

“Born Again” Christians

1. Key to the Kingdom: New Birth

- A. **Illus:** Mexical drug-lord recently died during extensive plastic surgery. Desperately wanted new identity.
- B. All men occasionally have this longing: despondent over mistakes, guilt, harm done to others, etc. We wish for fresh start, new identity.
- C. Nicodemus interviews Jesus: Jn 3:1-8.
 - 1. Born again (3:3); born of water/Spirit (3:5); born of Spirit (3:8). Jesus offers more than a new philosophy, moral code. He offers opportunity to start over, become a new person.
 - 2. This was novel, revolutionary to a Pharisaic Jew. He asks, “*How can a man be born when he is old ...*” (3:4)?
 - 3. Jesus replies that rebirth is engineered by the Holy Spirit and not fully understandable or explainable but its *visible results can be seen* (3:8, as with the wind).

2. Death to the Old

- A. **Illus:** In nature, death often occurs before life renewed - Jn 12:24-25. Seeds die, wildfires renew.
- B. Spiritual rebirth is more than ceremony, ritual or symbolism. It involves death that brings liberty from the past:
 - 1. **Death to “old man” of sin** - Rom 6:2-7: Died to sin (6:2); baptized into death (6:3); buried with Him through baptism into death (6:4); united in the likeness of His death (6:5); old man crucified with Him; body of sin done away; no longer slaves of sin (6:6); he who has **died has been freed** from sin (6:7).
 - a. Note the fundamental role of baptism in this process: not symbolic of what has already occurred but vitally connected to the benefits available through the sacrificial death of Jesus.
 - b. Compare with Jn 3:5 - “Born of **water** and Spirit ...”. This is not a human work of merit but compliance with conditions stipulated by the Holy Spirit.
 - c. This is why Paul, after three days of blindness, prayer and fasting was told to “*arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins ...*” (Ac 22:16).

2. **Death to worldly affection** - Rom 6:11-14: Reckon yourselves ... (6:11); do not let sin reign (6:12); do not present (6:13); sin shall not have dominion over you (6:14).

a. Death to past sins takes place in the mind of God. Further, it occurs at a certain point in time - our initial union with Christ.

b. Death to allegiance to sin takes place in the mind of the Christian. It is an ongoing process. *"I have been crucified to the world ..."* (Gal 6:14).

c. **Illus:** Man's affection for first wife: leaves her pictures/mementoes up; wears her ring; spritzes her perfume; goes to her favorite places, etc.

3. **Death to self-will** - Paul said, *"It is no longer I who live"* (Gal 2:20a); *no longer live for themselves ...*" (2 Cor 5:15).

C. The old man must die; in fact, he is dead already. But we can put him aside once for all and take on a new identity. Such turning away from sin and embracing of Jesus Christ is called **repentance**.

3. Life to the New

A. *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation ..."* (2 Cor 5:17). **Back to illus:** Plastic surgery only cosmetic, superficial change; still same *inside*. This transformation involves a renewed **mind** (Rom 12:2).

1. New relationship with God; accepted into God's family.

2. New moral standards; governed, guided by God's revealed word and will.

3. New objectives/goals. How one lives *this* life shaped by what he hopes to achieve in the next - Col 3:1-3.

B. How does such a change come about? Near-death experience? Direct vision, appearance of God? Mysterious "awakening" which cannot be explained?

1. 1 Pet 1:22-25 - Born again *"through the word of God."*

2. Jas 1:18, 22 - *"Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth ... receive with meekness the implanted word ..."*

C. Gal 2:20 - *"Christ lives in me ..."*. **Who lives in you?**