

“Born-Again Christian”

by Bill Crews

In the first century, according to the information supplied by the New Testament, if one was a Christian, he had been born again; and if one had been born again, he was a Christian.

But in modern times we are hearing the expression “born-again Christian.” It is redundant in that the same thing is being said twice. It is misleading in that it implies that some Christians have not been born again or that one may become a Christian in some other way than by being born again. It may leave the impression that to be born again is one thing and to become a Christian is another.

In the New Testament those who have been forgiven by God of their sins are likened to a “church” (from the Greek word **ekklesia**, which means “a called out people, an assembly, a gathering”), a family or household, a building, a body (compared to a human body), a bride, a temple, an army. The process or plan by which they were forgiven, or saved, is likened to a creation (they are called “a new creation”; each individual is called “a new creature”); likened to a crop (individuals are “plants” produced by the “seed” of God’s word, and they are to grow and bear fruit — **Matthew 13: 1-9, 18-23; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15**); likened to a death, burial and resurrection (**Romans 6:3-6; Colossians 2:12**); likened to a birth (what many refer to as “the new birth”).

In **John 3:3** Jesus announced to Nicodemus that unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus thought of a man repeating the process of his own physical birth and was puzzled (**verse 4**). Jesus explained that unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (**verse 5**). To be “born again” is to be “born of water and the Spirit”; to “see the kingdom of God” is to “enter the kingdom of God.” Jesus further explained that He spoke of a *spiritual* birth, not a *physical* birth, of a process involving the spirit or inward man. Using plain language rather than figurative, Jesus said to the apostles, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (**Mark 16:15-16**). One is begotten of the Spirit by hearing and believing His word, the gospel; one is born of water by being baptized. Such an one is saved, and a saved person is a Christian.

In the New Testament the process or plan by which the lost became Christians (**Acts 11:26; 14:21 and Matthew 28:19-20** show what that process is), and the process or plan by which the lost were born again are one and the same. To speak of “a born-again Christian” makes as much sense as to speak of “a believing Christian” (which implies that one can become “an unbelieving Christian”), or of “a child-of-God Christian” (which implies that one can become a Christian and not be a child of God), of “a new-creature Christian” (which implies that one can become a Christian and not be a new creature).

Yours for speaking as the Bible speaks, **Bill Crews**

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