

What does it mean to be a born again Christian?

THE RESPONSE OF REBIRTH—[John 3:3](#)

[John 3:3 \(NASB\)](#)

³“Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Jesus’ response is not an answer to Nicodemus’ statement. He knows that Nicodemus is beating around the bush. Jesus knows what is really on his heart and gives him the answer to his heart’s desire. He speaks of the kingdom of God and being born again. The term “**born again**” has been butchered by Hollywood and politicians. President Carter popularized the term in politics when he ran for President. Being born again does not mean you are:

1. **Turning over a new leaf.**
2. **Quitting bad habits and cleaning up your life.**
3. **Becoming religious, doing good deeds, or going to church.**

The necessity of the new birth is vividly portrayed in the life of George Whitefield. At sixteen, he became deeply convicted of his sin. He tried everything to become acceptable to God. He wrote, “I fasted for 36 hours twice a week. I prayed formal prayers several time a day and almost starved myself to death during Lent, but only felt more miserable. Then by God’s grace I met Charles Wesley, who put a book in my hand that showed me from the Scriptures that I must be ‘**born again**’ or be eternally lost.” Finally, Whitefield understood that he had to trust in Jesus Christ. He believed and was both forgiven and changed. After he became a preacher, he spoke at least a thousand times on the subject, “**You must be born again.**”

Spurgeon told of a missionary who visited a primitive hut and became nauseated by the filthy floor on which he had to sit. He suggested to his host that they scrub the dirty surface with soap and water, but the man replied, “the floor is just clay—packed down and dry. Add water and it turns to mud. The more you try to wash it, the worse the mess becomes!” Yes, the hut needed something besides an earthen floor. So it is with the human heart: it is hard and dirty, and nothing will help it. Man needs a new heart. He must be born again from above! Have you ever had a spiritual birthday? Have you been born again?

What does “born again” mean? This phrase carries three meanings. It comes from the Greek word *anōthen* {*an'-o-then*}.

1. **It means “from the beginning, completely or radically.”**
2. **It also means “again for the second time.”**
3. **It means “from above, from God.”**

Pastor Leadership Sunday School

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All three are found in the phrase “born again.” To be born again is to undergo such a radical change that it is like a new birth. It is to have something which can be described as being born all over again. The whole act of the new birth is not a human achievement because change comes from the grace and power of God. It is a spiritual birth in a person that takes place when they trust Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

John 1:12 (NASB)

¹²“**But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name.**”

When translator Des Oatridge, working in Papua New Guinea, came to the words “**born again**” in John’s Gospel, he asked his native co-translator to think of a good way to express it. The man explained this custom: “Sometimes a person goes wrong and will not listen to anybody. We all get together in the village and place that person in the midst of us. The elders talk to him for a long time. ‘You have gone wrong!’ they say. ‘All your thoughts, intentions, and values are wrong. Now you have to become a baby again and start to relearn everything right.’” It was the answer Des was looking for. Today the words of [John 3:3](#) in Binumarien read “**No one can see the Kingdom of God unless he becomes like a baby again and relearns everything from God’s Word.**”

The idea of the new birth runs all throughout the New Testament.

1 Peter 1:3 (NASB)

³“**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.**”

1 Peter 1:23 (NASB)

²³“**For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God.**”

James 1:18 (NASB)

¹⁸“**In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.**”

1 Corinthians 3:1 (NASB)

¹“**And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ.**”