

Where the Bible Speaks of Being “Born Again” and Why It is Synonymous with Genuine Christianity

Dan R. Smedra

In addition to denial of the supernatural, one of the dominant marks of a post-modern mind is its demand for *inclusiveness* and *egalitarianism*. Since for them absolute Truth does not exist, then all “truth” must be “local”—i.e., it exists only in the mind of each individual self and thus is equal in validity and value. For many, the Bible’s various messages of *exclusivity* (God’s *choosing* and the *new birth*) are viewed as contrary to man’s effort and pride--therefore highly offensive. For both American and European, it is now a cultural expectation to take umbrage when hearing the true Gospel message.

Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds¹ came and ate it up. Mark 4:3 & 4

For you are a people holy [set apart] to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession. Deuteronomy 7:6,7; 14:2

The fact of the Jewish Nation as God’s “chosen” earthly people is intensely offensive to the world, and particularly the various peoples occupying the Middle East. Yet, this reality began with the exclusive “calling” of and “covenant” with Abraham in Genesis 12. The subject of God’s dealing with Israel as His chosen earthly people extends to nearly seventy-five percent of the text of the Bible.

Likewise, the “born-again” Christian as God’s “chosen” heavenly people is highly offensive to the contemporary mind as well. However, Jesus said to the inquisitive Jewish Pharisee Nicodemus:

I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again. You should not be surprised at my saying, “You must be born again.” John 3:3 & 7

In these passages, the English phrase *“born again”* comes from a combination of 1) the Greek adverb *anōthen* which means *anew* or *from above*, and 2) the simple verb *gennaō* which means *to beget* or *to be born*.²

Christ’s disclosure of this *second* birth imperative to Nicodemus was prophetic—i.e., still future at the time Christ spoke. How can we tell? We know based on two additional truths revealed to His then current disciples. John 7:39 tells us:

By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

Here we discover that the indwelling Holy Spirit would be given subsequent to the specific *glorification* of Jesus Christ.

A collection of Scriptures explains that this unique glorification was technically a process, which was set in motion when the earthly Jesus of Nazareth predicted His death (John 12:23) and was consummated when the Ascended and Risen Lord Jesus Christ sat down at the right hand of the Father's throne in heaven (Revelation 3:21).

In view of His pending departure, Jesus comforted his then disciples with these words recorded in John 14:16 & 17:

And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you.

As one reads the Synoptic Gospels, it is important (key) to keep in mind that God the Holy Spirit was with Christ's earthly disciples, but did not indwell them. Further, we read in John 14:26 and 15:26:

But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me.

The reality of this exclusive indwelling "*Spirit of truth*" for "*those who believed*" was again still future when Christ taught His disciples.

Finally, in Acts 1:4, the Resurrected Christ completes his revelation to His disciples regarding the coming gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.³

Beginning with the promised coming of the Holy Spirit on the Jewish Feast Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), those who believed were "*born again*," and thus made part of the true Church—the Body of Christ. Over the past two thousand years, God has added additional members to the true Church via this supernatural new birth.

For a comprehensive explanation of what it means to be "*born again*," read [THE NEW BIRTH EXPLAINED](#) by Christian author Miles J. Stanford.

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is "...the stone your builders rejected, which has become the capstone." Salvation is found in no

one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by whom we must be saved. Acts 4:10-12

¹ Today's widespread 'multiculturalism' and emphasis upon 'political correctness' represents one of many possible "*birds*" in Christ's parable. Apologetically, Christ's *Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard* (Matthew 20:1-16) may be effective in driving off a bird or two. When engaged in evangelism, have the individual read this section of Scripture and then have them explain to you what they think it means. If they find the actions of the "landowner" offensive, you may want to wait and allow the Holy Spirit to use the truth contained in this parable to soften their attitude to the message of unconditional "grace" contained therein.

² The same "*born-again*" truth is mentioned by the Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 1:3 and 23, but the compound Greek word *anagennaō* is used. *Ana*, meaning *again* or *from above*, is combined with *gennaō*.

³ For an in-depth treatment regarding this "baptism," which occurred 50 days following Christ's ascension into heaven, see [The Baptism by the Holy Spirit, THE LINE DRAWN](#), by author Miles J. Stanford.