

Born Again

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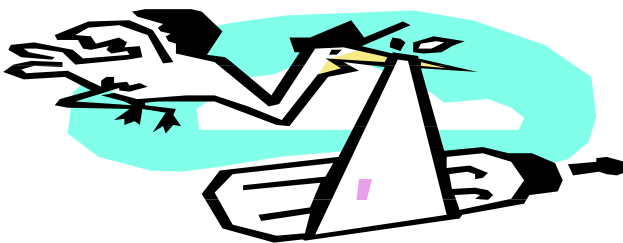
What about this term, 'born-again'?

We've all heard this term at some time or other. Many of us even know someone willing to admit to being born again themselves! But where did the term come from & what does it mean?

The phrase was coined by none other than the Lord Jesus Christ in the early days of His earthly ministry. One of the religious leaders of the day had come to Jesus secretly & began to flatter Him & 'butter' him up. Jesus brings him up short, stops him dead in his tracks, looks him in the eye & tells him - "ye must be born again", Jn. 3:3. Well, you can imagine the logical response to that one. And you would be right! Nicodemus freaked out. But Jesus quickly sets him straight & shows him that He is speaking in spiritual terms. Finally Nicodemus gets the picture. Regardless how great a 'spiritual' leader he might be, regardless how wise, good & well respected by his family, peers, credit agencies & the community at large, unless he experienced this thing that Jesus called "born-again", there was simply no way that he would see the Kingdom of God. Period. Jesus makes that crystal clear.

Why is it important?

As we will see in a minute the Bible has declared certain obvious facts as truth. For instance, we are told that "God is Holy". Another, "we are all going to die". Plus, "we will all stand before God & give an account". And the kicker, "sinful man cannot come into the presence of a Holy God on his own merits". Bummer. So what do we do now? Clean ourselves up? Turn over a new leaf? Try to fake God out? Work real hard to tip the scales in our favor? Hope God is in a good mood when we slam into the Pearly Gates? Not! We need some help. We need to be **born again**.



From here on I am going to let the Bible do a lot of the talking. Only an idiot would presume to try & do better than the Word of God on this subject.

*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this **the judgement**: Heb. 9:27*

***How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation...** Heb. 2:3*

One of the great misconceptions about sin is that most people think that they have to **do something** in order for them to be classified as a sinner: murder someone, cheat on a test or taxes, sleep with your best friend's wife or husband, abuse your kids, etc. Don't get me wrong. These are sins & should be avoided or confessed. But the essence of sin, from a biblical point of view, is that of a condition, not necessarily an act or a deed. What makes a 'sinner' is not relegated & confined to what they do - but, rather, what they are. We do not earn the title 'sinner' from the things that we do. We are 'sinners' because of the nature of what we are.

*The wicked are **estranged** from the womb: they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. Ps. 58:3*

*Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; & **in sin** did my mother conceive me. Ps. 51:5*

You may be a much better person than the guy next door or the girl you work out with. You may, in fact, be the best person on your block. Shucks, you may even be the best person that ever walked the face of this earth. The one little problem that creeps in is that the ultimate comparison is not between you & your fellow man - but rather with you & a Holy God. And, unfortunately, in that arena, we all fail to match His Holiness, His Glory, His Power & His Love.

You see, since it is His ball, hence His rules, He has privilege of dictating the terms of access to Himself or heaven. Now, we may choose to disregard these terms, substitute our own morality or pretend that He is a non-factor & continue to judge ourselves

by what ever standard that gives us comfort & eases our conscience. Unfortunately, this approach also has a biblical precedent,

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, & broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, & many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, & narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, & few there be that find it. Mt. 7:13-14

Who says I need it?

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: Rom. 3:10

For all have sinned & come short of the glory of God; Rom. 3:23

For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, & sinneth not. Ecc. 7:20

But we are all as an unclean thing, & all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; & we all do fade as a leaf; & our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. Isa. 64:6

Obviously, those who have a contrary view of their own self-righteousness or that of mankind in general than the above cited verses, will have ample opportunity to voice their objections to the Lord, face to face, at a future date.

How do I be born again?

First of all you should know that God loves you & wants you to come to Him.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Jn. 3:16

Come now, & let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Isa. 1:18



If you have read the Old Testament have you ever wondered why there was so much emphasis placed on blood? It seems that everytime you made a move you were stepping in blood. It was all over the place. Animals were sacrificed left & right. Their blood was sprinkled, dripped, waved & poured out. Why? Well, there is a very simple explanation. God was making a point. He was using the simple, everyday things that we can relate to in order to get a point across. The first lesson that He gave to Adam & Eve after the Fall in the Garden of Eden was the making of 'coats of skins' to replace the fig leaves they had fashioned for themselves. Want to take a wild guess as to what had to be 'shed' in order for God to get those skins off the animals? Blood. And in that moment, Adam & Eve knew that for their sins to be covered, blood had to be shed. And not just blood, but, innocent blood. God was making a point.

And so it went throughout the Old Testament. The rams, the goats, the sheep, the cattle, all having their blood shed for the sins of the people. Innocent blood to cover sin. So it comes as no shock when we read of Jesus,

*In whom we have redemption **through his blood**, even the forgiveness of sins: Col. 1:14*

*For if the blood of bulls & of goats, & the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: **How much more shall the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God? Heb. 9:13-14*

*...we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**. For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. Heb. 10:10, 14*

We are not called on today to sacrifice an animal in order to get saved or born again. This was done on the cross of Calvary almost 2000 years ago.

*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, & the life: **no man** cometh unto the Father, but by me. Jn. 14:6*

*Be it known unto you therefore, men & brethren, that through this man (Jesus) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from **all things**, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. Acts 13:38-39*

*...And if any man sin, we have **an advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 1 Jn. 2:1*

Look unto me, & **be ye saved**, all the ends of the earth:
for I am God, & there is none else. Isa. 45:22

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you,
& yet hast thou not known me Phillip? **he that hath seen
me has seen the Father**; & how sayest thou then, Shew
us the Father? Jn. 14:9

Come unto me (Jesus), all ye that labor & are heavy
laden, & I will give you rest. Mt. 11:28

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus,
& shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him
from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart
man believeth unto righteousness; & with the mouth
confession is made unto salvation. Rom. 10:9-10

...Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, **believe
on the Lord Jesus Christ**, & thou shalt be saved, & thy
house. Acts 16:30-31

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none
other name under heaven given among men, whereby we
must be saved. Acts 4:12

I, even I, am the Lord; & **beside me there is no saviour**.
Isa. 43:11

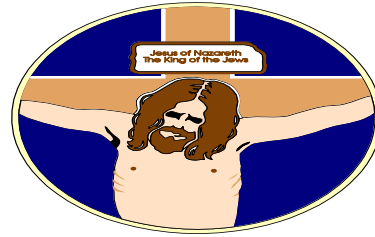
For there is one God, & **one mediator** between God &
men, the man Christ Jesus. 1 Tim. 2:15

For by grace are ye saved through faith; & that not of
yourselves: **it is the gift of God: not of works**, lest any
man should boast. Eph. 2:8-9

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, &
believeth on him that send me, hath everlasting life &
shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from
death unto life. J. 5:24

Pretty straight forward, isn't it? Not much I can add
without mucking it up. A person would pretty much have
to be ignorant on purpose not to 'get it', wouldn't he?

Some say that 'salvation' is free. It doesn't cost us
anything. It is a gift. On one level they are entirely
right. As far as we are concerned salvation is free. But
as most of you can relate, nothing is really free. Salvation
(the born-again experience) did cost someone. It cost
God. And that price will never be truly appreciated or
fully comprehended by us till we stand before Him face
to face. I read the words, but they are, after all, still
just words. I cannot fully appreciate what it meant to
Jesus to cry out those words from the cross, "My God,
my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"



Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, & see if
there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done
unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day
of his fierce anger. Lam. 1:12

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only
begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not
perish, but have everlasting life. Jn. 3:16

I cannot begin to express in words the dynamics that took
place between the Son & the Father on that fateful day
when Jesus was 'made sin' for you & me. When the
ultimate sacrifice, the Lamb of God that taketh away the
sin of the world, hung on that tree for a sinner such as I.

He is despised & rejected of men; a man of sorrows, &
acquainted with grief: & we hid as it were our faces from
him; he was despised, & we esteemed him not. Surely he
hath borne our griefs, & carried out sorrows: yet we did
esteem him stricken, smitten of God, & afflicted. But he
was wounded for **our transgressions**, he was bruised for
our iniquities: for the chastisement of our peace was
upon him; & with his stripes we are healed. All we like
sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his
own way; & **the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us
all**. He was oppressed, & he was afflicted, yet he opened
not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,
& as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened
not his mouth. Isa. 53:3-7

There it is again. The sacrificial lamb. The blood so
vividly apparent in the Old Testament. The just dying
for the unjust. A loving God seeking & making
provision for fallen man. And, in most cases, that man
being so blind as to not even be aware that he is in need
of a saviour.

Try & put yourself in God's shoes for a moment. You
have stipulated that 'sin' cannot approach your holiness.
Since 'all have sinned & come short of the glory of God',
this leaves mankind in a world of hurt. So what do you
do? You make provision for sinful man to come into
your fellowship. This provision is in the form of your
Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who in His 33 years upon this
earth has fulfilled all the requirements that will satisfy a
holy God. At the moment of the formal conclusion &
culmination of this ultimate sacrifice you, as God, watch
as your Son is

“made sin for you & I”. Literally, all the sins of everyone who has ever taken a breath on this planet is laid on Him at that awful moment. As God, you must turn away. And as you turn away from the very embodiment of sin hanging on that tree, your only begotten Son, you hear the anguished cry from Him, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me”? (Never once in His earthly life had Jesus ever referred to the Father as “God”). With those words ringing in your ears you slam shut this whole spectacle. Darkness covers the cross on Golgotha & for the next three hours it is just you & your Son. Finally, at 3 p.m. your Son utters the words “it is finished” & dies.

As I said, we will never really comprehend or appreciate the price that was paid for your sin & mine. It was incalculable & immeasurable. And in the light of that price that was paid can you even begin to imagine the response from God when someone stands before Him in judgment & says ‘well, I’m just as good as anyone else’. Or, ‘I think all religions are the same’. What about, ‘As long as you are sincere that’s all that really counts’. ‘I’ll work out my own salvation’. ‘All roads lead to Rome’. ‘I never had time for all that religious stuff, that seemed just like a crutch for those who were not strong enough to make it on their own’. ‘Religion is the opiate of the masses’. ‘I had Allah, or Scientology, or Bhuddism, or...well, we could go on & on, couldn’t we?

The excuses will melt like butter on a fourth of July picnic. You will look into the eyes of a Holy God who sacrificed His Son on your behalf.

And I saw a great white throne, & him that sat on it, from whose face the earth & the heaven fled away; & there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small & great, stand before God; & the books were opened: & another book was opened, which is the book of life: & the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; & death & hell gave up the dead which were in them: & they were judged every man according to their works. And death & hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. Rev. 20:11-15

Notice the word ‘whosoever’ in that last sentence? Keep in mind that other ‘whosoever’ located in Jn. 3:16.

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near. Isa. 55:6

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : & he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. Jn. 3:36

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. Jn. 3:18

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, & took upon him the form of a servant, & was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, & became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, & given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, & things in earth, & things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Phil. 2:5-11

So, simply put, the phrase, coined by Jesus Christ, ‘born again’, is simply a metaphor for a spiritual rebirth. It is the awareness & acknowledgement that someday you will stand before a holy God & give an account. Common sense & a lifetime of spiritual & moral breakdowns, failed resolutions & a realization of the absence of perfection in your own life should cause you to ask the only person to have lead a perfect life on this earth to save you. That person is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Upon asking Him to come into your heart, to forgive you of your sins & confessing Him as Lord, something takes place within you. It is a spiritual rebirth. It is what Jesus called being ‘born-again’!

Hopefully, the next time that someone asks you or you hear the phrase, ‘have you been born again’, you will not snicker or laugh or have a spastic fit or get uncomfortable, but, rather, sing out, “you bet”!

