

Redemption 304: *Born Again*



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Brian K. McPherson and Scott McPherson

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Born Again Study

The New Testament indicates that those who believe, accept, and live by Jesus' teaching are truly God's children, born of God, with God as their Father. For many Christians today, passages on the concept of being a child of God, or even being born of God, are used to emphasize the change in lifestyle that results from renewing our mind in Jesus' teachings so that we faithfully and obediently follow the lead of the Spirit rather than pursuing the things sought after by our flesh, which are not of God.

However helpful and accurate this New Testament portrayal is, it would be incomplete to limit our view of New Testament teaching on being born again, being born of God, and being the children of God, solely to the behavioral change and growth of understanding that is expected to occur in the life of a genuine follower of Christ. Indeed under such a limited view, the rebirth may often come to be seen as an event that takes place and is completed upon our first acceptance and profession of belief in the gospel. Thus, the rebirth would commonly be mistaken as a past and completed event in the life of the believer. But a large extent of New Testament teaching on this subject, including the earliest discussion and presentation by Jesus on the matter, indicates a larger picture of ongoing development toward a final and still future goal rather than as simply the initial event in our walk with God.

In starting this study it is important to state that it is not our purpose to deny or reject the New Testament truth that we are born of God upon our initial belief in Christ. Rather the intention is to reflect more light upon aspects of this subject that are stated in the New Testament itself and may not often receive the emphasis they deserve. This being the case, we will not spend a great deal of item dealing with passages which speak of our presently being children of God, or born of God. This is not out of neglect for these truths or an attempt to de-emphasize their importance. However, we will instead place them within the larger New Testament context of a process progressing toward a future completion.

The earliest discussion of the related concepts of rebirth and being the children of God comes in the opening chapters of John's Gospel. In fact, our introduction to the term "born again" comes from Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus in John 3.

John 3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. 3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5 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. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 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. 9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? 10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? 11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. 12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? 13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16 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. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 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. 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. 21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

The remarks to Nicodemus in this chapter begin immediately with a rather provocative statement by Jesus that men must be born again in order to see the kingdom of heaven. The text presents no prior discussion of this concept with Nicodemus. A few points are worth noting here.

First, it is clear that Nicodemus does not understand Jesus' statements. However, we cannot take Nicodemus' confusion as an indication that Jesus is here introducing an entirely new and unprecedented teaching. Two facts from this passage indicate the opposite conclusion. First, Jesus' clearly expresses an expectation that Nicodemus could have and perhaps should have been able to understand his remarks (John 3:10).

John 3:10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

Second, the fact that Jesus begins this discourse without introductory comments on the subject shows further that he thought Nicodemus would understand. In fact, John tells us that it was because Nicodemus was a teacher of Israel trained in the study of Old Testament texts, that Jesus expected he could comprehend these things. As Paul also states in Galatians 3, the Old Testament was given by God to lead us to Christ and to prepare us to be ready to accept his teaching.

Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. **24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.** **25** But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

In John 5, Jesus himself makes similar comments regarding the purpose and ability of the law as sufficient to guide men to him.

John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. **40 And ye will not come (2064) to me, that ye might have life.**

Notice that Jesus' comments here come just a chapter after his meeting with Nicodemus in John 3. And secondly, notice that Jesus is again discussing the concept of eternal life, just as he did with Nicodemus in John 3 (verses 15-16).

John 3:15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. **16** 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.

Third, notice that here in John 5, Jesus is criticizing the religious leaders for not coming to Him to receive eternal life though the scriptures (which they searched) pointed to Him. The Greek word used in John 5:40 for "come" is the Greek word "erchomai" (Strong's Number 2064). This is the same word that begins John 3's narration of Nicodemus' visit to Jesus.

John 3:1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: **2** The same came (2064) to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

In John 5, Jesus criticizes those among the leaders of Israel that didn't come to him to learn about eternal life since they should have known from their study of the scriptures to come to him for. Yet, in John 3, Nicodemus did come to Him to learn about eternal life. The nature of Jesus' response to Nicodemus' visit presupposes from its onset that Nicodemus was there to inquire about issues related to eternal life.

The reason it is important to grasp that this topic is not beyond Nicodemus' ability to understand is because it indicates that the subject has precedent and prior

instruction from the scriptures rather than being a new concept that Jesus is here mentioning for the first time. By studying these passages, we can see that perhaps Jesus is only employing new terminology in order to help Nicodemus understand the subject of eternal life, the kingdom of God, and our participation in it.

But how does knowing that Jesus is not presenting some new concept here in John 3 help us understand the subject any better? Well, first it gives us some help in evaluating the possible options for what Jesus is trying to convey to Nicodemus about the rebirth and the kingdom of God.

If we suppose that the rebirth is simply turning from a lifestyle of sin to a lifestyle of godliness then we understand Nicodemus' confusion in a certain way. Under this line of thinking, Nicodemus' error was in concluding that by "birth" Jesus was referring to a second creation parallel to our birth from our parents when in reality, Jesus only meant "a new life" or "a new way of life."

Knowing that Jesus' expected Nicodemus could understand the topic at hand because of his knowledge of the Old Testament tells us that viewing Nicodemus' error in this light is inadequate for several reasons. First, the idea of finding a way to more consistently live a life of godliness and obedience rather than of sin would not have been a foreign or difficult concept for the mind of a student of Old Testament teaching like Nicodemus. If this is all Jesus meant then Jesus' terminology (and not the nature of the subject itself) seems to be the source of the confusion.

Additionally, Jesus' response indicates that Nicodemus was on the right track about thinking in terms of another creation rather than simply a new or better way of life. Jesus' second statement reinforces Nicodemus' conclusion that the "rebirth" is, in fact, a real parallel to our being born as children to our human parents.

John 3:5 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. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**

From Jesus' comments here we can see that his parallel to our human birth isn't just an unintended implication that Nicodemus is hung up on. It is intentional. From verse 5-6 we can see that Jesus is reassuring Nicodemus that this comparison to our human birth is what he has in mind. To understand Jesus' clarification we must first understand the nature of Nicodemus' misunderstanding in verse 4.

John 3:4 Nicodemus saith unto him, **How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?**

Nicodemus' error wasn't in thinking Jesus' was comparing our rebirth to our human birth. It was in thinking that Jesus was describing a reoccurrence of our

original birth process. This is what Jesus' corrects in verses 5-6 by explaining that the second birth is not a rebirth to our human parents (described as birth of the flesh in verse 6 or perhaps even as a "birth of water" in verse 5), but being born of spirit.

It is obvious that in verse 6 Jesus is comparing our spiritual birth to our birth as human children of our human parents in these two verses. The mention of water in verse 5 is common terminology that can be used to refer to our birth by exiting our mother's womb preceded by the breaking of water.

Job 38:8 Or *who* shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, *as if it had issued out of the womb?*

"Amniotic fluid –The fluid, resembling salt water, contained in the amniotic sac; the embryo or fetus floats in the amniotic fluid." – The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, Third Edition. 2002.

John the apostle uses this same language in discussing Jesus' incarnation (his birth as a man, his becoming flesh) in his first epistle.

1 John 5:6 This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth....8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, **and the water, and the blood:** and these three agree in one....11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us **eternal life**, and this life is in his Son.

In this chapter we see that John has in mind these same subjects: human birth and eternal life (verse 11). John's reference to water and blood in verse 6 is clearly meant as assurance of Jesus' true humanity. That John begins by speaking of Jesus coming simply by water, and then adds, but "not by water only, but by blood" is meant as a refutation of Gnostic teachers who suggested that Jesus was not, in fact, incarnate as a man, but that he merely passed through Mary's womb without being her physical child. John's refutation of those who teach such things starts earlier in his epistle.

1 John 4:1 Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. **2** Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that **Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God:** **3** And every spirit that confesseth not that **Jesus Christ is come in the flesh** is not of God: and this is that *spirit* of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.

Further mention of the same topic appears in John's second epistle.

2 John 1:7 For **many deceivers are entered into the world**, who confess not that **Jesus Christ is come in the flesh**. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

The historical documentation of this Gnostic doctrine that Jesus was not truly human, but merely passed through Mary in birth comes from Irenaeus' recording and refutation of Gnostic teaching.

“And thus, by a special dispensation, there was generated by Him, through Mary, that man, whom, as He passed through the womb, the Father of all chose to [obtain] the knowledge of Himself by means of the Word.” – Irenaeus, Book I, CHAP. XV

“3. But, according to these men, neither was the Word made flesh, nor Christ, nor the Saviour (Soter), who was produced from [the joint contributions of] all [the Aeons]...Some, however, make the assertion, that this dispensational Jesus did become incarnate, and suffered, whom they represent as having passed through Mary just as water through a tube...But according to the opinion of no one of the heretics was the Word of God made flesh.” – Irenaeus, Book III, CHAP. XI

“The Valentinians, again, maintain that the dispensational Jesus was the same who passed through Mary, upon whom that Saviour from the more exalted [region] descended...” – Irenaeus, Book III, CHAP. XVI

From this information we can see that John's statement in 1 John 5:6 referring to Jesus' coming by water is a declaration that he not only was born of a woman (born of water) but that he was also, in fact, being her actual, flesh and blood, human child – God incarnate.

As to our larger point, the nature of the rebirth, we can see then from John 3:5-6, that Jesus is clarifying for Nicodemus, not that he doesn't have in mind “a birth” at all, but that he does indeed have “a birth” in mind. As Jesus reiterates to Nicodemus, the birth he is speaking of is rightly understood as comparable to our human births, but it is not as Nicodemus erroneously intuited as a recurrence of our human births. Instead, Jesus is speaking of our being born by spirit, just as we were born of flesh.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.** **4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?** **5** 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.** **6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**

It is clear from Jesus statement in verse 6 that the rebirth he is describing to Nicodemus is our being born of spirit by the Spirit of God, just as we were born of flesh from our human parents. Jesus' comparison presupposes a comparison of flesh and spirit whereby he indicates our spiritual birth is a process that results in us being composed of spirit in the same way that our human birth resulted in our being composed of the substance of flesh.

Earlier in John's Gospel, John provides some introductory remarks on the topic that he later records for us in chapter 3 between Jesus and Nicodemus. Notice that for John, these two passages are clearly connected. In both John 1 and John 3, John is discussing the same subject. For comparison below John 1 is part of John 3.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **2** The same was in the beginning with God. **3** All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. **4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.** **6** There was a man sent from God, whose name *was* John. **7 The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.** **10** He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. **11** He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

John 3:15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. **16** 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.** **17** For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. **18 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. 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20** For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. **21** But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

In both of these passages John, their author, is covering the New Testament teaching on eternal life through belief in Jesus Christ. The language throughout both passages is intentionally similar. By reading John 1, we get access to some introductory material for the subject of John 3.

What we learn from John 1 is that from the times of John the Baptist the declaration had gone out about Jesus as the source of eternal life. Throughout Jesus' ministry we see that many came to him for the very purpose of inquiring from him about this subject.

Matthew 19:16 And, behold, **one came** and said unto him, Good Master, **what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?**

Mark 10:17 And when he was gone forth into the way, **there came one running,** and kneeled to him, and asked him, **Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?**

Luke 10:25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, **Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?**

Luke 18:18 And a certain ruler asked him, saying, **Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?**

Nicodemus had no doubt heard of this message as well. Indeed, the religious leaders either came themselves to John the Baptist to inquire of him about his teaching or sent someone to do so for them. In coming to Jesus, Nicodemus is simply following the natural course of events prescribed by the circumstances, just as a faithful Jewish leader of the time would have been expected to. He comes to a man proclaimed to be the Christ to inquire about eternal life.

But what does John tell us about eternal life through Jesus in John 1?

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even to them that believe on his name:* **13** Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

The connection between John 1:12-13 and John 3 is obvious and not often overlooked. But the implication of John 1:12-13 upon the meaning of the rebirth Jesus describes to Nicodemus in John 3 may perhaps be more easily overlooked.

Though the term “born again” is not used here in John 1:12-13, the rebirth is clearly being described in similar language. Again, we see a contrast is made between our births as men from our parents and another birth. However, John 1 does not contrast our being born of flesh, with our being born by spirit as John 3 does. Instead, the contrast is made between being the son of human parents and being the son of God. This statement has implications on our understanding of what Jesus means by being “born again” when he mentions it to Nicodemus in John 3.

The implication from the text again steers us toward understanding spiritual birth (being born again) in the same way as we understand our physical births as men and not in some other sense as simply dealing with how we live our lives. Part of the reason we are steered in that direction is because of John’s contrast here. From these verses in John 1 we see that a fundamental aspect of this teaching is based on the concept Jesus later points Nicodemus towards with the words “born again.” In John 1, we see that men are first born as the sons (children) of human parents, making us flesh, making us men (humans). However, God’s intention through Christ is to make us something else, “sons of God.”

What we can see here is that John is capturing Jesus’ teaching on the rebirth in an ontological sense, in the sense of the substance of who we are and what we are made of, of what makes us what we are. From John 1 and John 3 we can see that Jesus’ teaching (and John’s recording of it) requires that we understand that

ontology is at the core of this doctrine. Simply put, ontology is the “study of being.”

Ontology - *noun*. the study of the nature of existence and being in the abstract.

As we cover in our Cosmology Study, ontology is a compound word comprised of two Greek words, "ontos" (meaning "being") and "logos" (meaning "discourse.") In practical terms, ontology is just a fancy philosophical word for the study of "what something is." And what we are ontologically, by virtue of our being born of human parents, is men (humans) comprised of the substance of flesh and blood.

We have already seen that John uses the same statements in his epistles to make the point (contrary to Gnostic teaching) that Jesus was, in fact, truly human.

1 John 5:6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth...8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, **and the water, and the blood:** and these three agree in one....11 And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

(See also 1 John 4:1-3 and 2 John 1:7.) In these verses John is simply repeating the teaching that to be born of flesh and blood is what makes one a man. Thus Jesus was, in fact, truly man, in that he was born of a woman (by water) and was made of flesh and blood.

In John 1:12-14, John provides this same argument to explain to us that the Word, which is ontologically God, in fact, became ontologically human.

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 **And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,** (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

Notice that John's statement that the Word (who is God) truly became a man (flesh) follows directly after the statements in verse 12-13 that Jesus gives us the power to become something besides what we are already (that is, besides flesh). In the context of describing the Word of God ontologically becoming flesh (becoming man, becoming the Son of Man), John indicates that the rebirth not only involves a behavioral change (as the church commonly describes), but it also included something else, an ontological change.

At this point we have refined the question of what the rebirth is. We have clarified it. We can see that the rebirth at least includes something that may sometimes be overlooked or has often gone unsaid. The rebirth includes an ontological change, which can only be compared to how, through the process of birth, one becomes a man (being made of flesh and blood). This ontological change of the rebirth

involves going from being merely a man, merely flesh and blood, to becoming sons (or children) of God, made of spirit.

Since we know that being born of a man and woman is to be born or made of flesh. To be born of flesh speaks of the material we are made out of, flesh and blood. When we are born of our human parents we receive a human body made out of flesh and blood. Following the linguistic parallels of these passages we can understand that becoming the sons of God (John 1:12-13) is equivalent to being born or made of spirit (John 3:5-6). It therefore follows directly from Jesus' teachings in John's Gospel that since to be born of a man and woman is to be made of the substance of flesh, to be born of God is to be born and made of the substance of spirit.

At this point, in order not to overlook Jesus' point, some background examination on the subject of humans as spirit beings might be helpful.

Throughout the Biblical texts it is clear that man is both flesh and blood, but also spirit. When God created Adam, it is the Spirit of God that brings Adam to life by breathing into man's body, which had been formed from the earth.

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, **and breathed (05301) into his nostrils the breath (05397) of life (02416); and man became a living (02416) soul (05315).**

The term for "breath" in the phrase "breath of life" is the Hebrew word "neshamah" (Strong's No. 05397). "Neshamah" means "breath, spirit." The meaning of "neshamah" is very closely related to "ruwach" the Hebrew word for "spirit" (Strong's No. 07307), which is similarly defined as "wind, breath, mind, spirit." In fact, just 5 chapters later, Genesis 7 describes that the Flood killed all living creatures "in whose nostrils was the breath of life." Here the single English word "breath" is actually a translation of 2 Hebrew words, the word "neshamah" and "ruwach" side by side.

Genesis 7:22 All in whose nostrils was the breath 05397 07307 of life, of all that was in the dry land, died.

Similarly, the book of Job also refers to the "neshamah" or breath and the "ruwach" or spirit being in the nostrils.

Job 27:3 All the while my breath 05397 is in me, and the spirit 07307 of God is in my nostrils 0639.

This very early picture in Genesis 2:7 actually gives us a good explanation about the spirit and soul. The soul is the being itself, as a distinct individual.

Scholars and linguists have long recognized that both the Hebrew and the Greek words for "soul" refer to the individual being. This is evident in the definitions of "nephesh" (Hebrew) and "psyche" (Greek). "Nephesh" (Strong's No. 05315) is

primarily defined as “self, life, creature, person, mind, living being.” And definitions 1b and 1c of “psuche” (Strong’s No. 5590) are “life, that in which there is life, a living being.” So, as we can see, both terms are well-recognized as references to the individual being, the self.

The spirit on the other hand, is not a reference to the individual itself, but to a substance of which an individual is (in whole or in part) comprised. Here in Genesis 2:7, we see that man is made from two components. His body is formed from the ground, or soil. But when the spirit (or wind, breath of life) is breathed into it, that impartation of spirit brings this man to life so that he becomes a living being, or living soul – an individual being.

However, just as the ground from which man’s body is formed is a substance, spirit is also a substance, not comparable to soil, but comparable metaphorically to wind. And just as God has the power of life and being in himself (See John 5:26), when God imparts spirit it creates other living beings. This is exactly what Genesis 2:7 is describing concerning Adam’s creation.

The process is conceptually similar to the imagery of producing a new flame from an existing flame. The original flame is not diminished and the new flame is distinct from the original. So, spirit can be understood as an eternal substance that imparts life.

From these texts further comparisons can be made between the different components of man, our flesh (and blood) and our spirit. Both are substances. One is comparable to soil, the other to wind. One is mortal. The other is immortal. One is of earth, one is of heaven. This parallel is directly indicated by Genesis 2:7 and 7:22, in which the words for “breath” and “spirit” are metaphorically indicative of wind just as much as the word’s for Adam’s body are metaphorically indicative of soil. Both components come together to form man.

As we establish during the addendum portion of our Trinity study, the term “spirit” is the proper title for the class of immortal creatures commonly called “angels” today. In both Hebrew and Greek, the term “angel” denotes a job or action of being a messenger. Over time, this term became synonymous with these immortal creatures in the scripture. But it was the term “spirit” that was the counterpart title that corresponded to the title “man.” As we saw in detail during the addendum, the Hebrew term for “man” was “Adam,” which designated his formation from the “adamah” or ground of the earth. This corresponded metaphorically with his mortality. The Hebrew term “spirit” is “ruwach” or wind, which designates the constitution of these creatures from heavenly matter and corresponds metaphorically to their immortality.

However, during the addendum, we also established that man is comprised partially of spirit and partially of an earthen body. This is outlined in Genesis 2:7 as well, where we saw God form a body for man out of the dust of the earth and breathe into it, causing man to become a living soul. Consequently, after man’s mortal body dies, the man is solely comprised of spirit. He is a disembodied spirit.

And so, both angels and dead men can also be referred to as “spirits” since after death man is merely comprised of spirit and no longer has his earthen body. As we explained, this was the meaning of Jesus’ statement after his resurrection in Luke 24.

Luke 24:36 And as they thus spake, **Jesus himself stood in the midst of them,** and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you. **37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.** **38 And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?** **39 Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.** **40 And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them *his* hands and *his* feet.** **41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat?** **42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.** **43 And he took *it*, and did eat before them.**

In Luke 24:36, Jesus suddenly appears in the room with his disciples. Verse 37 informs us that the disciples at first believed they were seeing a spirit. But in verses 38-43, Jesus offers his body as proof that he is no mere spirit, telling them to touch his body and even eating in front of them. His point is clear. If he were merely a disembodied spirit, he would have no body. The fact that he has a body means that he had been resurrected.

From this examination we can see that when we are born as men, as children from our father and mother, we, as men, are comprised of both flesh and blood and also of spirit. However, in the opening chapter of his gospel John makes an important clarification contrasting our human birth and our becoming children of God.

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: **13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.** **14** And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

In verses 13 John explains that we do not become God’s children simply by virtue of being born as men to our human parents. The reason for this is that our births as men were not of God’s choosing, but instead were the result of the choices and actions of our human parents. There are only two obvious exceptions to this rule. The first is Adam. The second is Jesus (the second Adam). Both persons were created directly by God’s own choice and effort. (A third and final possible exception would be Eve.)

What this statement by John also tells us is that being born as men does not make us born of God. The portion of spirit that all men have from conception is inherited from our parents going back to Adam, but it is not the result of a direct endowment of spirit by God Himself at our conception. This means that even though, as men, we are partially comprised of the substance of spirit, we are not, by this fact, considered to be God’s children.

Jesus says as much to Nicodemus in John 3, where he states that we cannot enter the kingdom of God unless we are born of water and the Spirit.

John 3:5 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.

Since we know that man when he is born from his parents is already both part flesh and blood and part spirit, Jesus' statement that we must be born of water and Spirit indicates that some further spiritual birth is needed. In order to become God's children then something else has to occur. Both John and Jesus define that something as involving our believing in Jesus (John 1:12 and John 3:15-18). But as we said the purpose of this study is not to take issue with the fact that the process of rebirth starts with our acceptance and belief in Christ. Rather our purpose is to emphasize the scriptural fact that rebirth is not complete at that initial belief.

This being the case, we will focus on John and Jesus' remarks that the rebirth involves something beyond our being born as men and our belief and acceptance of Christ as men. Both John and Jesus describe that the rebirth also involves, not just our acceptance of Christ, but another birth. Not another birth wherein we are again made of the substance of flesh, but a birth wherein we are made of the substance of spirit. Or to be more precise, a birth wherein what was previously made of flesh (and spirit) becomes more fully made of spirit (John 1:13 and John 3:3, 5-8).

Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 15 are useful for helping us to understand how this process works. In this chapter, he describes to the believers in Corinth how it is that we, who have bodies made of flesh will receive bodies that are made of spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:35 But some *man* will say, **How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?** 36 *Thou* fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: 37 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*:...42 **So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:** 43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: 44 **It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.** 45 **And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.** 46 **Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.** 47 **The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.** 48 As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly. 49 And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. 50 **Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.** 51 Behold, I shew you a mystery;

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 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.** 53 **For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.** 54 **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. 55 O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory? 56 The sting of death *is* sin; and the strength of sin *is* the law.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul is informing us about spirit bodies. In verse 50 of this passage he clearly refers to Jesus' comments to Nicodemus where he states "that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.** 5 **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.** 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

But in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul not only helps us understand what it means to be born of spirit, but he also gives us an indication for why it is that we must be born of spirit to inherit the kingdom of God. In verse 50-53, Paul states that corruption cannot inherit incorruption.

1 Corinthians 15:50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 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.** 53 **For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.**

In these verses Paul is clearly informing us of why bodies composed of mere flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven. The reason we must be born again (as Jesus put it) in order to see the kingdom of heaven is that our flesh, our human bodies are corruptible. In order to live in the kingdom of God, we must have incorruptible bodies. Or, as Paul calls them in verse 44 of the same chapter, "spiritual bodies," our bodies transformed and now comprised of spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:44 It is sown a natural body; **it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.**

But why must we have incorruptible bodies? Or as John recorded it, why must we become sons of God rather than just sons of men? Or as Jesus puts it, why must we be born of the spirit? Or putting them all together, why must our bodies of flesh be transformed into bodies of spirit? The reason we must have spiritual

bodies is that our human bodies, our bodies of flesh, won't be entirely suitable for the kingdom of God. Why? There are two reasons.

What we know of the coming kingdom of God, and what the Jews knew of the kingdom of God, in part comes from the Book of Daniel where we get the phrases "the kingdom of heaven" and the alternative "kingdom of God" that Jesus discusses throughout His ministry.

Daniel 2:44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Here in Daniel 2 we can see that "the kingdom of God" (or more fully "the kingdom of the God of heaven") will be established on earth after a succession of other earthly kingdoms, but that unlike these kingdoms, which it will destroy and replace, the kingdom of God will have no end. It will be eternal. A similar description within the same theme occurs in Daniel 7.

Daniel 7:13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. 15 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. 16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. 17 These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. 18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever...27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

From these passages in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 we can see the origin of several key New Testament concepts and phrases. Not only does Daniel provide us with the phrase the "kingdom of God," but he also introduces the term "Son of Man," which Jesus often used to identify himself throughout the gospels.

What we learn from all this is that the kingdom of God is an eternal kingdom in which we live in God's presence forever. And, as we can see from verse 27, we can see that this kingdom of God will be on earth, for it is described as being "under the whole heaven." (For comparison, Daniel 9:12 and also Deuteronomy 4:19 use the phrase "under the whole heaven" to refer to the earth.) In order to live forever God is going to make our bodies immortal. This is what is meant by eternal life that we receive through Jesus Christ. As Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 15, we will be suited to live this life eternally in the kingdom only by

receiving an immortal, incorruptible, spirit body at Jesus' return when he sets up his kingdom on earth in accordance with Daniel's visions.

Besides the eternal duration of the kingdom of God, another reason that we will need to be transformed from our mortal bodies of mere flesh and blood (which we received when we were born of our human parents) to spirit bodies (being born again through the resurrection and transformation of our bodies of mere flesh) is because during the kingdom the saints will live in God's presence.

From the Old and New Testaments it is made clear that no mere man has seen God at any time (John 1:18) because to do so would result in a man's death. (More information on this topic is presented in our Trinity Study.) The reason for this is because mortal flesh is not suited to behold God in His full glory. Thus, when the Word of God visited Moses in the Old Testament, He hid his glory from Moses except at Moses' request on Mount Sinai. There the Word allowed Moses to see His back, but not his face. (Likewise, Jesus' incarnation was the Word of God coming to us humbly, as a man, and not in His full glory as God.)

Exodus 33:17 And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. **18 And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.** **19 And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee;** and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. **20 And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.** **21** And the LORD said, Behold, *there is* a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: **22** And it shall come to pass, **while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by:** **23 And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.**

So, in order to live forever in the presence of God, we must be born again with incorruptible bodies that won't be destroyed by God's presence. And this is how Jesus describes eternal life, as immortality, living without perishing.

John 10:10 The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly...**28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish,** neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.

John 10:28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.

This ability to live forever in transformed bodies made of spirit is first indicated to us by Jesus' teaching that resurrected men will be made immortal like the angels.

Luke 20:36 Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children (5207) of God (2316), being the children (5207) of the resurrection.

Jesus' teaching here makes sense within the context of Old Testament terminology. First, the term "sons of God" is the earliest Old Testament name for angels. It is used in Genesis to describe those angels who came down and had children with the daughters of men. And it is used in Job (1:6, 2:1, and 38:7), a book considered by some to be one of the oldest in the scriptures, where we see the angels coming to present themselves before God and as present before the creation of man on Day 6 of Genesis 1. (By contrast the term angel does not appear until Genesis 16.)

The reason that angelic beings were first termed "sons of God" is simple to understand, especially in light of John's comments in John 1:12-14. As we recall from John 1:12-14, our births as men are the result of the human will and effort of our parents. Thus, we are the children of men, created as a result of lines of human reproduction back to Adam.

However, angelic beings are not created through a process of reproduction as when two parents come together and conceive a child born nine months later. Rather, each angel was created directly by God himself. By studying these scriptural concepts together John's comments in John 1:12-14 become even clearer. Through belief in Christ Jesus we will come to be born again, born as sons of God, just as the angels, when God creates from our bodies of flesh and blood bodies of immortal spirit just like those of the angels when he created them.

Thus, we follow the pattern established by Christ that he may be the first born among many brethren, just as Paul states in Romans 8.

Romans 8:29 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.*

First, we are as the first Adam, made of flesh, mortal and from the soil of the earth. Then we are made as the second Adam, who through resurrection became made of spirit, immortal (as wind from heaven) when our earthly bodies are transformed.

1 Corinthians 15:42 So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: 43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: 44 It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. 45 And so it is written, **The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.** 46 Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. 47 **The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven.** 48 **As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly.** 49 **And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.** 50 Now this I say,

brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

At this point we can take a moment to briefly examine a few of Jesus' other remarks to Nicodemus in John 3:7-8, which are more easily understood in light of our larger study of the nature of being born again and being made equal to angels. Having clarified his statements that those born of the Spirit are made of spirit, just as being born of our human parents we have bodies of made of flesh and of the earth, Jesus elaborates on what it means to be born of the spirit.

John 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit (4151), he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit (4151) is spirit (4151). 7 **Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.** 8 **The wind (4151) 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 (4151).** 9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? 10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? 11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. 12 **If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?** 13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, *even* the Son of man which is in heaven.

We can see that the words for "wind" and "Spirit" in verse 8 are the same word in the Greek. In fact, the word for "wind" in verse 8 is the same word as is translated as "spirit" throughout the passage. The reason for this is that the Greek word "pnuema" (Strong's Number 4151) to which we are referring can mean either "wind, spirit, or breath." Thus, Jesus' comments in verse 8 are further indication of the distinction he is drawing being born of flesh, which is to have a body that is composed of the soil of the earth (inherited as a child of Adam) versus having a body that is comprised of spirit or wind and is of the substance of the heavens. (Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 15 that we looked at earlier seem to reflect Jesus' remarks here speaking of heavenly and earthly things in general, but births and bodies more specifically.)

The point that Jesus is making isn't simply some poetic gesture about the spontaneity of born again persons in following God's direction or some other fine-sounding observation. Rather, more within the context, Jesus is saying that those born of the spirit are born or made of a substance comparable to wind. This language points back to Genesis and the typical biblical discussion of angelic or spirit beings when compared to man's being created of the earth.

Hebrews 1:7 And of the angels he saith, **Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.**

With this in mind Jesus is simply describing the movements of a spirit being similar to his own movement after his resurrection, wherein he was able to move

in and out of a building by simply appearing rather than by entering through doorways. This he could do because his human body had been immortalized through his resurrection to an angelic-like state. Thus, he was (as he had indicated to Nicodemus) able to come and go unseen as the wind.

Luke 24:30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake, and gave to them. 31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; **and he vanished out of their sight...**36 And as they thus spake, **Jesus himself stood in the midst of them**, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you. 37 But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit.

John 20:19 Then the same day at evening, being the first *day* of the week, when **the doors were shut** where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, **came Jesus and stood in the midst**, and saith unto them, Peace *be* unto you....26 And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: **then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst**, and said, Peace *be* unto you.

In a passage we looked at earlier (1 Corinthians 15), Paul employs a useful metaphor to illustrate how we, like the resurrected Christ, will receive immortal bodies like the angels. It is the metaphor of the seed.

1 Corinthians 15:35 But some *man* will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? 36 *Thou* fool, **that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: 37 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:...**42 **So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption:** 43 It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: 44 **It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body.**

Of course, Paul's use of this metaphor originates with Jesus' own teaching.

Matthew 13:3 And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, **Behold, a sower went forth to sow;...**18 **Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.** 19 **When any one heareth the word of the kingdom**, and understandeth *it* not, then cometh the wicked *one*, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. **This is he which received seed by the way side.** 20 **But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;** 21 Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. 22 **He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.** 23 **But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth *it*; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.**

Luke 8:4 And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: **5 A sower went out to sow his seed:** and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. **6** And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. **7** And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. **8** And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. **9** And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? **10** And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. **11 Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God.** **12** Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. **13** They on the rock *are they*, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. **14** And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life, and bring no fruit to perfection. **15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.**

In these parables, Jesus describes the Word of God as seed cast into the earth. Over time the seed, if it lands on good soil, brings forth its fruit. Peter also heard Jesus describe his teaching as spirit and life in John 6.

John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: **the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.**...**68** Then **Simon Peter** answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast **the words of eternal life.**

And in his first epistle, Peter drew upon on Jesus' teachings to describe the word as a seed that brings forth everlasting life.

1 Peter 1:23 **Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.** **24** For all flesh *is* as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: **25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.**

James likewise states in contrast that death is the fruit produced by sowing to the desires of the flesh for sin.

James 1:15 **Then when lust hath conceived (4815), it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.**

And finally we have Paul again speaking on this same subject in Galatians.

Galatians 6:8 For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

In each of these passages the concept is made clear. The teachings proclaimed by Jesus Christ (and then by his apostles and disciples) are like a seed sown into the ground of our human bodies (which are made of the soil of the earth). We hear it, believe it, and accept it. Over a process of time (if we keep faithfully Jesus' words until the end) the incorruptible seed of the Word will produce in us a second birth whereby our bodies of flesh and blood are born again and made into spirit bodies. This then is how we are made ready to receive eternal life in the everlasting kingdom of God on earth.

Though it is clear that the process starts with our belief in and acceptance of the Word of God, it is also clear that the process isn't completed there. The process of the rebirth isn't finished until that seed wells up into eternal life.

John 4:36 And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.

John 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water **that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.**

Jesus is clear that though eternal life has begun to grow in us from the moment we accept his teaching, that eternal life really begins in the age (or world) to come when Jesus returns to set up his eternal kingdom on earth.

Matthew 13:24 Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, **The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:** 25 But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. 26 But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. 27 So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? 28 He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? 29 But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. 30 **Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn....**36 **Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.** 37 He answered and said unto them, **He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;** 38 **The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom;** but the tares are the children of the wicked *one*; 39 **The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.**

Matthew 25:31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats:...46 **And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.**

Mark 4:26 And he said, **So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground;** 27 And should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. 28 For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. 29 **But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.**

Mark 10:30 But he shall receive an hundredfold **now in this time**, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; **and in the world to come eternal life.**

John 6:54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, **hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.**

Paul also identifies our adoption as God's sons as ultimately taking place at the point when our bodies are resurrected, redeemed, and glorified just as Jesus' body was when he rose from the dead.

Romans 8:10 And if Christ *be* in you, the body *is* dead because of sin; but the Spirit *is* life because of righteousness. 11 **But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.** 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. 13 For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. 15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 **The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:** 17 **And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.** 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.* 19 **For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.** 20 For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope, 21 **Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.** 22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. 23 And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even **we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.** 24 **For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man**

seeth, why doth he yet hope for? 25 But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait for *it*.

(Notice also how Paul's comments on following the flesh parallel James' comments from James 1:15 that the lusts of the flesh bring forth sin and sin results in death.)

And so we can see the process outlined by the scripture is very much like that of a seed sown into the ground. Our receiving God's Word by believing in Jesus Christ is like children when they are conceived by their parents.

1 Corinthians 4:14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn *you*. **15** For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, **yet *have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.***

Galations 4:19 **My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,**

In this way we are conceived through the seed of the word of God, our Father and we become His children. However, just as the seed must remain in the earth until the harvest has come when it bears its fruit, so the seed of God's Word must remain in us until the coming of the kingdom of God on earth, when it will bear its fruit and produce from our corruptible bodies of flesh and blood, glorious, immortal bodies made of spirit.

We can draw similar conclusions about the salvation that is ours in Christ Jesus to those we have arrived at in our study of being born again. First, Daniel's vision of the eternal kingdom of God replacing the kingdoms of men when it comes to the earth is an essential element in not only what it means to be born again, but what it means to be saved. As it is defined for us in the opening chapter of Luke, the salvation that Jesus would bring would be the very salvation from their enemies that God promised to his people through the patriarchs and described to Daniel through visions in which the kingdoms that persecuted God's people for their belief in God would be destroyed.

Luke 1:69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;...**71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;**...**77** To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

If Daniel's vision is indeed at the heart of the salvation Jesus offers then we would expect that the New Testament would constantly portray that salvation as ultimately coming with the arrival of Jesus' kingdom on earth at the end of this age. And this is exactly what we do find.

Matthew 24:3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and **what *shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?***...**13** **But he that shall endure**

unto the end, the same shall be saved...22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

(Matthew 10:22 And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: but **he that endureth to the end shall be saved.**)

Mark 13:13 And ye shall be hated of all *men* for my name's sake: **but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved...20 And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days.**

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy **hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,** **4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,** **5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.** **6** Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: **7 That the trial of your faith,** being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, **though it be tried with fire,** might be found unto praise and honour and glory **at the appearing of Jesus Christ:** **8** Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see *him* not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: **9** Receiving the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls...**23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.** **24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:** **25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.**

Revelation 12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, **Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God,** and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

Here in these passages we see that our salvation is described in the context of the fiery trial at the end of this age that is meant to bring God's people to faithful obedience as well as to purge the earth of sinful men in preparation for the coming kingdom of God. In this way we see the New Testament indicating that our salvation is a salvation of God's faithful from His coming wrath on the disobedient and the destruction of their rebellious kingdom.

Romans 5:9 Much more then, being now justified by his blood, **we shall be saved from wrath through him.** **10** For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, **we shall be saved by his life.**

1 Thessalonians 5:8 But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, **the hope of salvation.** **9 For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,**

We can see then that our salvation is similar to the process of our rebirth. Jesus explains that if we accept His teaching and live obedient to Him, we have already passed from death to life.

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, **He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.** **25** Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. **26** For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; **27** And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. **28** Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, **29** And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

These passages show that our initial belief and acceptance of Christ is a past and completed event. However, in the larger sense, what we are saved from (God's wrath upon the world of the ungodly) has not yet occurred and so we have not yet attained this salvation, but must endure until the end. Therefore, though our belief in Christ (which paves the way for our salvation) is a past event, the salvation itself is a still future event that coincides in time with our being reborn.

Romans 13:11 And that, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep: **for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.**

Philippians 2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.**

With this in mind we are continually encouraged in the New Testament to remain in Christ's teaching, renewing our mind in the Word that we might be faithful unto the end and receive our eternal inheritance when Christ comes. (Christ's instructions, if we remain in them, will keep us in line to receive the coming salvation.)

John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. **As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.** **5 I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit:** for without me ye can do nothing. **6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast *them* into the fire, and they are burned.** **7 If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.**

Colossians 3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. 2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 **For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.** 4 **When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.** 5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: 6 **For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:** 7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. 8 **But now ye also put off all these;** anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. 9 Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; 10 **And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:** 11 Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond *nor* free: but Christ *is* all, and in all. 12 **Put on therefore,** as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;

2 Corinthians 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but **though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.** 17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, **worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;** 18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: **for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.** **5:1** For we know that **if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.** 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: 3 If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. 4 For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, **but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.** 5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, **who also hath given unto us the earnest (728) of the Spirit.** 6 Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord:

Ephesians 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by **Jesus Christ** to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; 8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10 **That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:** 11 **In whom also we have obtained an inheritance,** being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13 **In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,** praise of his glory. 14 **Which is the earnest (728) of our**

inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 4:20 But ye have not so learned Christ; 21 If so be that ye have heard him, **and have been taught by him**, as the truth is in Jesus: 22 **That ye put off concerning the former conversation (391) the old man**, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; 23 **And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;** 24 **And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.** 25 **Wherefore putting away lying**, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another. 26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: 27 Neither give place to the devil. 28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth. 29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. 30 **And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.** 31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, **be put away from you**, with all malice: 32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. 1 **Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;**

1 Corinthians 15:2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

Lastly before we end this study it is helpful to comment on another parallel that extends from Jesus' teaching and ministry back to Genesis. In his own words, as we have seen, Jesus identifies himself, among other things, as the only way to the Father.

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

The teachings, which Jesus gave to us from the Father, are spirit and life for us. In fact, they are the seeds of eternal life.

John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: **the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.**...68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast **the words of eternal life.**

Therefore, for us, keeping Jesus' commands will result in eternal life in God's presence in the kingdom.

John 12:50 And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

Matthew 19:17 And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is* none good but one, *that is*, God: **but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.**

In this way, Jesus becomes the way of restoration back to the life in God's presence that was available to man in the garden of Eden. The only difference is that prior to the flood (such as with Adam and Eve) life in God's presence was not permanent. Rather it was made possible through the temporary sustenance provided by the fruit of the tree of life. Thus, when man disobeyed God's command prior to the flood, he was cast of the garden of Eden and the way was guarded so that he could not re-enter God's presence or eat of the tree of life and life forever.

Genesis 2:8 And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; **the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.**...15 And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. 16 **And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.**...3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, **she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.**...22 And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: **and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:** 23 Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. 24 So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, **to keep the way of the tree of life.**

But now, in Christ the fellowship with God, which was possible in the garden before the flood and which was lost through disobedience to God's command, has been restored. In obedience to God's commands in Christ we can come again into God's presence and dwell with Him, this time eternally through the resurrection of our bodies as immortal spirits equal to angels (rather than temporarily through the sustenance provided by the tree of life).

In summary, we have seen in this study that the overall New Testament description of being born again encompasses much more than simply our initial belief in Christ or the behavioral change that should accompany that belief. Instead, it is a process similar to a seed planted and remaining in the earth until the time has come for it to bear its fruit. In this way our acceptance of Christ is the Word of God entering into the earthen bodies that we received from our human parents. And if we keep that word to the coming of the kingdom of God (on earth) that seed will well-up and change our mortal bodies of flesh into immortal, incorruptible spirit bodies and we will be equal to the angels suited to live forever in God's presence. In this way, we might say that we are even now God's children, being conceived of by the seed of the Word, but we are not yet born

again (at least in any complete sense) as we have not yet received the redemption, glorification, and immortalizing of our bodies.

Similarly, though our acceptance of Jesus is what provides for our being saved, salvation is not something that we now possess or have achieved. Instead, we have seen that salvation occurs for us at a specific time in the future when God's wrath destroys the world of the ungodly and replaces it with the kingdom of Christ. Only by enduring until that time and by abiding in God's Word by keeping his teaching will we be saved.

In order to be saved on that day and to receive the spirit bodies suited for our eternal inheritance in the kingdom we must keep God's teaching through the renewing of our mind in His Word, turning away from the incorrect understanding of the world around us and the sinful behavior which results from it, which focus on the flesh and disobedience that will only produce eternal death. With this purpose and hope in our minds we are to press forward faithfully until that time when we receive our promised eternal inheritance in Christ Jesus in that coming kingdom.