper*, or *join a church* in order to be *born again*. Furthermore, the Bible never tells us how to be born again, how to believe, how to be righteous, how to repent. How thoroughly destroyed man is in sin! But in the new birth the newborn babe in Christ understands the things of God and is able to do the will of God from the heart. *Ye must be born again* is a simple statement of fact. It is not an invitation. It is not an imperative. The question is not, what must a man do to be born again? The question is, What must a man do to be saved? And the answer to that is found in the hearing of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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