

**YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN**



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Many protestant Christian movements today based their belief system on one central expression. This expression is "You must be born again". Therefore, what does the expression "being born again" mean. This movement tells us that "being born again" restores a person into a righteous relationship with God with the ability to be a witness for Him. The concept of this movement is centered around the presence of sin and how we must manage it daily. From my research, I have found several movements that are based on this expression following Saint Augustus's third-century doctrine of the original sin. Also, there is a mixture of John Calvin's sixteenth-century doctrine known as the "TULIP". Within the concept of the "TULIP", the "T" is the primary character because it identifies how Calvin and Augustine viewed the man (Adam) and by extension the whole human race as being "TOTALLY DEPRAVED". Now, being that there is no Hebrew or Greek definition of the word "DEPRAVED" that I can find in the strong concordance, we are left with the dictionary's definition which is, "corrupt, wicked, or perverted". It must be noted here that God never calls Adam (the living soul) corrupt, wicked, or perverted, he only saw him as his Son (Luke 3:33). Along with the Augustine and Calvin doctrines were also the Pelagius and Arminian student's doctrines of having a Free Will to accept or not accept God's rule. Although both of these doctrines are based on the doctrine of the original sin as declared by the council of Nicaea in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, they both have the same starting point which is the "FALL OF MAN". The two primary movements that I found interesting in modern times are the Evangelical movement and the Pentecostal movement, they both in some way or another proclaim these doctrines. It is noticed that within both of these movements, they imply there is no remission of sin and that Christians although being saved from sin by the blood of Christ continue in sin. They continue to proclaim that sin still has some type of existence in a Christian's life. The evangelical movement tells us that we are all sinners (Romans 3:23) and must suffer to endure until the return of Christ. On the other hand, those of the Pentecostal movement indicate that being born again has two stages, one is the saving stage and the other is the power stage. They indicate that a person can be saved from sin, but until you have been empowered by the power of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in a Heavenly language, you cannot do battle with the devil and by extension sin. Under the belief of both movements, a person who is washed with the blood of Christ must continue to fight their sinful nature and keep their foot on the devil's neck to control him.

Now, the initiation of the expression "you must be born again" started with

those movements which are evangelical by doctrine in the late 1960s. Several other movements around the world hold fast to this doctrine. The focus of these movements is the conversation that Jesus had with Nicodemus in John 3. Let us take a closer look at the expression that has become an integral part of the Christian life. This is the conversation Nicodemus had with Jesus in John 3:1-7, "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again". We find here that Nicodemus is of the sect of the Pharisees. This sect was responsible for the religious and political well-being of the Children of Israel. They walked a thin line between their following the Law and the Prophets and Caesar the Roman God/King. Many who read this conversation, focus on the matter that Nicodemus came to Jesus at night, then conclude that he was sneaking around out of fear. There is no indication of this and this is another conjecture that has been added to the Christian story. Now, we know that Nicodemus not only respected Jesus but also knew who he was according to the Law and the Prophets. This is based on his two opening statements. One was that "no man can do the miracles", indicating the verification of the Law and the Prophets as to the coming of Christ. And the other is, that God was with him, indicating that he identified him as the Christ, who was with God at the beginning (John 1). If we look at what Jesus told Peter in Matthews 16:17, "And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven". Therefore, the only way Nicodemus could identify Jesus's status and position was that the Father in Heaven reveals it to him. Paul (who was a Pharisee) said this in Galatians 1:15-16, "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood". Therefore, the only way Nicodemus and the other Pharisees he represented could have known this, was by a clear understanding of the Law and the Prophets, as revealed to them by the Father which was in Heaven. As we continue, Jesus's reply to him of being able to see and enter the Kingdom of Heaven was based on two things, water, and the

Spirit. Now, if we dive further into this conversation, the essence of being born again is the two things that Jesus indicated as being essential, which were being born of water and the Spirit. I find Jesus's reply interesting because, within the Bible, water is always viewed as a purifier. It is what God used to activate growth in Genesis 2:5, what he cleaned the earth within Genesis 7, and what we use to identify with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. We say that it is an outward expression of an inward act. Now the inward act is the receiving of the Holy Spirit whose job it is to seal us (Ephesians 1:13). The Holy Spirit symbolizes a reality of truth and throws light on both Jesus's nature and mission. It is what always connects us to Jesus our King, Emmanuel. In John 18:37, the conversation between Pilate and Jesus about the truth went like this, "Pilate, therefore, said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice". Now looking at the water and the Spirit in the context of being "born again", it is to be someone who is "of the truth". Another interesting reply of Jesus was that he compared the two natures of man which are the flesh (unrighteousness) and the Spirit (righteousness) as being essential in determining the new birth. In his reply to Nicodemus in John 3:6, he said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit". Here Jesus separated the fleshly nature of man from his spiritual nature. The importance of this is that Paul, in Galatians 5:17, says, "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would". We find here that the flesh and the Spirit are contrary to each other. In strong concordance (G480), contrary means, "to be set over against, opposite to, to oppose, be adverse to, to withstand". The indication in verse 6 by Jesus is that you cannot see nor enter the Kingdom of Heaven if you are born under the nature of the flesh as Paul indicates. Now, from my perspective, Jesus's conversation with Nicodemus was based on what was necessary for a person to see and by extension enter the Kingdom of God. This is what Jesus knew about the sect of the Pharisees as found in Matthews 23:13-15, "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves". Jesus had some hard words for the sect of the Pharisees. However, I find it interesting that in verse 13, he

condemns them for shutting up the Kingdom from men. In other words, they were not teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven but only teaching the concept of making more men that were like them (verse 15) which were children of hell. They were bringing them to the door (Jesus) but then had them go back in the world to make more disciples like themselves. He said that the converts they were making were twofold worse than them. Can these woes that Jesus declared be identified today? In today's Christian culture, the emphasis on sin and Satan is mind-blowing to me. We act as if there is no solution to the sin and Satan situation. Our action toward defeating the forces of evil (the flesh) appears to be nonexistent. Although we have been taught and declare that Jesus defeated sin and Satan at the cross, we also believe he did not complete his assignment (mission) of saving his people from their sins. We do know that Jesus's people (his sheep, his chosen, his elect), were given to him at the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

As we continue with "You Must be Born Again", the question is what does this look like? To understand this, we must explore the final objective of being born again. That objective is to obtain eternal life in the Kingdom of Heaven with the Lord, the King. Well then, we are taught that our righteous connection with the Lord is our primary concern. Strong concordance G2962 tells us that the Lord refers to Jehovah or Jesus and it means; "belonging to the Lord. Also, G2962 continues its meaning as to, "he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has the power of deciding. This title is given to God, the Messiah". Therefore, to be born again is to belong to the Lord to be used by him and for him as he sees fit. So then, what does born again look like? The Prophecy of the Scriptures tells us that the core of being born again and by extension having eternal life is rooted in faith. In Hebrews 11, we are told the value of faith and what is accomplished by it. Looking at verses 1-3, we find this, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God so that things that are seen were not made of things that do appear". In verse 3, we see that the worlds were framed by the word of God, Jesus, the image of the invisible God. Do you think this is interesting? Oh well, let us continue. Is it possible that faith is the core of being born again, or is being born again the core of faith? The important question is, "Which comes first, faith or being born again"? Now, based on what Jesus said to Nicodemus, that being born again is the act of being regenerated by the water and the Spirit, the logical answer would be, that faith in the regeneration of the washing and the newing of the Spirit (Titus 3:5) is the starting point of becoming born again with the final destination being accepted into the Kingdom

of Heaven. Now, this acceptance into the Kingdom happens at the moment of the new birth (Matthews 4:17) and is accompanied by the establishment of eternal life in Christ. Next, we find that faith is the core of the new birth, is something that cannot be seen, and is a partner with hope. Hope, in the strong concordance (G1680), Hope is, "in the Christian sense joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation...". We find here that faith is the foundation of hope, and hope is what reminds us that we as born-again believers are well and that Jesus is with us, Hebrews 12:5. The confirmation of this is found in Romans 8:15 where we are told that the Spirit that we received gives us the ability to cry out "Abba Father". Paul tells us in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:10-11, who the foundation is. He goes on to say, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ". Our understanding then is that faith is knowing who Jesus is. Knowing that he is the King, gives the born-again Christian their platform to boldly witness to the world that Jesus is the King and God of heaven and Earth. Acts 4:13 states, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus". The complete understanding of this is found in strong concordance G4102 where it states that faith is the "conviction of the truth of anything, belief; in the New Testament, it is the conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it. Relating to God, the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Christ. Relating to Christ, a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Jesus is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God". What does the word Christ mean? We have been taught that Christ is the last name of Jesus, Jesus Christ. However, in strong concordance G5548, Christ means, "to anoint and consecrate Jesus to the Messianic office, and furnishing him with the necessary powers for its administration that endure Christians with the gifts of the Holy Spirit". One of the attributes of being born again is receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Paul outlines these gifts in Galatians 5:22-23 which are, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law". He further reaffirms this in Ephesians 5:9. We find here that Paul does not indicate many of the things that have been injected into what the fruit (gift) of the Holy Spirit truly is. We find here that Christ is the Messianic office of the anointed and consecrated physical image of the invisible God, God in the flesh. Now, this office has been

around from the beginning and is the position of a person that conducts God's business and is in a righteous relationship with God. Therefore, it is faith in the fact that we are born again to have life in Christ and be hidden in God (Colossians 3:3). As born-again believers, we have a good report with God (Hebrews 11:2). This report is not based on what we do or don't do, it is based on who we are in the eyes of God (his children). The final note here is that we as born-again believers are not running from sin and Satan but accepting our place in eternal life in heavenly places with Christ. Now, Paul reminds us of this in Romans 6:1-7, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in the newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin". Also, as born-again believers, we are justified, glorified, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:30 and 15:16). Therefore, we as born-again believers are sealed by God to be who he wants us to be to do his works of spreading the fact that Jesus is Lord, King, and Emmanuel after the order of Melchisedec. Many of our leaders today overlook what is said in Hebrews 6:1-3 from the Message Bible, "So come on, let's leave the preschool fingerpainting exercises on Christ and get on with the grand work of art. Grow up in Christ. The basic foundational truths are in place: turning your back on "salvation by self-help" and turning in trust toward God; baptismal instructions; laying on of hands; the resurrection of the dead; eternal judgment. With God helping us, we'll stay true to all of that. But there's so much more. Let's get on with it"!

Knowing that "being born again" is very important in the life of Christians, there must be some more to it. As we explore the Scriptures concerning this, we find that John, the one that initiated this expression assists us in coming to a better understanding of it. In 1<sup>st</sup> John 5, we see John's in-depth explanation about being born again without using the expression. Here, he indicates that believers' love for Jesus Christ and the one who begotten and sent him to us is the glue that makes being born again works. He goes on to tie our love for Christ and the Father to our love for one another. This is the final new commandment that Jesus left us with (John 13:34-35). John goes on to tell us that this new commandment is what gives believers victory over the world.

Now, here is an interesting thing, In verse 6, he says, "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness because the Spirit is truth". Now, many are taught that this identifies what happen at the cross when Jesus was pierced in the side and water and blood came out. However, John indicates that the water and blood were the way Jesus came into the world in a spiritual and natural sense. To continue, This verse is intriguing to me because it identifies the two essentials of being born again as indicated in John 3. John now gives us the perspectives of those essential and adds another one to it, the blood. We now know that Jesus came by water and blood and the Spirit verified it as being true. This is further confirmed in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:16 when Paul tells us this, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory". Here we find that God was manifest in the flesh (water and blood) and justified (verified) by the Spirit. This is the whole creation story from the beginning to the ascension all wrapped in a mystery. What do you think? So, if we look at the added essential, we find that the blood symbolizes life (Genesis 9:4). This is because the blood is the life force of the flesh. However, the blood that was in the flesh of Jesus served another purpose. We find in Hebrews 12:24 this, "And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel". Now, this brings with it a question of how Abel's and Jesus's blood relate? Looking back at Genesis 4 and the bringing of the offerings, we have been taught that Cain was sent from God's presence because his offering was not his best. However, if we look at verses 10-12 after the murder of Abel, God tells Cain this, "And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth". The understanding here is that Abel's blood was crying out for justice against Cain. An interesting thing about this comes from Matthews 23:33-36 after Jesus had pronounced the Woes on the Pharisees and the Scribes. He tells them why they have been judged and found guilty. Here is what he said to them, "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city. That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the

altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation". We find here that blood is very important to God because it speaks to him. Jesus in Matthews 26:28 said his blood was for the remission of sins. That remission of sins was for the Pharisees and those that followed them. The relationship between Abel's and Jesus's blood is that Abel's blood cried out for justice from the ground and Jesus's blood cried out for mercy from the cross. This relationship between these two individuals' blood is remarkable. As I understand it, this situation placed God in a place of judgment. There needed to be a decision as to which were to be honored, justice (punishment) or mercy (forgiveness) on the Pharisees and those that followed them for what they and their forefather the devil had done to God's children. At the cross, Jesus asked for mercy when he said this in Luke 23:43, "Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots". As an answer to this request, we find that the veil was torn by God from top to bottom when Jesus cried out this in Matthews 27:50-53, "Jesus when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many". As a result, God removed the Jewish Sanhedrin completely from their positions of rulership over the Jews. Also, in 70 AD, the temple was destroyed by the Romans and to date, a Muslim Mosque sits in its place. Jesus's prophecy came true.

As we continue with the essentials of being born again, with the combination of the three essentials, we understand that it is the water that purified Jesus for his arrival, it was the blood that identified his speaking life force, and the Spirit influencing believers of the truth, Jesus is the long-awaited Christ. Now, after the verification of who Jesus is by the Spirit (the King), we notice that there is a record in heaven, and this record is supported and certified. Before we continue, let us look at the word "record" from the strong concordance. In the concordance, the word "record" (G3140) means, "to be a witness, to bear witness, an example of this is to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something, or that he knows it because he has been taught by divine revelation or inspiration". The keyword here for "record" is "witness". In verse 7, we see that this record (witness) is made by the Godhead. The verse reads as follows, " For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one". Now, this record is supported by the three that were there in the beginning. The Father, which strong concordance (G3962) identifies as, "God is called the Father of the stars,

the heavenly luminaries, because he is their creator, upholder, ruler of all rational and intelligent beings, whether angels or men, because he is their creator, preserver, guardian, and protector". The Word, which strong concordance (G3056) identifies as, "In John, denotes the essential Word of God, Jesus Christ, the personal wisdom and power in union with God, his minister in creation and government of the universe, the cause of all the world's life both physical and ethical, which for the procurement of man's salvation put on human nature in the person of Jesus the Messiah, the second person in the Godhead, and shone forth conspicuously from His words and deeds". And the Holy Ghost, which strong concordance (G4151) identifies as, "the spiritual nature of Christ, higher than the highest angels and equal to God, the divine nature of Christ". Now, this is what is referred to as the Godhead (Colossians 3:8-12). We know that this Godhead has existed from the beginning. We find that in Hebrews 13:8, Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Eternity: Past, Present, and Future as outlined in Revelation 1:7-8, "...I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty". With Jesus being who he says he is in these verses, then he has always been the image of the invisible God, the container of the Godhead. Colossians 1:15 tells us that Jesus is, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature". As we look further into being born again, an interesting thing appears, Genesis 2:1 indicates that Heaven and Earth were finished at the same time, with everything occupying its position as the hosts of God. Therefore, Heaven and Earth together are partners in God's master plan. Jesus told the apostles this in Matthews 16:19, "And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven". They were given the keys to Heaven and the authority to control what goes on in Heaven and Earth as keepers of the promise of eternal life. As mentioned, heaven and earth have to exist as one to bring about the complete plan of God which is both doing his bidding as he sees fit. Therefore, in verse 8 of 1<sup>st</sup> John 5, we find that there is also a combined witness within the earth. It says, "And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one". The interesting thing about this is that the word "witness" has the same meaning as the word "record". This is what ties heaven and earth together which is the Spirit, the water, and the blood. In Genesis 1:2, we understand that the face of the deep and the earth was in darkness and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. Next, God spoke and light came into existence. John tells us in John 1:4 that in the Word was life and that life was the light of men. Is it possible that the first thing that God spoke into existence was his

image? Just saying. Could this be the living soul that God blew his Spirit into at the beginning? Within the schools of thought, there is an understanding that Genesis 2 come before Genesis 1 because nothing activated on earth until after it rained and the man was formed Genesis 2:5. Study to show yourself approved. Now, why is this important, you see the same Godhead that supported and certified the record as to who Jesus is, the King in heaven, is the same Godhead that supported and certified the witness as to who Jesus is, the King in the earth. This is because they (the Godhead) are one and they agree as one. That agreement on earth is that Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creatures, Colossians 1:15. What then does this have to do with being born again, well just as Christ had to be supported and certified to be the King, each of us must be supported and certified to see and enter the Kingdom. That support and certification in heaven and on earth happened at the moment we understand that Jesus is the Christ from the beginning and that he is always with us here on earth.

In conclusion, in today's world, we as Christians are taught that we must follow Jesus to be saved. That within salvation, we have peace with God and we then must worship him to keep that peace strong. Many say that to be saved is what gives us the knowledge to utilize the weapons of prayer, fasting, praising, and worshipping that hold the enemy at bay and get us what we think we need until Jesus returns. We are further taught that by being in the right standing with God we can do the things that Jesus did while he was on the earth. In other words, this means we can mimic what Jesus and others did by manipulating God to do this or that in our favor, therefore, we are in some ways more than others and have the answers to the world's situation. Now, on the other hand, we are taught that being saved holds us in a state of safety until Jesus comes and takes us home, to heaven. What I have found is that Christianity has been turned into a religion that is based on doctrinal beliefs. These doctrinal beliefs are based on what men think about what other men have said about what they think the Prophecy of the Scripture means. Further, many of these doctrinal beliefs are canonized beliefs from the perspective of men (Bishops) who voted on what could be believed and what could not. If we notice, many within the religion of evangelism believe in the canon of this or that Apostolic council of the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries which are based on Augustine's doctrine of the original sin from the belief of the fall of man. However, this may be good for those who need to be doctrinal, but the Law and the Prophets were based on the understanding of who Christ was as King and God. Yes, their belief was based on understanding. Proverbs 4:7 tells us the importance of understanding when it says, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy

getting get understanding". Understanding provides the believer with wisdom (the principal thing) that enables us to boldly declare that Jesus is the Christ, the only true and living Mighty God, God in the flesh. Now, the new birth is the certification the believers are the Children of God and are born of God, 1 John 5. How then do we know we are of the new birth, well it is because those of the new birth see things as they are and not as they want them to be.

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