

Just What Do You Mean ... "Born Again"?

"Praise the Lord, I'm BORN AGAIN!" Millions of those who have come forward at evangelistic campaigns, or answered altar call at revival have spoken those words. Former President Jimmy Carter, whose sister is a well-known evangelist, considers himself a "born-again" Christian, as do thousands of others in notable professions. Just what does it mean to be "born again"? What happens to you when "it" happens? What do you feel? How do you know? Are there any evidences of "being born again"? And what did Jesus teach about this? Was Paul "born again"? Must you be "born again" to be a Christian? If you are "born again," must you speak in "other tongues," and receive the "baptism of the Holy Ghost"? You will be surprised to see the plain teaching of your Bible on all these questions!

By Garner Ted Armstrong

Who hasn't, at one time or another in life, wanted to "turn over a new leaf"? Who among us has not desired to relive certain portions of our lives - to start over, to erase unpleasant experiences of the past?

We have all done it. We have all promised ourselves to "begin anew," to rid ourselves of bad habits; to commence new interests, projects or hobbies, and, sometimes we succeed, in part. New Year's resolutions, promises to mates and loved ones, personal vows and promises we make to ourselves - all of these illustrate the desire to "turn over a new leaf." And which person among us has not decided, with almost monotonous regularity, to "change our lifestyle"? We promise ourselves we will diet, exercise; we will eliminate certain foods and substances we suspect may be harming us, and we will get ourselves back in good physical condition.

Transcendent above all of these passing and temporary desires for change is the profound, religious and emotional experience which millions call "being born again."

What did they believe they were doing? What was the goal, the motive? Was it not to change their lives? Was it not to give themselves to Jesus Christ; acknowledging the fact that He is the Savior of the world; that He died for our sins, and that, when we acknowledge Him as the divine Son of God, our personal Savior, High Priest and soon coming King, calling upon Him for forgiveness of all of our evil deeds and sins of the past, He becomes our forgiving Savior?

What wife and mother has not been thrilled to the bottom of her soul upon seeing a husband and father who had been grievously afflicted with a drinking problem, perhaps abusing his wife and children, unable to hold a job, of a foul mouth and bad personal habits be moved to want to change all this - perhaps "going forward" at the altar call following a particularly inspiring sermon by a famous evangelist, and confidently feeling he has then been "born again"? To tens of thousands, the experience they call "being born again" is a very precious, deeply rewarding experience.

Repentance

Jesus preached about repentance. Matthew said, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 4:17).

Surely everyone understands the meaning of the word "repent"? Webster's New World Dictionary puts it this way, "(1) To feel sorry or self-reproachful for what one has done or failed to do; be conscience-stricken or contrite. (2) To feel such regret or dissatisfaction over some past action, intention, etc. as to change one's mind about. (3) To feel so contrite over one's sins as to change, or decide to change, one's ways; be penitent."

Continually, Jesus preached that those hearing His message should repent! Mark wrote, "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel!" (Mark 1:14, 15). He told His

listeners, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3, 5). when Jesus commissioned His disciples to go into all the world, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God as a witness and a warning, He reminded them that repentance and the forgiveness of sins was the primary focus of their message! It was the result that should be expected, in those cases where God was calling individuals to salvation, as a direct result of hearing the apostles preaching.

Read the description of the "great commission" Jesus Christ gave His apostles! "And [He] said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46, 47).

One of the most outstanding examples of how the apostles began to fulfill that great commission in their day - a great commission to God's Church which remains to be performed in our day - is found in the second chapter of Acts, when the apostle Peter, explaining about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ said, "Repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit!" (Acts 2:38).

Surely, you have known individuals in your experience who have tried to do this! Perhaps you, yourself, have gone through a religious experience when you felt you really repented of your sins - wanted to rid yourself of your guilty past, and accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior! But, perhaps the minister you heard, or the church you attend referred to your experience as "being born again," rather than "repentance."

Then why did Jesus speak of repentance so forcefully and continuously as being the experience one feels at the time of deep contrition over one's past? Why did He continually thunder at His audiences "REPENT ye, and believe the gospel"?

It may come as a shock to you - but literally millions of our fellow citizens have been brought to a frame of mind where they wanted to REPENT, and, insofar as they were able, they tried to do just that - but were not told by the evangelist to whom they listened HOW to do it! Instead, they were told that the "experience" of accepting Christ as Savior and the desire to rid oneself of feelings of guilt over past sins was "being born again"! Make no mistake! Jesus Christ or Nazareth said. "You must be born again!" But does "being born again" mean "repent"?

But how can this be? Notice what the Bible plainly says! "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren!" (Romans 8:29). Here, Jesus is called the firstborn among all those who are likewise to be born of God, even as He was. Was Jesus "born again"? Absolutely! The Bible plainly says He was! But does this make any sense? If "being born again" means repentance; if "being born again" means the experience one feels at a time of deep sorrow and contrition, and a desire to change one's life by receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and calling upon Him for the forgiveness of sins, then how could Jesus have possibly been born again? If "being born again" means forgiveness of sins and commencing life anew as a Christian, is the Bible trying to say that Jesus somehow was guilty of sin?

But Jesus never sinned! He lived a flawless, perfect life! Yet, the Bible says He was "born again"! Notice! "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept!" In Romans, the eighth chapter, the same writer, the apostle Paul, speaks of Jesus Christ as the "first born" among many brethren. Here, drawing upon the meaning of the day of Pentecost (called, in the Old Testament, the "feast of firstfruits!") Paul characterizes the risen Jesus Christ as "the firstfruits of them that slept." Read on. "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

"But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they are Christ's at His coming" (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). Notice carefully the context. This is the famous "resurrection chapter." I have said for over twenty-

eight years that, if a sincerely thirsting and hungering Christian person will merely read the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians slowly, carefully and meaningfully - without anyone attempting to "spiritualize away" or argue around what these beautiful words plainly tell us, he will come to understand more about the plan of God; about the state of the dead, and about the resurrection of the dead than is understood by thousands of ministers in the great and vaunted churches!

Jesus Christ of Nazareth is ALIVE! He was raised from the dead! (See Acts 2:24, 30, 32, 36; Acts 4:2; 4:10; Revelation 1:18.) when Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, He was once again, very God! Even though He had the power to manifest Himself in His human, physical form (as He did to the apostles on many occasions, even telling doubting Thomas to thrust his hand into His gaping wounds, in order to convince him of the fact that He was, indeed, alive!); even though He was able to appear inside locked doors, materializing miraculously from His spirit form into human form, Jesus Christ was SPIRIT!

The stone was not rolled away to let Jesus Christ out of the tomb, it was rolled away to let the world look in! The world saw, through the eyes of Peter, John, and then others, a tomb that was empty! The tomb had been emptied long before the stone was rolled away at the earthquake, when the keepers of the tomb were struck unconscious!

Notice how the apostle Paul explains the great change that takes place at the resurrection of the dead! "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up?" and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed His own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: . . . And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly" (1 Corinthians 15:35-38).

Notice that Jesus, referred to as the "last Adam" (verse 45) is stated to have been made a "quickenning SPIRIT"! After the resurrection of the dead, at which time Jesus was said to have been "born anew" or "born from above" He became, once again, SPIRIT! When the Bible says He was a "quickenning spirit," it means He has the power to make alive! Now, what about us?

Paul says, 'And as we have borne the image of the earthy [made in the image of our own physical parents], we shall also bear the image of the heavenly [finally be made in the spiritual image of our spiritual father!]. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God: neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:50-54).

Study those words carefully! Can you understand them? If you can, you are now being given understanding that is not possessed by literally tens of thousands of ministers, and simply is not taught in many of the most prestigious churches! Yet the Bible plainly says that the time of our great CHANGE from human to spirit; from corruptible fleshly life to incorruptible spirit life comes only "at the last trump" which is precisely at the time of the second coming of Christ!

But of course! Did not you already read it? Notice again verse 23. "But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits [He is the "firstborn" of many brethren!] AFTERWARD they that are Christ's AT HIS COMING!"

So the Bible characterizes the instant of the resurrection of the dead - a great, global, tumultuous event to occur precisely at the time of the second coming of Christ, as "being born again"!

Obviously, this is distinctly different from the moment of repentance, at which time, if we sincerely repent, are baptized, and received the laying on of hands for the Holy Spirit, we are begotten as children of God! It is as different as the two moments in your own life involving your birth! There was a moment when you did not exist! You were merely "potential" life, within the bodies of your two parents. Then, at the moment of conception, "YOU" began to be! A few seconds previously, and you were merely a "potential" human being! But, following the very instant of conception, YOU, just the way you are, with your thinking, reasoning mind; your height, shape, weight, general texture and coloring of skin, hair and eyes, were predetermined by the indelible stamp of your father and mother's own heredity, contained in the genes and chromosomes from their own bodies, gradually forming in the womb of your mother, until the time, approximately nine months later, when you were BORN!

The two events are obviously greatly different! Yet, they are closely related.

Believe it or not, this is a direct analogy to the process of repentance on the one hand, and being "born again" on the other! Could it be that millions of people who speak of "being born again" do not understand that what they really mean is that they believe they have repented, but are merely using incorrect terminology? Could it be that there is something far deeper, greater, more fabulously exciting and rewarding in their personal futures that they do not yet understand, because they have not known the whole truth on this vital subject?

After all, Jesus did tell Nicodemus "You must be born again!" Now, it is time to painstakingly study that most important part of scripture!

"Ye Must Be Born Again"

The first time in all history such strange words were ever uttered was when Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Nicodemus, an educated man, a Pharisee, and a member of the Sanhedrin, knew the Old Testament scriptures. However, what Jesus said to him was totally outside his experience, or his education. Never in his life had he heard such a strange saying. To Nicodemus, there was no such thing as people "speaking with tongues," or speaking about "being baptized by the Holy Ghost," or "being born again." Though such expressions are commonplace, particularly in the southeastern United States and in the colloquial phrases used by itinerant evangelists and others, you have to realize that the strange statement Jesus uttered was absolutely shocking, and brand-new to Nicodemus' startled ears!

Nicodemus knew Jesus used the word in Hebrew which meant "born." It was the same word Jesus would have used if He had spoken of a "newborn colt" or a "newborn baby." It was not a "different" word, connoting anything spiritual or extraphysical.

Therefore, Nicodemus answered exactly in kind. Since Jesus had spoken of birth, Nicodemus, completely mystified, retorted, "How can a man be born when he is OLD? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (John 3:4).

Now, let's pause a moment and ask ourselves, how would YOU have answered Nicodemus? Let's suppose you are one of the millions of people who believe you have been "born again." If so, how would you respond to Nicodemus' obvious puzzlement? Millions would probably tell Nicodemus he must "believe on Jesus Christ of Nazareth as personal Savior - call upon Him for the forgiveness of sins, and, upon receiving the Holy Spirit, he

must be "baptized" by the power of the "Holy Ghost"! Many, particularly those in the "charismatic" movements would go on to explain that there must be "evidence" of the baptism of the Holy Ghost by speaking in tongues!

You and I both know there are literally hundreds of "Pentecostal" preachers and ministers who would explain it that way!

But how did JESUS explain it?

Read it, in your own Bible!

"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 the 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. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto Him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3:5-13).

I have included here about half of the lengthy first-person quotation from Jesus Christ to Nicodemus, which includes the "favorite scripture" of millions, John 3:16!

But did you grasp it? Did you understand it?

We shall see.

Were You Born of the Flesh?

How well I remember a conversation I had with a very cultured, genteel, elderly lady more than twenty years ago on this same subject! I'm sure she has long since died. She must have been in her late seventies or early eighties at the time: the widow of a Protestant minister who had preached standard Protestant doctrine as taught by one of the mainstream fundamentalist churches for more than fifty years. Deeply entrenched in this elderly lady's mind was the commonplace understanding of the expression "born again."

However, she had heard several of my radio programs, or perhaps seen the telecast; she had read some of the literature, and, during a visit to our offices, asked me for an explanation.

I read Jesus' words from this passage very carefully, expounding every single word, and the meaning of each phrase. I explained. "Now then, Mrs. (I have long since forgotten her name, but shall call her Jones), you were born many years ago as a little baby, just as I was. My name is Armstrong. I am so named because my father and mother gave me life, by the process of begettal, and human birth. Today, as I am sitting here talking to you, it is obvious I am flesh"! I grasped one forearm with another, and explained to her that, if I nicked my face when I am shaving, I bleed. I explained that our human, physical and chemical existence is temporal, that we are sustained by the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the foods we eat. She and I both agreed that, as we sat there chatting about the scriptures, we were both HUMAN - both flesh!

"Fine," I said. "Jesus said, That which is born of the flesh is flesh! So far, so good. We are both fleshly, and we have both been born into this human life from our mother's womb, and we are FLESH!" "Now then," I said. "Jesus said, That which is born of the spirit IS SPIRIT." Looking at the lady, I said to her, "Now then, Mrs. Jones, it is obvious you are not yet spirit! That is, you have not yet been changed into a spirit being!" I explained how Jesus, after the resurrection, was able to materialize before the startled disciples, standing

suddenly before them inside a stone building with securely locked doors! I explained how the Bible says "God is a spirit," and how we read, in 1 Corinthians 15:50-52, that when we are changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump" we are to BECOME composed of spirit!

I explained the vast and fathomless difference between a fleshly, human being; a creature with the same bloodstream and fleshly, chemical existence as any rabbit, cow, chicken or horse -and the fabulous, ETERNAL existence of the spirit members of the family of God!

I went on to expound, even as did Jesus to Nicodemus "The wind blows wherever it wants to, and you can hear the sound of it, but you cannot tell where it comes from, or where it goes - so IS everyone that is born of the spirit" (John 3:8)!

After painstakingly explaining about how our physical eyes cannot see the molecules of air that surrounded us; how wind likened unto God's Holy Spirit in the Bible, can be so powerful that hurricanes and tornados can tear down buildings, hurl cars and trucks about like matchsticks, and pack a powerful punch, I explained, as thoroughly as I knew how, the vast DIFFERENCE between that which is fleshly, and that which is spirit!

Feeling I had finally gotten through to this very sweet, elderly lady's mind by carefully explaining exactly what Jesus meant, I finally asked, "Now then, Mrs. Jones, in the face of all this and what Jesus plainly said, have you yet been 'born of the spirit'?"

"Oh, yes! Praise the Lord!" she said.

I wish someone could have taken a picture of the look of dumbfounded amazement that must have transfixed my face at that moment. Never have I felt so inadequate.

You see, to this dear lady, the idea was so absolutely FIXED in her mind: having been set in her memory for more than fifty years, that she was only "half listening" to what I was saying! She simply did not get it - she didn't understand! Spiritually, she was BLIND!

But Nicodemus had not been subjected to fifty solid years of false teaching! Nicodemus, amazed, asked Jesus "How can these things be?" which resulted in Jesus saying, "If I have told you earthly things, and you believe not, how shall you believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" (John 3:12).

You see, Jesus Christ was speaking of a total change from flesh to spirit; from human to divine!

The apostle Paul explained it thoroughly in the famous "resurrection chapter" of 1 Corinthians 15.

Read it again, particularly noticing what Jesus said about the kind of body we shall have in the resurrection!

"It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness: it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit [a spirit being - capable of giving life!]. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment. in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality [something we do not now have!]. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall

be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Corinthians 15:35-54).

I have repeated here, for your careful perusal, one of the most important passages in all the Bible concerning the resurrection of the dead, and the meaning of "being born again"!

Can anything be plainer?

Just as I explained to the elderly lady, there is a kind of flesh that we human beings share with other air-breathing creatures! But our fleshly bodies are as different from spirit as the difference between the earth and the sun!

Paul said "So also is the resurrection of the dead!" He said that we are buried in the ground as "a natural body," but we are raised as a "spiritual body"!

He explained that the "last Adam" (meaning Jesus Christ) was "made a quickening spirit"! He went on to say that just as we are earthy, as our human physical parents were earthy, so shall we be "heavenly" as our heavenly Father is heavenly.

Now, can you understand verse 49? "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"!

Did not John say the same thing when he said, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: But we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2)?

No, elderly Mrs. Jones simply did not understand! Doubtless, she was a genteel, cultured and sincere lady. But, because of literally decades of false teaching, she was spiritually blind! She didn't know that she was spiritually blind - she thought she really understood! To her, the only response to my question "Have you been born again?" was her natural response "Oh yes, praise the Lord!"

She did not understand, just as millions of others do not understand that the experience which they CALL "being born again" is really the experience of repentance; and that Jesus Christ meant something far deeper, far greater, more profound - that He meant we are, eventually, to be BORN OF GOD by a resurrection just as He, Christ, was!

That's why He is called the "firstborn among many brethren," and the "firstfruits of them that slept"!

Jesus Christ was "born again"! That doesn't mean He had to "repent," for He lived a flawless, sinless and perfect life! But He did die for our sins, and He was resurrected! When He was resurrected, He was changed into SPIRIT!

He was no longer physical, fleshly. When He manifested Himself to the startled disciples behind closed doors, He was able to identify Himself as having the same "body" by the miraculous power of God, but He was also able to instantly disappear by transforming Himself into spiritual essence and simply disappearing from their sight INSTANTLY, even through solid stone walls!

Jesus used the analogy of wind as something which has power, which can set up a noise, and which yet is invisible. He said, "So is every one that is born of the spirit!"

Of course! When we are changed instantaneously at the final trump, at the moment of the arrival of Jesus Christ to this earth, whether we are living, or dead, we will instantly be changed INTO spirit!

We will then be born of God BY A RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD!

What a tragedy it is that, though millions have been led to the place where they wanted to "be born again," meaning they wanted to change their lives; to give themselves to God; to repent of their sins, and to receive Jesus Christ as personal Savior - they were able to go only PART WAY with that process for the simple reason that they were blindly following blind leaders who simply could not tell them the whole truth! And why not? Because those blind leaders did not KNOW the truth about repentance! They did not know what sin is! They did not know the real truth about water baptism and its deep symbolism; about the laying on of hands for the receiving of God's Holy Spirit; about the real meaning of being BORN AGAIN!

The Greek word for "born" is gennao. It means, according to the exhaustive concordances, "to bear, beget, be born, bring forth, conceive, be delivered of, gender, make, spring forth."

Notice that there is only one Greek word connoting both the words "to beget" (conceive), and "born."

Only by understanding the context can one determine which way the Greek word gennao should be translated into the English. Actually, Christians should speak of having been "begotten of the Holy Spirit," as a new child of God - but not yet BORN of God - if they knew what Jesus really meant by "Ye must be born again."

"Begotten, But Not Yet Born"

We all know what is meant by conception. It is the moment when a male sperm unites with the female egg in the womb, causing the beginning of a new human life.

At that precise moment, a moment which took place in all our lives, a completely new, totally individual human life has begun! The pattern in the genes is set; the sex is decided, and the general height, shape, skin color and texture, color of eyes and hair - all is set, predetermined by the combined hereditary traits of mother and father.

But the newly-begotten life is not yet BORN. Today, as millions fight against legal abortion, they point out that such a life, though conveniently called a "fetus" and not a "child" is a HUMAN LIFE!

The analogy between human begetting and birth and spiritual begetting and birth is clear.

God is the Architect of our bodies. It is He who "made them male and female" (Genesis 1:26, 27). God is the Great Designer of the human reproductive cycle.

Just as the Creator designed our human, physical bodies so they are capable of reproducing after their own kind, so is GOD REPRODUCING AFTER HIS OWN KIND!

He BEGETS US with the power of His Spirit! We then become a "new creature" in Christ - a "new creation." We are, in the innermost being, as enlivened by the begetting of God's Spirit, a NEW SPIRIT LIFE gradually being formed!

We are begotten, but not yet BORN!

Follow the logical analogy further: Just as the tiny human life, in embryonic form, must be nurtured and fed by the mother's body; just as it is protected in the womb, so must the newly-begotten Christian; the newly-begotten spiritual life be nurtured and fed in the body of the "mother," which is the spiritual organism called the Church!

Finally, after years of overcoming; of patience, faith, trials and tests; years of serving, sharing, giving - years of allowing God's ways to supplant OUR ways; of allowing our Heavenly Father, through the power of His Spirit to RULE our lives - we come to maturity; to the point of BIRTH into His own family!

That is why Christ is called the "Firstborn among many brethren"!

Finally, at the resurrection, or at the moment of His coming, if we are "alive and remain"

(1 Corinthians 15:50-52), we shall be CHANGED! We will then be BORN OF GOD by a CHANGE from human to spirit; from physical to spiritual; from a mortal being to an immortal being!

Then, and ONLY then, shall we be "BORN AGAIN"!

Finally, if you and I were sitting down to discuss the statement Jesus made to Nicodemus, and I painstakingly went through the same scriptures as I did with elderly Mrs. Jones, after explaining, carefully, each word Jesus spoke, and I asked YOU, "Now then, (substitute your name), have YOU been born again?" What would your answer be?

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