

How to Be ‘Born Again’

Few really understand this commonly used evangelical expression.

It was President Jimmy Carter who helped popularize the term "born again." The expression is misleading, however, in view of the way it is typically applied.

In common parlance, born again is understood to mean an experience of conversion, usually emotional, and associated with long sieges of prayer, preaching, and stirring music. For those undergoing the experience, born again means to be reborn in this life, with the implication that salvation is now assured.

A proper understanding of the concept, however, will lead to a significant truth in the way Yahweh is calling out a people for His Name.

The Meaning Behind ‘Born Again’

The concept of being "born again" is taken from chapter 3 of the Evangel of John in Yahshua's response to the Pharisee Nicodemus:

"Yahshua answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of Elohim" (John 3:3).

"Born again" in the King James Version should more properly be rendered, "begotten from above." "Born" here is the Greek *gennao*, meaning the birth process – from begetting to birth. *Gennao* is the same word used in Matthew 1:20, where the angel told Joseph that that which is conceived (*gennao*, begotten) in Mary was of the Holy Spirit.

One must be begotten before one is born. The process of birth begins with a gestation period. It doesn't happen instantaneously. This whole concept relates to the spiritual begetting that Yahshua was speaking of in John 3.

The second part of this phrase, the word "again," is from the Greek *anothen* (Strong's Concordance Greek Dictionary No. 509), meaning from above, anew, by supernal power. (For example, verse 31 of this chapter properly renders *anothen* "from above.")

Nicodemus did not understand the Messiah and asked 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 meant not a physical birth, but a new birth, a different birth beyond even the conversion experience. The connotation of "born again" to mean a change in one's behavior and a pursuit of a Biblical way of life is part of the intended meaning, but Yahshua went beyond that. "Yahshua answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of Elohim" (John 3:5).

The Savior prophesied of the glorious kingdom coming to this earth, which is offered to those who devote their lives to doing Yahweh's will as their Master did before them. To clarify the meaning of His words, Yahshua added:

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto you, you must be born again [begotten from above]. The wind blows where it lists, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell when it comes, and where it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:6-8).

Other related verses reveal that Yahshua was talking about repentant persons who were given the "earnest" or "down payment" of the Holy Spirit. We receive the Holy Spirit upon baptism

into Yahshua's Name after we have repented and turned from the ways of the world and are determined to follow in the footsteps of our Savior.

John 3:34 reveals that the Holy Spirit is given in measure. As we grow in grace, knowledge, and obedience, more of the Spirit is given to us, Acts 5:32. The Spirit was not given to Yahshua in part, but in whole: "For He whom Elohim has sent speaks the words of Elohim: for Elohim gives not the Spirit by measure unto Him."

But to us He gives just a part of the Spirit at first, to see whether we will continue faithful and grow in it. "Who has also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2Cor. 1:22). Earnest is the Greek *arrhabon* and means a pledge or an advance, like a down payment.

As with Yahshua's human begettal, the Holy Spirit is given us as a spiritual "begettal." Then as we grow spiritually, more of the Spirit is given, helping us mature into the nature and righteous stature of Yahshua.

First Comes Repentance

Before any spiritual begettal takes place, though, repentance must occur. We find a prime example of repentance in Acts 2. It came following Peter's explanation to the assembled Jews from 15 countries, saying that because of their sins they themselves were the ones who sentenced Yahshua to death. They were ashamed, anxious, stirred up, and asked, "What shall we do?"

"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Yashua Messiah for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, [even] as many as Yahweh our Elohim shall call" (Acts 2:38-39).

When we come to the point of understanding and believing "we all have sinned and come short of the glory of Yahweh" (Rom. 3:23), then we are ready to seek the only forgiveness of sins available to us. That is, through accepting Yahshua the Messiah.

Peter's answer: be baptized into the Name of Yahshua the Messiah for the remission of sin. At that point, with our sins cast aside, we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit. We are then granted a down payment, a portion of the Holy Spirit to work in our lives to overcome our own carnal desires and the ways of the world, as well as Satan's temptations day by day.

This is the invitation that Yahshua gave the people in His day: "In the last day, that great day of the feast [Tabernacles], Yahshua stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly [innermost being] shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Yahshua was not yet glorified)" (John 7: 37-39).

Yahshua likened the Holy Spirit to flowing water, which will cover the earth when the Kingdom is in operation. His cleansing blood at Passover allowed the Holy Spirit to come and remain on earth. Through the sacrifice of Yahshua we receive the Holy Spirit by baptism in His Name. Our sins are washed away, and once empowered by the Spirit; we keep Yahweh's laws and cease sinning.

Yahshua the First to Be Born Again

Yahshua is the Head of the Assembly; our pioneer, the One who has gone before and was the first to be resurrected with a body changed from flesh and blood to spirit. Those in the first resurrection shall also be changed to a spirit body:

"And he is the head of the body, the assembly: who is the beginning, the FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18). Note also this:

"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." (Rom 8:29).

Yahshua as the firstborn among brethren was "born again." That occurred when His physical body was changed to spirit essence as He rose from the dead. He was begotten (*gennao*) of water baptism and of the Spirit and was ultimately born from above (*anochen*) when He took on a spirit "body."

As we have read in John 3:8, once we are born of the spirit (born again) we will be spirit beings, a condition Yahshua says is wind-like:

"The wind blows where it lists, and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell whence it comes, and whither it goes: so is every one that is BORN OF THE SPIRIT" (John 3:8).

Being given the Holy Spirit upon baptism into Yahshua's saving Name is but the beginning for us.

His indwelling Spirit gives us peace of mind and produces fruits: "But the fruit of the Spirit of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22-23).

But beyond what it does for us now, the portion of the Holy Spirit we receive upon immersion is also a kind of pledge or security toward an inheritance one day of the Kingdom. Paul writes that we are sealed in Yahshua with the Holy Spirit of promise, Ephesians 1:13. He adds, "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:14).

This Kingdom inheritance will be awarded when Yahshua returns, John 14:2-3.

A Begettal Period

Just as in a legal contract when an earnest deposit is made, there is a waiting period during which the legal system put everything in order. All necessary groundwork must be laid so that both parties are satisfied that they are getting just what they are bargaining for.

What, then, is expected of us during this early begettal and "spiritual gestation" period prior to being born again?

Peter writes, "Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking. As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may GROW thereby: If so be you have tasted that the Savior is gracious" (1Peter 2:1-3). How do we grow? In grace and knowledge, 2Peter 3:18.

If we do not deliberately go against the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and do not quench the proper attitude of obedience being developed in our character, then we are sealed in Yahshua's Name unto the day of Yahshua's return when we rise to meet Him in the air as He returns to set up His Kingdom. We will then be changed to immortal, spirit beings, no longer flesh and blood that dies.

At that moment we will be born again. Notice the following:

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of Yahweh whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30).

"When Messiah who is our life, shall appear, then you shall you also appear with him in glory" [spirit beings] (Col. 3:4).

"Blessed and holy is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death had no power, but they shall be priests of Yahweh and of Messiah, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6).

Enter the Spirit Kingdom

Those given responsibilities in the Kingdom are those who have overcome their carnal nature, have been baptized into Yahshua's Name, and eventually become spirit beings at the resurrection.

The simple fact is, fleshly human beings cannot enter the Kingdom – either figuratively or literally. Paul wrote, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of Yahweh; neither does corruption inherit incorruption" (1Cor. 15:50).

To be born again is to be changed into spirit in a new birth that comes "from above." We must be born again, Yahshua said, or we can't see the Kingdom, "Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born again" (John 3:7).

Why is it necessary to be born again? Because flesh and blood cannot exist in the spirit world of the Kingdom. We must literally be changed – born into – spirit essence. Paul explains how this will happen: "Behold, I show 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed," 1Corinthians 15:51-52. (However, there will be a few humans left to repopulate the earth during the Kingdom reign.)

The formula for begetting of the Holy Spirit (*gennao*) that eventually leads to being born again into Yahshua's Kingdom is this: One must repent of one's sins (transgression of Yahweh's law, 1John 3:4), believe in and turn to the true Messiah Yahshua, and be immersed in water in His Name. Then follows the begetting of the Holy Spirit.

Yahshua went on to say that only a few would be willing to pay the price to be in the Kingdom.

Carnal One Will Not Enter

Most people are too preoccupied with their daily lives and will not take the time or make the effort to find out more about the grand and glorious future that awaits those who seek the Kingdom. Only when it is too late will many strive to enter.

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24). "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20).

We are to become humble and teachable as little children and put into practice what the Bible tells us. We are to keep Yahweh's laws and develop the character and love of Yahshua our Savior." And said, Verily I say unto you, Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

We are told plainly in 1Corinthians 6:9-10 that those who practice sin will have no place in the Kingdom, and will not be begotten of His Spirit and born again. "Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of Yahweh? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of Yahweh."

During the spiritual battle when the Holy Spirit is working in the repentant heart, the old nature gives away to a completely different individual: "Therefore if any man be in Messiah, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new," 2Corinthians 6:17-18.

Certain Ones Are Called Now

Being "begotten from above" by Yahweh's Holy Spirit is a fulfillment of the promise made by Yahshua. The Heavenly Father is calling certain people now to become His sons and daughters and to rule with Him in the Kingdom.

This is all made possible by the death and resurrection of His Son Yahshua, who paid the price for our sins, and arose that we might have life. He is now the Advocate for us as we struggle to overcome the world, Satan, and our carnal nature. He intercedes for us, and through the Holy Spirit we grow in grace and knowledge of Yahweh, fitting into His design for the faithful.

It all starts by being begotten from above with His Holy Spirit. When we answer Yahweh's call and are immersed into Yahshua's saving Name, we are sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. From that time forward we are given a portion of His Spirit to see what we will do with it.

Having the full power of the Holy Spirit will allow us to do even more than we can now. Imagine being able to become invisible when you wish; move through doors and walls; speed ahead to some destination; thwart activities of the wicked; all of which by using the mighty Spirit Power to accomplish good and fight evil.

First, we must demonstrate to Yahweh that we will use the measure of the Holy Spirit that we are given to produce fruitful works. Empowered by the Spirit, we do good, bringing honor to Yahweh by showing that we are worthy of His reward.

To seek to fulfill our selfish wants is the way of the worldly man, not the way of a person begotten by the Holy Spirit. May it be the goal of every person to be born again into the Kingdom of our Savior Yahshua!

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