

What Does It Mean To Be BORN AGAIN?

Lesson 8

Who and What Is "God"?

To fully understand what it really means to be born again, it is necessary to first understand who and what God is, and the very PURPOSE for our existence.

Turn to the beginning of the Bible, the first words are: "In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). The original Hebrew word for "God," here and throughout the account of creation, is Elohim. It is the plural form of the Hebrew *Eloah*, which in English means "Mighty One." So Elohim means "Mighty Ones" more than one divine Personage. (Notice the plural pronouns and "our" in referring to "God" in Genesis 1:26,)

Thus we see that Elohim is a plural noun. In other words, Elohim stands for a SINGLE CLASS composed of MORE than one individual such as the words church, family, or kingdom. Just, as there is the animal kingdom and the human family or kingdom, Elohim, as used in the account, of creation, shows that there is also a GOD KINGDOM or FAMILY.

But who are the Individuals presently composing the God Family? Let's notice what the Bible reveals.

1. Who was with "God" when God created the universe? John 1:1. Is the "Word" also God? Verses 1-2. Was it the Word who actually created all things? Verse 3.

COMMENT: The Greek word translated into English as "Word" in John is *Logos*. it means "spokesman," or "one who speaks."

2. By whom was all the material universe created—including this earth and mankind? Heb. 1:12; Col. 1:16-17. Who, then, is the "Word" of John 1:1? John 1: 14; Eph. 3:9. And who is the other divine member of the God Family? I Cor. 8:6.

COMMENT: John 1:1-3 and Genesis are two accounts of the same event—the original creation of the universe. They both reveal that the two Supreme Beings of the God Family created all things. Together they planned the creation and the Word did the actual creating. Everything was created and made by the divine Being who later became the human Jesus Christ to die for the sins of mankind!

The "LORD" of the Old Testament

Do you know which of the two members of the God Family dealt directly with man in Old Testament times? Was it the "Father?" Could it possibly have been the Word, who became Jesus Christ?

Very few have understood this important truth. But the Bible makes it plain.

1. Has any human being ever seen the Father? John 1: 18.

2. But did people ever look upon the God of the Old Testament? Gen. 17:1; 18:1, 22; 32:30; Ex. 24:9-11; 33:18-23.

COMMENT: Notice in Exodus 33:18-23 that Moses had specifically requested to see the LORD in His "glory." But God prevented Moses from looking upon His glorified face lest he die from seeing His brilliance!

The verses cited in questions 1 and 2 clearly prove that the God of the Old Testament could not have been the "Father."

3. Who was called the "Rock" in Old Testament times? II Sam. 22:2-3. Did David call the LORD his "Rock" and his "God?" Ps. 18:1-2.

COMMENT: The King James Version of the Bible and several other translations use the word "LORD," usually in capital letters, to translate the Hebrew word YHWH. Most Biblical scholars believe YHWH to be some form of the verb "to be" or "to exist." Hence YHWH signifies "the self-existent One," One Who "lives" from eternity, and to eternity.

Revelation 1:8 clarifies the meaning of this name, speaking of Christ as "the beginning and the ending ... which is, and which was, and which is to come..." Both Moffatt's "the Eternal" and Fenton's "Ever Living" are excellent translations of the Hebrew YHWH.

In ancient Hebrew, the vowels were not written. They were supplied by the reader. Since the ancient Jews considered the name YHWH too holy to pronounce, instead of reading YHWH they substituted Adonai (meaning "Lord" or "Master") or occasionally Elohim.

When the Jewish textual scholars known as *Masoretes* added the vowels to the written Hebrew text about the seventh century A.D., they wrote the vowel points of Adonai or Elohim with each occurrence of YHWH to tell the oral reader to pronounce either Adonai or Elohim, whichever had been indicated. From the consonants YHWH and the vowels of Adonai came the hybrid form "Jehovah."

Thus the precise pronunciation of YHWH is unknown today. Obviously it is not necessary for us to know exactly how to pronounce it, or God would have made certain that the correct pronunciation be preserved. It is clear that the meaning of the Almighty's name is infinitely more important than its mere sound in Hebrew.

4. According to 1 Corinthians 10:4, who was (and is) the "Rock"?

COMMENT: Thus the Bible identifies the "Rock" the LORD of the Old Testament as Christ! How surprising to those who have assumed that the God of the Old Testament, was the "Father!"

And so the "LORD" who spoke to and was seen of men was the One who later became Jesus Christ. For no mortal man has ever seen the Father (John 1:18).

5. Was the One who became Christ also the One who spoke the Ten Commandments? Ex. 20:1-2.

COMMENT: The Hebrew word for "LORD" in Exodus 20 is YHWH. So it was the Logos, the "Spokesman," who later became Christ, who actually spoke the Ten Commandments!

But why is this understanding important for us today?

Understanding the true identity of the God of the Old Testament is vital to becoming reborn with the spiritual nature of God. For the God of the Old Testament, commonly believed to have been harsh and stern, was really our SAVIOR —loving, kind, merciful and just (Ex. 34:5-7).

The POWER of God

Most of traditional Christianity today believes that God is a "trinity" composed of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Could this possibly be true? Let's learn what the Bible reveals about the Spirit of God.

1. Is God's Spirit the POWER by which He creates? Jer. 32:17; Gen, 1:1-3; Ps. 104:30.

COMMENT: It was by the Spirit of God that the Eternal (YHWH)—the Logos (Christ)—created the entire vast universe. Invisible spirit energy was literally transformed into the material creation (Heb. 11:3). And it was by the power of His Spirit that God renewed the surface of the earth (Ps. 104:30).

2. Exactly how did the Eternal God utilize His Spirit of power to bring His various creations into being? Ps. 148:1-5. Notice the word "commanded" in verse 5. Also read Psalm 33:8-9 and Genesis 1:2-3.

COMMENT: Christ—the Logos, or "Word" (John 1:1) "spoke and it was done." He is the One Who said, "Let there be light." The Word willed that spirit energy emanating from Himself be TRANSFORMED into physical energy and matter. That is how the creation of the universe was done.

3. Is God's Spirit omnipresent—does it fill the entire universe? Ps. 139:7-8; Jer. 23:24. Is it by His Spirit of power that God is also able to sustain and rule His vast creation? Heb. 1:2-3; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 66:7.

COMMENT: Like the atmosphere on earth, the power of God is everywhere. That is how the Word was able to do the work of the creation. God uses this power much as man uses electrical energy.

David's prayer in Psalm 139:7-8 shows that he knew God's Spirit or power was omnipresent. No matter where in the universe one might go, God's Spirit will still be there. That is how Jesus Christ is "... upholding all things by the word of his POWER" (Heb. 1:3). By His authority as God, He keeps all things in the universe in their place. This work is done through the power of the God Family and with the express consent of the Father.

Though the Father is SUPREME in the God Family, as Christ Himself revealed (John 14:28), Jesus is the administrator of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26).

He is therefore greater than that Spirit. These two scriptures alone nullify and make void the supposition that the Holy Spirit is a person of equal rank with the Father and Son. The Spirit is not a personality, but rather the very power of God—the power by which God does His will. IT IS NOT ANOTHER PERSON!

4. But what about 1 John 5:7-8, which many have supposed proves God is composed of three divine Persons? HOW do these two verses read?

COMMENT. Verses 7 and 8 should actually read as follows: "For there are three that bear record, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one."

The words omitted in the above quote, but included in the King James Version of 1611, are left out of most modern translations of the Bible—for a very good reason. The added words in the Authorized (King James) Version are spurious—fraudulent! These words implying that there is a trinity first appeared in a fourth century Latin text, probably as a marginal note by a copyist who believed in the Trinity doctrine. They are not found in any respectable Greek manuscript, but entered the text of the Latin Vulgate by the eighth century after Christ.

The editors of both liberal and conservative Bible commentaries (ancient and modern) agree as to the fraudulent origin of the King James rendering of 1 John 5:7-8. Notice the following quotes from two modern commentaries.

Says the conservatively oriented *New Bible Commentary Revised*: "The words are clearly a gloss and are rightly excluded by RSV (The Revised Standard Version) even from its margin" (p. 1269). *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, a standard liberal work, is even more incisive with its comments: "The famous interpolation after 'three witnesses' is not printed even in RSV, and rightly. . . No respectable Greek MS (manuscript) contains it. Appearing first in a late 4th century Latin text, it entered the Vulgate and finally the NT (New Testament) of Erasmus (and eventually the King James Version)" (p, 1098).

5. Is the Holy Spirit referred to in the Bible as "it" and "he?" John 1:22; Rom. 8:16, 26; 1 Peter 1:11; John 14:16-17, 26; 16:7-8, 13.

COMMENT: Normally, the Holy Spirit is referred to as "it." in the King James Version. In the 14th, 15th and 16th chapters of John, the Holy Spirit is personified as one Who brings help. Therefore, the English pronouns "he" and "him" are used in connection with the word "Comforter."

Grammatically, all pronouns in Greek must agree in gender with the nouns to which they refer. The Greek word *parakletos* ("comforter" in English) is masculine in gender; hence the translators' use of the personal pronoun "he" and "him" for the Greek masculine pronouns.

It should be noted, however, that in many languages the gender of a word has nothing to do with whether the thing designated is male or female. For example, in Spanish the word *table* (la mesa) is a feminine instead of neuter. Gender in language is nothing more than a grammatical tool.

In Greek as in English, the word "spirit" is neuter—neither masculine nor feminine in gender. *Pneumo* is the Greek word meaning "spirit." It always grammatically neuter and properly represented by the English pronoun "it" as in John 13:32 and Romans 8:16.

The fact of the matter, which few realize, is that the "Trinity" doctrine implies that the Family of Gad is forever limited to three persons. It denies the very PERPOSE for which Elohim created mankind! You will grasp this astonishing truth more fully as you continue studying your Bible with this lesson.

The Nature of God

1. What is the composition of God? John 4:24. But of what is man composed? 1 Cor. 15:47; Gen. 2:7.

COMMENT: One of the great differences between the God Family or Kingdom and the human kingdom is that God is composed of immortal spirit, invisible to human eyes, while man is mortal, flesh and blood—made from the dust of the earth and subject to death and decay.

2. Just before He was taken to be crucified, to what state did Christ ask His Father to restore Him? John 17:5. Was Christ again to share His Father's glory in the God Family? Same verse.

3. How do Christ's and the Father's powerful, glorified spirit bodies appear? Rev. 1:13-16. (The "Son of man" mentioned here is the glorified Christ.)

COMMENT: The power of the Father and Christ is so great that their spirit bodies shine as bright AS THE SUN IN FULL STRENGTH!

4. What is another great difference between God and man—what is God's characteristic attitude and general mental makeup? Ps. 99:9. Is there anyone as holy as God? 1 Sam. 2:2. Would you conclude that man, of himself, is "holy"? Rom. 3:10-18, 23; 87; Jer. 17:9.

COMMENT: The meaning of the word "holy" involves pureness of heart or freedom from sin. The two divine Beings presently composing the God Family possess a "holy" or sinless attitude and nature.

But what does all this have to do with your being "born again?"

EVERYTHING! When born again you will possess the same power, glory and holiness of God! But more about this later.

A "Father-Son" Relationship

Have you ever wondered how the "Father-Son" relationship of the God Family developed? This is vital to know in order to understand the purpose and plan of God, and what it really means to be born again.

1. What did Jesus say about Himself and His Father? John 10:30; 17:11. Yet who is greater in authority? John 14:28; 1 Cor. 11:3.

COMMENT. The Father and Son are one in purpose and attitude. But the Father is greater in authority. The Father has always been in supreme command in the Family or Kingdom of God—even before the Word became a human being.

2. Why did the Word (Christ) become a flesh-and-blood human being? Heb. 2:9, 14.

COMMENT: All mankind has sinned (Rom. 3:23). And "the wages of sin is eternal death" Rom. 6:23). The Word became a mortal man so He could die to pay the death penalty for the sins of ALL mankind. Christ was able to do this because His life was far more valuable than the lives of all human beings put together. He was not only the Creator of all mankind. He was GOD made

flesh! (John 1:14.)

3. But exactly how did the Word become composed of flesh and blood? Matt. 1:18-21. ("Ghost" in this passage, as elsewhere, is an unfortunate translation in the King James. It should rather be rendered "Spirit," as it is in most other translations of the Bible.) What title did the other member of the God Kingdom acquire as a result of this miraculous begetting? Matt. 18:35; John 1:14.

COMMENT: Before Christ (the Word) was conceived in Mary, He was not the "Son of God." He was one of the two members of the God Kingdom. He, like the One who became the Father, had existed eternally. But, it nowhere stated in the Bible that He was a SON of God prior to His conception in Mary. His human birth was His first birth. He gave up the glory He had shared with the other divine Being, who became His "Father," in order to be born into the world as human being, live a perfect life, and then give His life to pay the penalty of all the sins of mankind.

And so Jesus was begotten within His human mother Mary. But unlike all other human beings, He was miraculously begotten by the One who became the Father, through the agency and power of the Spirit of God (Matt. 1:20; John 1:14). (Here, by the way, is further proof the Spirit of God is not a person. Since Christ was conceived of the Holy Spirit, if the Spirit were person, then IT would be Christ's Father!) By His miraculous begetting, Christ became the "Son" of God, and the other person of the God Kingdom became His "Father." And so began the "Father-Son" relationship, which is a FAMILY relationship!

Now let's begin to understand exactly what all this has to do with our being "born again."

Man Created in God's Image

Man is not just another "animal" as evolutionists claim. God's purpose for creating man surpasses anything ever imagined by the human mind. Let's turn to the first chapter of Genesis and begin to understand the most astounding revelation of your Bible!

1. After what "kind" were the animals created? Gen. 1:20-25.

COMMENT: These verses plainly state that God created fish to reproduce after their own particular kind, birds after their particular kind, and cattle after their kind. Each kind may have many varieties within it, but all creatures only reproduce after their own "kind." That is why dogs reproduce dogs, monkeys reproduce monkeys, sheep reproduce sheep, etc.

2. But what about man? After whose and "likeness" was man created? Verses 26-27.

COMMENT: In God's pattern for physical life, like reproduces like. And just as each plant or animal reproduces after its own kind, so humans reproduce humans. But UNLIKE any of the animals, man was created in God's likeness.

These scriptures refute the evolutionary theory that man is merely the "highest" of the animals, having evolved from lower mammals. They clearly state that God created man after own image and likeness! God made man LIKE Himself—same form and shape.

3. Even though man is made in the likeness of God, are both composed of the same type of "material?" John 4:24; Gen. 2:7.

COMMENT: There is a vast difference between spirit and dust. Although man was created in the very shape and likeness of God, he was not created out of spirit. He was made of the dust of the

earth, subject to death and decay. But God's purpose is to eventually create him out of eternal spirit!

In 1 Corinthians 15:46-49 we read: "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which natural; and AFTERWARD that which is spiritual. The first man (Adam) is of earth, earthy: the second man (Christ) is the Lord from heaven... And as we (speaking of Spirit-begotten Christians) have borne image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

Clearly, man is much more than any animal. Man has the potential to become divine spirit—just as GOD is spirit!

Our Awesome Destiny!

Astonishing as it may sound, God is now in the process of creating His greatest creation of all—His supreme masterpiece!

Only a very few have really understood God's awesome purpose for human beings. The Bible reveals that God is REPRODUCING HIMSELF through mankind! Our destiny is to become the literal children of God—MEMBERS of His own divine Family!

Let's understand this amazing truth.

1. Is God forming and molding man as a potter works with clay? Isa. 64:8.

COMMENT. God's creation of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden was complete only in the physical sense. They were created perfect physically but not perfect spiritually. They were created of the dust not of divine SPIRIT. They were created corruptible and subject to death—not incorruptible and immortal.

But God did not intend that mankind should remain that way!

2. Did Job realize God was forming a special creation in his life? Job 14:14-15.

COMMENT: Notice especially the latter part of verse 15: "thou wilt have a desire to the WORK of Thine hands." The "work" was Job. Job knew he was merely a piece of divine workmanship in the hands of the Master Potter.

3. Are true Christians being fashioned by God for a specific purpose? Isa. 43:7; Eph. 2:10.

COMMENT: "We" in the New Testament usually refers to Spirit-begotten Christians, as Paul intended in Ephesians 2:10. We, then—if we are true Christians—are God's "workmanship." We are in the process of being "created"—WHY?—"unto good works." God, with the Holy Spirit He has put within us, is forming in us His perfect spiritual character! With our consent, and cooperation, God is creating us in His own character-image! We are to become the supreme masterpiece of all His works of creation—individuals who will be capable of righteously exercising the awesome powers of God!

The material creation of man is only the first phase. Now the clay model has to be fashioned and molded, with our cooperation and the aid of God's Holy Spirit, into the finished spiritual masterpiece. An analogy of this process would be a caterpillar going through a metamorphosis into a beautiful butterfly. Mankind must undergo a spiritual "metamorphosis," or CHANGE—to

become perfect SPIRITUAL MEMBERS in the divine FAMILY OF GOD!

What it Means to Be "Born Again"

The Gospel Jesus brought to mankind is simply the "good news" of the Kingdom of God—and that Kingdom is DUAL. It is not only the ruling government Christ will establish over the nations of the earth when He returns. It is also the FAMILY of God—the God Kingdom, composed of the spirit members of the God Family.

There are only two members in the God Family or Kingdom at the present, time—God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. But God is going to increase His Family!

Incredible as it may sound, Jesus taught that humans can be "born" into the FAMILY, or KINGDOM, of God!

1. Does God plainly show it is His purpose to increase His divine Family by bringing many sons into it? 2 Cor. 6:18; Heb. 2:9-11; Rev. 21:7. Isn't Jesus Christ actually the "firstborn" of MANY sons of God? Rom. 8:29.

COMMENT: To be "conformed to the image" of Christ means to become LIKE Him—to be glorified as He is now glorified—to be member of the divine FAMILY of GOD even as Christ now is.

2. But what, must happen to flesh-and-blood Christians before they can enter God's Family? 1 Cor. 15:49-52; John 8:3-8.

COMMENT: Jesus said we must be "born again" CHANGED INTO SPIRIT! Yes, born again—this time born of the Spirit of God as divine Sons in the Family of God!

Begotten Sons Now— Not Yet Born Again

1. If we are true Christians, are we already—in this life—the children of God? I John 8:1-2. Are we already inheritors of the Kingdom of God, or only heirs to it? Rom. 8: 14-17.

COMMENT: Notice that, although we are now the "sons" and "children of God," we are only heirs—ones who shall, in the future, inherit all that God has promised. Why? Because we are now only begotten. It is only when we are born of God that we become inheritors of God's Kingdom—divine members of the Family of God.

Before the second phase of creation—our spiritual creation—can begin, God the Father must first beget each of us by placing His Holy Spirit within our minds to join with the spirit in man. We are then impregnated, so to speak, by the "seed" or germ of eternal life. It is the begetting of the spiritual life of God within our minds. And much as a newly begotten physical embryo begins to grow in its mother's womb, we are to grow in SPIRITUAL CHARACTER after we are begotten by God's Spirit. This growth results from Bible study, prayer, and walking with God every day of our lives.

2. Now compare Galatians 3:26 and Ephesians 1:5 with Romans 8:14-17.

COMMENT: These verses in Galatians and Ephesians reveal the same truth—that Christians are already the children—the SONS—OF God, destined to inherit eternal life.

Some versions of the Bible use the expression "adoption of sons" or "adoption of children" in Ephesians 1:5. Although linguistically possible, these do not give the real meaning. The original inspired Greek expression *huiothesia* means "son-ship." When we receive the spirit of son-ship as an impregnating "seed" (I Peter 1:23), that, is not an "adoption." The Holy Spirit makes us the literal begotten sons of God, for we are going to be just like our Heavenly Father when finally born into His Family.

And so all Spirit-begotten Christians have become the (as yet unborn) children of God the Father in the same sense that an unborn human fetus is the child of its human parents!

3. Do we actually receive of the divine nature of God when begotten by His Holy Spirit? 2 Peter 1:3-4. What are some of the divine characteristics or "fruits" of God's nature that are made manifest in the lives of obedient Christians after they are begotten by God's Spirit? Gal. 5:22-23.

4. Is love ("charity") the greatest attribute of God's nature that is transmitted to us by His Holy Spirit? 1 John 4:16; Rom. 5:5; I Cor. 13:1-13, especially verse 13. Is this the same love that enables us to obey God's Law? Rom. 13:10.

COMMENT: The Holy Spirit that person may receive from God can be compared to the sperm of a human father. God's Spirit transmits His spiritual attributes to us, even as a sperm cell transmits a human father's physical attributes to his newly conceived offspring. The Holy Spirit—the germ or "seed" (I Peter 1:23) by which we are spiritually begotten imparts to us the very nature and life of God our heavenly Father.

If you are truly the kind of Christian described in the Bible, then you are now a Spirit-begotten child of God. God the Father placed His Spirit within your mind, having joined it with the spirit in man. He thus begot you with the Holy Spirit just as the sperm from a human father impregnates the ovum of the mother. You were impregnated with the spiritual "seed" of eternal life so you could begin the process of spiritual growth. But you are not yet born of God—not yet composed of spirit, not yet immortal. If you are not a Spirit-begotten Christian, then you have not yet even begun this process!

Born Again at the Resurrection

1. Can we, while still flesh and blood, inherit God's Kingdom? 1 Cor. 15:50. What must happen to us to be born as divine Sons in God's Family? Verses 51-53.

COMMENT: "That which is born of the Spirit IS spirit," said Jesus (John 3:16). But we have not yet been born of the Spirit. We are STILL FLESH AND BLOOD—capable of pain and bleeding when injured. But when born into the God Family, we will be free of human pain and suffering (Rev. 21:4). And with our new spirit bodies, we will be unfettered by the physical limitations of time and space. When Christ was "born again" He was able to pass through solid walls (John 20:19, 26). Obviously, any beings who claim to already be born again are completely mistaken, for they are still flesh and blood.

Jesus said we must be "born of the Spirit" - we must become composed of spirit—to ever see or enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5). And so the second birth is something yet to occur at the resurrection to immortality!

2. Until they are born again—changed into spirit beings—what are Christians exhorted to do in this life? 2 Peter 3:18; Eph. 4:15. How and by whom are they to be "fed" and

nurtured so they may grow unto the stature of Christ? 1 Peter 5:1-2; Eph. 4:11-13.

COMMENT: A father begets- He does not "bring forth." The mother does that, later. After the father's part, which begins the PROCESS, there is a period of time leading to birth. At the time of begetting, birth has not yet occurred. In the case of human beings, it follows about nine months later.

During the intervening time, just as the mother nourishes and protects the unborn son or daughter in her womb, so God's Church is commissioned to nourish and protect Spirit-begotten Christians in her spiritual "womb," to "feed the flock." God's Spirit-begotten children must be nourished on the spiritual food supplied by God—the words of Scripture. They must live by every word of God in order to grow spiritually.

If by the return of Jesus Christ we have grown in spiritual character, we will then be born of God, being "children of the resurrection" (Luke 20:35-36), just as Christ became the BORN AGAIN "Son of God" at His resurrection (Rom. 1:4).

3. Speaking of the resurrection, when the second birth will occur, what did Paul say regarding the new body Christians will receive? 1 Cor. 15:42-44. Will they become as Jesus Christ is today? Phil. 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2; Matt. 17:1-2; Rev. 1:13-16; Matt. 13:43; Dan. 12:3.

COMMENT. Because God is spirit, when one is born of his heavenly Father, he will also BE SPIRIT—he will be composed of the same substance of which God is composed. He will be given a spirit body like Christ's and will be GLORIFIED and given tremendous SPIRITUAL POWER. The power and glory Spirit-begotten Christians shall receive at the resurrection will be so great that it will make their faces shine as the sun. And all who are thus born of God will be able to see God because they will be in the Kingdom—the divine Family—of God!

The Great Difference Between "Begotten" and "Born"

Most traditional Christians believe they were "born again" when they first "accepted Christ." Then by misapplying I John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God," many conclude that they are no longer capable of sinning in this life.

The Bible shows that this conclusion is absolutely false!

1. Did the Apostle John say that Christians do sometimes commit sin? 1 John 1:8-10.

COMMENT: By using the present tense of the verbs in verse 8, John meant they sin after becoming Christians. Notice also that he includes himself by saying "we."

2. Was the Apostle Paul beset with recurring sin long after he was baptized and received (wag begotten by) the Holy Spirit? Rom. 7:14-25. Is there a just man on earth who does not at some time commit sin? Eccl. 7:20. So isn't it plain that Christians in this mortal flesh are not now perfect, and therefore NOT YET BORN OF GOD?

3. Now notice I John 5:18. Does this verse further prove that Christians are not yet born of God?

COMMENT: Once we are born of God at the resurrection, we will be able to live without ever sinning again because we will then possess the fullness of God's perfect character and divine

nature (1 John 3:9).

But as long as we are only "begotten" of God we must "keep ourselves" from sinning—we resist evil temptations. But we can still commit sin. When caught off guard or in a moment of weakness we can and do sometimes sin.

Life to the begotten Christian is battle against evil influences. Although a true Christian has received the begetting of God's divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), he still can and will occasionally manifest the traits of human nature, for the one wars against the other (Gal. 5:17). (The surprising origin of the evil characteristics of what is commonly called "human nature" will be covered in Lesson 9.)

But what about the Old Testament men of God? Can we prove whether they were either begotten or born of God?

4. Did David have God's Spirit? 1 Sam. 16:13; Ps. 51:10-11. What about the "holy men of old," including Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? 2 Peter 1:21; Rom. 8:14; Luke 13:28. Yet who was the first to be born of God? Col. 1:18.

COMMENT. Since those old individuals had God's Holy Spirit, and yet Christ was the first to be BORN of God (by Virtue of His resurrection), then it follows that those men of old were merely begotten of God—not yet born into His Family. They, as well as other Spirit-begotten children of God, will be BORN of God at the first resurrection!

The Greek Word *Gennao*

Much of the confusion about being "born again" has resulted from misinterpreting the original Greek of the New Testament. With one exception (James 1:15-18), the Greek word used in reference to spiritual begetting or birth is *gennao*. This word means both "to conceive" or "to beget," and "to bear" or "to be born," all or any part of the process which produces a new human being.

Since both begetting and birth are included in the meaning of *gennao*, we must let the Bible interpret itself in order to know which meaning is intended in a particular passage.

Here are several examples where the Greek word should rightly have been rendered "begotten," not "born," in the Authorized (King James) Version:

John 1:12-13; 1 John 2:29; 4:7; 5:1 (three times); 5:4.

The King James is correct in using "begotten" in 1 Corinthians 4:15, Hebrews 1:5; 1 Peter 1:3, and 1 John 5:1.

Now what about the scriptures that call Christ the "ONLY begotten?" (John 1:14, 18; 3:16; 1 John 4:9.) Do these, after all, disprove that true Christians are only begotten of God's Spirit, growing toward being born of God at the resurrection? of course not!

The answer is that all these verses are referring to Christ's miraculous begetting in His mother Mary's womb. Christ's physical begetting and birth (*gennao*) were unique. No other person in the history of mankind has been begotten by the Spirit of the heavenly Father in a human mother's womb! In this sense He is—and always shall be—the "only begotten." But others have been "begotten again" (1 Peter 1:3) and will ultimately become—through the of spiritual growth and birth—the Spirit-born Sons of God.

You Must Be Born Again!

What God created at the time described in the first chapter of Genesis was a physical creation. Man, made of the dust of the ground, was the MATERIAL being which God planned to mold, shape and form into a perfect SPIRITUAL creation. He pictures us as the clay, Himself as the Master Potter, forming us into the spiritual "image" of Himself.

Human reproduction is a type of the process by which God is reproducing Himself. Each human since Adam and Eve started from a tiny ovum, the size of a pinpoint, produced in the body of the mother. But the ovum is incomplete of itself. According to some authorities, its lifespan is only about 48 hours. Unless fertilized by the sperm cell from the human father within the limited time, it dies. A new human life can begin only when that sperm cell impregnates—enters—the ovum.

Spiritually speaking, each human mind is like an ovum. We were made to need the impregnating spiritual life of God's Holy Spirit so we can be created in God's spiritual image and live forever!

The physical ovum, once it is fertilized, becomes a begotten human life called an embryo. A number of weeks following conception, the embryo develops into what is called a fetus. The mother's womb nourishes and protects it, carrying it in that part of her body where she may best protect it from harm until it has grown enough to be born.

Likewise, God's CHURCH protects and spiritually feeds Spirit-begotten Christians with the Word of God so they may grow spiritually (2 Peter 3:18) in the divine character of God. But there is one great difference in this analogy.

The human fetus does not attain physical and mental maturity before birth. However, the Spirit-begotten Christian must attain a measure of spiritual maturity before he or she is spirit-born at the resurrection. The newborn physical babe's main growth occurs after birth, but spiritual growth in Christians occurs before their spiritual birth (1 Peter 2:1-2).

When we are "born again"—born of God, changed into spirit beings at the resurrection—we will look essentially as we do now. But our resurrected bodies will be different bodies—composed of SPIRIT instead of flesh and blood (1 Cor.15:35-44). And our faces will shine with the brilliance of the sun in full strength, as does Christ's!(Rev. 1:16)

Now what, exactly, is the spiritual growth that is so necessary before being born again? It is spiritual CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT!

Such character is the ability, as a free moral agent, to discern right from wrong—the true values from the false—truth from error—and then to make the right choice or decision, even against self-desire, impulse or temptation; plus the will and self-discipline to resist the wrong and to DO the right, which is obedience to God's law of love. Such spiritual character development is possible only through our feeding on the Word of God in Bible study, through prayer, obedience to God, and wholehearted participation in the work of God's Church. (The subject of spiritual growth and character development will be covered in much greater detail in upcoming lessons.)

Then, when the glorified Christ returns to earth at His Second Coming, we will be resurrected or instantaneously changed into bodies that will be like His! (1 John 3:1-2.) At that instant, our physical bodies will be made like His glorified body. We will be BORN AGAIN AS SPIRIT MEMBERS OF GOD'S OWN FAMILY as God's own glorious offspring with eternal life—as His immortal Sons to reign along With Jesus Christ our elder Brother!

That, according to your Bible, is what it means to be "born again." May God help you to comprehend this glorious truth, and become one of His spiritually begotten and finally BORN children!