

# What Do You Call a Christian? – Born Again

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Scripture Reading: John 3:1-8

As we have already noted, words change meaning over the years. Sometimes they lose meaning through overuse. Sometimes they are mishandled, causing the true meanings to be corrupted or lost. The word “Christian” has been overused and mishandled over the years. It is the purpose of this study to regain its original and true meaning through the study of Biblical words and phrases.

**The next term in our study is “Born Again.”** The simple Greek word for “born” means “to beget;” “to generate” (create life); or “to be born.” This word, used with an adverb, or the use of a more complex Greek word describes one being “born again,” “born anew,” or “born from above.”

**The New Birth was a vital issue to Jesus as He spoke to Nicodemus,** who was a teacher and leader among the pharisees. See John 3:1-8.

**John 3:1-2** – Nicodemus was not ready to commit to a public endorsement of Jesus during the day. He is always referred to as the one *“who came to Jesus by night”* (John 7:50; 19:39). He wished to privately endorse Jesus as a good teacher and a worker of divine miracles, who was truly sent from God.

**John 3:3** – This was not acceptable. Jesus did not want compliments. Jesus told Nicodemus that his, or any person’s, greatest need is to be born again. The word *“see”* is not referring to sight with the eyes. Rather it is referring to sight with the mind. This teacher and leader of the Jews could not comprehend what the work of God on earth is unless he experienced a second birth.

**John 3:4 cp. 9-12** – Nicodemus proved Jesus’ point by showing that he totally did not understand what Jesus was talking about. His suggestion of a second physical birth, coming forth from his mother’s womb, was off course! Teachers today are also off course when they suggest that Jesus is, here, talking about baptism.

**John 3:5** – to *“be born of water and of the Spirit”*

**Not a reference to baptism!** Those who teach that we are saved by baptism, or by the sacraments of the church, often bring up baptism when the Bible mentions water. John 2:1-11 shows water being poured into six pots and then being turned into wine – a picture of internal transformation. John 4:10-15 shows Jesus offering eternal life as a superior kind of water to a woman who was only familiar with the normal water that she came to draw from a well.

John 7:37-39 shows Jesus offering His Spirit to those who thirsted. His Spirit would flow like rivers of water. None of these passages are a reference to baptism. When the Bible speaks of baptism, it is compared to a death, burial, and resurrection – not a birth (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12-13).

**Referring to the work of the Holy Spirit, through the Scriptures, to give eternal life—restoring that life which was lost when Adam sinned.** See Titus 3:5-7 (“regeneration” is equivalent to being born again cp. Ephesians 5:25-26 “washing of water by the word”); James 1:18; I Peter 1:22-23. Because of our sinful natures, we cannot reform or renovate ourselves to please God. The old self must die and a new creation, in Christ, must be born. That part of Adam that died when he sinned – the part that could know God and lovingly serve Him, is restored to us by God’s Spirit through the Gospel (I Corinthians 2:9-16)

**John 3:6-7** – Born of the flesh / Born of the Spirit – What is the difference? To be born the first time is to be only physical – a fleshly sinful person who is dead to the things of God and is unacceptable to God. To be born the second time is to receive a spiritual life and nature that makes you alive to God and acceptable to God.

**If you are born once, you will die twice. If you are born twice, you will die once.** See John 8:24; Revelation 20:11-15 cp. John 11:25-26; Revelation 2:11.

**John 3:8** – To describe the new birth as a sovereign work of God’s Spirit, and not the work of natural man, Jesus compares it to the blowing of the wind. Wind is unpredictable and uncontrollable. The Hebrew and Greek words for “Wind” are literally the same words translated “spirit” or “breath.” See John 1:12-13; 6:37-40, 44-45, 63; Matthew 11:25-27.

**The New Birth is a Divine Work.** It does not come by any efforts of man. Yet, this truth is meant to drive men towards God, that they might seek deliverance from being dead in trespasses and sins. Consider John 1:4-5,9-13; Ephesians 2:1-9 (KJV “quickened” = “to be made alive”); I Peter 1:2-5, 21-25 cp. Acts 2:39-40.

**The New Birth is the gift of a New Nature.** By the second birth, God makes us His child. Our spiritual birth brings us into God’s family. Therefore, we receive the moral and spiritual nature of our Heavenly Father. See Ephesians 2:4-5,8-10; II Corinthians 5:17; II Peter 1:2-4. There are distinguishable traits that give evidence that you have been born again. See examples in I John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4-5,18. **Are you born again?**