

## ***What Does Born Again Mean, Revisited***

Jesus told Nicodemus that as a teacher of Israel he, Nicodemus, should know how salvation occurs, know what being born of water and of spirit means, know what constitutes being born a second time. Teachers of spiritual Israel today should likewise understand this birth analogy, which, like all analogies, doesn't establish a one-to-one correspondence but a similarity.

So began an article I wrote more than six months ago [March 2003] in response to being challenged on the question of whether a born-from-above disciple has actual life in the spiritual realm. Without life in the supra-dimensional realm usually identified as heaven, the disciple can cast no shadow into the physical realm of space-time. And without then fully comprehending the implications of typology, I addressed the question of whether a disciple who has received the Holy Spirit is a begotten child of God, or has actually been born of Spirit, hence born again.

I asked the following questions to begin the article:

Does a new born infant receive his or her inheritance when the infant first draws breath? Is judgment upon an infant in his or her mother's womb? How can an infant in the womb be chastised by his or her father? Does an infant in his or her mother's womb accumulate wealth?

And because I attempted to answer these question in the article, I have chosen not to rewrite the article, but to write a short, new piece which will say much the same thing, but from a better understanding of the birth analogy. The premise of the earlier piece is correct; therefore, I have opted only to add this additional piece to the Literature Library's archives.

Within the splintered churches of God that have descended from the work of Herbert Armstrong, the expression "born again" means to be glorified at the resurrection of firstfruits. To be born of spirit (John 3:6, 8) and move about as the wind, within the derivative fellowships of Herbert Armstrong, requires glorification. A begotten son of God, to these fellowships, who still occupies a fleshy tabernacle hasn't yet been born of spirit. To be born of spirit means the person's body is spirit. And at a carnal level, the reasoning used by these fellowships makes sense, but only at a carnal level.

Born-from-above or born again disciples are to be spiritually minded, which means that these disciples are to raise their overall level of thinking. Revelation no longer comes from physical visions, but from spiritual comprehension of what has already been revealed. The physical portion of the plan of God was completed at Calvary, but the spiritual portion began only three and a half years earlier and won't be complete until the conclusion of the Lord's day. The spiritual portion of the plan of God began with the Breath of the Father [*Pneuma "Agion*] descending upon the man Jesus of Nazareth as a dove (Matt 3:16), thereby giving spiritual life to the second Adam in an analogous birth process to the first Adam receiving the breath of life from Elohim [singular in usage]. The first Adam become a *naphesh*, a breathing creature (Gen 2:7). The second Adam became a life-giving spirit (1 Cor

15:45). But Jesus as the second Adam didn't become a life-giving spirit until after His Ascension and glorification. He returned the evening of His Ascension and He "breathed on [the ten disciples assembled together] and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit [*Pneuma "Agion"]*'" (John 20:22). Thus, the glorified Jesus began the same two-step spiritual birth process in these ten disciples that had begun when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him as a dove.

The spiritual birth process requires that spiritual infancy and adolescence as sons of God be spent in corruptible tabernacles, or bodies of flesh. Glorification occurs when a son of God reaches his or her spiritual majority--sons of God are neither Jew nor Greek, free nor slave, male nor female (Gal 3:26-29). A disciple becomes a son of God with baptism, in exactly the same manner that the man Jesus of Nazareth was declared the beloved Son of the Father following His baptism (Matt 3:17).

John's baptism was for repentance from sin (Matt 3:11); his baptism was physical, and symbolic of the earth having been baptized with water during the days of Noah. His warning to Pharisees and Sadducees was, "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (same verse). What John reveals is the comparison between the physical and the spiritual. There is one physical baptism: with water. But there are two spiritual baptisms: (1) with the Holy Spirit, and (2) with fire. Just as the world was baptized for sin with water, it will be baptized with the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28 & Acts 2:17) when the Holy Spirit is poured out upon all flesh when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Most High and of His Christ (Rev 11:15 & Dan 7:9-14) half way through seven years of tribulation (Dan 9:27). The world will then be baptized with fire when the new heavens and the new earth come following the great White Throne Judgment.

Although most denominations teach that the Holy Breath of God was first given on that day of Pentecost when Peter spoke, that teaching is contradicted by Scripture, for Jesus gave the Holy Spirit to His disciples the evening following His Ascension, thereby creating the second Eve (i.e., the Church) at the equivalent time of when the first Eve was presented to the first Adam. The Church was then composed of flesh and breath [*soma* and *psuche*] disciples who had just received the *Pneuma* of God, whereby completing the tri-part construction that the Apostle Paul identifies [*psuche*, *pneuma* and *soma* – 1 Thess 5:23]. The man Jesus of Nazareth was born of Mary as flesh and breath; to say otherwise is to make oneself into an antichrist. Thus, the man Jesus became the beloved Son when He received the *Pneuma* or Breath of the Father, thereby making Him tri-part in construction for the next three and a half years. He wasn't the begotten Son of the Father when He received the Holy Spirit; He was the beloved Son.

Two concepts taught by historical exegesis must be rejected, one Arian, one trinitarian, before being born again can be spiritually understood. The first error (held by all Arian fellowships of the spiritual house of Israel) is that the Father begot the man Jesus of Nazareth. Some Arian fellowships hold that Jesus was initially created in the womb of Mary; some such as the Latter Day Saints back Jesus' creation by the Father up prior to the creation of the universe. But none of them read the original text with sufficient spiritual

understanding to see that the man Jesus came as His own son--John teaches that the *Logos* was *Theos*, who was in the beginning with *Theon*, that *Theos* created all things and came as the man Jesus (John 1:1-14). It was *Theos* who gave His son, His only (He could only enter His creation once), because He so loved the world (John 3:16-17). Literally, the God of the Old Testament [the *I AM* of Moses] who created everything physical came as the man Jesus of Nazareth, a flesh and breath human being no longer with spiritual life. Thus, when Israel killed Jesus, the nation killed the Covenantor thereby abolishing the covenant by which it had been made the holy nation of God (Eph 2:15 – compare with Exod 19:5-6 & 1 Pet 2:9). God doesn't break covenants. If Israel had not killed the Covenantor, physical circumcision would still be required of spiritual Israelites. The second covenant would be in addition to the Sinai covenant, not instead of it. The priesthood would still be Levitical, not after the order of Melchizedek. But because Israel killed *YHWH* its *Elohim* (Exod 20:2), who was born of flesh and breath as the man Jesus (again, John 1:14), the law that divided the world into physically Circumcised and unCircumcised was abolished. The second covenant of Moses made with uncircumcised Israelites (Deu 29:1) wasn't abolished, for this second covenant made no physical distinction between those who had clipped foreskins and those who didn't.

So a spiritual son of God needs to understand that the God of the Old Testament came as His only Son (again, He could only do this once) because **He** loved His creation enough to give Himself entirely for it; **He** loved you and me enough to enter His creation, live without sin, and become our sin offering. And if you think you don't have to obey Him and live within His laws, which are also the Father's, you are truly spiritually ignorant. He loved you enough to make possible you becoming His younger sibling, like Him in every way. And how do you show appreciation? By mocking Him, saying, *I'm not under the law, I'm under grace; I don't have to keep His Sabbaths?* Is this how you show your appreciation of *YHWH* Israel's *Elohim* dying as the man Jesus at Calvary? If it is, you aren't worth the dust of which you are composed.

The second major false concept promulgated by historical exegesis is the primary error of the spiritual house of Judah (spiritual Israel divided in two spiritual houses, as did the physical nation, prior to the Father sending both houses into spiritual bondage to Satan, the king of Babylon [Isa 14:4-21])--the error of assigning personhood to the Breath/*Pneuma* of the God. A person doesn't assign personhood to his or her own breath, nor should a person assign personhood to the Breath of either Christ or of the Father. Their Breaths are distinct as Paul writes, "Anyone who does not have the Spirit [*Pneuma*] of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit [*pneuma*] is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit [*Pneuma*] of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit [*Pneumatōs*] who dwells in you" (Rom 8:9-11 – even the *ESV* translators assign personhood to the Breath of the Father, such is the extent of the error).

The one who raised Christ from the dead is not Christ, but the Father. So a disciple needs to possess both the Breath of the Father, and the Breath of the Son. This can be seen in the ark of the covenant, which all disciples become--in the Holy of holies, where the high

priest of physical Israel entered once a year after offering sacrifices for himself and for the holy nation of Israel. In the ark were the two tablets of stone on which the commandments were written, a jar of manna, and Aaron's budded staff. Beside the ark, as a witness against Israel, was the book of Deuteronomy. And over the ark was the mercy seat.

Under the eternal covenant, disciples are the spiritual realities for which the physical ark was the shadow. The laws of God are written on the hearts and minds of disciples (Jer 31:33; Heb 8:10 & 10:16), which become the spiritual reality for which the two tablets of stone were the shadow. Disciples also have the indwelling of Christ as the true Bread of Life (John 6:33, 35-40), for which the jar of manna was the shadow. Disciples have the promise of resurrection to life (John 5:24, 29), for which Aaron's budded staff was the shadow. The second covenant, the terms of which are recorded in the book of Deuteronomy as Paul's faith that comes from righteousness (compare Rom 10:6-8 with Deu 30:11-14), remains beside disciples as a witness for or against them, and the mercy seat as a shadow of grace remains above them. Disciples are no longer under the law for they have the indwelling of the laws of God, and of the Bread of life through having received the Breath of the Father and the Breath of Christ. Disciples are, instead, under grace, for grace (which is Christ bearing their sins in the spiritual realm) remains outside of them. Receiving grace isn't automatic, but requires remaining in covenant with God as Jesus revealed when He said not to be surprised when some disciples are resurrected to condemnation (John 5:29), which is Jesus saying that He never knew them (Matt 7:21-23) at their judgments. They are the servants who will be slaughtered at His return (Luke 19:27).

Actually, the distinctiveness of *Theos*' Breath from *Theon*'s Breath has been revealed from the beginning, but physical Israelites never knew the Father (John 17:25); they were of the world, spiritually. They knew only the *Logos*, as the Spokesperson and physical creator for the Father. However, by deconstructing the Hebraic icon *Elohim*, disciples with sufficient spiritual savvy will find the name of God (El) plus breath (ah) in the icon, Eloah, the plural of which is Elohim. Thus, *Elohim* reveals the presence of God plus Breath times a multiple. That multiple is revealed in the tetragrammaton *YHWH*, which, when deconstructed, yields a deity + breath + a second deity + breath. Therefore, the multiple was two: *Theos* (grammatically masculine singular) and *Theon* (neuter singular). And the Septuagint is not a reliable guide to how *YHWH* should be translated into Greek, for the Jews never knew the Father. Jesus cited the Septuagint rather than Hebraic Scripture to conceal the presence of the Father from the Pharisees, so Jesus used the mistranslation to His advantage. Israel would not have killed Him if the nation had truly realized who He was. The Sinai covenant would not have been abolished--when *Theos* entered His creation, He came to die as the sin offering for Israel.

It is not entirely correct to say that Christ [*Theos*] is the God of the Old Testament, for as the icon *Elohim* and the tetragrammaton *YHWH* reveal, the Father was always present with the *Logos*, as recorded in Genesis 1:26; 3:22, and 10:7, where *Elohim* requires plural pronouns. What is technically correct is to say that physical Israel only had interaction with the *Logos*, that physical Israel never interacted with the Father, that even Abraham (the addition of the /ah/ in Abram's name indicates when he received the Breath of God) knew only the *Logos*.

It is also technically correct to say that the Breath of the Logos differed from the Breath of the Father in the same type of manner that one person's physical breath differs from another person's physical breath, with neither's breath greater or lesser than the other's. Jesus said, "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself" (John 5:26), and "For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will" (v. 21). Both the Father and the Son are *Elohim*, which is, again, the plural of *Eloah* (i.e., Deity plus Breath). Both existed together in a relationship that hasn't been revealed prior to the *Logos* being born as the man Jesus of Nazareth. The relationship since then has been Father and Son. Their Breaths [plural] isn't another personage, or two personages, but the creative power by which the Father and the Son do work. To assign personhood to the Breaths of the Father and of the Son is to mock both.

Before returning to the man Jesus of Nazareth being the second Adam, what Peter said on Pentecost needs reviewed: Peter either misspoke, or what he said hasn't been understood. The last days didn't begin with that day of Pentecost. The sun didn't get turned to darkness (Acts 2:20). The moon didn't turn to blood (same verse). Wonders haven't been shown in the heavens above and signs on the earth below (v. 19). The Holy Spirit wasn't poured out on all flesh (v. 17), and there hasn't been any surplus of genuine prophets. So the prophecies of Joel didn't come to pass on that day of Pentecost, except in a limited way as the shadow of what would occur in the actual last days during the Tribulation.

The above is correct: the book of Acts reveals the shadow of the endtime Church following the second Passover slaughter of firstborns. The man Jesus is the Lamb of God, sacrificed for the sins of Israel. Counting backwards from His death on the preparation day for the first high Sabbath of Unleavened Bread (the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan – He died late afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup>), John says, "Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus raised from the dead.... The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him" (John 12:1, 13). John identifies the first high Sabbath of Unleavened Bread as the Passover (John 19:14, 31), for Israel killed the paschal lamb at even between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup>, and eat this Passover lamb on the 15<sup>th</sup>, the high Sabbath. Thus, six days before the 15<sup>th</sup> is the 9<sup>th</sup>. Jesus, then, entered Jerusalem on the 10<sup>th</sup>; He was "penned" in Jerusalem on the same day that the paschal lamb was selected and penned, waiting its slaughter late afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup>. Jesus exactly fulfills the time requirement for being the Passover Lamb of Israel. As such, He is the Lamb of God, that God selected to be sacrificed for "those whom he foreknew... in order that [Jesus] might be firstborn among many brothers" (Rom 8:29).

When physical Israel first received the Passover ordinance, sacrificed a lamb and put its blood on their house posts and lintels, six hours later the death angel passed through Egypt slaying all the firstborns of man and beasts not covered by the blood of a Passover lamb. Israel was released from physical bondage to the Pharaoh. They didn't take up arms and fight for their liberation. God released them by having the Egyptians expel Israel from Egypt. And this release from bondage will be no longer remembered because of the magnitude of the release of endtime Israel from bondage (Jer 16:14-15), following the

second Passover slaughter of firstborns, spiritual and human, when Satan as the king of Babylon expels Christians from economic and social Babylon.

The feast of Unleavened Bread begins immediately following the sacrifice of the Passover lamb. The feast is seven days long, with leaven representing sin. For seven days, Israel lives without eating leavened breads--and this feast is a shadow of the reality that is Christ (Col 2:16-17). The reality is seven years of tribulation in which newly liberated spiritual Israel (i.e., the greater Christian Church) lives by faith, sin-free, expelled from economic Babylon. Now Jesus' question of whether He will find faith on earth when He returns can be contextualized: the good news that must be proclaimed to the world before the conclusion of the age comes is that all who endure to the end will be saved (Matt 24:13-14). Enduring in faith for seven years will be initially difficult. Many will quit, too many.

The book of Acts, now, reveals the shadow that happens to the greater Christian Church once it has been liberated from spiritual bondage to sin following the second Passover. Thus Peter's sermon on that day of Pentecost was appropriately set timewise, for the spiritual reality of what he says occurs during the seven years of tribulation.

Unfortunately, too many born-again Christians will not take the Passover as Jesus instituted the changed symbols to bread and wine. I do not know how close to following Jesus' example a Christian has to be for the person to be covered by the blood of the lamb--I don't know if taking leavened white bread and water, as one major Arian denomination does, is close enough. As a firstborn, I wouldn't want to make that bet; I will follow Jesus' example as closely as I can. And a born-again disciple (i.e., a disciple with the Holy Spirit) who does not cover him or herself with the Blood of Christ will be physically slain. This disciple will also be spiritually slain, for he or she died out of covenant. This person will, most likely, be resurrected to condemnation, which isn't revealing the judgment of the person before it's time (1 Cor 4:5) but acknowledging the reality of the disciple dying out of covenant. This disciple will have been spiritually slain just as Pharaoh was slaying physical Israelites when Moses was born, and Herod had babies slain when Christ, as the spiritual reality of Moses, was born. These two recorded massacres of Israelite infants form the twin shadows of Satan's massacre of spiritual infants by convincing them not to take the Passover how Christ gave the example.

All of Israel can know with some high degree of resolution what will happen during the Tribulation by spiritually applying what has been recorded in the book of Acts. When Jesus sent His twelve disciples forth to the cities of the lost house of Israel, His disciples were composed of *soma* and *psuche*, body and breath ["soul" is a poor translation] (Matt 10:28). They had not yet received the Holy Spirit [*Pneuma "Agion"*]. They wouldn't receive the Holy Spirit until the evening following His Ascension, when the glorified Jesus breathed on ten of His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). Therefore, Jesus assigns to His disciples' physical breath [*psuche*] the qualities of spiritual breath [*pneuma* – from 1 Thess 5:23, where Paul wishes that disciple's *psuche*, *pneuma*, and *soma* will be found blameless at Christ's return – compare Paul's tri-part composition of born-again disciples with Jesus' teaching to Nicodemus, cited in the original article].

The twelve disciples Jesus sent forth form the pre-second-Passover shadow of born

again disciples being sent to the cities/denominations of the lost house of spiritual Israel. The first shadow was of the patriarch Jacob/Israel and his twelve sons, who became seventy, and went down to Egypt. The second shadow is of Jesus and His twelve not-yet-born-again disciples, who became seventy (Luke 10:1, 17 – some manuscripts place the number at seventy-two) who went to Egypt or to “every town and place where he himself was about to go” (10:1). While the twelve were to only go to the cities of the lost house of Israel, the seventy go to everywhere Jesus will go. As the glorified Christ, He goes to the world. Thus, the reality of the double shadow is endtime born-again disciples going to all of spiritual Babylon. The twelve are, probably, fellowships of disciples with life in the spiritual realm. The twelve are probably not endtime individuals chosen from among many disciples, but that scenario is textually possible. Such individuals would be of enormous size spiritually in order to cast the double shadow; they would be disciples who are extremely mature in the faith. They would be the spiritual equivalent of Peter, Paul, John, and James after these Apostles received the Holy Spirit.

The model for spiritual birth is that of the man Jesus of Nazareth, who was born of a woman but became a life-giving spirit as the second Adam. The first Adam was created as a physical, non-living, non-breathing corpse that looked in every way like a man prior to receiving the breath of life (Gen 2:7). He was a man without life, without breath. And he became a breathing creature [*naphesh*] when Elohim [singular in usage] breathed into his nostrils.

Likewise, the man Jesus of Nazareth was born of a woman as flesh and breath [*soma* and *psuche*]. He had no spiritual life, a statement sure to challenge both Arian and trinitarian Christians. But John writes, “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already” (1 John 4:2-3). The person who claims the Jesus was both man and God prior to when He received the Breath of the Father denies that Jesus came in the flesh, and is an antichrist. Is that simple enough a person can understand the spiritual concept? Jesus was a man tempted in all things as we are, but without sin. He couldn't be tempted as we are unless He was like us, flesh and physical breath, exactly like the first Adam after the first Adam became a breathing creature. And by the time John writes this epistle, there were teachers of spiritual Israel claiming that Jesus was born as God, or as man and God. He wasn't. He was born a man. He divested Himself of all aspects of deity to enter the creation. Yet, He wasn't worthy of death, for as a man, Jesus lived without sin. And the teachers who have Jesus as both man and God, or as fully man and fully God are little antichrists. They lack spiritual understanding. They have taught Israel without being sent by God, and they will be extremely lucky to be counted as least in the kingdom of heaven.

Spiritually, the man Jesus of Nazareth was like Adam as a corpse before the Breath of the Father. descended upon Jesus as a dove. Jesus was, when He walked up to John and said that He needed baptized, a spiritual corpse, awaiting receipt of the spiritual Breath of life. The birth analogy for born again disciples is that of the first Adam/second Adam, not that of entering a womb the second time. Each disciple is a one-of creation just as Jesus was

spiritually, and Adam was physically. But the spiritual creation is a two-step process as revealed by Jesus' life: a disciple first receives the Holy Spirit, by which the disciple is born a second time. Then the disciple spends his or her spiritual infancy in a corruptible body that actually works against the disciple, as Paul realized but didn't understand (Rom 7:14-25).

Our corruptible bodies require us to continually choose to do what is right as we strive to overcome the flesh. We make a decision to do what is right, then cannot follow through on that decision for long; thus, we must make and remake the decision to do what is right, thereby creating a habit of choosing to do what is right, a habit that determines our character. We mature spiritually by choosing to do what is right in every situation. Our failures are covered by grace. Our successes get credited to Christ, who dwells in us through His spirit. Our life in the spiritual realm comes from the spirit of the Father dwelling in us. And all who assign personhood to the Breath of the Father, or to the Breath of the Son are devoid of spiritual understanding; they are in bondage to the spiritual king of Babylon. They will be liberated at the second Passover, which comes when the good news that *all who endure to the end will be saved* is proclaimed to the world as a witness to all nations.

If you practice such silliness as praying to the Breath of Christ, stop. How did Jesus pray? To the Father, correct? Of course that is correct. And if you imitate Paul as Paul imitates Christ, then you too will pray to the Father in Christ's name, and not to Christ in His name, or to the Breath of the Father or of the Son in who-knows name. The Holy Spirit is not a person; it is not a thing; it is a force that is an attribute of all who have been born again

Until an individual is drawn from the world by the Father (John 6:44, 65), the person is a spiritual corpse. But when drawn, the person receives life in the spiritual real, and when called by Christ, the person becomes a disciple. The person begins his or her only chance to receive salvation. The person is as a physical Israelite infant who would have been circumcised on the eighth day--this infant hasn't given his consent to being circumcised. His foreskin is clipped because His parents choose to make him a member of the tribe. Likewise, disciples whom the Father foreknew and predestined and called and justified and glorified (Rom 8:29-30) have no choice about when they receive their opportunity for salvation. God the Father as their Father decided for them that they would become Israelites prior to the great White Throne Judgment. They are drawn and called out of season to do a work. They are not called to receive salvation, which is a gift and can be given as well in the great White Throne Judgment as at Christ's return as the Messiah. Truly, they are called to work spiritually during their lifetimes. They are to do business with their knowledge of the mysteries of God (compare Matt 13:12 with Matt 25:29 & Luke 19:13, 26). Their increase (additional disciples) belongs to Christ, but determines their reward in the spiritual realm.

Again, the model for being born again is the man Jesus of Nazareth, who as the second Adam revealed in His life and glorification the two-step spiritual birth process which requires heirs of God to first have life as the children of God in corruptible bodies, then to reach their majority at glorification, when they will be granted to have life inherit within them, just as Christ and the Father have life within them. A disciple isn't begotten when he or she receives the Holy Spirit; the disciple has received the Breath of the Father just as the



first Adam received the breath of Elohim and the second Adam received the Breath of the Father (Matt 3:16). If the disciple remains in covenant with God, the disciple will be glorified. No sin will ever be imputed to the disciple. But if the disciple leaves the covenant and dies outside of the covenant, the disciple will be resurrected to condemnation (John 5:29). If a disciple dies at the second Passover slaughter of all who are not covered by the blood of the Lamb of God, the disciple will have died out of covenant. He or she as spiritual Israelites will typologically represent the slain infants of physical Israel at the time of Moses' and Jesus' births. And this slaughter of Israelite infants can be great if this work and those who join us are unable to reach the world effectively. We are already reaching the world, so it becomes a manner of how much coverage will the Father allow before the end comes.

Join with us to get all born again disciples covered by the Blood of the Lamb of God. This will be the greatest act of love you can perform for your brothers and sisters in Christ.

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## **What Does *Born Again* Mean?**

Jesus told Nicodemus that as a teacher of Israel he, Nicodemus, should know how salvation occurs, know what being born of water and of spirit means, know what constitutes being born a second time. Teachers of spiritual Israel today should likewise understand this birth analogy, which, like all analogies, doesn't establish a one-to-one correspondence but a similarity.

When a disciple has received the Holy Spirit, is the disciple a begotten child of God? Or has the disciple been born of Spirit, hence born again?

Does a new born infant receive his or her inheritance when the infant first draws breath? Is judgment upon an infant in his or her mother's womb? How can an infant in the womb be chastised by his or her father? Does an infant in his or her mother's womb accumulate wealth?

So, what did Jesus mean when He said that a disciple must be born from above? Is this *born from above* disciple still flesh? Or is glorification being born from above? Is a disciple merely begotten of God until glorified? Is the Church the disciple's mother, and the disciple's flesh the womb? If so, how can the disciple store up treasure in heaven?

Unless the disciple has already been born and is an heir awaiting to receive his or her inheritance, the disciple has nothing to do but be nourished in his or her mother's womb – in this case, be nourished in the flesh, or indulge the flesh. But the Apostle Peter says that disciples have been called to proclaim the mighty deeds of Christ, not to merely lounge around in the Church.

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Within greater Christianity, one of the most emotionally charged phrases is "born again." Evangelical Christianity has appropriated the phrase as its test of genuineness. The philosophical Church of God rejects the phrase, thereby assigning to the Greek linguistic icon *gennaytha/gennaō* the English icon begotten—and therein lies the problem for everyone concerned. Readers assign meaning to letter combinations. Words do not carry around little backpacks that contain their meaning. Translators, by tradition, assign meaning to a flow of linguistic icons, then take that meaning and look for how similar meaning would be expressed in the language into which they are translating. Nicodemus didn't understand what Jesus said, so it would be impossible for Nicodemus to have then accurately translated what Jesus told him, for Nicodemus was unable to assign any meaning to Jesus' words that made sense to him. To him, Jesus' use of the variant forms of a root word that means *to procreate* meant that a person would have to enter the womb a second time, a physical impossibility. Jesus chides him for not understanding the concept, and the glorified Christ today chides the teachers of spiritual Israel for not understanding the concept.

If Nicodemus, a native Greek speaker and a person educated in the traditions of Moses, could not understand how Jesus used the variant forms of the root word for procreation,

then we should not expect this passage to be accurately rendered by those who follow in the traditions of Nicodemus. Nor should we expect this passage to be well translated by scholars who hold the error of Bishop Arius or the error of trinitarianism. They, like Nicodemus, must first assign meaning to Jesus' words before they can then assign icons in another language to those linguistic objects. This is not a straightforward passage, but a passage that lies at the heart of the mystery of God.

Green's *Interlinear* renders this passage as follows:

was And a man out of the Pharisees, Nicodemus (the) name to him, a ruler of the Jews. This one came to — Jesus by night, and said to Him, Rabbi, we know that from God You have come a teacher; no one for these signs is able to do which You do, except be God with Him. answered — Jesus and said to him, Truly, truly, I say to you, Except one receive birth from above, not he is able to see the kingdom of God. says to Him Nicodemus, How is able a man to be born, old being? Not he is able into the womb of the mother of him a second (time) to enter and be born?

answered Jesus, Truly, truly, I say to you, Except one receive birth of water and Spirit, not he is able to enter the kingdom of God. That receiving birth, from the flesh, flesh is; and that receiving birth from the Spirit [*pneumatōs*], spirit [*pneuma*] is. Do not wonder because I told you, must You receive birth from above. The Spirit [*pneuma*] where He desires breathes, and the voice of Him you hear, but not you know where He goes; so is everyone having received birth from the Spirit [*pneumatōs*]. answered Nicodemus and said to him, How can these things come about? answered — Jesus and said to him, You are the teacher — of Israel, and these things not you do know? Truly, truly, I say to you, — what we know we speak, and what we have seen we witness, and the witness of us not you receive. If earthly things I told you and not you believe, how, if I tell you the heavenly things, will you believe? (John 3:1-12)

What Jesus told Nicodemus was an earthly thing. The comparison of being born of God to human birth is an imperfect analogy given to aid Nicodemus in understanding the miracles Jesus performed to verify that He, Jesus, was from God.

The passage continues,

And no one has gone up into — Heaven except He out of — Heaven having come down the Son — of man, who is in — Heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so to be lifted up must the Son — of man, that everyone believing in Him not may perish, but have life everlasting. (vs. 13-15)

The portion of Jesus' analogy that causes the philosophical Church of God to use the English icon *begotten* is, "The Spirit [*pneuma*] where He desires breathes, and the voice of Him you hear, but not you know where He goes; so is everyone having received birth from the Spirit [*pneumatōs*]" — and the first thing we

see is the trinitarian error of assigning personhood to the Breath of God. The Breath [*Pneuma*] is not a "he," and the pronoun shouldn't appear in the English text as it isn't in the Greek. The passage might better be rendered, *the Spirit where desires breathes, and the voice/sound of it you hear, but you don't know from where it comes or to where it goes; in like manner they are all who have been born of the Breath of God.*

The spirit in a person cannot be seen, only heard.

Born from above disciples don't have to pass the pin test, but have to hear the Spirit of God. In the context of Nicodemus coming to Jesus to get understanding about the kingdom of God, disciples know about the kingdom because they hear the voice of the Spirit that dwells within them when they have been born from above. Because Nicodemus hadn't yet been born from above, he could not hear this voice. Therefore, he couldn't understand what Jesus said even when Jesus spoke in a fleshy manner.

Within the Church of God, the above passage has been popularly translated as meaning that born-from-above disciples will be composed of spirit, hence the pin test, one minister's demonstration to show that disciples are still made of flesh and not of spirit. But that understanding is as carnal as was the understanding of Nicodemus, who thought a person must enter the womb a second time. Again, Nicodemus didn't understand what Jesus said. Disciples cannot look to how Nicodemus understood the variant forms of the root word for procreating that Jesus used; Nicodemus lacked understanding! Can anything be more plain than that? The forms of *gennaō* that Jesus used do not pertain to a second birth in a human sense, in the sense of a second infancy, or a second passage from a womb; but rather, they pertain to how a person can understand the mysteries of God, the primary mystery being addressed is who Jesus was. To say that the forms of *gennaō* Jesus used pertain to an actual second birth continues Nicodemus' misunderstanding.

Because meaning is assigned to words by everyone, novice and scholar, arguing nuances of the Greek icons used in the passage is not a fruitful activity. Better is understanding from many passages the relationship disciples presently have with God the Father and with His Messiah, our high priest Christ Jesus. The

mystery of God is that we, today, are younger siblings of the glorified Christ, even though we haven't yet been glorified. We are not awaiting glorification to become the children of God. The Apostle Paul writes to Gentile converts at Rome, "But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness" (Rom 8:9-10).

While still Gentiles, these Roman converts were born of flesh, and lived according to their flesh. They were in the situation about which Jesus addressed Nicodemus: they were born of water (i.e., they had passed through their mothers' birth canals). But they were no longer in the flesh when Paul writes to them, even though they hadn't yet been glorified and still dwelt in fleshy tabernacles. Rather, they were in the Spirit because the Spirit of God dwelt in them. Their flesh was dead because of sin, but they were alive in the Spirit.

The person who insists that disciples are only begotten of God and haven't been born as children has a problem with the remainder of Paul's passage: "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is the very Spirit [Breath of God] bearing witness with our spirit [breath] that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:14-17).

Someone can certainly argue that a fetus is the child and heir of his or her father, and this person could argue that a fetus jumping in the womb is equivalent of shouting *Abba Father*, but what about falling back into a spirit of slavery? Can a fetus un-conceive itself? A disciple was a slave to sin and Satan prior to being drawn by the Father. This disciple had his or her breath, so the disciple existed in the flesh; again, the disciple had been born of water. He or she had not yet been born from above.

In the human model, a woman carries an egg, which, to become a fetus, must be fertilized by sperm from the father. Those who argue that a drawn and spirit-led disciple is merely begotten would have a disciple living in the flesh being the equivalent of an unfertilized

egg in a woman's ovary. When God the Father draws the disciple, he or she is now the equivalent of the fertilized egg in the woman's womb. The disciple develops as a fetus does, develops within the Church of God, its mother. Eventually, the disciple will be born of spirit; i.e., glorified. And he or she will become a baby Elohim, still requiring nurturing by his or her mother, the Bride of Christ. This modeling sounds plausible, but it isn't valid. Judgment is now upon the household of God (1 Peter 4:17), and has been on each disciple since the disciple was baptized. The womb period occurs between when the disciple was drawn and when the disciple comes under judgment. With judgment comes heir, or child status. As far as God is concerned, baptism represents real death, and being raised from the baptismal pool represents physical resurrection, or being born from above. And remember, analogies are not one-to-one correspondences.

Those who hold the position that a spirit-led disciple is merely begotten also hold the theological position that a disciple receives the Holy Spirit with the laying on of hands post baptism. That position is not true and hasn't been since the conversion of Cornelius (Acts chptr 10). Laying on of hands was required to receive the Holy Spirit prior to Peter receiving his vision, but a new model was established for the drawing and conversion of Gentiles, a model different from the one seen in Samaria (Acts 8:15-17).

Circumcised Israel believed itself to be in covenant with God; it was a holy nation (Ex. 19:5-6). It had the law of God and access to the Holy Spirit through obedience by faith, according to the terms of the second or Moab covenant. So John the Baptist's baptism was for repentance (Matt 3:11) not spiritual judgment, and was a baptism of the flesh (John 3:31). It was for the work of crying in the wilderness and making straight the way of the Lord (John 1:23). It wasn't for receiving the Holy Spirit, nor was the disciples' baptism of wouldbe converts in the name of Jesus Christ prior to the conversion of Cornelius (again Acts 8:15-17). All of that changed, though, when Peter received his vision, which he didn't immediately understand.

The conversion of Cornelius wasn't a special case, but the model of the future, since the natural or carnal mind is hostile to God (Rom 8:7). It will not, and cannot submit to

God without spiritual modification. It is content with the things of the flesh, at least content enough that it will not have anything to do with the things of God until the Father draws the person from the world (John 6:44, 65; 1 Peter 1:2), thereby spiritually circumcising the person by writing the law of God on his or her heart and mind, which is a euphemism for receiving the Holy Spirit or Breath of God.

The new covenant consists of three linguistic absolutes: the law of God is written on the person's heart and mind (Jer 31:33; Heb 6:10 & 10:16); the person now knows God (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:11); and the person has his or her sins forgiven (Jer 31:34; Heb 8:12 & 10:17). A person's sins aren't almost forgiven, or partially forgiven; the person doesn't sort of know God; the person doesn't have part of the law of God written on his or her heart and mind, or almost written there. All three things occur at once and can only occur completely as a package deal. Thus, when a person is drawn from the world, the person receives the Breath of God, which is the writing of the law of God on the person's heart and mind. And because this person now has a circumcised heart and mind (Deu 30:6), this person knows God, and is known of God because the person's sins have been forgiven. Otherwise, this person remains in the world, remains a part of the world, and cannot think about the things of God, has no interest in God, and is actually hostile to God. Without the change of modeling with Cornelius, there would be no spiritual Israel.

But this newly drawn disciple is as a Hebrew male less than eight days old: the disciple had no say in whether he or she wanted to have a relationship with God, had no say about whether he or she wanted to become a spiritual Israelite (no one is called to become a spiritual Gentile – Gentiles, by the act of having their sins forgiven, become spiritual Israelites; they are no longer Gentiles). The disciple has been made a part of spiritual Israel, by being born of Spirit. The only choice the disciple has is whether the disciple wishes to continue as part of Israel. Baptism equates spiritually to physical circumcision on the eighth day. If a drawn disciple chooses to be baptized (the disciple already has a small portion of the Holy Spirit), the disciple's status as part of spiritual Israel is secure as long as the disciple remains in covenant with God— God didn't write His laws on a disciple's heart and

mind to have the disciple ignore the fine print— just as a physical Israelite's tribal status was secure with physical circumcision. Judgment has now come upon the disciple in exactly the same manner as it will on every individual resurrected physically in the great White Throne Judgment. So only by not accepting judgment can a drawn disciple opt out of the covenant into which the disciple was placed. This disciple also opts out of a position in the first resurrection, and becomes like the rich young ruler whose wealth kept him from following Jesus.

Once judgment is upon a disciple, the disciple has set his or her hand to the plow. There is no walking away unless the disciple wants reservations in the lake of fire. Those reservations aren't made, though, until the end of the disciple's life. Anytime before death, the disciple can repent and return to the covenant relationship into which he or she was placed when drawn.

Now, backing up to what the writer of Hebrews says,

And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children – / "My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord,/ or lose hearts when you are punished by him'/ for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves,/ and chastises every child whom he accepts."/ Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children. (12:5-8)

Parents do not discipline children who are in the womb, fetuses who haven't been born. Discipline begins a year or two after birth. Likewise, God doesn't begin to discipline until after a disciple comes under judgment. Satan, as the spiritual type of Pharaoh, comes after a disciple who has been liberated from bondage to him, especially in that period prior to the crossing of the Red Sea, a type of baptism (1 Corth 10:1-2). Trials that newly drawn disciples have are from Satan trying to return the disciple to slave status. However, after baptism, disciples can expect spiritual discipline, spiritual pruning, so that they will bear much fruit.

Spirit-led disciples are repeatedly addressed by Paul as children, not fetuses. Peter writes to the scattered Israelite converts, "Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance" (1 Peter 1:14); and, "you have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed" (v. 23); and, "Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that you may grow into salvation" (2:2). Glorification equates to salvation, not birth. We were born from above when we received the Spirit of God. All genuine disciples have been born again. Either you are born anew (same Greek word as Jesus said to Nicodemus), or you are illegitimate and not a child of God the Father. You either hear the voice of God, the sound of His Breath, or you are a spiritual bastard.

Glorification is the child of God reaching his or her majority, and thereby receiving his or her inheritance. Once glorified, the disciple is an Elohim, who will always choose to do that which is right. If there is any doubt about what the disciple will do when glorified, the disciple won't be glorified. God isn't in the business of creating more rebels, for the disciple will no longer be a little lower than the angels, will no longer be under a disciplinarian, but will be a younger sibling of Christ Jesus. Childhood is our time to learn to always do that which is right.

Spiritual procreation isn't directly analogous to physical procreation, but close enough that we can, as born again disciples, identify ourselves as the children of God. Conception occurred when God the Father drew us from the world. Birth occurred when we accepted judgment upon ourselves. Inheritance occurs when we have endured in covenant to our physical end, or to the end of the age, whichever comes first. There is no sensation of time passing in the grave, so glorification will seem to occur for all faithful disciples immediately following death.

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