

“Born Again” or “Begotten From Above”?

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INTRODUCTION.

If ever there was a need to put aside pre-conceived ideas and teachings, there is great need to do so in the present use of the expression “*born again*“. There is a common conception and presentation throughout the Christian world that is an absolutely false and misleading error. The basis of the expression is found in the book of John.

John 3:3-5 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto ye except a man be **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, 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, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

In most translations, the words “*born again*” have been carried on in a traditional manner, suggesting that a second “birth” is necessary to enter the Kingdom of God. Many Bibles, in their margins, will have “from above” showing this is what the original manuscripts have. When we look into the words actually spoken, we find that it was Nicodemus who made the suggestion about entering a second time into his mother’s womb. This was the interpretation that Nicodemus put on Jesus’ words, but Jesus did not say anything about a second time even if the translations make Him appear to say He did. **JESUS DID NOT USE THE WORD “AGAIN”!** There is no manuscript at all that says Jesus used the word “again”. The word *deuteros* that Nicodemus spoke appears in the New Testament 44 times, and it always means twice, again, etc. Jesus did not use this word *deuteros*; Jesus used the word *anochen*.

Strong G509 <i>anochen</i>	Includes from above, or <u>from the first</u> .
Thayer <i>anochen</i>	Used of things that come from heaven [from God], or from a higher [upper] place, or from the very first, or <u>from the origin</u> .

Knowing this one word difference helps understanding and shows up the problems there are with the popular concept. Jesus confirmed to Nicodemus that He was not speaking of a second birth when He told Nicodemus that He was referring to being born of water and of Spirit. Jesus did not use the future tense, as did Nicodemus. Jesus was speaking of something that existed at the time of speaking. The Christian Church has picked up the words Nicodemus spoke, rather than the words of Jesus. Jesus chided Nicodemus for not knowing *these things* [v10]. Likewise today, our teachers need chiding for the same reason of not knowing *these things*. Jesus went on to say that not every person is begotten from physical birth *of the Spirit*, noting that, that which is *of flesh* is of the flesh, being born that way at physical birth.

“AGAIN”

The word *anochen* that Jesus uses appears 14 times in the New Testament and it does not have a meaning similar to *deuteros* (second time) or *pallin* (again), the latter being the word most commonly translated as “again”. The adverb *anochen* always relates to place and is used of past or former time, but never the future time. In order to discuss the word *anochen*, let us consider examples of how the word has been translated.

<i>Matt 27:51 and Mark 15:38</i>	<i>the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom;</i>
<i>Luke 1:3</i>	<i>having had perfect understanding all things from the very first.</i>
<i>John 3:31</i>	<i>He that cometh from above is above all:</i>
<i>John 19:11</i>	<i>except it were given thee from above:</i>

John 19:23 now the coat was without seam, woven **from the top**
 throughout.

Acts 26:5 Which knew me **from the beginning**,
 James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is **from above**.
 James 3:17 But the wisdom that is **from above**

None of these indicate “again” in any sense.

“BORN”

Begetting and birth are two vastly different events. Begetting as used of men is the action and process of conception, for example, *Abraham begat Isaac* [Matt 1:16]. Birth as used of woman, is movement from one environment to another, for example, *Mary of whom Jesus was born* [Matt 1-16]. This word *gennaō* varies with the context and it may have an abstract meaning also where it is used of figurative father-child relationships [1 Cor 4:15].

This word “born” in John 3:3-5 is *gennaō* and it is found 98 times in the New Testament. The sense usually has connection with procreation; the most prominent meaning being *beget* or *begotten*. We must thus now determine the time when this begetting takes place. All modern teachers insist that people already born can be re-born in the future. But when used of a male, *begotten* is usually about the time of conception; when *born* is used of a female it is usually about physical birth.

Thayer *It is of mankind begetting children.*
 Vine *Chiefly used of men begetting children.*

If we want to understand its use in John 3:3-5, it is necessary to look at the Greek which does not indicate future tense here. Modern theology or teaching likes to use the words in the future tense [from tradition], but this is a total error. We have been taught so wrongly to use the words, *except a man be born again* in the future tense that it is hard for many to think otherwise. But “*be born*” is indefinite with respect to time. Jesus taught exactly what is taught through the Old Testament, namely that God’s race is born from an original sowing.

“BORN OF WATER AND OF SPIRIT”

This is not only an interesting subject; but John 3:5 [*Except a man be born of water and of the spirit*] is a key verse. Because of the “and” we see there are two requirements for perceiving the Kingdom of God: *water* as well as *spirit*. What is believed here determines which gospel is believed. We have the choice to believe that any man of any race can *see the kingdom of God* or we can believe the limitation that Jesus presents:

The word for water is *hudor* and it is used of water of all sorts. On its own it means nothing but water! Some religious so-called experts argue that the expression refers to baptism, but this cannot be so because the thief on the cross [stake] went to paradise without being baptised. So we have to look further.

A person is *begotten of water* as part of the natural process following biological conception, but Jesus added the words, *and of the Spirit*. This makes it clear that the ability to comprehend the Kingdom of God is included at the time of conception. To determine what this is about, we must of necessity go back to the Old Testament to see who and what was begotten of the Spirit. We can anticipate that the Old Testament will agree with the New Testament.

WHO DID GOD BEGET?

Exodus 4:22 *Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn.*

Statements like this immediately exclude all the other races and potentially, those before Jacob. So, there is no need to go further back in the Bible, apart from noting that both Abraham and Sarah were from the Adamic seed. They could not have been from the pre-Adamic or other

later seed-lines. When God separated Abram and Sara He regenerated their ability to conceive a child and commemorated the event by changing their names adding the fifth letter of the Hebrew alphabet into their names - Abraham and Sarah. This number is connected with the Spirit of God! The life in Sarah's womb was spirit-endowed. Now, consider these questions:

1. If Israel was God's firstborn son, then who are their offspring?
2. For Israel to be the son, then who is Israel's father? Is it not God?
3. Does not Israel originate from God if Israel is His son?

Nowhere in the Bible can we find any suggestion of the humanist brotherhood of all men. God is expressed as being the "Father of Israel" only. He is the father of *all men OF ISRAEL*, not all men of all races.

Jesus taught His disciples [all Israelites only] to pray saying, *our Father which art in heaven*. This is better translated *our Father, the One in heaven*. Neither God nor man can be called a father until they have begotten offspring. There is no suggestion of a spiritual birth later in life. God states that He is a Father in Exodus 4:22; therefore He begat offspring and is the father of all descendants from Israel. The Apostle Peter declares that we [Israelites to whom he was writing] are *begotten from above, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God*.

It must be immediately pointed out that, in this verse, the incorruptible seed of God [the Father] is *sporas* rather than *sperma*. The meaning of this word *sporas* is *the sowing back in the past*, or *sown seed* and refers to the firstborn, Isaac conceived in Sarah's womb, after God had regenerated Sarah's and Abraham's ability to conceive a child. It is now an appropriate place to look at Sarah and Abraham, who are shown to be the place [or origin], being that originating rock or quarry and the pit.

ABRAHAM AND SARAH – THE ORIGIN

Isaiah 51:1,2 Harken unto me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him.

It is not necessary here to establish all the reasons as to why God needed to make a new start with Abraham and Sarah. We have to accept that He did call Abraham alone. From this beginning, God made promises to Abraham that were to follow on to Abraham's seed (*zera*). Only those born from this new beginning could comprehend the Kingdom of God. This beginning was from God because God had regenerated Abraham and Sarah enabling them to bear one child. In this way Isaac was born because of God's action.

From Adam to Abraham, Adam's pure line contained the breath of life [see Job], so where did the people come from who did not have the breath of life? These men and women originated from Genesis 1. Through misgenerative activity –[i.e.race mixing]-, racial pollution was introduced to the bloodstream of the sons of Adam, and we find that God sought to eliminate the products of such activity. Noah was "*pure in his generations*" [Gen 6:9], and so he and his unmixed family were preserved. Later, the Children of Israel were to destroy the mixed breed of the Canaanites. These could not receive the things of the Spirit of God. They could not witness in their spirit and say, *the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God* [Rom 8:16], as an Israelite is able to do. This principle is a continuing theme in the Bible.

Through Abraham and Sarah, God established the basis for Abraham's seed to become the Sons of God [John 1:12]. God was making a new beginning with Abraham. None other than the seed of Abraham, through the son of promise, Isaac, has this opportunity or potential. Abraham's seven other sons did not have this potential - because they were born prior to Isaac. The descendants of Isaac were begotten of the Spirit from their conception. This is why those among

Isaac's descendants who believe are regarded as being anointed by the Spirit [Gal 3:16]. Paul is able to declare, *now He which stablishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us is God who has also sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts* [2 Cor. 1:21,22]. In 1 Cor 2:7-16 Paul, confirming this, tells the brethren [kinsmen of the same womb of Sarah] that they have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God [v12]. He says that through this we might know [or comprehend] the things that are freely given to us, [the brethren], of God. He goes on to further declare that the "natural" man [those not born of Isaac's line] cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God. He affirms Jesus' statement that anyone who is not begotten of the original sowing [in the womb of Sarah] cannot see the Kingdom of God.

1 John 2:27 But the anointing which you have received abideth in you,

1 John 3:9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit [practice] sin, for his seed remaineth in him:

1 John 5:18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not;

There is this relationship between the "anointing", the right "seed", and being begotten of God.

"FORMED FROM THE WOMB".

Isaiah 44:2 Thus saith the Lord [Jehovah] that made thee [Israel], and formed thee from the womb,

In what way would Israel be formed in the womb? Whose womb? The word *beten* means what we mean today by *the womb*. Men do not have a womb; Abraham did not have a womb, but Sarah did.

In Isaiah 51:1,2 as quoted above, speaking of Sarah, we find the womb described as *the hole of the pit*. This metaphor is a term that extends to the mountain from which the Stone Kingdom is taken. This is God's mine. James who was writing to the twelve tribes said, *OF HIS OWN WILL BEGAT HE US [ISRAELITES] WITH THE WORD OF TRUTH* [James 1:18]. *Begat*, as has been shown, is chiefly about conception, not physical birth.

Isaiah 43:1 But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, ...

This verse indicates a difference between *Israel* and *Jacob*. Here we have the one being *created*, and the other being *formed*. So there are differences associated with the use of these words in different contexts.

Isaiah 44:24 Thus saith the Lord, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; ...

Here again, the Lord is speaking to Israel only. Nowhere in Scripture can we find reference to the Lord being the redeemer of any other people apart from those of Israel who are *formed from the womb*. In the New Testament we still find reference to the womb of Sarah. Therefore it is as important as ever in the New Testament, as well as in the Old Testament.

Rom 4:19 And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither the deadness of Sara's womb: ...

Contained in the first verse of this chapter, we see, *Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh*. The *father of us all* [that is, Israelites] of verse 16 is Abraham *after the flesh*. This still is not a spiritual rebirth. Remember that Paul was writing to the House of Israel to whom he was sent.

Nicodemus, as a master or teacher in Israel, should have known these things, Jesus told him so, in no uncertain terms. Teachers today likewise do not know these things. The womb of Sarah and the offspring from that womb have been spiritualised away! The common New

Testament word “brethren”, as has been shown, is *kinsmen of the womb*. What other womb would this be other than the womb of Sarah?

“HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN” “BORN OF GOD”

John 1:11,12 *He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the power to become the sons of God.*

Quoting R.K. and R.N. Phillips in *The only begotten God*,

*Verse 11 is almost completely misunderstood by the whole of Christendom today and the AV translation is the main cause of this misunderstanding ... The word own appears twice in the verse – but in the first clause it is neuter gender while in the second it is masculine. Therefore John is referring to two **different** things.*

*The first clause states that Jesus came to His own possessions [neuter gender] – His land, His Kingdom, His city, His temple. In the second clause the term His Own is the Greek term oi idios [masculine gender] which means, literally, the members of one’s own household. In this case it refers only to those who had authority over His Kingdom, city and Temple. (The vast majority of Israel were scattered abroad in the Dispersion and, at that time, were still classed as **not my people**.) Before we can complete the translation of verse 11, we have to look at the beginning of verse 12.*

*The Greek text of verse 12 begins but to those who did receive Him. In this clause and the last clause of verse 11, we have another instance of the AV translating two different Greek words as one English word – in this case, received. The last clause of verse 11 states, in effect, that those who were ruling over His possessions neither **received nor accepted Him** [as the owner]. It points to outright rejection, not through ignorance [which is covered by the phrase does not recognise Him in verse 10], but by wilful refusal to accept Him as the rightful owner. However, in the first sentence of verse 12 the word received has the meaning of to welcome or to accept willingly. Hence, while the **Judean** Nation rejected Him at a national level, there were individuals in that Nation who did both recognise and receive Him gladly. Verses 11 and 12 read in the Greek text:*

v11 *He comes unto his own [possessions] but The people [ruling over His possessions] refuse to accept Him [as the rightful owner].*

v12 *But to those who welcome Him, to The ones believing in His name, to them He gives authority to [make themselves] become [because of their beliefs] children of God [again].*

They were not everyone on earth who was born of bloods [plural in Greek] or by the will of the flesh [John 1:10-13]. Jesus came to His household who were born by the will of God.

Thayer’s Lexicon *Household is used as stock, race, descendants of one.*

Phillips and Phillips again points out:

*The phrase translated the sons of God in verse 12 of the AV is quite wrong. The Greek phrase is tekna theou which means children of God. Immature children, no doubt, but it does **not** mean sonship; for sonship points to growth and ultimate maturity. Nor does it have anything to do with the false doctrine of “adoption”. On the contrary, the phrase forcefully asserts:*

- a. *the natural genetic relationship of a child with its true father and, hence,*
- b. *those children of God are the biological descendants of God Himself.*

Note that John 1:13 states:

Which were born, not of blood [plural], nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

To which Phillips and Phillips point out:

Verse 13 states that those who were given the right to become children of God [again] were those [begotten]:

- a. **not** out of bloods - *which is of ordinary human descent,*
- b. **nor** out of [the] will of the flesh - *which was Sarah’s demand to have children by Hagar and Keturah,*
- c. **nor** out of [the] will of a man - *which was Abraham’s desire for an heir,*
- d. **but out of God are begotten.**

The Greek verb begotten is plural in this verse and so cannot be limited to the birth of Jesus“.

Isaac was not born of Abraham’s will. Abraham was past that. Isaac was begotten by God’s will when He regenerated Abraham and Sarah’s ability to have a child and to give that child an **individually incorruptible spirit**. Isaac was thus begotten *from above*, as are Isaac’s descendants from the time of their conception. In this portion of John 1 we find the origin of those who can believe in Jesus. Also we find where they did not [and do not] come from! Jesus came only [alone] to those begotten from above by God. He is shown to be the Redeemer of only His Kinsmen.

A person does not exercise his will in determining where and of what race he should be begotten. The will factor of the person being born does not function in normal physical conception and birth. God determined what seed a person is from that person's father. God knows who are begotten of the Spirit from above. 2 Tim 2:19 says, "*God knows those that are His*". The word translated as "born" = *gennao* in the following Scriptures, is used in the genealogies and in all other places, as being begotten or conceived. It does not relate to some spiritual birth.

John 1:13 Which were born [begotten], not of blood ...

John 3:3 Except a man be born again ... [that is, begotten from above]

John 3:5 Except a man be born [begotten] of water and of Spirit ...

John 3:8 so is everyone who is born [begotten] of the Spirit ...

John 18:37 To this end was I born ... [referring to Jesus' physical birth from Mary]

Matt 2:1 When Jesus was born in Bethlehem ... [referring to His physical birth from Mary]

Spiritualise these references if we like, but we will be like Nicodemus, *not knowing these things*.

"REGENERATION".

In Scripture there is an expression that means "born again". This is *paligenesia* or *palin* (again) plus *genesis* (born). There are but two occurrences and this is how they have been translated:

Matt 19:28 Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ...

Titus 3:5 ... but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; ...

It is not appropriate to expand this new subject here, other than to again note the Tribes of Israel limitation.

WHAT IS BEING SAID?

Simply this, there is a great difference between "begotten" and "born". *Begetal* refers to conception where as *born* refers to physical birth. The Greek word, *gennao*, means conception or beget (when used of men) and physical birth (when used of women). Unless a person is begotten of the line that arises from the original sowing, the begetting of God, that person does not come to contain the ability to perceive the Kingdom of God. This is what Jesus said to Nicodemus!