

What It Really Means to be Born Again

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The Messiah proclaimed these profound words, “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). His statement has echoed down through the corridor of time, but what does it mean to be “born again” and how do these simple words relate to the Kingdom of God?

In our age “born again” have become some of the most frequently quoted words in the Bible. However, few understand the true meaning of Christ’s powerful proclamation. As a result, many sincere individuals claim to be born again. They are convinced that Christ’s utterance simply means that one need only experience a change of heart by accepting Him as their personal Savior. One religious web site describes being born again as something “that happens the instant you genuinely believe in Him, receive Him, and confess Him as Lord (<http://www.born-again-christian.info/how.to.be.born.again.htm>, retr. 6/21/2012).

Based on such teachings, many individuals who merely profess a belief in Christ feel a sense of security. They believe they have obtained the Kingdom of God. However, this doctrine has no basis in the truth and is not taught anywhere in the Bible. In fact, this false concept of being born again simply by having a change of heart was never taught by the apostles and the New Testament Church. This false doctrine arose approximately 1700 years after Christ’s death when a protestant preacher by the name of George Whitfield began to teach that an awakening of the mind in acceptance of Christ was the way believers are born again.

This booklet will explain that the words of Christ mean much more than simply a change of heart. They reach far beyond an inner feeling or thought. Our Savior actually revealed humanity’s ultimate and transcendent destiny!

The Context is the Kingdom

John recorded an account of Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews, visiting Christ under the cloak of darkness. During this clandestine meeting, Nicodemus explained that the Jewish leadership considered Christ to be a teacher sent from God. The Messiah responded by stating that Nicodemus needed to be born again in order to see the Kingdom of God. Why did the Savior reply in this way? The answer requires an understanding of the motivation for Nicodemus' need to speak privately to Christ.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin. This high-ranking religious body defined doctrine and outlined appropriate behavior in the Jewish community. When Christ began His public ministry, He soon became a matter of concern to these religious leaders. Christ seemed to appear from nowhere—preaching a message about the Kingdom of God. Mark recorded:

Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14).

Christ taught that God's Kingdom was close at hand. He warned people to prepare for its inauguration. This message was not entirely foreign to the Jewish people. They understood from reading the Scriptures that one day the Messiah would appear and provide divine leadership for the entire world (Deu. 18:15; Dan. 2:37-44). God promised that the nation of Israel would become the headquarters for His world government (Isa. 2:2-3). The Jews eagerly anticipated a glorious future in the midst of that Kingdom.

While many wondered when the promised Messiah would appear, Christ preached a powerful message about God's Kingdom. His pronouncement brought great hope to some, but others found His message deeply disturbing.

Christ had no official credentials from the existing religious leadership, yet He taught publicly and with authority. His doctrine seemed to conflict with much of the long-standing

traditions of the Rabbis. The Jewish leaders felt threatened as they watched crowds of people flock to hear Christ's message. He offended the Sadducees because He was not of their priestly line. He infuriated the Pharisees by speaking with authority which they had not conferred. Christ appeared to be a threat to those holding positions of religious authority in Jerusalem.

Christ openly preached an unorthodox message. He performed astounding miracles, and His popularity with the common people flourished. The possibility of His teachings starting a rebellion created fear in the minds of Jewish political and religious officers. These Jewish leaders were faced with a dilemma. They understood their obligation to maintain peace in Judea for the great empire which held their reins. A revolt could cost them their positions.

Nicodemus was deeply entrenched in this religious and political system. He realized that the Jewish leadership would deem it necessary to oppose Christ. Fearing to be seen with the controversial Messiah, he chose to visit Him in the shadow of night. To Nicodemus the issue was not just political; it was spiritual. Was Christ an imposter or the prophesied Messiah? Should Nicodemus maintain the status quo and guarantee his office, or should he follow Christ? If Jesus truly was the Messiah, the consequences of opposing Him could cost Nicodemus the opportunity to be part of the glorious coming Kingdom of God. Nicodemus had to know. As the Apostle John wrote:

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him" (John 3:1-2).

Christ knew the innermost thoughts of men and He immediately realized the purpose of this visit. The Savior addressed Nicodemus' deep-felt, unspoken, concerns:

Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

With these words Christ told Nicodemus that the coming Kingdom was an absolute reality, and inclusion in that Kingdom would not come about as a result of the well-intended political maneuvering of men. Entrance would not be granted as a consequence of being a descendent of Abraham. The Kingdom would not be established through a revolt of the people or by any human power whatsoever. In fact, the Kingdom would not be attained by any means that Nicodemus could imagine. There was only one way he could become a spiritual citizen of the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus would have to be born again.

What does it mean to be born again?

Christ stated that in order to see the Kingdom one must be born again. But, what did He mean?

An analysis of the words John chose can be helpful. The word “born” is *gennao* in the Greek language, and it can mean “to *procreate* (properly of the father, but by extension of the mother); figuratively to *regenerate*: - bear, beget, be born, bring forth, conceive, be delivered of (*Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, G1080). The Greek word for “again” is *anōthen*. This word has the following possible meanings “*from above; by analogy from the first; by implication anew*” (*Strong’s*, G509).

When recording Christ’s statement, it is likely that John specifically chose *anōthen* because all meanings apply. We must be supernaturally born from the authority of heaven. We must be born from the One who is first—the Alpha and Omega (Rev. 22:13). We must be born in a way that will become a new beginning for us as sons and daughters of God. Christ literally meant to be born a second time.

It is also important to recognize that Christ did not actually use the word *anōthen*. Aramaic was the common language of Christ’s day, and it was Aramaic that He spoke.

This being the case, it is important to understand the context of these words. Therefore, we should consider the meaning that the man who was talking with Christ understood Him to convey. Notice the clear understanding reflected by Nicodemus' next question. He asked:

How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? (John 3:4).

This religious leader understood that Christ was talking about a literal rebirth. *Vines Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testament Words* confirms this stating:

Nicodemus was not puzzled about birth from heaven; what perplexed him was that a person must be born a **second time** (p. 19).

The words that Christ spoke, and what Nicodemus understood Him to say, is that a man must literally be born a second time. Nicodemus realized that the first birth occurred from his mother's womb, but what puzzled him was the possibility of a second birth. As will be explained, Christ was referring to another literal birth—one of spirit and not of flesh.

Typology in the Bible

To understand Christ's words, it is helpful to consider the way God uses typology in the Bible. First, what exactly is typology? *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* defines this word as "things in Christian belief, prefigured or symbolized." Types are symbols that God uses to reflect spiritual truths. As Paul wrote, God patterned everything in the physical universe after the spiritual realm (Rom. 1:20).

For example, mankind was created in God's image. Therefore, it is possible to observe the form of man and perceive what God looks like. As the Scriptures reveal, He has a head, arms, legs, hair, and eyes as depicted in the image of man (Rev. 1:13-16). However, everything in the spirit world is not

composed of the elements that we have on the earth. God is a spirit, and His realm is composed of the same.

In another illustration, God required the tabernacle to be built after a specific pattern. The book of Hebrews reveals that Christ gave Moses an exacting blueprint from which to work. The author stated that Christ is:

A Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man... For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; **who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things**, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See that you make all things **according to the pattern shown you on the mountain**” (Hebrews 8:2-5).

The tabernacle on earth was patterned after the heavenly tabernacle. The high priest of the temple represented our High Priest—Christ. The city of Jerusalem on earth is symbolic of the heavenly New Jerusalem which will one day descend to a newly created earth (Rev. 21). Thus, earthly things are physical types that picture the spiritual reality, or a divine fulfillment to come.

God repeatedly uses physical examples as symbolic forerunners of final events. It is essential to understand this relationship of the physical to the spiritual in order to comprehend what Christ said next, stating:

Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5).

Born of the Water

Christ spoke of two separate events. The first references being “born of water.” This is an expression which describes the act of being baptized by submersion in water. The baptismal ceremony undergone by each new convert portrays putting to

death the way of life before being called. It is a type of burial of the old self (Rom. 6:4-6). For this reason, when the new convert is baptized, they are to be totally immersed which figuratively signifies burial with Christ.

Being raised up out of the water also has tremendous symbolism. It portrays being raised as a new person in Christ (Col. 3:10). It also foreshadows the Christian's literal death when buried in a grave, and the magnificent reality of one day being resurrected. For more on this subject, please read our booklet—*Three Resurrections of the Dead*.

Many religious leaders require people to become baptized in order to join their church. In such cases the candidate goes under the water and rises again, never fully realizing why God commanded the baptism ceremony. Consequently, they do not understand the amazing message God incorporated within this profound ritual. Paul discussed this at great length in the book of Romans where he wrote:

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4).

The Apostle Paul explained that new converts are partakers of Christ's death in baptism. This means that baptism simulates being buried with Christ. This is why total immersion in water is required. The candidate then rises up out of a type of grave portraying the Messiah's supernatural resurrection. Apostle Paul continued:

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of His resurrection (Romans 6:5).

When Christ was raised from the dead His form was completely different from that which He had as a human. Christ

was changed in composition. He was born again as the magnificent, powerful, spirit being He previously was. Paul proclaimed that Christ was:

Declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4).

When Christ returns, true and faithful Christians will be resurrected and made sons and daughters of God. They will be glorified as Christ was. They will become entirely new beings composed of spirit and possess supernatural powers beyond human imagination. The only thing they will retain is the righteous character developed during the conversion process.

The Christian baptism in water foreshadows this awesome future event. In a precursory sense, being born of the water is a symbolic new birth. A Christian comes out of the water a new individual in Christ. Paul described this by stating:

Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (2Corinthians 5:17).

Once baptized, a Christian is committed to living the way God desires and begins to take steps toward maturity. They are a babe that must continue to develop. As the both Peter and Paul explained:

As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby (1Peter 2:2).

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual *people* but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able *to receive it*, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere* men? (1Corinthians 3:1-3).

Each person raised out of the water during baptism is cleansed of all sins that were previously committed (Rom. 3:25). A minister then lays his hands on the convert, and the Holy Spirit is bestowed from God. Spiritual conception takes place, and the Christian becomes a part of the body of Christ. They continue to study while growing in grace and knowledge (2Pet. 3:18). With God in the lead, the individual matures spiritually. Continual repentance and further change must take place. The fruits of the Spirit begin to show forth manifesting God's divine nature. Christ's character becomes more and more evident—radiating out like a light to the world (Mat. 5:16; Gal. 5:22-24; 2Pet. 1:4).

It is obvious that being born of the water is a significant part of the conversion process. It must also be understood that it is only a symbol of the expectation of a far greater experience that lies in the future. It is NOT the reality! Baptism is simply acting out the typology of eventual death, burial, and a resurrection to transcendent glory.

At Christ's return, those who were born of the water and have overcome their human nature will be resurrected. They will finally possess the nature of God. Being born of the water is the precursor to the transcendent end of being born again.

Born of the Spirit

The second event that Christ mentioned is being born of the Spirit. After being properly baptized, all that the new believer experiences in their life is designed to prepare them for this single magnificent reality of being born of the spirit.

When Christ spoke these words, He meant no less than a literal birth into an entirely different realm. God is spirit, and He ultimately desires that all men worship Him in spirit (John 4:24). To accomplish this high calling, the Almighty must transform His called-out ones into spirit beings. The process the Eternal chose to accomplish this is rebirth. Just as humans are born into this physical world, the faithful are destined to one day be born into the spirit world.

For this reason, Christ stipulated that “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Those things that are composed of spirit are invisible to the human eye (John 3:8). Therefore, in order to see God’s Kingdom, we must first be transformed into the same substance of which God and the angels are composed. The Apostle Paul echoed this transcendent truth with the words:

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption (1Corinthians 15:50).

Flesh and blood cannot exist in the spirit realm. So awesome is the world of spirit, and so glorious is the Almighty, that He warned humans that they cannot look upon His face and live (Exo. 33:20). Therefore, in order to exist in the Kingdom of Heaven and to view God’s majesty, human beings must become spirit beings. Once supernaturally transformed, we will be able to look upon God’s radiant face and live. As Paul continued:

Behold, I tell 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 trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1Corinthians 15:51-52).

This is the great hope and the ultimate destiny of all genuine Christians—to be resurrected as incorruptible spirit! The Apostle Paul made this clear when he wrote:

So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. *The body* is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is

written, “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit (1Corinthians 15:42-45).

It is undeniable. The Scriptures reveal that humans have the potential to experience a change from this physical, natural body to a spirit, supernatural body. Therefore, Christ professed to Nicodemus that there were indeed two births—the first being of the flesh and the second of the spirit. The Savior continued to explain this truth to His visitor:

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6).

Our human mothers facilitated physical birth. We were fashioned from the flesh and blood of their body. Like them, we are corruptible. The Bible explained our mortality, stating:

...you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; For dust you *are*, and to dust you shall return (Genesis 3:19).

Professing that the second birth is of the spirit, Christ explained that it is a supernatural birth. When finally born of the spirit, faithful people of God will then be spirit. However, this change takes place in the future, not at the time we are baptized in water. As Paul wrote:

However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man *was* of the earth, *made* of dust; the second Man *is* the Lord from heaven. As *was* the *man* of dust, so also *are* those *who are made* of dust; and as *is* the heavenly *Man*, so also *are* those *who are* heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the *man* of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly *Man* (1Corinthians 15:46-49).

Paul revealed that one day we shall bear the image of the heavenly. Christians are now made in God’s physical image.

However, when they are born again, they will be created in His spiritual image. They will be composed of the same supernatural material as God. For this reason, when Christ spoke of being born again, He was not talking about becoming spiritually-minded or undergoing a change of heart. Notice the words He used:

Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit (John 3:7-8).

Christ explained that His true followers will be born again, and they will actually be changed in composition. They will become mighty, and transcend the physical laws of nature.

Upon being resurrected, the saints will take on the very nature of Christ. They will be like Him, able to command the physical elements to obey their word! They will be like the wind, invisible to the human eye, but possessing tremendous power. Resurrected spirit beings will be capable of travel anywhere in the universe at the speed of thought while completely outside the realm of mortal perception.

Humanity’s Destiny

Humanity’s purpose is the most significant doctrine to understand. Nicodemus realized the importance of the Kingdom and wondered if Christ might be the Messiah who would establish God’s government on earth. Christ taught that He was indeed the prophesied Messiah, but that His Kingdom would not be established at that time (John 18:36). He would first return to heaven and prepare a place for His faithful (John 14:2-3). Upon His second coming, Christ will resurrect a chosen few and change them from flesh to spirit. This is when they will be born again to inherit the Kingdom, and rule with Him on the earth for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4).

This is the transcendent future the Eternal has waiting for true and faithful Christians. This magnificent destiny has

remained a mystery to most, but it is the reason for our existence. The Apostle Paul explained this to the Colossians:

The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:26-27).

The mystery hidden for millennia is that humankind is destined for the glory of God. This hope of glory is portrayed symbolically in a conversion process designed by the Creator. It begins with sincere, true repentance and leads to baptism which results in a continual process of overcoming sin. However, God's unique symbolism is not limited to baptism. Various facets of the Almighty and His plan can be understood by observing aspects of the earth and universe (Rom. 1:20).

We are part of the physical creation, but unlike animals we are wondrously and marvelously made in God's image (Gen. 1:26). We have traits and abilities far above any other creatures on earth.

Fashioned in the image of God, we are like Him in the physical realm. With god-like abilities we have built great cities, computers, and space craft capable of flying to other planets. Man has gone so far as to harness nuclear energy and unravel the mysteries of DNA.

In addition to humanity's amazing skills, we have also been given the ability to experience emotions as God does. Our Creator loves, hates, feels joy, and sadness. In His divine affection, He has conferred these faculties upon humanity. Therefore, man can empathize, feel compassion, introspect, and show mercy. Mankind possesses such abilities because we were made in His image.

God created the human race as physical beings in hopes that during this temporary life we would experience the exhilaration of success, joy, and happiness as well as failure, sadness, and difficulties. God's desire is for people to learn the

magnificent lesson that man's way without Him has no future (Pro. 16:25). Without God's moral way of life, the human race would eventually destroy itself. As Christ stated:

And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days (Mark 13:20).

Genuine Christians are those who learn this lesson, respond to God's call, repent, and turn from a life of practicing sin. Once the individual understands the vanity of man's selfish way, that person begins to obey God. After being baptized and receiving God's Holy Spirit, the new believer begins to develop righteous character by following the instructions found in God's laws.

At Christ's return, those who have overcome will be resurrected to glory—reborn into the royal family of God. They will be given a new spiritual body free from disease and decay. They will literally become God's children.

God is a Father

According to the Bible, God is actually reproducing after His kind—the God kind! This is the awesome and transcendent meaning of being born again! God is literally creating a perfectly righteous holy family. As a Father, He has lovingly offered humanity the opportunity to become His children. The Apostle Paul wrote:

For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named (Ephesians 3:14-15).

In these verses, the Apostle Paul revealed that God is a family. Christ further stated that He came to reveal that God is our Father (Mat. 11:27). By this, He did not imply that God was an impersonal Father. Christ taught that God is our Father in the fullest and most personal sense—as a faithful and loving parent.

For this reason, He instructed His followers to pray “our Father” (Mat. 6:9). Paul also encouraged Christians to call God “Abba”—an intimate, paternal term, much like the endearing word Daddy (Rom. 8:15). Christ further taught that, once converted, God becomes our spiritual Father and we Christ’s brothers and sisters. As the author of Hebrews stated:

For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren (Hebrews 2:11).

Christ is the Son of God, and those who have God’s Spirit become His brethren. Therefore, they are God’s children; For “The Spirit is witness with our spirit that we are children of God (*Bible in Basic English*, Rom. 8:16).

Converted Christians are now the children of God, but not yet born! They are in a relationship with the Father who has begotten them with the Holy Spirit. The child is the father’s offspring even before birth. It is heir to all that the father has while yet inside the womb. The Apostle Paul described this relationship even further:

And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together (Romans 8:17).

Notice that the Scriptures tell us that we are now heirs of God, but not yet glorified. Tried and genuine Christians will miraculously be delivered from human life with all its limitations, trials, and sufferings into the Father’s spiritual family. Paul elaborated on this theme, stating:

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy *to be compared* with **the glory which shall be revealed in us**. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for **the revealing of the sons of God**. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of

Him who subjected *it* in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God (Romans 8:18-21).

The apostle stated that the creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption. He declared that the entire creation will eventually be rescued from corruption. These verses, and those that follow, are speaking specifically about the experience of being born again. The imagery is that of the creation being in the pangs of labor. It is as if a baby is soon to be delivered from its mother. The analogy also portrays genuine Christians waiting for their adoption as sons and daughters. Paul continued:

For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body (Romans 8:22-23).

The focus of these verses is the Christian's birth into the Kingdom and family of God. Our physical human birth actually foreshadows a spiritual birth.

Consider how the embryo develops safely within the confines of the mother's womb until maturity. Finally, at the appointed time, the contractions begin. Through the pain of these convulsions a child is born. However, in the warm and watery darkness of the womb, the child never realizes just how confined and limited it really is. It is the only environment the baby has ever known. The child before birth cannot grasp the liberty it will soon experience. It is unable to comprehend the vastness of the earth; neither does the infant understand the future opportunities it can enjoy through the maturation process. Its tiny mind cannot foresee its potential to build houses, author books, play musical instruments, or any of the many constructive and creative endeavors that most take for granted.

Once born, the child is free from its otherwise “watery grave.” This also foreshadows baptism and its ultimate destiny to be born again. At first, the newborn child is awed by the wonderful images and colors of the creation as it opens its eyes to see light for the very first time. It can now more clearly see and hear sounds from which its communication skills will develop. A marvelous and amazing world of growth, creative accomplishment, and fulfillment awaits the new human being.

Similarly, the Christian that will be born into the spirit dimension cannot grasp of the enormity of God’s universe, or the profound powers and abilities he or she will inherit as a child of God. How vast is the expansive spirit world? How majestic will our new bodies be? What will it be like to finally gaze on the glory of the Eternal God? How satisfying and fulfilling will it be to work directly with Christ in creative endeavors for the good of all.

Like a baby in the womb is unable to comprehend the world that it will be born into, we cannot fully imagine what awaits those who overcome. As the Apostle Paul explained:

For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known (1Corinthians 13:12).

We cannot fully comprehend the world into which we will be born. When this magnificent event occurs, an entire new universe of exhilarating discovery, growth, and development will be given to us. God’s chosen will possess superior knowledge and will understand all things with perfect clarity. The long-awaited moment of seeing God face to face will be a reality, and we will know God in the same way that He knows us (1Cor. 13:12). It will be an awesome and fulfilling life.

Christ had perfect understanding of God’s plan and purpose for humanity. He knew that He would actually be the first to be born again and therefore understood exactly what His destiny was. Hence, when it was time for Him to be crucified, in agony, distress, and sorrow, Christ took comfort by focusing

on His previous life and being born again into the family of God. As He reflected on the imminent glory of His future, Christ also comforted His disciples with the following words:

Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you (John 16:20-22).

Knowing that His anticipated time of trial and anguish was near, Christ concentrated on His faith in the ultimate destiny God had in store for Him. He would emerge from this terrible trial, resurrected—born again, into the Kingdom of heaven. Christ would once again be a glorious spirit being. He would enjoy the powers of being God and sharing eternity at the right hand of His Father! The profound truth is that a chosen few can share in the glorious destiny of Christ. People can enter the family of God!

The Messiah informed the religious leaders of His day that He and the Father were one (John 10:30). The self-righteous Pharisees understood that He was declaring Himself to be God. Objecting vehemently, they sought to stone Him. When Christ asked the reason for their hostility, they answered:

For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God (John 10:33).

Voicing that He and the Father were one, Christ established Himself as being equal to God. It is of great importance to realize that the Savior also stated that we are to be one with Him.

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me (John 17:20-23).

The significance of these words is enormous. It means that we have the potential of becoming a member of the family of God! This is the ultimate destiny for believers. Christ made this absolutely clear by answering His interrogators with the following words:

Is it not written in your law, ‘I said, you are gods’? If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God?’ (John 10:34-36).

Christ quoted Psalm 82:6. There God’s word stated that the ancient Israelites had the potential of becoming gods. After reiterating the profound truth found in the psalm, Christ said that the “Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35). This truth is absolute. Because this was Christ’s destiny, it can also be yours!

Humans will one day be born into the family of the Most-High. This truth is demonstrated in the creation. He designed life so that the physical world reflects spiritual truths. Therefore, children mature to become like their mother and father. Reaching adulthood, they have the same rights and privileges as their parents. Likewise, once born into the Almighty’s family, Christians will live on the same plane that God does. They will possess similar powers, glory, and much more than our limited human minds can now imagine. As Paul noted:

When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory (Colossians 3:4).

At the return of Christ, faithful Christians will be raised from the dead. Those still alive on earth will be miraculously changed. By virtue of this change at the resurrection, those accounted worthy will be born again as sons and daughters of the Father. As Luke quoted:

But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection (Luke 20:35-36).

Genuine Christians will literally be refashioned, recreated, and made in the likeness of Christ. The Apostle Paul wrote of this glorious metamorphosis, stating:

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself (Philippians 3:20-21).

It must be understood that this change to reflect God's likeness is NOT symbolic! It is no less than an absolute future reality. The Apostle John wrote of this wonderful transformation when he stated:

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1John 3:2).

Consider the glory that John saw in Christ after His resurrection (Rev. 1:14-17). The apostle felt very close to the

Savior when He walked on this earth as a man. He even laid his head on the chest of Christ. However, when he witnessed a vision of the Savior as a glorified spirit being, John was so awed that he became fearful and felt as though he had died.

This vision reveals the glorified state of Christ after His resurrection from the dead. It also points to our ultimate, majestic destiny to one day be born again. The Scriptures promise Christians that they will be raised, born of the spirit, and glorified with majesty like Christ. At this time, only Christ has experienced this wondrous change.

Christ is the Firstborn

Throughout the history of human existence, only one person has ever been born again. The Apostle Paul explained that it was Christ who was the first to undergo this divine process. Genuine Christians will also be born again, but their change will occur later. Paul wrote:

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29).

Christ is the firstborn of God, but there will be others. Numerous sincere Bible students have not understood this wonderful truth. They have been misled by the false teaching that the word “firstborn” refers only to Christ’s preeminence. As a result, many have not realized that Christ is the first, and others will follow.

An examination of this vitally important word explains this truth. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* explains that “firstborn” is the Greek word *prototokos*. This unique term is composed of two parts. The first is *protos* which means “foremost (in time, place, order or importance): - before, beginning, best, chief (-est), first (of all)” (G4413). The second part is *tikto*; an expression that connotes producing seed as a mother, a plant, or the earth (G5088). The Apostle Paul specifically chose to use the expression *prototokos* because

when speaking of Christ both meanings apply. *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia* defines this word as:

first in sequence to be born or, figuratively, first in rank, preeminent (p. 540).

Interestingly, *protos* is the root word from which we derive the English word prototype—a pattern from which all others are fashioned. Therefore, Christ has preeminence as a reflection of His being the human prototype. He is the perfect model to which Christians are to conform.

The second root word, *tikto*, also reflects the fact that Christ's office as firstborn gives Him preeminence. However, this prominence stems not only from being the first in time order, but by His being born through the seed of God's Spirit.

According to the words recorded in Scripture by the Apostle Paul, Christ was the first to be born again. As such, He has a place that is both primary in time, order, and in rank. However, Paul references two births in His writings. The first was in the flesh through Mary. As Paul said:

Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh (Romans 1:3).

Matthew also mentioned that Christ was the firstborn child of Mary (Mat. 1:24-25). Other Scriptures concur documenting that Christ was the first to be born among other siblings (Mark 6:3). However, the word "firstborn" is the same term that Paul used when explaining that Christ was the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29). Therefore, Christ was the first in His physical birth order, but He was also the first to be born of the spirit—born again. As Paul wrote:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation (Colossians 1:15).

This verse proclaims that Christ is literally the firstborn of all humanity. This cannot be speaking of a physical birth. Adam was the first human to be given physical life by God. It is Adam, not Christ, who was God's physical firstborn (Luke 3:38).

Further establishing the true meaning of "born again," Paul calls Christ the "last Adam" (1Cor. 15:45). As Adam was the first human being, Christ is the first to be born again as a spirit being and thus a spiritual type of Adam.

The Firstborn are Mine

Ancient Israel was freed from slavery when God slew all of the firstborn of Egypt. God then claimed that the firstborn of both man and beast were to be His. Moses wrote:

Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and beast; it is Mine... you shall set apart to the LORD all that open the womb, that is, every firstborn that comes from an animal which you have; the males *shall be* the LORD's. But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem *it*, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem (Exodus 13:1-13).

In these verses the term "firstborn" refers to first in birth order. Further, the sacrifice of the firstborn is symbolic of Christ. He is the first to be born of God, and the sacrifice for the firstborn of man and beast by the ancient Israelites was intended to be a continual reminder of God's firstborn Son who would sacrifice His life for mankind.

Without question, at midnight on that very first Passover in Egypt, all who died were also the first in birth order. In their own way, they too pointed to the Messiah who would taste death in order to save mankind, and rise again to become the firstborn of God's spiritual creation.

Relating how Christians differ from those brought out of Egypt, the book of Hebrews reveals that Christ is the spiritual

firstborn. Faithful believers are called to experience a similar transcendent destiny:

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven (Hebrews 12:22-23).

Faithful Christians will be taken to the New Jerusalem after being resurrected to spirit. They will then be able to see the spiritual city and literally take part in governing from this magnificent edifice in the Kingdom. Those who come to the “church of the firstborn” are individuals who are now called by God to be born again.

The Firstborn of the Dead

The term “firstborn” indicates that Christ is the first to be born again, and others will follow. What must be understood is that this second birth does not occur at baptism. Instead, it takes place after the death of the body. As the Apostle Paul wrote:

And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence (Colossians 1:18).

Realize the astounding truth that Christ is the “beginning” of what God has planned for mankind. He was the first to go through the process of being born again. Christ is the “firstborn from the dead.” This makes it clear that His rebirth did not occur while He walked the earth. This answers the question of when a Christian is born again. It is not at baptism or when a person decides to give their heart to the Lord. Before Christ was born again, He died. Likewise, all who follow Him must first die before they will be born again. The Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians of this truth stating:

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ's at His coming... But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies (1Corinthians 15:22-23; 35-36).

The Scriptures indicate that a literal death of the body must take place before a person can be born again. Even the faithful who are alive when Christ returns will perish in the flesh when they are instantly changed into a born-again spirit being (1Cor. 15:52). As Paul wrote, Christ is the firstborn of many brethren. Thus, the Bible reveals that those who are chosen will follow the same pattern.

Until this momentous transformation occurs, genuine Christians merely have a down payment of the spirit as assurance (Eph. 1:13-14). God's spirit engenders new life in Christians. They are spiritually begotten in this way. Like spiritual embryos that must develop before birth, as long as the believer grows in grace and knowledge, they will be born again at a later time.

Begotten and Born

Christians should have this blessed hope of one day being miraculously born again into the Family of God. For now, spirit life is merely conceived within the convert. Therefore, Christians are only begotten by the spirit—they are not yet born again. As the Apostle Peter wrote:

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy **has begotten us** again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1Peter 1:3).

The translator's use of the word "begotten" is telling. Begotten is the past tense of begettal. *The New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* defines this word:

To procreate, usually said of the father, sometimes of both parents. To cause (p. 87).

To beget means to engender or begin new life. Much more is required for birth to occur. There is a time-line of events that absolutely must transpire during procreation, and our understanding of God's plan for mankind can be greatly enhanced by an examination of this process.

Human life originates with the Father. His sperm unites in a marvelous way with the mother's egg—producing a new life. Begetting takes place when the mother conceives and gestation begins. Finally, the embryonic growth culminates in the birth of a child. In like manner, upon complete surrender to God and baptism in water, the laying on of hands issues the Holy Spirit from the Father in heaven. God's Spirit unites with the spirit of man and spirit life is miraculously engendered. Thus, having been conceived for the first time spiritually, the new Christian is now begotten by the Spirit.

Some have been confused regarding the subject of born again because of a mistranslation of the Greek word that John recorded Christ to say. The actual word God inspired is *gennaō*. Defined as "procreate," this word is "properly used of a father, but by extension of the mother" (*Strong's*, G1080). Further, it can mean to "regenerate, bear, beget, be born, bring forth, conceive, or be delivered of." The definition of *gennaō* can mean to beget, be born, or both. Therefore, when translating the Scriptures, it is necessary to sometimes render *gennaō* as begotten and other times born. The only way to be certain of the translation is by examining the context. The meaning must be in accord with the surrounding verses as well as the entire plan of God. For example, in Matthew's account of Mary's pregnancy, the word *gennaō* means conceived:

Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David,

do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:19-21).

The apostle spoke of that which had begun in Mary’s womb—not what had been born. The word “conceived” is translated from *gennao*. In the next chapter, *gennao* is used twice to refer to Christ after He had been born:

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him” (Matthew 2:1-2).

Translators properly rendered *gennao* as born in this verse. In other instances, they misunderstood the context and transposed the word as born—instead of the intended meaning of begotten. For example, in 1Peter 1:3 *gennao* is properly translated “begotten.” Twenty verses later it is mistranslated as “born” as the following verses show:

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has **begotten** us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead... Love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been **born** again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever (1Peter 1:3-23).

The context shows Peter using *gennao* in connection with “incorruptible seed.” Seed is never born. It is that which is planted thereby begetting life. Therefore, it is clear that *gennao* should have been translated to reflect the truth that Christians are not yet born again. They have the seed of the Holy Spirit and are therefore begotten again as correctly translated in verse three of this same chapter. Both the

American Standard Version and Young's Literal Translation correctly rendered this term stating:

Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth (ASV, 1Peter 1:3-23).

Being begotten again, not out of seed corruptible, but incorruptible, through a word of God—living and remaining—to the age (YLT, 1Peter 1:3-23).

Why Gennao?

In the New Testament Scriptures, *gennao* is sometimes used to mean spiritual “begettal.” Other times it refers to a future time when the individual is born of the spirit. Why did the New Testament authors use this unique word that can have two meanings? They could have chosen to use the Greek word, *sullambano*, to represent the act of conception. *Sullambano* literally means to take together, or to catch. Incredible as it may seem, ancient Greeks knew that the sperm comes together with the ovum resulting in conception. The gospel writer, Luke, used this very term to refer to that which is conceived (Luke 1:24-36; 2:21).

The reason God inspired the term *gennao* to be used when referring to the spiritual birth process is because it is directly involved with the person's salvation. The connotation is that which is begotten will be born.

To emphasize this positive aspect of conversion, God may have inspired the apostles John and Peter to use the word *gennao* in reference to being spiritually begotten for the following reason. While genuine Christians are only begotten now, those who diligently seek to obey God, and are found to be faithful servants to the end, will surely be born again:

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

Christ is the Only Begotten

Christ was also referred to with an endearing term by the Apostle John who wrote “we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). If Christ is called the “only begotten,” does this mean that others cannot be begotten? Absolutely not! Christ being the “only begotten” does not mean others cannot follow. *Monogenes* is the Greek word used by John, from which the term “only begotten” was translated. It is the same word used by the author of Hebrews in chapter 11. The definition is primarily that of being unique. As *Vines Complete Expository Dictionary* explains:

With reference to Christ, the phrase ‘the only begotten from the Father’ indicates that, as the Son of God, he was the sole representative of the Being and character of the One who sent him... The expression also suggests the thought of the deepest affection (p. 447).

We see that Christ being the only begotten does not refer to Him as being the only one who has ever been begotten. Instead, it points to the uniqueness of His begetting. Consider some of the ways in which Christ’s conception was supernaturally superior:

- He had no beginning or end of days (Heb. 7:3).
- He put off His glory to become a man (Php. 2:6-7).
- He was conceived without sexual union (Mat. 1:20).
- He had the Spirit without measure (John 3:34).

Consider another example of this expression. Abraham was a Biblical type of God the Father, and his son Isaac was a type of Christ. Abraham was told to sacrifice his son—picturing the Father allowing Christ to be sacrificed for us. Isaac was considered the patriarch’s only son even though Abraham had other children. Hebrews explains:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son* (Hebrews 11:17).

The term “only begotten” refers to the deep affection and closeness of a father, as well as the unique status of the child. Christ will always be the only begotten. He was always with the Father and was the first to be born again. The Father is especially pleased with the sacrifice and love Christ bestowed on us, and we should feel eternally indebted and grateful to Him. It is only through Him that we can be begotten and ultimately born into the family of God.

In summary, spiritual conception begins after repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Spirit. The newly conceived Christian must now grow in Christ-like character while in the body of the Church (Col. 1:18). Finally, the entire earth will experience contraction-like convulsions as it experiences the great tribulation. After which, God’s begotten children will be born again at Christ’s triumphant return (Rom. 8:15-30).

Nicodemus should have Understood

When Christ informed Nicodemus that he must be born, the religious leader did not grasp the transcendent reality of His statement. Christ’s nocturnal visitor was perplexed, and asked the Savior, “How can these things be?” Noting his confusion, Christ replied, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?” (John 3:9-10).

Nicodemus was a high-ranking teacher in the Jewish community. By virtue of his training, He should have possessed an understanding of Scripture that would enable him to grasp the meaning of Christ’s words. This teaching had already been recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures which Nicodemus professed to follow. As Paul explained to Timothy:

From childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is*

profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2Timothy 3:15-17).

The New Testament Scriptures did not exist when Paul wrote these words. The books of the Old Testament were all that existed for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction. Paul said that they reveal all that is necessary in order to be saved. This includes the concept of being born again. For example, what is considered to be the oldest manuscript in the Bible refers to God creating a work of great value in man—something which would be complete at a resurrection. The patriarch Job asked the question:

If a man dies, shall he live *again*? All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my change comes. You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands (Job 14:14-15).

Job knew that a resurrection would come and with it a change in his physical composition. The prophet Daniel also confirmed a resurrection from which God's faithful will emerge in a glorified state. He wrote:

Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame *and* everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever (Daniel 12:2-3).

The great king, David understood that his ultimate destiny was to see the Almighty. Looking forward to arising from the sleep of death, and being transformed into to the marvelous likeness of God, he wrote:

As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness (Psalm 17:15).

The prophet Isaiah foretold this monumental event that will occur at the end of the age. Speaking of a time of terrible apostasy among God's people just prior to Christ's return, Isaiah showed that God will intervene in the affairs of men, and raise a large number of people from the dead:

“Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? *Or* shall a nation be born at once? For as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her children. Shall I bring to the time of birth, and not cause delivery?” says the LORD. “Shall I who cause delivery shut up *the womb?*” says your God (Isaiah 66:8-9).

As a teacher of the Scriptures, Nicodemus should have known what Christ meant when He spoke about being born again. This subject is mentioned throughout the prophets and depicted as a resurrection from the dead. God's true servants from ancient times understood this truth. The Almighty would one day raise His faithful, and the earth would give up her dead—delivering them from bondage in the grave and into the glorious liberty of the Sons of God.

Why Didn't Christ Just Say Resurrection?

If Christ really meant a resurrection from the dead, why didn't He simply say so? Why didn't He use that very word? Why didn't Christ tell Nicodemus except a man be resurrected he cannot see the Kingdom of God?

The answer is that Christ would actually have misled people if he used the term resurrection because being born again means more than being raised from the dead. To be resurrected means to be brought back to life. According to prophets, this will occur at different times for varying reasons.

In the book of Revelation, the Apostle John wrote about three different resurrections. The first is shown to take place at Christ's return. Those who are a part of this resurrection are changed to spirit (Rev. 20:4). A second resurrection to physical life takes place 1,000 years later (Rev. 20:5). Finally, a third resurrection occurs in which the rest of mankind will be judged—some to eternal life, and others to the second death. This is prophesied to occur at yet a later time (Rev. 20:12-15). For more on this subject, please read our booklet—*Three Resurrections of the Dead*.

Additionally, not everyone who will be born again will be resurrected from the grave. Some faithful over-comers will be alive at Christ's return. These will be instantaneously changed. As Paul wrote:

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord (1Thessalonians 4:16-17).

Those who qualify and are alive when Christ returns will not need to be resurrected from the dead. They will simply be changed at His coming.

Another possible reason why Christ may have not used the term resurrection is that most of the Jewish people of His time would have misunderstood His meaning. The vast majority of His contemporaries had a false concept of the resurrection. The Sadducees denied the existence of a resurrection altogether. The Pharisees believed in a resurrection, but their view was a radical departure from the teaching found in the Scriptures.

The Pharisee's Belief in the Resurrection

Flavius Josephus was a devoted Pharisee and Jewish general who became a noted historian after his capture by the Roman general Titus. While imprisoned in Rome, he authored

his famous work titled *Antiquities of the Jews*. In this book, Josephus addressed many of the beliefs of his religious organization. Regarding the Pharisaic belief in the resurrection, he explained:

They also believe that souls have an immortal vigour in them, and that under the earth there will be rewards or punishments, according as they have lived virtuously or viciously in this life; and the latter are to be detained in an everlasting prison, but the former shall have power to revive and live again (18, I, 3).

The beliefs of the Pharisees were more like the Greek view of hell than the message of hope found in the Bible. In his extensive work, Josephus also wrote about the following belief:

All souls are incorruptible; but that the souls of good men are only removed into other bodies, but that the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment (*Wars of the Jews*, 2, 8, 14).

Though they believed in a type of resurrection, the philosophy of the Pharisees had very little to do with the Bible's view of an after-life. In spite of their desire to be separate and pure from the influence of the Greeks, their view had become deeply colored by the pagan concepts of the immortal soul and reincarnation. If Christ would have used the term resurrection, Nicodemus and the Pharisees would have been led to believe they were correct in their distorted views of the after-life.

Instead, Christ used the phrase "born again" because it has a much more precise and profound meaning than simply being brought back to life. The second birth is an entirely new and different existence in the Kingdom and family of God. Being born again means to be transformed into a glorious spirit being. It signifies becoming like God. It includes being a part of God's eternal government—ruling with Him in His marvelous Kingdom forever.

You must be Born Again

The doctrine of being born again is indeed one of the most beautiful, profound, and meaningful teachings in the Bible. It gives the Christian's life a deep significance and awesome purpose. Understanding what it means to be born again explains why we were born in the first place, and what God's purpose for humanity actually is.

Being born again is not just a conversion of mind. It is not simply giving your heart to the Lord, professing belief in Him, or being baptized. Christ spoke of a future rebirth into God's family.

God the Father is reproducing His own kind by creating sons and daughters. He is developing a family composed of spirit beings that will one day enjoy pleasures, creative endeavors, and accomplishments on His level. As such, those who will be born again will have developed righteous character. They will keep His law, and live in love, peace, and harmony for eternity.

This teaching could not possibly have come from the cunning minds of philosophers. It could not be the concoction of men, but is rather a truth revealed by no less than the Spirit of God. It is stated many places in the Bible, and it is mirrored by the types and patterns found in God's creation. Paul wrote:

For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse (Romans 1:20).

It is possible to understand God's plan by taking a close look at the creation. We can recognize that the physical is a type of the spiritual. When we observe the earth, we see that every living thing is reproducing. We see that God made man in His own image, and people reproduce through a family. It would be foolish to think that we can reproduce, but God cannot. The entire creation is living proof that this is God's purpose for humanity.

In the physical world, we understand that a new human being is created by the supreme act of love between a husband and wife. The seed of the father unites with the egg of the mother, and a child is begotten. This portrays the Holy Spirit uniting with a human spirit. When our spirit unites with the Spirit of God, new life is engendered in us. We begin to become new creatures through a process of conversion. However, we are not yet born again. We are only begotten—conceived a second time.

Once a human female is impregnated, the miracle of new life created in the mother's womb begins to form. The embryo grows, developing attributes inherited from its parents. Likewise, Christians begin to grow in the body of Christ—His Church (Col 1:24). Having partaken of God's divine nature, we commence a spiritual journey of immense proportion in which we begin to develop attributes that reflect the mind of the Almighty and begin to exhibit the character of God (2Pet. 1:4).

When the physical process of gestation is complete, the human embryo is ready to be born. Contractions begin. There are birth pangs. Finally, to the joy of the whole family, a child is born. In a similar manner, Christians will be born again at Christ's return. Isaiah prophesied that a nation will be born at once, and Peter wrote that people are being called to become that nation:

But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1Peter 2:9).

God is reproducing Himself, and genuine Christians have the tremendous opportunity of being part of a chosen generation. If we are called and choose to live His way of life, we can be begotten of God while yet flesh and blood. We can call the Almighty Abba—Father.

In the not-too-distant future, genuine Christians will be born into God's divine family. They will live with Him in

everlasting joy, and reap the blessings of His way of life forever. This is the profound meaning of the words that Christ spoke to Nicodemus that fateful night. Through the scriptures preserved for centuries, His words now speak to you. They tell of a grand truth of such magnitude that it cannot be contained:

Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

The Eternal Church of God offers a variety of books, booklets, articles, audio, and video to help people better understand the Bible. Some of the printed material available includes:

This is Not the Only Time of Salvation

The Truth about Heaven

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

The Truth about Easter

The Truth about Tithing

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