

What Does  
**“BORN AGAIN”**  
Mean?

*by* David C. Pack

Many speak of having been “born again.” What does this term mean? Millions think they know but do not. Do you?

Since Christ taught, “Except a man be *born again*, he cannot SEE the *kingdom of God*,” correct understanding is vital. You *can* know Christ’s meaning. Here it is, made absolutely PLAIN!

Herbert W. Armstrong led the Worldwide Church of God (formerly The Radio Church of God until 1968) until his death in 1986. Hundreds of millions heard his voice and read his literature. God called him in the fall of 1926 and he was converted in the spring of 1927. Over the course of Mr. Armstrong’s ministry, God revealed through him a great many true biblical doctrines, which had been lost to the Church through the centuries. After his death, his successors ceased to believe and teach these doctrines. Although copyright law prohibits The Restored Church of God from reproducing and distributing literature produced while he led the Worldwide Church of God, we are committed to the preservation and teaching of all of these truths!

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Many Protestants and virtually all “evangelical” Christians think that, after becoming “believers,” they have been “born again.”

I have known many who believed this. While having no idea what the term actually meant, they had been told that “professing Jesus” was a kind of “new birth”—that they were in some mysterious way “born again.” It also became their Christian duty to bring others to this belief. I have been approached more than once and asked if I have been “born again.” I always answered no! This booklet explains WHY.

The popular concept of what it means to be “born again” is based largely on ignorance of God’s Word and outright silly reasoning. Yet the deception that this *single* misunderstanding presents is even more important when considering how many *other* true doctrines fall like dominoes in its wake. God’s PURPOSE for man—that He is expanding His Family—the true gospel, most aspects of the kingdom of God, the meaning of being sons of God, character development, the pagan trinity doctrine, who is the antichrist, and more, become impossible to properly understand.

Almost none take the time to examine—or PROVE—what God’s Word says about this extremely important subject. If they did, they would be stunned—astonished—at what they found!

Most professing Christians believe that being “born again” occurs in *this* life upon “receiving Jesus.” But this is *not* what the Bible teaches. Being “born again” has nothing whatsoever to do with “professing Jesus,” “just believing in your heart,” “giving your heart to the Lord” or any other kind of religious experience. It does not happen at conversion. The Bible teaches that it happens long after this initial step in a new Christian’s life.

So few understand Jesus’ words: “Except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Reread and consider them carefully. Take note of what Christ says is at stake in just this single scripture. One’s ability to “see the kingdom of God” hinges solely on whether he is “born again.” Obviously, one had better understand the enormous importance of how and when people are *born again*!

When Christ said “*Except* a man,” He left no room for misunderstanding. Do not be confused. Remaining deceived about being born again makes salvation impossible. Certainly, *when* this occurs is inseparable from properly understanding *how* it happens or *what* it means. Also, if one believes that *conversion* allows a person to “see the kingdom,” then he *must* believe that the kingdom is here *now*. Yet the Bible plainly teaches otherwise!

While Christ’s words require explanation, you *can* understand what so many do not. And it will be made most PLAIN!

### First Things First—Basic Scriptures!

Of the 12 rules of Bible study, the most basic for proper doctrinal understanding is to start with the clearest scriptures on any subject. This is especially critical in removing misconceptions about *how* and *when* one is born again.

In fact, there are *several* plain verses about this subject. They introduce everything else that follows. Understanding them is the only proper way to approach the subject. The entire doctrine becomes quite easy to understand when you keep these few basic verses straight. We shall examine three before examining Christ’s statement in John 3:3.

First, notice a most startling scripture written by the apostle Paul to the Colossians. Remember that the Bible always interprets itself, *and* to always accept what it says after it does.

Speaking of Christ, Paul wrote, “Who is the image of the invisible God, the FIRSTBORN OF EVERY CREATURE...And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the *beginning*, the FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD; that in all things He might have the *preeminence*” (1:15, 18).

Christ is the *firstborn* “from the dead.” This is a big key to understanding when one is born again. Believe God, and fix this phrase in your mind. This verse states that one’s new birth occurs *after death*—and involves returning *from the dead*. Once again, accept what the Bible says, without adding to or subtracting from it. Verse 15 uses the phrase “*firstborn* of every creature,” thereby adding double emphasis to Paul’s statement—and meaning.

Despite the plainness of this verse, some try to dismiss it by saying it has nothing to do with being born from the dead. They explain it away as merely a *title* given to Christ—that He holds the title of “FIRSTBORN FROM THE DEAD.”

This is silly—even foolish—and easy to disprove.

Notice the phrase “who is *the beginning*.” This alone proves that Christ’s Resurrection from the dead refers to the order in time sequence that this

occurs. He is the “beginning” of all those others who will receive eternal life at His Return—when the resurrection of the dead occurs. “*Beginning*” has to be a reference to who is *first*. The next passage builds on and helps explain this one.

Paul wrote to the Romans, “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the *first-born among many brethren*” (8:29). God intends on having “many” sons—Christ’s “brethren,” born later in His plan. If anyone is designated to be *first*, others must follow, or *first* has no meaning. It must be related to something else later. In the case of salvation, *many* will follow. This is further proof that “first-born” has nothing to do with any supposed *title*!

Christ is not the only Son to be part of God’s Plan. There will be more sons who follow Him in the resurrection. He is firstborn of “every creature”—the other sons. The many *other* brethren are those converted over the last 2,000 years (and a few in the Old Testament). They are called to become younger brothers and sisters *with* Christ. If Christ is firstborn from the dead, then all other brethren would be “secondborn,” “thirdborn,” “onehundredth-born,” etc.

Let’s note one additional verse confirming *when* Christ was born again. The apostle John, recording Christ’s Revelation, wrote, “And from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the *firstborn from the dead*, and the ruler over the kings of the earth” (1:5, NKJV).

Though the Authorized Version (KJV) translates this as “first begotten,” virtually every other translation renders this verse as “*firstborn* from the dead.”

These verses make absolutely plain that one is born from the dead at the RESURRECTION. Only *then* will—or can—anyone “see the kingdom of God.”

### Nicodemus Questions Christ

Now for the verse that causes so much unnecessary controversy and confusion for so many. This should never be. Let’s examine why.

A series of verses in John 3 is commonly misunderstood by people who believe that they can be “born again” in this life, as physical human beings, and, therefore, “see the kingdom of God.”

In this account, Nicodemus questioned Christ, who answered, “Except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (vs. 3). Confused, Nicodemus replied, “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...Except a man be born of water [the first physical, human birth] *and* of the Spirit [again later, at the resurrection], he cannot *enter into* the kingdom of God” (vs. 4-5). To see and enter into God’s kingdom, you must become SPIRIT. But people are physical. Entering the kingdom is impossible for them, because Paul wrote that “flesh and blood *cannot* inherit the kingdom of God” (I Cor. 15:50)!

While Nicodemus knew exactly what being born meant, he was confused about how it could happen again—a second time. This is why he asked about re-entering his mother’s womb. However, ministers and religious leaders today are deceived and confused in a different way. They claim that being born again has nothing to do with an *actual* birth—but that it is a *feeling*, an *experience*, a “*conversion*” and the like.

In verse 5, Christ explains what it means to be “*born of water and of the Spirit*,” and why, if this does not happen, one “cannot *enter into* the kingdom of God.” Yes, the kingdom is something that can be “entered into.” But Christ explains His “born of water and of the Spirit” phrase when He states, “That which is BORN of the flesh *IS* flesh” and then “that which is born of the Spirit *IS* spirit” (vs. 6).

Of course it is. Flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God—but *spirit can!* Human beings are made of dust (Gen. 2:7; 3:19), not spirit. Those born again are *composed of* spirit.

When born as humans, we are delivered from a PHYSICAL mother. When born of spirit, we are delivered from a SPIRITUAL mother, the Church. People are destined to be born again as spirit, *like Christ was*, just as surely as they are born physically of a human mother, *like Christ was*. This will become plain.

Because Christ wanted no room for misunderstanding, He likened spirit to wind. Wind, like spirit, is *invisible*. It cannot be seen. Christ told Nicodemus, “The *wind* blows where it lists [does], and you hear the sound thereof, but cannot tell from where it comes, and where it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (vs. 8). Those who are born of spirit will be like wind—they will be invisible! But human beings are flesh and blood, and can be seen.

Another comparison is important. Wind often demonstrates enormous POWER. While invisible, its *effects* are easily seen. The force of hurricanes, typhoons, tornadoes and straight-line winds can be tremendous. But people possess relatively little power. The power of wind vastly exceeds that of the strongest human being—or a million put together!

So, there is a limitation on who can actually see and enter the kingdom. Anyone can see physical things. Therefore, the kingdom *cannot* be something physical, or everyone *could* see it. Understand these critical points that Christ made. You must *be* spirit to see the invisible kingdom of God!

Proper understanding of the Bible’s teaching about being born again is *vital*—absolutely PARAMOUNT—to both “see” and to “enter into” the kingdom of God.

Grasp this about the John 3 account! Christ was making an exciting, thrilling announcement about the kingdom of God coming to earth—and that people can be born into it. But His “newscast” was received as a threat to the religious leaders. They saw themselves as losing power to both this kingdom and Christ because of His influence over the people.

When Nicodemus approached Christ, he acknowledged in verse 2, “Rabbi, *we know* that you are a teacher *come from God*.” He plainly admitted that he

knew who Christ was and that God had sent Him to earth. Notice that Nicodemus was speaking for more people than himself when he said, “*we know*.” Nicodemus was a Pharisee. He was referring to himself and the other Pharisees who understood who and what Christ was. These religious leaders well understood that Christ’s true authority to teach the truth and perform miracles came “from God.” They could not deny God’s power evident in the miracles He performed. But they still resented Him. On different occasions, they called Him a blasphemer, drunkard, heretic, seditionist, bastard, ignorant, demon-possessed, false prophet—and crucified Him!

The Romans usually installed the Pharisees into positions of rulership under their occupying authority. This gave the Pharisees important status and made life generally better for them than for the admiring multitudes that Christ taught, healed, cast demons from and performed other miracles for.

Like the Pharisees, many today see the plain truth of the Bible, yet *choose* to ignore it in order to hold to their own traditions and ideas—and *status!* The Pharisees felt threatened by the potential for immediate loss of personal power to this new kingdom. This is why Christ spoke so bluntly to them when He said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

### When Was *Jesus* Born Again?

Despite the plainness of these verses, there are those who still dispute them. They reject the obvious meaning that the “born again experience” occurs at the resurrection, claiming that upon “accepting Jesus,” one can “see the kingdom” in his *mind’s eye*. In addition to ignoring that the kingdom must be “entered into” as well, this conclusion leaves them with another serious dilemma.

If Christ were not born again when He was “born from the dead,” then when else could He have experienced this? Remember, almost all professing Christians believe that one is born again upon “*conversion*.”

When did *Christ* experience conversion? When did He accept *Himself*? No one can explain this!

Since Christ had the Holy Spirit from begetting in Mary’s womb, when was He “converted”? Understand! The Bible clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit is given at conversion (Acts 2:38). Yet, Christ had God’s Spirit from conception. Would any suggest that He could “see the kingdom of God” when just an embryo inside His mother? Did Christ “give His heart to the Lord (Himself)” as an embryo in His mother’s womb?

These questions of when Christ was *born again* take on greater significance for another reason. True Christians copy Christ. The apostle Peter wrote, “Christ...leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps” (I Pet. 2:21).

It is impossible for Christians to follow Christ’s example of rebirth at conversion because He was never converted in the human sense. He had the Holy Spirit from the moment His physical existence began.

We have learned another important point about being born again that applies here. Remember, Christ said, “that which is born of the Spirit *is* spirit.” This reinforces all the above verses about Him being born *from the dead*. After His Resurrection and return to heaven, Jesus was *composed of Spirit*—He was then like wind.

Before continuing, you must grasp this! The example that Christ set, which Christians must follow, is that He was born (again) *from the dead*, not at conversion. Like Christ, we will *also* be composed of spirit, and be like wind.

### Christ’s Advance Announcement

Before we can delve more deeply into the truth of when one is born again, some background is needed as a foundation for truly understanding the big picture of this doctrine.

Wherever He went, Christ continually announced the kingdom of God. It was the subject of most of His parables. Like a newscaster ahead of his time, Christ came announcing a total change in the way the world would be governed at His Return—at the establishing of God’s kingdom. With this change would come unprecedented world peace, happiness and prosperity.

The prophet Malachi spoke of a Messenger to come: “Behold, I will send My messenger [John the Baptist], and he shall prepare the way before Me: and the Lord [the Messiah], whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger [Jesus] of the covenant, whom you delight in” (3:1).

Christ came as a Messenger. And when He commissioned His twelve apostles and sent them to preach, the only instruction He gave was to preach about the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1-2). When He later sent out His seventy disciples (10:1), He also commanded them to preach the kingdom (vs. 9).

The terms “kingdom” and “kingdom of God” are found throughout the New Testament. Yet it is absolutely astonishing how nearly everyone has lost the knowledge and true *meaning* of what they refer to! Like the truth about being born again, this understanding has been suppressed for 2,000 years!

### What IS the Gospel?

The word “gospel” is an old English word meaning “god spell” or good news. The word “kingdom” is also an old English term simply meaning *government*. In other words, Christ preached “the good news of the government of God.” World peace, happiness and prosperity for all *will* certainly be good news for mankind, who has not known it for 6,000 years!

Jesus came saying, “Repent you, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:15). But what *is* the true gospel? The truth of the gospel is now hidden from the vast majority of professing Christians. Ever since the first century, there has been a conspiracy to deceive would-be Christians about the meaning of the gospel. Shocking as it is, this statement is true!

Most believe that the gospel is about the *person* of Christ. Certainly He *is* an important subject, but Christ is *not* the gospel. The Bible shows that Jesus is preached in conjunction *with* the gospel. Of course, His role is extremely important. But again, He is *not* the gospel!

Notice Mark’s account again: “Now after that John [the first Malachi 3:1 messenger] was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the *kingdom of God*” (vs. 14). That is the gospel Jesus preached, saying, “Repent you, and *believe the gospel*.” What gospel?—the “KINGDOM OF GOD.” Verse 1 refers to this message: “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.” Christ’s gospel is about the KINGDOM OF GOD—not something else! One must believe *that* gospel to be saved—not some counterfeit.

No wonder Christ answered Nicodemus as He did.

*Everything* that Christ said and taught He tied to the kingdom of God!

### The Kingdom of God Explained

We have seen that Christians will be born again so that they can “see”—“*inherit it*” (I Cor. 15:50)—the kingdom of God. This much is now plain.

But what *is* the kingdom of God? The term has no meaning if it cannot be understood. If Christians inherit it, they should know exactly *what* they are inheriting.

Let’s make this impossible to misunderstand. In this life, people are born into: (1) A human *family*, and (2) any one of many earthly human *kingdoms* (governments). A kingdom is comprised of a nation of people under a government that rules the nation.

It is the same with God. At the resurrection, humans are born into: (1) The God FAMILY, which is also (2) the KINGDOM of God. These are essentially one and the same. The parallel is perfectly clear when comparing the human physical pattern to the divine Spirit pattern.

God has a throne in heaven, from which He rules His kingdom (Isa. 66:1; Rev. 3:21). He literally rules the entire universe with Christ. When Christians are born again, they enter *this* kingdom—God’s ruling, governing FAMILY!

Are you beginning to see God’s awesome purpose for your life—your inheritance? (Take time to read our free booklet *What is the Kingdom of God?*)

### Daniel Understood

The prophet Daniel understood that the kingdom of God involved a *literal* government that would one day rule over *real* people and *real* nations on earth. He held no illusion that it was merely “sentimental fluff” or a “warm feeling in the hearts of men.” Through a series of dreams and visions (Dan. 1:17), God used him to explain much new, *special* understanding about how and when His kingdom would come to earth.

All that Daniel was shown was to be “closed up and sealed till the time of the end” (12:9). We are *now* in the time of the end. There are many proofs of this. His message is for us today! Daniel reported big—*tremendous*—news that will affect you in your lifetime! He understood and spoke the same gospel that Christ preached—and it is vital that we understand what he said! (Read our free booklet *Are These the Last Days?* to understand more about how Daniel’s prophecy was written to be understood *in our time*.)

Carefully read Daniel 2:28-44. This astonishing, detailed prophecy reveals many things about God’s plan to restore His government to earth—including the time sequence in which this will happen.

The first several verses describe the image of a giant man. Verses 31 to 33 state, “This image’s head was of fine *gold*, his breast and his arms of *silver*, his belly and his thighs of *brass*, His legs of iron, his feet part of *iron and part of clay*.” This man is constructed of four distinct parts. Verses 34 to 35 describe a large supernatural “*stone* that smote the image [and] became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.” Note verse 34 states that this stone “was cut out *without hands*” because God, not men, formed it.

The “stone” shattered the image and replaced it, eventually encompassing the entire earth. This can only be the government of God coming to earth. In effect, Daniel is announcing the same gospel of the kingdom of God.

These same verses show a succession of WORLD EMPIRES depicted by different metals of which the giant image (statue) was made. These were literal kingdoms. *First*, the Chaldean-Babylonian Empire of gold—*second*, the Medo-Persian Empire of silver—*third*, the Greco-Macedonian Empire of brass—and *fourth*, the Roman Empire of iron mixed with clay. The message from history is that these four kingdoms once governed vast areas, and the fourth kingdom will largely rule the world until the kingdom of God is finally established.

### Saints Enter the Kingdom

Daniel wrote much about God’s kingdom—and the saints’ role in it, offering a direct connection to *when* Christians will be born again.

Chapter 7, verse 13, speaks of Christ coming in the “clouds of heaven.” Before His Return, God officially grants Him the authority to rule the world. The next verse states, “*And there was GIVEN Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed*” (vs. 14).

In this earth-shattering event, Christ is prophesied to come like lightning shining from the east to the west (Matt. 24:27). John wrote of this time: “The *kingdoms* of this world are become the KINGDOMS of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 11:15).

God has a plan for how to manage all peoples and nations. Christ will not rule earth by Himself. The governments of men require the efforts of

many, who assist a leader. God’s government is no different, where He is supreme.

More verses in Daniel 7 are critical to understand. Remember that God’s kingdom is foretold to replace the four previously discussed world-ruling kingdoms of chapter 2: “These great beasts, which are *four*, are *four* kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But *the saints* of the most High shall *take the kingdom*, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever” (vs. 17-18).

That is right! The ultimate calling of Christians is to join Christ and share rulership in the kingdom of God over all nations and peoples. Truly, Christ is “KING of kings and LORD of lords.” This includes *anyone* willing to accept God’s terms for entering His kingdom.

Verses 19 to 20 shed additional light on what happens when the saints return with Christ. Their first responsibility is to replace the “fourth beast,” which rules with the assistance of a “little horn.” This little horn is a *religious* kingdom and is the woman who rides the beast of Revelation 17. This religious kingdom (centered in Rome) has ruled over all of the previous resurrections, or revivals, of the Holy Roman Empire.

Notice: “I beheld, and *the same horn made war with the saints* [the work of the Babylonish whore of Revelation 17:5-6], and prevailed against them; Until the Ancient of Days came, and *judgment was given to the saints* of the Most High; and the time came that *the saints possessed the kingdom*” (vs. 21-22).

Finally, verse 27 confirms the marvelous potential lying ahead for all the true saints of God: “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, *shall be given to the people of the saints* of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.”

What could be more plain? No wonder Christ stated, “And he that *overcomes*, and keeps My works unto the end, to him will I give *power over the nations*: And he shall *rule them* with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be *broken* to shivers: even as I received of My Father” (Rev. 2:26-27), and added, “To him that *overcomes* will I grant to sit with Me *in My throne...*” (3:21).

The phrase “in My throne” is used because Christ understood that His throne is on the earth, unlike the Father’s, which is in heaven. Luke 1:32 shows that Christ will sit in Jerusalem on the throne of David. Also, see Revelation 5:10; 20:4; Matthew 5:5; Psalm 25:12-13; 37:11, etc. There is no doubt that when Christ returns, the saints will rule with Him!

### God’s Government Once Ruled the Earth

Genesis 1:1 states, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” The book of Job describes the time when God created the world. God asked Job a series of questions: “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare, if you have understanding. Who has laid the measures thereof,

if you know? Or who has stretched the line upon it?...*When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?*” (38:4-5, 7).

These “stars” were angels (Rev. 1:20; 12:4) and are described as “sons of God.” Literal heavenly stars do not sing. Notice that it says “all” of them “shouted” and “sang together.” Job reveals that the earth was created in a wonderful and beautiful condition, with angelic joy and singing. Lucifer and his angels had not yet rebelled at the time of the Genesis 1:1 creation.

Genesis 1:2 is mistranslated and does *not* reflect the *meaning* of the original Hebrew. The King James Version of the Bible states, “And the earth *was without form, and void.*” Three key Hebrew words are all mistranslated here, thus obscuring—and actually *hiding*—the verse’s true meaning.

The word translated “was” is *hayah*. In Genesis 2:7, this word is correctly translated “became,” and in Genesis 9:15, “become.”

The words for “without form, and void” are *tohu* and *bohu*. Correctly translated, they mean “chaotic, in confusion, waste and empty.” In short, a perfectly created earth (vs. 1) “became chaotic and confused” (vs. 2).

In effect, Isaiah 45:18 shows the way God did *not* create the earth: “For thus says the LORD that created the heavens; God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He has established it, He created it not in vain [*tohu* meaning chaotic or waste], He formed it to be inhabited.” The earth *became* chaotic *after* God created it—*between* the events of Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. The latter verse describes the earth’s *re-creation* 6,000 years ago. Verse 1 describes the *original* creation of the entire universe that scientists say occurred as many as 17 billion years ago.

We know *what* happened. But *how* did it happen? How did the earth go from being beautiful and perfect at creation to chaotic, confused, waste and empty? Since God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33), we know that *He* did not destroy it. Then *who* or *what* caused this?

Psalms 104:30 states that God “*renews* the face of the earth.” During the creation week, God *renewed* a damaged, injured earth, then completely covered with water (Gen. 1:2).

This destruction was caused by the devil, who, lifted up with pride, sought to replace God. Physical devastation was the result.

Acts 3:19-21 reveals that Christ’s Return brings the “restitution [the restoring] of all things.” But, Satan is still the god of this world (II Cor. 4:4), and would continue to be, had Christ not qualified to replace him.

### Christ Overcame and Qualified to Replace Satan

Satan demonstrated he could not be governed by God. So, a successor had to qualify to replace him, because Satan’s government was still in place on earth.

Almost immediately after Christ was baptized by John the Baptist (Mark 1:9-11), He entered an extraordinary, extended battle with Satan.

Successfully resisting the devil’s temptation was the key to Christ overcoming sin and qualifying to replace and remove him at the establishing of the

kingdom of God. Matthew 4 contains the account: “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit...to be *tempted* of the devil” (vs. 1). Through enticement, the devil repeatedly *tempted* Christ, in various ways. Take time to read the account. At the end of several attempts by Satan to break Christ’s will, the account climaxes.

Notice that after being offered all the world’s kingdoms by Satan, Christ rebuked him (vs. 10), and commanded him to leave. The temptation ended and the devil departed. Christ had successfully resisted—and qualified!

Christ passed a very real test! He overcame the world, His flesh and the devil in defeating sin and qualifying to pay for the sins of the world.

### God’s Purpose Completed Before Kingdom Can Be Established

Though Christ qualified to replace Satan almost 2,000 years ago, there are several reasons for the long delay in establishing God’s kingdom.

God’s Plan encompasses 7,000 years. Few understand this. Numerous verses describe Christ’s 1,000-year reign, which begins at His Return with the saints (Rev. 20:4-6). A few more understand this much, but know *nothing* of the fact that God has allotted 6,000 years, or six millennial days of a “seven-day week,” to man’s rule, prior to the seventh 1,000-year “day.” The sixth “day” is drawing to a close. Satan is soon to be bound (Rev. 20:2).

Man has been given 6,000 years to try his own ways, governments, religions, philosophies, value systems, forms of education and methods of trying to solve the world’s greatest problems. Under the sway of Satan, he has practiced sin—disobedience to God’s commands—for all this time. Then he has tried to treat all of the ill *effects* instead of treating the *cause*—breaking God’s spiritual laws. God is allowing mankind to learn bitter lessons. The vast majority, who have never known the precious truth of God, are having to learn that their own ways—and solutions to problems—do not work!

Having conquered sin, Christ qualified to replace (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13) the “god of this world.” He assured that the devil will soon no longer be able to deceive (Rev. 12:9) and confuse mankind (I Cor. 14:33). Having not *yet* been bound, Satan does everything within his power to thwart God’s Plan. His deceived ministers (II Cor. 11:13-15) teach, in effect, that God has failed to save the world. Yet, only by God’s *permission* does Satan hold sway over this “present evil world” (Gal. 1:4; I John 5:19). Recognize that God is not losing some kind of great cosmic “wrestling match” over which He has full control. He knows exactly what He is doing, and the beauty of His plan *can* be known. No true God would ever condemn humanity without offering salvation to all!

There are other reasons for the delay in Christ’s Return. He had to first call and train the original disciples to become apostles—to become part of the foundation of the Church (Eph. 2:20) and to take the gospel to the world. Then, throughout the New Testament period, He had to train an administrative team to rule with Him.

Christ did not establish His kingdom immediately, because He had to ascend to heaven to become High Priest of those God calls. Christians are rec-

onciled to God by Christ’s death, but they are saved by His LIFE (Rom. 5:10)—His Resurrection. Also, while still human, Christ could not install Himself as Satan’s replacement. Daniel showed that He had to return to heaven (also Luke 19) to be CROWNED with power and glory before He could return.

The master deceiver has inspired many false religions, counterfeiting the truth in endless ways. The fruit of his efforts lies everywhere. But a 1,000-year “Sabbath rest” is coming soon. Man will then be *forced* to rest from sin and receive rest from Satan’s relentless deceit.

Mark 2:28 states, “the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” When the Lord of the Sabbath—Jesus Christ—comes to bind Satan, his dominion will end and the world will *rest* from sin. The then spirit-composed saints—BORN of God—will rule.

It is no surprise that Satan deceives the world about the saints being “born from the dead.” He knows their first order of business will be to bind and replace him!

### God’s Ruling Family Kingdom

Physical kingdoms have people, and governments over them. God is no different. John 4:24 states that “God is a Spirit.” Under the Father, Christ leads His kingdom, composed of spirit beings. At His Return, Christ, as a member of the Family of God, will have many younger “brothers and sisters” (the “many brethren” of Romans 8:29) who will have qualified to rule with Him.

There is a plant kingdom, an animal kingdom, human kingdoms and an angelic kingdom. There is also the kingdom of God.

In Genesis 1:26, “God said, Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, after *Our* likeness.” When referring to themselves, the One speaking says, “Us,” “Our,” “Our.” The Hebrew word here for God is *Elohim*. It is a uniplural term like *group, team, committee* or *family*. All of these terms represent *one* entity, comprised of *several* members or persons.

Thus, the Bible teaches that there is one God, composed of two Persons—the Father and Christ—with many more to be added later. The first time when God will add more sons to His Family is when Christ’s kingdom is established.

At that time, “many sons shall be brought unto glory” through the “captain of our salvation” (Heb. 2:10). Verse 11 adds that Christ “is not ashamed to call them brethren.” Christ is called “*firstborn*” among these brethren.

Do you grasp this? A true Christian’s goal is to be BORN into the kingdom (government) of God, as a SPIRIT BEING to rule under Christ. What could be more wonderful—more *glorious*—for a Christian to look forward to?

Throughout His ministry, when Christ taught about the kingdom, He was actually teaching about the FAMILY of God, and how humans may enter it by being born again.

### Flesh and Blood Cannot Enter

The Bible teaches that God’s kingdom will rule over the people and nations of the earth. The nations are not actually part of that kingdom, any more than the citizens of any country are part of the government that rules them. One must *enter* the kingdom to be in it. As distinct from those who are governed by it, who is actually *in* the kingdom?

Recall Paul’s statement: “Now this I say, brethren, that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom* of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery” (I Cor. 15:50-51).

This *is* a mystery to almost everyone—that flesh-and-blood human beings *cannot* enter the kingdom of God. Only at the resurrection are people (true Christians) changed (born again) from flesh to spirit. Only then are those who were begotten of God born again. If we just believe the PLAIN TRUTH of the Bible, God’s kingdom cannot include flesh-and-blood people!

But exactly *when* does the change from physical to spirit composition occur?

Verse 51 continues into verse 52 and holds the answer: “We shall not all sleep [remain dead], but we shall all be *changed*, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be *changed*.” But changed to what?

In verse 47, Paul continues with this clear explanation: “The first man is of the earth, earthy [a physical human]: the second man is the Lord from heaven [a Spirit God Being].” Verse 49 continues, “And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall [in the future—at the resurrection] also bear the image of the heavenly.” Verse 53 states, “For this corruptible [flesh is certainly corruptible] must put on incorruption [those born of God are spirit], and this mortal must put on immortality.” It is at this point that flesh is changed into SPIRIT!

Genesis 2:7 states, “And the LORD God formed man of the *dust of the ground*.” Human beings are composed of flesh—of the dust. God will *change* their flesh to spirit at the resurrection. Those entering the kingdom must be composed of spirit.

Let’s examine this further. Matthew 22:30 states, “For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, *but are as the angels of God*.”

Hebrews 1:7 shows that angels are made of spirit. This is important to understand about our composition in the resurrection. But do not misunderstand and think that Christ was saying that the resurrected saints would actually *be* angels. He merely meant that they would be “as” the angels, in that neither angels nor resurrected saints *marry*.

This is what Nicodemus could not comprehend. It truly was a “mystery” to him. Christ had to explain it to him, as Paul had to explain it to the Corinthians—that we will all be CHANGED at the resurrection. This is when we



inherit the kingdom of God—when we are *born again*. No one can “see” or “enter into” the kingdom until Christ returns and establishes it.

### Seeking Immortality—a Spirit Body

Before continuing, we need to examine immortality from a different perspective. Understand! The “immortal soul” doctrine states that everyone is *already* immortal. But what about the following verse referencing God and Jesus Christ? Notice: “*Who only has immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man has seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting*” (I Tim. 6:16).

If God and Christ are the “only” ones who have immortality, this leaves no room for people to possess immortal souls. People are not born with immortal souls (Gen. 2:7; Ezek. 18:4, 20; Matt. 10:28).

Romans 2:7 gives God’s perspective on immortality. Notice this instruction to would-be Christians: “SEEK for glory and honor and IMMORTALITY, INTERNAL LIFE.” If people already have immortality, God would not tell them to *seek* it. Paul would not have told the Corinthians that their “mortal [bodies] must *put on* immortality” (I Cor. 15:53-54) at the resurrection.

Human beings do not have life inherent within them. Since you are not immortal, your life will span a certain allotted time, after which you will die. That is absolute (Heb. 9:27). Unless God intervenes, you have no future—no hope—beyond a limited time of 70 to 80 years.

Stop believing the fables of men about immortal souls. This fiction is not taught in the Bible!

### Joint-heirs—Not Yet Inheritors—With Christ

Matthew 5:5 states that “the meek [true Christians]...INHERIT the earth”—and “rule with Christ.” But how does one become an “heir with Christ”?

A single verse exists that defines a Christian, but it is not the popular idea taught in the so-called “Christian” world. This verse also introduces being *heirs*.

God’s Holy Spirit within a mind makes one a Christian. Paul wrote, “For as many as are *led by the Spirit of God*, THEY are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). Christians have the Holy Spirit leading them. Having God’s Spirit is absolutely *essential* to being a Christian. Some verses earlier, Paul said, “But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, *he is none of His*” (vs. 9)!

It is that simple! One either has the Spirit of God, and *is* a Christian, or does *not* have it, and is *not* a Christian—is “none of His.” All who are truly converted *must* have the Holy Spirit in them.

This much is clear. What is *not* so clear—or even *known*—is this: “And if children, then HEIRS; HEIRS of God, and JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also *glorified together*” (vs. 17).

The Bible reveals a connection between SONS and HEIRS—and being “glorified together.” An heir has not yet *inherited* what is to come to him. I Corinthians 15:50 states that we will “INHERIT the kingdom of God.” But those called now, in this lifetime, are HEIRS—begotten (not *yet* born) sons. Paul explains, “And if you be Christ’s, then are you Abraham’s seed, and HEIRS according to the promise...Wherefore you are no more a servant, but a SON; and if a son, then an HEIR of God through Christ” (Gal. 3:29; 4:7).

A true follower of Christ and the Bible is an heir *with* Christ! Heirs are not yet *inheritors*. An heir is one who later *inherits* what has been promised to him. We have seen that Christians inherit the kingdom at the Return of Christ, when they are changed.

But what does this *mean*? It means you *must* receive God’s Spirit. But *how*?

Most believe that there are no requirements—*conditions*—to being saved. This is not true. The following verses prove that there are *three pre-conditions* that must be met just to receive the Holy Spirit.

On the day Christ established the New Testament Church, Peter gave a powerful sermon. It was so convicting that 3,000 were baptized. Before baptism, many asked Peter, “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). He instructed, “*Repent, and be baptized* every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

This is God’s plain command to: (1) *Repent* and (2) *be baptized*—in this order—to receive the Holy Spirit! Mark 1:14-15 adds that Christ taught one must also (3) *believe the gospel* of the kingdom of God.

From baptism forward, the new convert is begotten and led by the Holy Spirit! What does “begotten” mean?

### Spiritual Begettal Parallels Physical Begettal

As explained, one receives the Holy Spirit at baptism (through the laying on of hands). At this point, the Christian is begotten by the Father, just as Christ was begotten in Mary’s womb by the Father. Once begotten, a Christian takes on the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5), who now lives in him (Gal. 2:20).

We can understand spiritual begettal by examining the process of human begettal. Life begins when the human father’s sperm unites with the mother’s ovum. In the reproduction process, an egg has to be fertilized by a sperm cell. It then becomes “sealed off,” unable to be re-fertilized by another sperm.

Human life begins as an embryo, develops into a fetus and eventually grows and matures toward birth about nine months later. Begettal, development and parturition (separation from the womb) are entirely separate phases of the *process* by which each human being progresses toward birth. A fertilized egg is not a *born* human being. Similarly, a spirit-begotten human is not a *born* spirit being or person, as Christ became after His Resurrection. How plain!

God has carefully created an unmistakable comparison—a parallel—between human birth and divine birth at the time of the resurrection. That

which is “born of the flesh *is* flesh”—is a *physical human being*. And that which is “born of the spirit *is* spirit”—is a DIVINE SPIRIT-COMPOSED BEING.

There is an all-important time element to both human and Christian development. Both involve a “gestation” period! With humans, the role of the father is complete at fertilization, but the role of the mother continues for nine months. She must literally carry the child all the way to birth. Everyone understands this process of development. No one confuses begetting with birth. If you doubt this, just try telling it to an abortion-rights activist. These people view birth as everything and see begetting as having almost no meaning or importance, and barely acknowledge it as part of the process. In this way, even deceived abortionists recognize a clear distinction between begetting and birth.

Why then do so many believe that professing or accepting Christ automatically leapfrogs them to the point of spiritual *birth*, without gestation and development? No one speaks of *pregnant* women as *already* having new babies.

Why can’t professing Christians comprehend such basic understanding? Why can they not see the critical TIME ELEMENT, so essential to *human* development, as necessary for *spiritual* development?

### Born Again Through Continuing With Holy Spirit

Now understand this point! The very same Spirit, dwelling in us from the moment of conversion, raises us (all those begotten of God) to join God in His kingdom.

Paul describes how spiritual begetting, when the Holy Spirit enters, leads to the time of one’s second birth to spiritual composition—when one is born again: “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you” (Rom. 8:11). The very Spirit of God in us will allow us to awake in the resurrection.

What Paul told the Corinthians about how they would be changed at the resurrection is the same as what he told the Romans about how their physical bodies would be “quicken” by God’s Spirit, in them from conversion.

One final related point must be addressed. It has a direct bearing on *when* one is born again. Human babies can no longer abort after delivery. This possibility is only a danger, whether by accident, deliberate killing of the fetus or other reasons, *prior* to birth.

### Spiritual Fetuses Can ABORT!

Get this straight! Only those with the Spirit of God have the potential for eternal life: “And this is the record, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that has the Son HAS LIFE; and he that has not the Son of God HAS NOT LIFE” (I John 5:11-12).

If one has God’s Spirit, and then through neglect or willful sin, loses it—he has aborted!

In a most true sense, let me say again, a Christian (like a human fetus) can “miscarry,” if he does not continue in the right path—if he does not “endure to the end” (Matt. 24:13; 10:22). In this way, the parallel between physical and spiritual development in the womb—gestation—expands.

Notice: “For it is impossible for those who were *once enlightened*, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and *were made partakers of the Holy Spirit*, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, *to renew them again unto repentance*; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame” (Heb. 6:4-6).

This is most serious for those who ignore the warning of this verse. Those who think themselves already “born again” are either ignorant of or refuse to accept the grave caution explained by Paul in these verses.

Now continue. Physical embryos are a type of *spirit* embryos, but the two are not identical. There are some obvious differences between physical and spirit embryos. These are developing toward a higher plane of life than physical embryos—life that includes being made of invisible spirit, ability to travel through air, inability to sin, eternal life, and other spiritual capabilities.

### We Take On God’s Likeness When Born Again

Recall that God made human beings in His “image” and “likeness.” But this process of growing and developing in the womb will not be complete until the resurrection—when we are no longer composed of “flesh and blood.” Those who are members of the Church are flesh-and-blood children of God, not yet *spirit-composed* children.

But understand this vital point. God created *you* to become “like” Him in every way. Through His Spirit entering the mind of newly converted children, a new spirit life begins. A tiny, spirit-begotten *embryo* comes into existence. But it does not stop there. In the same way that little children grow to look like their physical parents, so also do God’s children gradually take on the SPIRITUAL LIKENESS of God (also their Parent), in nature and character, as much as in image and form (II Pet. 1:4). But this development process is completely separate from when they appear, in spirit, from the womb—when BORN AGAIN.

Both the Old and New Testaments make this process absolutely plain! While many have a vague idea that Christians are “sons of God,” none consider: “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the SONS OF GOD. . . Beloved, *now* are we the SONS OF GOD, and it does *not yet* appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM; for we shall see Him as He is” (I John 3:1-2).

This is an extremely important verse for another reason. While we are called sons “now,” notice that it does “*not yet* appear what we shall be.”

Then John adds, “Whosoever is *born of God* does not commit sin; for His seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is *born of God*” (vs. 9). We will one day have the very likeness of Christ. At that time, we *will* be born of God. Remember, Romans 8:16 states that we are “children” of God and “heirs *with Christ*.”

These verses in I John 3 are staggering in overall importance. Did you notice that John said, “*now* are we the sons of God.” Just as parents speak of a child not yet born as their son or daughter, God speaks of His begotten children as SONS OF GOD now!

David understood this very point of taking on God’s likeness: “As for me, I will behold Your face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I AWAKE, with Your LIKENESS” (Psa. 17:15).

David and John understood that they would “awake” at the resurrection and look exactly like God in image, form, character—and *spirit composition*—BORN AGAIN!

Let me also repeat this—God is *reproducing* Himself in human beings who have received His Holy Spirit. He is creating children that will look and *be* just like Him!

Paul amplifies what John and David meant: “For our conversation [citizenship] is in heaven; *from where* [He is coming here] also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall CHANGE our vile body, that it may be fashioned LIKE UNTO HIS GLORIOUS BODY, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Phil. 3:20-21).

This is *awesome* knowledge! *Nothing* compares to it! But let’s make it even clearer.

The following is a direct description of Jesus Christ, as He now exists in full glory, after being born again. Meditate on it, realizing that you can be *like Him*: “His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and His eyes were as a *flame of fire*; And His feet like unto *fine brass*, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was *as the sun shines in his strength*” (Rev. 1:14-16).

What this astounding description reveals about your future is not my personal opinion. It is what *your Bible* reveals! This is what Paul meant when he wrote, “And as we have borne the IMAGE of the *earthy*, we shall also bear the IMAGE of the *heavenly*” (I Cor. 15:49).

While we are *physically* formed and shaped like God *now*, we shall later become Spirit, taking on the “IMAGE of the HEAVENLY.”

### The Church, as Mother, Feeds Her Children

Jesus promised, “I will build My Church” (Matt. 16:18). The New Testament describes God’s Church as the “body of Christ” (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). Paul taught, “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (I Cor. 12:13).

The Church is described as “Jerusalem above,” and directly referred to as “the MOTHER of us all” (Gal. 4:26). Hebrews 12:22-23 makes this clearer: “But you are come unto...the HEAVENLY JERUSALEM...THE...CHURCH...which are written in heaven.” It does not say that the Church is *in* heaven, but rather that those of the Church are “*written* in heaven.” This is because the dead in Christ are now awaiting the first resurrection!

Like any good mother, the Church nurtures and feeds her unborn children so that they may grow within her “womb.” She has been doing it for 2,000 years. Peter instructed the ministry to “*feed the flock of God* which is among you, taking the oversight...willingly” (I Pet. 5:2).

Paul amplified the Church’s ROLE as Mother: “For the *perfecting* of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the *edifying* of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto...the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12-13).

The context continues with two additional verses demonstrating that God’s “children,” like any other children, are supposed to “grow up.” Notice that the Church is also responsible for protecting God’s flock from false doctrine: “That we henceforth be no more *children*, tossed to and fro, and *carried about with every wind of doctrine*, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to *deceive*; But speaking the *truth* in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ” (vs. 14-15).

The ministry’s duty is to teach the Church the truth and to warn of the dangers of being deceived by false doctrine. (Take time to carefully read our booklet *Where Is God’s Church?* to learn how to identify Christ’s Church.)

### The Unborn Must Mature Toward Birth

Like the newly begotten baby grows in its mother’s womb, the Christian must also grow before he can leave the womb. Peter wrote, “But *grow* in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Pet. 3:18).

Christians *must* grow in this lifetime. To be given awesome divine authority and power, as “joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17), they must *qualify*, by building God’s holy, righteous CHARACTER in their lives *now*!

Doctors understand that a human fetus cannot survive outside the womb unless it has sufficiently developed *prior* to delivery. The “heroic” efforts of medical science have limits in terms of saving a premature child. It is the same with the begotten children of God, who must grow during the gestation period. Like human fetuses, they must also be fed all the necessary *spiritual* nutrients to grow sufficiently to be born into the kingdom as incorruptible Spirit Beings.

Christians must grow, develop and fully *mature*, spiritually, while in the womb. Human fetuses begin at microscopic size and grow to the time of birth. The newly-begotten Christian grows in the same way. He starts out 99.9% spiritually *immature* and slowly progresses to full spiritual maturity—and *birth*!

Surely God is as wise as human doctors. He recognizes that His children must grow sufficiently before He can deliver them—bring them to BIRTH!

Peter includes several passages explaining the importance of the begotten Christian growing within the true Church of God. How and when one is born again cannot be understood without some discussion of various Greek words and how they are or should be rendered in English.

If the Bible discusses being born again, it would have to also mention that one is also “begotten again,” for begettal must precede it. It does mention this!

Notice: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy has *begotten* us *again* [*anagennao*] unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (I Pet. 1:3-5).

The Greek word used here is *anagennao*. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* defines it as: “to beget or (by extension) bear (*again*): beget, (bear) again.” It also means “to beget anew” (*Young’s Concordance*). Humans are begotten for the first time in the womb of a human mother, and “begotten again”—or *anew*—by receiving God’s Spirit at conversion.

Peter makes another reference using the word *anagennao*. But it has been mistranslated as *born*: “Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently: being *born* [*begotten*] *again* [*anagennao*], not of corruptible seed [human sperm], but of incorruptible [the Holy Spirit], by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever.” (I Pet. 1:22-23).

Those called now have been begotten by both “corruptible” seed (human sperm), which led to a physical birth, and “incorruptible” seed (the Holy Spirit), which *will* lead to a spiritual birth if one continues to grow in the womb. Peter writes that, for instance, those who are begotten again grow in love of the brethren.

Notice how Peter uses the analogy of milk to bring growth: “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and all envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may GROW thereby” (I Pet. 2:1-2).

Bible analogies can also have multiple applications with no contradiction. Satan is like a lion (I Pet. 5:8)—but so are the righteous (Prov. 28:1). The newborn babe analogy is used to refer to the newly converted, but Christ Himself used it when referring to His own imminent RESURRECTION TO SPIRIT LIFE.

Notice: “A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow because her hour has come; but as soon as she has given BIRTH to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been BORN into the world. Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you” (John 16:21-22, NKJV).

Understand. The reference to “newborn babes” is an analogy, and *only* an analogy. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines *analogy* as: “resemblance in some particulars between things otherwise unlike.”

The old *Webster’s Dictionary* defines it as: “likeness between two things...consisting in the resemblance not of the things themselves, but of two or more attributes, circumstances or effects.”

I Peter 2:1-2 unnecessarily confuses some readers, causing them to throw aside every previous verse explaining when rebirth occurs.

But it is obvious that Peter is not saying that Christians *are* babies, rather that they grow *like* or *as* babies grow through drinking nourishing milk. Recall II Peter 3:18, which also exhorts Christians to “grow in grace and knowledge.”

Like babies nourished in the womb, Christians grow *toward* birth!

### Examining the Greek

The New Testament was originally written in Greek. All other Bibles of whatever language involve translation from this language. Each language presents certain problems in trying to render exact meaning as God intended. And not all languages are the same.

Let me illustrate. The English word *lead* can refer to the physical element, such as a *lead* pencil or a *lead* weight. It can also refer to taking charge, in verb form—to *lead* other people. It can even be a noun when speaking of one who “takes the *lead*.”

Another example would be the word *love* in English. The Greeks had three words (*agape*, *philia*, and *eros*) that can correctly be translated *love* in English. *Agape* means the love of God; *philia* means brotherly love; *eros* means romantic or erotic love.

Only by checking the context of words such as these can one discern the intended—the correct!—meaning of why the word is used. It has to be understood in relation to the overall topic of discussion, or confusion can result.

For example, the words *fetus* and *embryo* do not appear anywhere in the Bible. If God used these words, because there was a Greek equivalent that could be translated this way, it would make matters easier to understand when considering a Christian’s status in this life. Since God does not use these words (the Greek contains no similar words), He expects us to discern His intent by other means. He does not leave people to *guess* what His Word is saying.

Consider. All through the Bible, pregnancy is depicted by the expression “*with child*,” not “with fetus” or “with embryo.” (Abortionists, take note!)

This sets up our discussion of the Greek word *gennao* (the word Christ used when speaking to Nicodemus). *Gennao* can be translated either as “to beget” or “to be born.” Both are technically correct. We will learn why.

Let’s examine several different Greek-English dictionaries (lexicons) definitions:

*Strong’s*: “*gennao*: to procreate (prop. of the father, but by extension of the mother); fig. to regenerate: — bear, beget, be born, bring forth, conceive, be delivered of, gender, make, spring.”

*George Ricker Berry’s*: “*gennao*: to beget, give birth to, produce, effect; pass., to be begotten, born.”

*Young’s*: “*gennao*: to beget, bring forth.”

*Liddell and Scott’s*: “*gennao*: to beget, of the father; to bear, bring forth, of the mother; II, to generate, produce.” (Webster’s defines *generate*: “to beget; procreate.”)

*Thayer’s*: “*gennao*: 1. properly: of men begetting children. Matt. 1:1-16; Acts 7:8, 29; foll. by *ek* with gen. of the mother, Matt. 1:3, 5, 6; more rarely of women giving birth to children. Luke 1:13, 57; 23:29; John. 16:21, etc. 2. a. univ. to engender, cause to arise, excite...d. peculiarly in the Gospel and 1st Ep. of John, of God conferring upon men the nature and disposition of His sons, imparting to them spiritual life i.e. by His own holy power, prompting and persuading souls to put faith in Christ and live a new life consecrated to Himself.”

Eleven different Greek-English lexicons show that the word *gennao* can either refer to begettal by the father (*begotten*) or birth by the mother (*born*). We checked five more, not on this list, and found the same definition. *Gennao* can either be translated “born” or “begotten,” depending on context.

*Gennao* is actually found 97 times in the New Testament. Here is a breakdown of how it is variously translated: beget, 49; be born, 39; bear, 2; gender, 2; bring forth, 1; be delivered, 1; is born, 1; been born, 1; was born, 1.

It has been said that the English language is the best language for an author to use because it has an extremely large number of words, which carry very subtle differences in meaning and nuance of meaning. The vast majority of people read the Bible in English. It is our responsibility to primarily make its meaning clear in this language, before translating to others.

While the Greeks had one word that encompassed the entire *process* from begettal to birth, English carries two different words. One, BEGETTAL, starts the process—another, BORN, depicts its completion. It is natural for English-speaking people to think of conception and begettal as having happened, without yet having a birth. This would be foreign to a Greek-speaking person of 2,000 years ago. He would think of begettal as the *primary* meaning, with the entire rest of the process, that culminated in the birth, as the *secondary* meaning. Those who speak English talk of one’s birthdate as when he separated from the womb. This would carry a different meaning for one who spoke Greek, because he would see the birth as part of a nine-month *process* from begettal, but would still have only the word *gennao* to represent *all* of the process.

The Bible simply does not use different words to distinguish between *born* and *unborn* children. The Greek word (*brephos*) translated “babe” in Luke 1:41—“the babe leaped in her womb”—is the same Greek word translated

“infants” in Luke 18:16—“then they also brought infants to him that He might touch them.”

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word (*ben*) translated “children” in Genesis 25:22—“the children struggled together *within her*”—is the same Hebrew word translated “son” in Exodus 2:10—“and the child [Moses] grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh’s daughter.” In the first case, the children were unborn, and, in the second case, it was a young Moses growing up.

These scriptures reveal God’s mind and how He views an unborn child (embryo or fetus) as a human being. In other words, when referring to children in the womb (begotten) or out of the womb (born), God makes no distinction. All those who believe in the kind of mass murder politely referred to as *abortion* ought to heed what God’s Word reveals about *His* view!

It is important to understand, however, that *all* of the various scholars quoted here, and many others, put primary emphasis on *begettal* by the Father as the meaning of *gennao*.

After all, the words *genesis*, *gender*, *genitals* and *genealogy* all have to do with beginnings. Men understand this and thereby leave little doubt as to the proper emphasis on the meaning of *gennao*!

### Defining “Beget”

It would be helpful to briefly explain the English verb “beget,” or its adjective form, “begotten.”

*Webster’s Dictionary* definition of *beget* is: “1: to procreate, as the father: sire. 2: Cause.” Above, I quoted the definition from the *New English Dictionary of Historical Principles*: “begetting, the action or process of generating or producing...”

Numerous dictionaries offer a great many *synonyms* for this word. Webster’s defines a *synonym* as “one of two or more words or expressions of the same language that have the same or nearly the same meaning.”

Let’s examine several:

“*beget* 1. father, sire, procreate, generate, engender, get; breed, propagate, reproduce, spawn; impregnate, Biol. fecundate, Biol. fertilize” (J.I. Rodale, *The Synonym Finder*, p. 106).

“*conceive* 4. beget, procreate, father, sire; generate, engender, propagate, reproduce; become impregnated, become pregnant, become fertilized, come with child” (Ibid., pp. 206-207).

“*impregnate* 1. inseminate, make pregnant, get with child or young, SI. knock up; fertilize, fructify, make fruitful, fecundate; beget, create, procreate, engender, generate” (Ibid., p. 545).

“*engender* 2. beget, create, procreate, father, sire, sow the seeds of, conceive, give birth to; breed, propagate, reproduce, spawn” (Ibid., p. 353).

“*Beget*, *get*, and *sire* imply the procreating act of the male parent; usually ‘beget’ is preferred in reference to men and ‘get’ and ‘sire’ in reference to ani-

mals [he that begets a fool does it to his sorrow – Prov. 17:21] [a bull may be unable to get calves]” (*Webster’s New Dictionary of Synonyms*).

“*begotten* past part. of *beget*” *beget* 1. Obsolete a. To acquire b. To get (with child) 2. To procreate as father or sire; to generate” (*Webster’s New International Dictionary Second Edition*).

“*beget* 1 (obsolete): to acquire especially through effort 2a: to procreate as the father: SIRE b: to give birth to: BREED 3 (obsolete): to make a woman pregnant” (*Webster’s Third New International Dictionary*).

“*beget* 1. To acquire (usually by effort) – 1602. 2. To procreate, generate; occasionally said of both parents ME [Middle English]. b. GET (with child) – 1611. 3. Theologically applied to the relationship of the Father to the Son in the Trinity ME” (*Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*).

Here is the definition of “Reproduction, Procreation” from *Roget’s International Thesaurus, 4th Edit*: “169.10 Fertilize, fructify, fecundate, fecundify; impregnate, inseminate, spermatize; get with child or young; pollinate or pollinize, pollen; cross-fertilize, cross-pollinate or crosspollinize, cross-pollen.”

### Examining Different Passages

Let’s summarize what we have learned. English translators have sometimes been able to accurately discern the intended meaning in the Greek. Sometimes they have not.

We need to examine some correct and incorrect translations of certain verses. Before we do, understand what is at stake.

The Roman Catholic church believes that their church is the kingdom of God. The Protestants have generally accepted their assumption, but believed that the kingdom is primarily Protestantism. Others believe that the kingdom is something established “in men’s hearts.” All of these ideas reinforce the *assumption* that one can be “born again” *in this life*—and, therefore, “enter into” the kingdom *now*. Most of these problems have arisen because of improper translation of verses in which “born” should have been rendered “begotten.”

The following verses should be translated *begotten*, not *born*:

“Which were *born* [*begotten*; *American Revised Version* or *American Standard Version*], not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13).

The ARV correctly translates I John 2:29 as “everyone that does righteousness is *begotten* of him,” while the *King James Version* (or *Authorized Version*) incorrectly renders it “is born of him.”

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loves is *born* [*begotten*; ARV] of God, and knows God” (I John 4:7). The ARV correctly uses the word “begotten.”

“Whosoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is *born* [*begotten*; ARV] of God: and every one that loves Him that *begat* loves Him also that is *begotten*

of Him” (I John 5:1). This verse contains *gennao* three separate times. The first time it is incorrectly translated *born*, and the second and third times is properly translated *begat* and *is begotten*. The ARV has it correct.

“For whatsoever is *born* [*begotten*; ARV] of God overcomes the world” (I John 5:4).

Here are some examples of where *gennao* is *correctly* translated in the *King James Version*.

I Corinthians 4:15 states, “For though you have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have you not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have *begotten* you through the gospel.”

Hebrews 1:5 also contains another correctly rendered passage using *gennao*: “For unto which of the angels said he at any time, You are My Son, this day have I *begotten* you? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to Me a Son?”

### The Resurrection—Christ’s Second Birth

Romans 1:3-4 states of Christ, “Concerning *His Son* Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the *Son of God* with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, *by the resurrection from the dead*.”

Most have heard that Christ was the Son of God, but He was only “declared to be” the Son of God, in the fullest sense, “by the *resurrection from the dead*.” Certainly He was already the *begotten* Son of God prior to His birth into the kingdom at the time of His Resurrection. But He was only fully “declared to be Son of God” at the resurrection—*after* He was BORN! Grasp this!

Romans 1 shows that Christ was *physically born* of Mary, descending from David “according to the flesh,” and SPIRITUALLY BORN A Son of God “according to the Spirit...by the resurrection of the dead.” Plainly, Christ was born TWICE, once of Mary, and the second time as the “firstborn *from the dead*.”

By returning to Romans 8, we will better understand *why*. Recall what we learned about Christ’s second birth, and how other sons follow Him: “For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the *firstborn among many brethren*” (vs. 29).

The birth of a firstborn son does not preclude the birth of additional sons (and daughters) to the same family. I have two sons—only one could be firstborn—and am myself a firstborn son, having a younger brother. My father was a secondborn son, having an elder brother and so on. This should make the point clear.

Christ is merely the first *born again* Son of God. “Many brethren” (all true Christians) will join Him at His Return. This absolutely astonishing understanding is known to only the few called today (John 6:44, 65).

### To Inherit “ALL THINGS”

The book of Hebrews reveals God’s awesome purpose with crystal clarity. The context begins in Chapter 1. The picture that unfolds is truly awesome!

Examine the introduction to Hebrews: “God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His *Son*, whom He has appointed HEIR OF ALL THINGS, by whom also He made the worlds...For unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son, this day have I begotten you?” (vs. 1-2, 5).

These verses set the stage by revealing that God has made Christ “heir of all things.” But there are other things to be understood before continuing.

First, understand that God created angels to be “ministering spirits” to assist the “HEIRS of salvation” (vs. 14). This is their role within God’s Plan. While they are spirit beings, angels are not BORN sons of God. They are not offered membership in the FAMILY OF GOD.

This is why Satan (as a *fallen* angel) so hates the idea that puny, fleshly man can receive what he has never been offered, nor can ever achieve. Therefore, deceiving humanity about the real meaning of being “born again” is of paramount importance to him.

Paul quotes from two places in the Psalms: “For unto which of the angels said He at any time, you are My Son, this day have I begotten you? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to Me a Son?” God states that He has never said these things to an angel! (Heb. 1:5). (Hebrews 2:5 describes the earth under the “subjection of angels” now, but makes clear that these angels will not rule over “the world *to come*.”)

Paul then quotes from another Psalm, explaining what has always been God’s Purpose: “Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a *scepter* of righteousness is the *scepter* of Your kingdom” (1:8).

A scepter is a rod or staff used as a symbol of *rulership* or *authority*—and in His kingdom, God holds *all power*.

Finally, Paul re-frames the same question about angels: “But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool?” The answer—*none*! Why? “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to *minister* for them who shall be HEIRS of salvation?” (1:13-14).

This sets the stage for what we must understand! Let’s really grasp the future that God has prepared for His sons (and daughters).

This amazing series of verses continues in chapter 2—and builds in understanding and impact. Paul quotes Psalm 8:4-6. There, David asked the all-important question, “*What is man, that You are mindful of him?*” (Heb. 2:6). Since God is eternal, and sits over the entire universe, controlling all power, no wonder David asked, and Paul repeated, this question.

The astounding answer is in the next verse: “You made him [man] *a little lower* than the angels; You crowned him with glory and honor, *and did set him over the works of Your Hands*.”

Paul further explains that God plans to give immense power and *authority* to His Sons: “You have put ALL THINGS in subjection under his feet. For in that He put ALL in subjection under him, He left NOTHING that is not put under him. But now we see *not yet* ALL THINGS put under him” (vs. 8).

This has not *yet* happened—but soon will, at the Return of Christ.

When God says that “all things” will be put under the feet of man, this is what He means. The vast universe, with all of its quadrillions of stars and one trillion galaxies, will be put under the authority of men who have been born into the Family of God. In fact, the Moffatt translation renders the Greek word for “all things” as “the universe.”

This is staggering knowledge! Take time to truly grasp it. Savor what can be *your future*, if you choose to seek and obey God. It is the reason you exist—it explains why you were born! (Read our free book *The Awesome Potential of Man*.)

Take time to read the following verses. They remove all doubt about whether God is going to give ALL POWER to Christ and all of the other of the “many brethren” of whom Christ is firstborn.

“ALL THINGS are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knows the Son, but the Father; neither knows any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him” (Matt. 11:27).

“And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, ALL POWER is given unto Me in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18).

“The Father loves the Son, and has given ALL THINGS into His hand” (John 3:35).

“Jesus knowing that the Father had given ALL THINGS into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God” (John 13:3).

“ALL THINGS that the Father has are Mine” (John 16:15).

“For he has put ALL THINGS under his feet. But when He said ALL THINGS are put under him, it is manifest that He [the Father] is excepted, which did put ALL THINGS under Him. And when ALL THINGS shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him [the Father] that put ALL THINGS, that God may be all in all” (I Cor. 15:27-28).

This last verse mentions “ALL THINGS” *five separate times*. All of these verses together leave absolutely no room for misunderstanding. The final inheritance of God’s future sons will be truly staggering!

### The Whole Creation Groans Waiting

Before continuing, consider an important verse about another related aspect of salvation few understand. We have seen that Christians await a truly awesome

salvation. But the *whole* creation also intensely awaits the appearance of many *new Sons* to be added to God’s Family.

Carefully read the following: “For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for *the creation* [all things in the known universe] was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of Him who subjected it in hope; because *the creation itself will be set free* from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the CHILDREN OF GOD. We know that the *whole creation* [everything] has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only *the creation*, but we ourselves [Christians], who have the *firstfruits* of the Spirit [the FEW now called], groan inwardly as we wait for [*birth*] as SONS” (Rom. 8:19-23, RSV).

All future “children of God” will liberate a creation now in bondage. A decayed and wounded earth, moon and stars will soon be renewed and returned to a state of beauty, harmony and tranquility under the leadership of Christ and God’s other children. This is part of *your* calling.

Continuing in Hebrews 2, notice that Christ “is not ashamed to call them *brethren* [the other many sons—US]” (vs. 11). Truly, the begotten Christian has been called to “glory” and to be one of “many sons.” Christ’s suffering and sacrifice allow Him to be the “Captain of *their* salvation”—and potentially *yours*.

What an incredible future for those whom Christ “calls...brethren.” Notice again: “For both He that *sanctifies* [Christ] and they who are *sanctified* [begotten Christians] are all of one: for which cause He is *not ashamed to call them brethren*” (vs. 11).

There will be no difference between Christ and His younger brothers and sisters, except that He will have greater authority.

Do you see what is described here? The Christian goal is to be born into the kingdom of God—to become a SPIRIT BEING ruling with Christ. What could be more *wonderful*—more GLORIOUS—to look forward to?

The cherished traditions and fables of men, about life after death, or about anything else, have absolutely no worth, and this includes the fiction that deceived millions believe of a supposed “born again experience” in this life. The truth of the Bible is the only knowledge of permanent worth. Christians, having come out of a deceived, confused world, are set apart from the world by the TRUTH (John 17:17).

If Christ is “not ashamed to call them (us) brethren,” then we, God’s begotten sons, must not be ashamed to defend the very truth that sanctifies us—and the truth of the gospel (Phil. 1:17). We must “grow up” unto Christ (Eph. 4:13) and hold to the true doctrines of God. We must *qualify* to stand beside Christ over “all things.” We must understand the truth about being BORN AGAIN!

### Christ the *Only* Begotten Son—How?

A number of Old Testament servants of God had His Spirit before it was given to the New Testament Church. It was only by God’s Spirit that the Old

Testament prophets recorded the Scriptures: “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were *moved by the Holy Spirit*” (II Pet. 1:21).

Also, King David had God’s Spirit. After his adultery with Bathsheba, he poured out his heart in prayer asking God for forgiveness, and that he could continue to have the Holy Spirit within him: “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence; and *take not Your Holy Spirit* from me. Restore unto me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with your *free Spirit*” (Psa. 51:10-12).

These verses are quite clear. And we could cite numerous others to demonstrate that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will enter the kingdom. God’s Spirit was certainly dwelling in these men, but they were not—and are not—yet BORN into the kingdom.

Numerous judges and pre-flood preachers, along with many other prophets, were begotten of God exactly as Christians are today. But they have also not yet “entered into” (John 3:5) the kingdom.

This question then arises: If these men were also begotten of the Holy Spirit, how could Christ be called “the *only* begotten Son of God”? The answer is quite simple. Christ was the only person begotten by the Father in heaven *directly* in a human womb. No other person has ever been born of a virgin with God as Father. In *this* sense, Christ was the only begotten Son of God.

Hebrews 11:39-40 proves that the prophets and patriarchs are still awaiting their birth into the kingdom: “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received *not* the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they *without us* should not be made perfect.”

The patriarchs are awaiting “*us*” (potentially including you)—to become “perfect,” *born again*, divine spirit beings in the Family of God.

### Those Begotten Strive Not to Sin

The Bible is filled with many accounts of God’s greatest servants battling to overcome sin. In nearly every case, they had to learn difficult and sometimes painful lessons.

When examined collectively, Moses, Noah, David, Samuel, Peter and others fought every kind of problem known to man. Those begotten of God can still sin—and can, as seen, even commit the unpardonable sin, leading to an abortion—a *miscarriage*—and loss of eternal life. (Read our free booklet *Just What Is “The Unpardonable Sin”*? to understand when and how one may commit this sin.) Suffice to say, Christians can sin. Those born of God *cannot*.

John says that Christians sometimes sin. The begotten *can* slip up and temporarily get off track into sin. Here is how he expressed it: “If we [Christians] say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us [Christians]. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have



not sinned, we make him a liar, and His word is not in us...And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (I John 1:8-2:1).

This passage is most plain. The last verse (2:1) explains that Christ is our advocate—our High Priest (Heb. 4:15)—to whom we may go in time of need for forgiveness.

Paul represents a classic individual example of how one of God’s great servants fought to overcome sin. At the end of his life, he was able to say that he had “fought the good fight” and that he had “run his course” knowing that a “crown” awaited him. But this did not happen without much effort to defeat, through war, the human nature that he strove to overcome.

Carefully read Romans 7:14-23. It will educate and encourage you that you are not alone on your path to overcoming *Satan*, *society* and *self*—all of which lead to *sin*!

Paul said, “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal [physical, made of flesh], sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: *for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I*” (vs. 14-15). He continued, “for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would [do] I do not: but the evil which I would not [do], that I do” (vs. 18-19).

It was as though whatever Paul did or did not want to do, his human nature, his flesh, caused him to do exactly the opposite! *Why?* God inspired him to record the answer for us: “I find then a *law*, that, when I would [try to] do good, evil is present with me...But I see *another law* in my members, *warring* against the *law of my mind*, and bringing me into captivity to the *law of sin*” (vs. 21, 23).

Paul went on to add that only through the power of Christ’s mind in him was he able to overcome and obtain final victory to keep God’s law, rather than obeying sin. Only in this way could Paul later say that he had “fought the good fight” and had “run his course” to victory.

Understand that *Christianity is an all-out war!* But Christians should expect to win, as long as they remain close to God to obtain strength for overcoming.

God looks on the intent of your heart. It is your overall desire and motivation that is important to Him. He wants to know if, after you sin, you are sorry for it and are determined to strive to do better.

Hebrews 4:15 states that Christ “was in all points tempted like as we are.” Christ understands the temptations that beset us even better than we do. He watches to see if we will be sober and vigilant as we root sin out of our lives.

### Two Ways of Translating

In one passage a chapter later, in I John 3, *gennaō* is used and could possibly be translated correctly in two different ways. Let’s see.

God’s character will have already been perfected in those He “quickens” at the resurrection. At this time, they will no longer be able to sin: “Whosoever is BORN of God does *not commit sin*; for His seed remains in him: and he *cannot sin*, because he is BORN of God” (vs. 9).

This is a fascinating verse. It can literally be translated two different ways, both correct. Some translators render this verse as *begotten* instead of *born*, because they understand that Christians do not *practice* sin as a way of life. In other words, they do not *habitually* sin—they strive not to sin.

Now consider the second way to view this verse correctly. If one is BORN of God in the resurrection, then a very member of the God Family, he “cannot sin”—it is impossible! This is also true! This second explanation is almost certainly what God intended. Here is why.

Return to the beginning of the chapter and reread a verse examined earlier: “Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God...Beloved, NOW are we the sons of God, and it *does not yet appear what we shall be*: but we know that, when He shall appear, *we shall be like Him*; for we shall see Him *as He is*” (vs. 1-2).

As explained previously, a Christian is “now” a begotten “son of God.” Yet, in this life, it “does *not yet* appear what we shall be.” The Christian is *not yet* “like Him”—“as He is.”

The context in I John 3 is clearly talking about sons of God who are *not yet* born. By verse 9, it is apparent that what is being described is how Christians will be “like Him” at the resurrection.

In other sections, we have already covered what it means to be like God—BORN AGAIN!

### When the Inheritance and When Born Again?

We repeat the question: *When* do Christians become inheritors—and no longer heirs? *When* is one truly BORN AGAIN?

Recall that Paul wrote, “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption” (I Cor. 15:50).

Fleshly human beings cannot enter the kingdom of God—the Family of God, ruling over the entire earth.

Christ told Nicodemus that, “Except a man be born again, he cannot SEE the kingdom of God.” When Nicodemus was confused, Christ said, “That which is born of the flesh IS flesh” and “that which is born of the Spirit IS spirit” (John 3:3-6).

God’s Word teaches that the dead in Christ are resurrected at His Return. Some will not believe this, preferring to believe the dead go to heaven after having been “born again” in this life, upon “professing” or “accepting” Jesus.

Paul explained: “Now if Christ be preached that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there

be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and *your faith is also vain.*”

This is God’s answer to all those who will not believe in the resurrection of the dead—in being BORN AGAIN. Paul continues explaining, “For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, *your faith is vain*; you are yet in your sins [understanding the resurrection becomes serious]. Then they also which are fallen *asleep* in Christ are perished” (I Cor. 15:12-14, 16-18).

There are few scriptures stronger than these. If there is no resurrection, then Christianity is a *vain religion*! So says God!

Only through Christ, the firstborn, can others be born later. Christ comes first, with others appearing later in their own order. But *when* does this happen? *When* are others “born again”? “For as in Adam all die, even so *in Christ* shall all be made alive. But every man *in his own order*: Christ the *firstfruits*; afterward they that are Christ’s *AT HIS COMING*” (vs. 22-23).

Christians are born again “at His Coming”—*not before!*

Now here is *what* happens at the resurrection: “Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall *not all sleep*, but we shall all be CHANGED, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump [the moment of Christ’s Return]; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal [body from human birth] must put on immortality [divine body at spirit birth]” (vs. 51-53).

The flesh is changed to spirit only at the resurrection.

Let’s examine one more important verse from Paul to remove all doubt about *when* it occurs and *what* happens when it does: “But I would not have you to be *ignorant*, brethren, concerning them which are *asleep.*” Most *are* ignorant about the resurrection—and them that are asleep—but they need not be. Now notice why Paul taught what he did: “that you sorrow not, even as others which have no *hope*” (I Thes. 4:13).

Many *are* now “asleep in Christ.” They are sleeping in the grave, awaiting the resurrection and rebirth. Christians hope to be resurrected.

Here is exactly when the resurrection occurs: “For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the TRUMP OF GOD: and the *dead in Christ* shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (vs. 16-17).

In John 14:3, Christ said, “I will come again.” Isaiah wrote, “Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him: behold, His reward is with Him” (40:10).

At that time, Daniel said, “many of them that *sleep* in the dust of the earth shall *awake* [from sleep]...to everlasting life” (12:2). The knowledge that the dead are asleep in the grave has been understood since long before the New Testament era.

### Gospel of Kingdom Preached at the End

Christ taught the gospel of the kingdom of God. As with the truth of salvation, and being born again, the ministers of this world have created a substitute gospel about the *Person* of Jesus. But the truth is that Christ announced that a wonderful, world-ruling government would come to earth. It would be preceded by a time of terrible world trouble and confusion—our time NOW! The saints would receive their inheritance at His Return and the establishing of His government.

Christ’s disciples asked Him what would be the SIGN of His Coming and the end of the age (Matt. 24:3). He warned them of deception from many who would come “in His Name,” saying that “Christ is Christ” (vs. 5). He explained that they would put an emphasis on Christ’s *Person* instead of His *message*. But He also foretold that “this gospel OF THE KINGDOM shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the *end come*” (vs. 14).

Remember, if the kingdom of God had been preached through the centuries, from the time of Christ to the present, proclaiming it today could not be a *sign* that the world has reached the *end* of the age. Impostors and false leaders suppressed the preaching of the true gospel to the world until the 20th century. Starting in 1934, Herbert W. Armstrong began the fulfillment of this prophecy. It continues in these final days.

We are now in the time of the end. The Restored Church of God is continuing to preach *this* gospel. We are teaching people how to “see” and “enter into” the kingdom of God—we are teaching them how to be BORN AGAIN!

It is astonishing that the enormous amount of New Testament proof revealing the staggering truth about being born again is so ignored and misunderstood. Christ, Paul, Peter and John taught it over and over again, in marvelous clarity for those who will examine their PLAIN WORDS!

### Born at Resurrection

At the conclusion of Mr. Armstrong’s booklet *Just What Do You Mean – Born Again?*, he wrote the following, beginning under the subhead “Will You BELIEVE?”:

“Now will you believe what God says in the book of Hebrews?

“WHY should God be concerned about human beings? From a small airplane we look like little ants down here. From a jet 5 to 6 miles high, people on the ground have shrunken so small they can’t be seen. HOW TINY must we look to GOD? WHY should He have concern for us?

“The question is answered in Hebrews 2, beginning verse 6. God made man a little lower than angels, but, in God’s PURPOSE and PLAN, He has CROWNED man, as He first has Christ, with GLORY and HONOR.

“What is the GLORY with which Christ is now CROWNED? A crown denotes KINGSHIP—rule—authority—power. Jesus Christ said, just before ascending to heaven, that ALL POWER in the universe—in heaven and in earth—had been given to HIM.

“In Heb. 1:1-3, it is revealed that Christ now is the BRIGHTNESS of God’s GLORY!

“Yes, His eyes like flashing flames of fire—His face shining bright as the full-strength SUN.

“Christ’s GLORY is such that now He sustains, upholds, controls, every force, energy, and power that exists EVERYWHERE—supreme POWER over the universe!

“Now believe what God says about *US!*—Hebrews 2:10, ‘For it became him...in bringing MANY SONS UNTO *GLORY*, to make the captain [margin, Leader, or Predecessor, or Pioneer] of their salvation perfect through sufferings.’ And in verse 11 Jesus calls us His BROTHERS.

“Oh, what matchless, transcendent GLORY God purposes for us—*when* we are BORN AGAIN! Revelation 1:13-17 gives a graphic description of that future glory.

#### WHY Not Now?

“But, as we read in Heb. 2:8, we do not see YET all this GLORY having been inherited by any but CHRIST. WHY, then are we not YET *born*?

“Because, when we are, we are to be given such POWERS to guide, direct, and control, that we must first BE TRAINED and have the PERFECT SPIRITUAL CHARACTER developed in us so that we may safely be entrusted with such vast powers!

“God CREATED this universe. He is the REAL Supreme Ruler! He is not going to turn over that power to rule to any except those who will rule HIS WAY, who will OBEY HIM, *obey* HIS GOVERNMENT, and carry out HIS GOVERNMENT, UNDER HIM!

“So, it is ONLY those that are LED BY God’s Holy Spirit in HIS WAYS who are the SONS of God (Rom. 8:14). And we have to begin OVERCOMING our own self-natures, the wrong WAYS of this world which have become fixed HABIT, and the devil. We must ‘GROW in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’ (II Peter 3:18).

“Yes, even as the unborn, but begotten, human baby must GROW from its beginning size no larger than a pinpoint, fed on physical food, so once we are impregnated by GOD’S HOLY SPIRIT—His *LIFE*—WE MUST *GROW* SPIRITUALLY, fed on the SPIRITUAL FOOD of God’s Word the BIBLE, and by PRAYER, and what fellowship is possible with truly begotten BRETHREN in God’s TRUTH.

“And UNLESS we *do* continue to GROW in spiritual character development, more and more LIKE GOD, we become like the unborn babe that miscarries—or like an abortion! AND SUCH SHALL NEVER BE BORN OF GOD!

#### GLORIOUS WORLD TOMORROW

“What WONDERFUL, almost INCOMPREHENSIBLE, *GLORIOUS GOOD NEWS!*

And the BEST NEWS is, that the COMING OF CHRIST is now drawing VERY NEAR! Just a very few more years! And then—the PEACEFUL, HAPPY, GLORIOUS *WORLD TOMORROW!*

“All who NOW are *begotten* sons of God shall then be BORN—elevated from mortal to IMMORTAL, from decaying FLESH to SPIRIT—from HUMAN to DIVINE!

“And THAT *TRUE* BORN-AGAIN EXPERIENCE will be incomparably more GLORIOUS than the false, vague, meaningless, so-called ‘born-again experience’ that deceived THOUSANDS think they have had now.

“Can your mind grasp what an incredible, transcendent GLORY is the true potential of those who do BELIEVE, REPENT and OBEY?

“But, the scriptures that break before our eyes this GLORIOUS GOOD NEWS, also warn us to TAKE HEED, and to MAKE OUR CALLING AND ELECTION *SURE!*”

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