

# Born Again

Lesson 3 in "More Like Jesus"  
Taken/revised from Chap. 5 in "The True Worshipers"

**Lesson Aim:** To understand the meaning of "born again," and the absolute imperative of the new birth for all who want to truly know God.

**Key Verses:** Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." John 3:5-6

## LIFE, Death and Choice

When we humans are born physically we come into this world by the act of a man and a woman, and we live in a physical way. When we are born of the Spirit, we become spiritually alive by an act of God, following our choice to receive His gift of eternal LIFE.

"LIFE" means human wholeness, "life to the hilt" through Spirit to spirit relationship with God. By creation design man was to be governed by his spirit, under the influence of the Spirit of God.

However, free will is at the core of how God made man. We could choose to

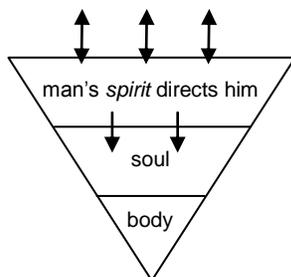
remain in that relationship with God, or to refuse Him. Man's condition changed profoundly when he rebelled against God. He had life in terms of human existence, but the spiritual LIFE he had known was gone.

The spirit of man was not extinguished when Adam and Eve sinned, but it was cut off from its life-source. Even after man fell from their high place of intimate fellowship with God, and came under Satan's rule, their spirit longed to be united with Him. To be fully human according to creation design. The term "born again" implies that there is something there which can be birthed into LIFE.

These diagrams are intended to illustrate the object of man's worship, and the part of humans which most dominates/directs them at three different stages.

### Created man – Godly by nature

- God is the object of man's worship
- Man looks to Him, to make life good.
- His Spirit speaks LIFE-giving truth into man through *his* spirit.



### Created Man

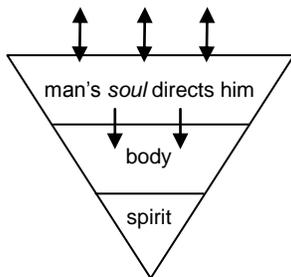
Man as created was godly by nature. That's all Adam and Eve knew! Loving God, relating intimately to Him and living according to His will, were natural to them.

In creation design the spirit of man was the gateway for input from God's Spirit. Man's spirit dominated and governed his soul (mind, will and emotions) and body. His needs were met through God-worship. His wholeness was derived entirely from his relationship with God. All was well!

However, one way that God shows His glory is that he was secure enough to give man the choice of following Him, and experiencing the good LIFE, or of rebelling against Him.

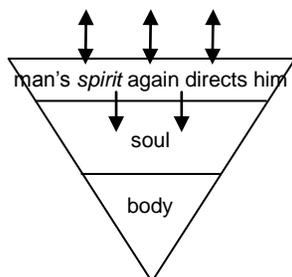
### Fallen man – Sinful by nature

- Satan is the object of man's worship.
- Man looks to *him*, to make life good.
- Satan appeals to man's soul and body and speaks lies to him;
- Satan robs man of God's LIFE.



### Born Again Man – Godliness by choice

- We receive a new nature, which is inclined toward godliness.
- God is again the object of man's worship.
- Man looks to Him, to make life good!
- God's Spirit again speaks LIFE into man through *his* spirit.



### Fallen Man

In Genesis 2:17 God said: *but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.* That was serious!

When Adam and Eve chose to rebel against God, they were separated from Him and lost the spiritual LIFE that had come through that relationship. Further, they became mortal beings, meaning they would die physically.

They now had a depraved nature. Satan became their governing spiritual source and His gateway is through man's soul and body. They were condemned to try to find wholeness through these aspects of humanity; a never ending effort in futility.

### Born Again Man

To be “born again” means to be born of the Spirit, as Jesus said. When we choose to receive God's gift of eternal life, our human spirit is supernaturally made alive by the touch of God; something akin to His giving life at the moment of human conception. We receive a new nature with a new set of natural inclinations. But that implies a change of allegiance; the actual transfer of citizenship and identity from one kingdom to another.

I don't believe that the Church in America has done well at communicating what actually happens in an authentic “born again” experience. It is a transaction between God and man and it includes both confession and repentance. Let's look at that more closely.

### Confession and Repentance

To “confess” is to agree with an accusation. The first part of Biblical confession is to agree with God that we have sinned, but we must also agree that we are a sinner by nature and are living in rebellion against Him. We ask God to forgive us for our sins *and* for the rebellion that produced them. We then accept God's free gift of salvation, which is available because Jesus took the penalty for our sins upon Himself when He died on the cross.

*Repentance* means “to turn away from.” We are to turn from both sinful actions and our rebellious heart. In order to do that we must surrender to God's rule, which means that we give up our right to decide for

ourselves what is good and simply obey *Him*. That decision repudiates Adam and Eve's act of rebellion and releases us from the death-grip bondage of the sinful nature that we inherited from them.

A born again person has received Jesus into His life. He is indwelt by the Person of Jesus, who now rules his life. That can only happen if we have made room for Him by relinquishing our own rule of our life, and *that* happens through repentance!

It is in the confession/repentance/surrender event that we are born again. Our spirit is made alive and is once again able to commune with God; to receive input from Him; and to give godly oversight to our

soul and body. We are truly a new person in our innermost being. We have a new object of worship and a new spiritual nature which is inclined toward God, and it affects every aspect of life.

### **The New Life**

When we invite persons to come to Jesus, we must be clear on the comprehensive nature of what actually takes place in the born-again transaction. Consider:

John 1:12-13 - Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God;<sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

In Acts 26:18 (nas) - open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.

II Cor. 5:17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

I Peter 1:3 - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

II Peter 1:4 - Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

I John 5:11-12 - And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.<sup>12</sup> Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

Yes, we are born again as a spiritual infant and there is now the process of growing into adulthood. We must learn and practice

its attitudes and disciplines and apply them to our life, but thankfully, as we mature our spirit dominates more and more and increasingly rules over the desires of our soul and body.

### **The Way of the Cross**

Born again folks are to live with the mindset that we take up our cross and die daily to self-rule and to the interests of the body and soul. We are to love God with all of our heart, soul and mind; finding our LIFE in the things of God rather than in the physical and material things of the earth.

Mark 8:34-35 - Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.<sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it.

Gal. 2:20 - I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Following Christ in this way might require our redefining the word "Christian" from meaning one who has accepted Jesus as their "Savior," so they escape hell when they die; to one who has surrendered his/her will to God and made Him Lord and Master of all of life.

### **What a Deal!**

"Born again" goes deep. It delivers us from Satan's dark kingdom and transfers us into the Kingdom of God and LIFE there.

- We glorify God by choosing Him over Satan, both in our initial decision to accept His gift of salvation, and in countless choices that follow as we walk through life.
- We have a Master who has our good in mind instead of one who destroys us.
- We live a full and satisfied life on earth.

- We are a testimony and encouragement to others, both those who know Him and those who don't.
- We go to heaven instead of hell when we die.
- We get to be in the presence of God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and worship Him forever!

Only God knows who goes to heaven in the end, but at the very least our timidity about the born again, surrendered and Spirit-led life cheats many out of LIFE now and hinders their witness to others.

### Questions for Thought and Discussion

- 1) Are the illustrations and information on Pages 9 and 10 helpful to you, and if so, how?
- 2) From your observations, does the level of Christlikeness in the church in America, and the influence the church has upon American culture, suggest that we're more in the "born again and actively living a transformed life under the lordship of Christ" approach, or the "get saved so you go to heaven when you die," mindset?
- 3) Is there actually a difference between inviting Jesus to be our Savior, and surrendering to Him as Lord and Master?
- 4) In your mind, does the typical Christian evangelistic message include the call to deep, life-changing repentance of our rebellion against God? Does it communicate the expectation that every aspect of life will be influenced and shaped by this commitment? Or, does it often simply call us to confess our sins and "get saved" so we don't go to hell when we die?
- 5) Is it possible that many Christians have never deliberately surrendered their will to God? And that our failure to take this step seriously is why many who confess Christ are still controlled by the fleshly desires of the body and soul?
- 6) My "take" on this lesson is that:
  - a) It is too negative and critical and isn't really very helpful.
  - b) We have a need in this area but the author is making a mountain out of a molehill.
  - c) This is serious stuff and we need to consider it carefully.

Aug. 2011. This is Lesson 3 in the workbook "More Like Jesus," and is one of many resources that can be found at [www.John2031.com](http://www.John2031.com). © 2011, Ken Stoltzfus, P.O. Box 228, Kidron, OH 44636 USA. May be printed for personal use and may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes without further permission as long as source is acknowledged. Bible quotations are from the New International Version unless otherwise noted.