

“You MUST be born again” Metaphor or Reality?

by Robert Schmid

It is estimated that there are as many as 680 million “**born again**” believers in the world. Whether that is so, is for us to guess, and for God to know. What is the definition of a born again Christian? There are many, such as:

- In Christianity, being **born again** represents a spiritual and metaphorical rebirth, accepting Jesus as the Messiah and receiving the Holy Spirit. It is a term associated with salvation.
- A **born again** Christian is a Christian who has experienced a dramatic conversion to faith in Jesus, especially a member of certain Protestant groups that stress this experience.
- A religious person who believes Jesus is the Christ and who is a member of a Christian denomination.
- In Christianity, **born again** means rebirth—namely spiritual birth into the family of God with Jesus Christ as Lord and savior.
- A **born again** Christian is one who is having faith in Jesus (with reference to John 3:3).

Where does the teaching of being “**born again**” come from? In the New Testament (John 3), Jesus instructed the Pharisee Nicodemus that; unless one is born again (or born from above), he cannot see, nor enter the kingdom of God. Jesus said: “***You MUST be born again.***”

Nicodemus, a ruler and teacher of the Jews, did not understand, and so, he questioned Jesus saying: “***How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?***” Jesus then instructed Nicodemus and said: “***That which is born of the flesh IS flesh and that which is born of the Spirit IS spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again. The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes from or whither it goes; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.’***”

This then raises the question if the account of John 3 is but a **metaphor** of some greater spiritual truth, or if it is to be taken **literally** that one must be “born AGAIN”?

Nicodemus had no problem understanding what it means to be BORN. He knew that birth involved a process that had its beginning in the womb, at conception, requiring a gestation period of nine month, with the end result being the BIRTH of a new human being. Based on this physical understanding, Nicodemus could not follow Jesus’ command that one has to be born AGAIN. And so, Jesus explained to him that that which is born of the flesh is flesh (referring to a *physical* birth), and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (referring to a *spiritual* birth). We are not told if Nicodemus ever understood what it means to be “born AGAIN.”

The important question is: Do we understand? Considering that there are millions of people who claim to be “born again, we need to ask HOW and WHEN did they become “born again”? There are more than enough testimonials of people who claim to have given their heart to Jesus and thereby became “born again.” Then there are the many that recited the Sinners Prayer, and or were baptized, resulting in them being “born again.”

Obviously, all those who claim to be already “born again,” use this expression as a **metaphor**, as a **figure of speech** of their CONVERSION to a belief in Jesus Christ. They are speaking of a **metaphorical rebirth** that takes place as soon as they accept Jesus as Lord and Savior.

In contrast, a **literal** meaning of “born again” must involve a process beginning with conception, through a gestation period, to a birth. Even though, depending on context, the word “birth” can mean the complete process or just the end result of the process--the actual birth, no parent speaks of a child still in the womb as already born, but they do speak of their unborn as their “child,” not as their “embryo” or “fetus” which are medical terms.

We can see then that the words “born again” represent a **metaphor** in orthodox, traditional Christianity because to them it is an instant event in this life. In contrast, the words “born again” represent a **literal** event according to Jesus’ explanation to Nicodemus, a process that has its beginning in this life, but has its completion not until the resurrection. **Therefore, nobody has been “born again” in this life, and that includes the Lord Jesus Christ during His 33 ½ years as the Son of Man.**

Let us now consider why this misunderstanding of the meaning of “born again” exists. Jesus words are abundantly clear. *“That which is born of the flesh IS flesh”* (that includes all human beings including Jesus), and *“that which is born of the Spirit IS spirit”* (no human being IS spirit, except one—Jesus). Again, why this misunderstanding? The reason why we have this misunderstanding is because; *“the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature.”* Yes, it is the great dragon, who is called the Devil and Satan, **the deceiver of the whole world** who is responsible that 680 million Christians (erroneously) believe that they are *already* born again. To be BORN and be BORN AGAIN is the one thing Satan can never be, and therefore he hates and confuses this teaching, calling it a metaphor, whenever, wherever and through whomever he can.

How did Satan accomplish this? Well, human desire for instant gratification, to be “born again” NOW, is a major tool of Satan. But Satan’s master stroke was the raising up of a counterfeit church known as the Roman Catholic Church. Through this false church, Satan re-defined who and what God is with the establishment of the trinity doctrine in the third century. It is the Trinity or Godhead teaching that cannot accept a **literal** meaning of “born again.” Why not? Because a trinity is inherently limited to three, and can therefore not accept **literal** additions, cannot accept the **literal** birth of **literal** children to a Trinity/Godhead.

Roman Catholic Trinitarian Christology uses “born again” as a **metaphor** for CONVERSION and for ADOPTION. But, Jesus did not say; you must be adopted to see and enter the kingdom of God. Only the **REALITY** of a **LITERAL BIRTH** through God, reserved *only* for human beings, can cause one to become “born again,” when, after the complete process, you become (a) Spirit (being), a *true* child of God, by a resurrection from the dead.

Romans 1:19-20 tells us that: *“For what can be known about God is plain (is not a mystery) to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.”* The process of how to be BORN and, by extension, how to be BORN

AGAIN, is made known to us, for every single one of us came into existence, was BORN, by this same process. God created in Adam and Eve the process of being BORN of the flesh, and Jesus, through His conversation with Nicodemus, and by His example, made it plain that being BORN AGAIN requires a like process. There are no shortcuts to become “born again.”

A secondary reason why people consider themselves already born again is because the Greek word “gennao” (the word Christ used when He spoke to Nicodemus) can be translated as “BORN” or as “BEGOTTEN” depending on context. In other words it was up to the translators to determine when to translate “gennao” as “BORN” or as “BEGOTTEN.” For example: 1 John 5:1 in the KJV says: “*Whoever 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.*” All three words, “born,” “begat” and “begotten” are translated from the same Greek word “gennao” (Strong’s 1080). To be doctrinally correct and consistent, the first part of 1 John 5:1 should have been translated as: “*Whoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is **BEGOTTEN** of God.*”

As we can see, the use of the phrase “born again” as a metaphor is deceptive and false for there is no greater truth than to be literally “born again” of God. The primary objective of God and the very purpose of human life is to become BORN AGAIN, born of God, in order to become what God is: a sinless, divine Spirit Being. To become “born again” requires a process that begins with conversion when God imparts His Holy Spirit into our mind (**begettal**) and is not complete until we die with the firm hope and assurance that God will resurrect us (become **born again**) from the dead at the second coming of Christ.

“See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children NOW; it does not yet appear what we shall be (because we are only BEGOTTEN children), but we know that when he appears we shall be like him (BORN AGAIN), for we shall see him as he is” (a divine Spirit Being). “No one BORN of God commits sin; for God’s nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is BORN of God” (1 John 3:1,2,9).

