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“REGENERATION” AND ITS PURPOSE IN THE SALVATION OF MAN

This work gives a theological understanding of the term “being born again”, it is noted that it is a gift of the Holy Spirit, as the birth of a new (spiritual) person who receives certain charisms that enable him to be morally stable and believe in Salvation.

Key words: birth again, gifts, charisms, healing, moral stability, spirituality.

У даній роботі дається богословське розуміння терміну “народження згори», відзначаючи, що це дар Святого Духа, як народження нової (духовної) людини, яка отримує певні харизми, що дозволяють їй бути морально стійкою і вірити в Спасіння.

Ключові слова: народження згори, дари, харизми, цілення, моральна стійкість, духовність.

The relevance of the problem lies in the fact that the author gives a theological understanding of the term “being born again” as the process of creating a new (spiritual) person.

Degree of research on the problem: most of the works of Henry Clarence Thiessen, Millard Erickson, Fritz Rienecker, Paul Enns, Stanley Horton, Charles Spurgeon, James Packer, Cloud Townsend give a theological interpretation of the process of being born again, as the birth of a new person from the Holy Spirit, which involves receiving certain charisms: healing, glossolalia, a morally stable person – a Christian.

Statement of the main material. Being born again is a biblical term, a concept of theology. Among Christian denominations, there are certain differences in the understanding of both the term “born again” and its semantic characteristics.

The etymology of the concept of “being born again” comes from the words of Jesus Christ in a conversation with the Jewish rabbi Nicodemus, according to which being born again is a prerequisite for a person’s entry into the Kingdom of God. We read: Jesus answered and said to him: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”. Nicodemus said to him: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”. Jesus replied, “Most assuredly, I say to you, *unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3–5).

In historic churches, as well as in most Lutheran and Anglican denominations, it is traditionally believed that “being born again, being born of water and the Spirit, takes place in the sacrament of baptism.

Baptist, Mennonite, Reform, Pentecostal, and other evangelical churches believe that “being born again” and water baptism are very different events.

Among Christian theologians, it is common to interpret “water” (John 3:3–5) as an allegory for the Word of God, or the first, bodily birth of man.

What does it mean to be born again? For many, this is a mystery. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 we read that the true, regenerated Christian is a new creation. This means a radical change. According to the doctrine, the born-again person receives a new heart, new feelings, thoughts, tastes, diametrically opposite to the previous ones. Can it achieve such a dramatic change on its own? It should be noted that “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? *Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil*” (Jer.13:23).

Spiritual birth is the work of the Holy Spirit. He who created us can give us a new heart, make us a new creation. Christ says that man must be born of “water and the Spirit”. The water mentioned here is none other than the Word of God, which purifies the heart of our inner man (John 15:3).

The Word of God, received by man, is the Divine seed from which a new spiritual life is born (James 1:18; I Pet. 1:23). The Spirit of which Christ spoke is the Holy Spirit. It is through the Holy Spirit that God regenerates sinful man and makes him His child (Titus 3:5). Let us now consider the words of Jesus Christ in His conversation with Nicodemus: “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”. “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:3–5).

The apostle James says in his epistle: “Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures” (James 1:18). The apostle Peter says: “Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Pet. 1:23).

From these passages in the New Testament, we can see that the first factor that is necessary for being born again is the Word of God. But the Word of God alone is not enough to be born again, because many people read the Word of God and even memorize it, but it does not affect or have any effect in them. Only when the Holy Spirit acts through the Word of God on a person, his heart is moved with pity and is able to receive the Good News – the Gospel. All our eloquent sermons cannot do what the Holy Spirit does through God’s Word.

Here, in a conversation with Nicodemus, Christ says: “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*” (John 3:6). That is, our spirit must be born of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

The book of Ezekiel says: “And it shall be *that* every living thing that moves, wherever the rivers go, will live” (Ezekiel, chapter 47:9). Where the Word of God and the Holy Spirit enter, everything lives.

We have observed more than once that this or that person attended worship services for many years and remained an unrepentant person. But one day the Holy Spirit touched his heart through the Word of God, and he came forward and repented. Evangelical Christians believe that being born again occurs at the same time as repentance and conversion to God.

Regeneration, accordingly, is a new birth, a second birth, the creation of a new one. It is the creation by the Holy Spirit of a new human life, which is called a “new creature” or a new, renewed man.

Like the first birth, it is an event, not a process, although it can take many days, weeks, months, and even years from the first conviction of sin to regeneration. A person’s real birth is his second birth, his birth from above, when he passes from darkness to light. This day becomes his new birthday, from this moment a person begins a new life. On God’s side, a change of heart is called regeneration, a new birth, and on the human side, it is called conversion. In regeneration the soul is passive, in conversion it is active. Regeneration can be defined as the transfer of the life of God to the soul (John 3:5, 10:10,28), as the endowment of a new nature (2 Pet. 1:4) or the heart (Jer. 24:7; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26), as the creation of a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10; 4:24). This new spiritual life affects:

- the intellect of the believer (I Cor. 2:14; Eph. 1:18; Col. 3:10);
- the freedom of the believer (Phil. 2:13; 2 Thess. 3:5; Heb. 13:21);
- the emotions of the believer (Matt. 5:4; and Pet. 1:8).

Being born again is a great work that is unique to the Holy Spirit. This is something that can happen unnoticed by a person (John 3:8), but its consequences are sure to appear later. We must pray that each of us will manifest these effects every day, all days of our lives.

As a result of regeneration, the heart changes, hatred and aversion to sin and love for Christ appear in it, in general, the whole life changes. Like streams of living water, new, holy desires begin to flow out of a person (John 4:14). A new life is full of love and good deeds. “*He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water*” (7:38).

What does the Bible text say about being born again? There was a certain man of the Pharisees, Nicodemus by name, the ruler of the Jews. He came to Christ in the night and said to him: “Teacher, we know that you came from God as a teacher, for no one can perform such miracles as you do”.

Jesus replied: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “*How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?*” Jesus answered, “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, “You must be born again”*” (John 3:1–7). “*You must be born again*” – these words of the Lord Jesus Christ are important and are one of the fundamental words in the matter of salvation and man’s participation in eternity. These words were spoken to the pious, deeply moral teacher of his people, an influential religious man – Nicodemus. It was to him that these words were addressed: “*Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*”. The proclaimed truth certainly could not be underestimated by its significance, and it could not be treated without special attention.

From these words, it is evident that not only Nicodemus needed to be born again, but all people need to be born again. In the Gospel, accordingly, the place given to this topic is very important.

George Whitefield, an English evangelist and pastor of the Anglican Church, one of the founders of the Methodist Church and a leader of spiritual awakening, a famous Christian reformer of the eighteenth century, is said to have been half of his work in preaching about being born again. When someone asked him why he talked about it so often, he replied, “*Because all people really need to be born again, without exception*”. This is the main basis for the proclamation of this important and necessary truth.

But in spite of all its importance and significance in our time, this subject is seldom and very little proclaimed by modern preachers. Moreover, this truth is unknown to many people who consider themselves Christians and belong to different Christian faiths.

This is what prompted the author to research, analyze the differences, substantiate and assert this important and necessary gospel theme. As we examine this teaching of the New Testament, we find in the words of Jesus Christ the following five questions, to which the Lord Himself answers:

- Who is to be born again?
- What does it mean to be born again?
- Why do you need to be born again?
- How can you know if a person is born again?
- What are the consequences of being born again?

Who is to be born again? Among nominal Christians, that is, Christians who have just borne that name, there is a view that only one particular circle of people needs to be born again. The words of Jesus Christ, in their view, are radical and even “revolutionary” and therefore cannot apply to all people. Insofar as they refer to some, it is only to sinners, to lost people, to whom these words about the regeneration, the being born again, apply.

They assert that for a person who has been brought up in a Christian environment, a member of a church, a baptized person, who has received a religious upbringing, who has attended services and led a proper lifestyle, no regeneration is required. He is already a Christian and needs to stick to his church and fulfill all church requirements. And by living in this way, a person will certainly be saved.

But the Word of God says otherwise: “*Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*”. As we already know, these words were spoken by the Lord not to any impious person or thief, but, on the contrary, to a representative of a high religious society in the days of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. And that is why such a common opinion among people is very dangerous.

Let us come back to the person of Nicodemus and pay special attention to him. The apostle John tells us that Nicodemus was a Pharisee. Today, Pharisaism largely reflects hypocrisy, namely, the wrong attitude of many Pharisees to the Lord, in which they did not recognize the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

It should not be forgotten that Pharisaism was at the same time a very strict orthodox religious grouping. It arose 400 years before the coming of Christ, when there were no new discoveries or

new prophets of God. Pharisaism was born as a religious movement against the unbelief of Israel. Pharisaism was a current of religious awakening and had considerable influence. In the days of Jesus Christ's mortal life, being a Pharisee was not so easy. It was necessary to endure serious tests in relation to faithfulness to the Word of God.

The Pharisees were expected to have sound teaching and a healthy interpretation of Scripture. Nicodemus belonged to this religious movement. And it was to him that Jesus said: *"You must be born again"*.

Nicodemus was also a member of the Sanhedrin, which is a spiritual tribunal. The decision of the Sanhedrin was final and could not be appealed. The Sanhedrin was considered the supreme authority on the interpretation of Scripture. Since Nicodemus was a member of this institution, the apostle John called him *"a ruler of the Jews"*. Such was Nicodemus, to whom the Lord said: *"You must be born again"* The Lord calls Nicodemus *"a teacher of Israel"* (John 3:10). This indicates Nicodemus' knowledge of the Scriptures, which is related to the religious life of Israel. Although Nicodemus knew the Scriptures, he had no idea of being born again and did not know the way to salvation. He performed the prescribed rituals and ceremonies, but he did not have in himself the Life of God, which is given only through being born again. Although Nicodemus was one of the pious people in Israel, he remained like everyone else – a sinner.

If he had lived in our days, perhaps he would have been a theologian, he would have occupied an honorable place in the religious world, the author of theological works. After all, the Lord called Nicodemus *"a teacher of Israel"*. But he was not saved, and he had to be born again!

Nicodemus was not a hypocrite. It is good when a person is pious and obedient to the Word of God. Everyone should be like that, and moreover, spiritually born again. But Nicodemus did not understand this, he considered himself and his religious qualities sufficient enough. Today, too, there are many such people who work honestly, sincerely in churches, but not born again, not born of God. They may also believe that they attend worship services, recite memorized prayers, know some of the scriptures, keep some commandments, and believe that these are sufficient for salvation. And that's why they don't even think about being born again. What a tragedy! Without the new birth there is no salvation, without it man is spiritually dead and will depart into eternal perdition!

Nicodemus was honest. When he came to Christ, he immediately said: *"You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him"* (John 3:2).

Nicodemus is admired for his sincerity. He was in search of the truth. The Lord revealed to Nicodemus that only through regeneration can man see and understand spiritual truths. Nicodemus was a "son of the covenant of God" because he belonged to the people with whom God made a covenant, not only at Mount Sinai, but much earlier through the patriarch Abraham. Through this people, Christ the Messiah came into the world. Nicodemus was taught all that all godly Israelites knew. He belonged to the great society of "the people of God" in the world, but he remained an unsaved man. And so the Lord says to him, *"You must be born again"*.

What does it mean to be born again? No matter how simple the words of the Lord are, the truth of being born again remains little or not at all understood by people. Many people today believe that there is no need for regeneration, even that it does not exist and can be replaced by something else, such as high morality, decent living, baptism, good works. In addition, the true birth again is badly disfigured and perverted, especially by those who have fallen under the influence of various false teachings.

"How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked Jesus Christ. It was impossible for Nicodemus to be born of the flesh a second time. He understood that an old man who has lived his life cannot bring back his life anew, much less to be born again. He did not know, it was not revealed to him, that man's inner nature is sinful and spiritually dead. This is how the Word of God reflects it: *"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me"* (Psalm 51:5), *"all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags"* (Isa. 64:6), *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately*

wicked; *Who can know it?»* (Jer. 17:9), *“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man”* (Mark 7:21–23). *“There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one”*

“Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; The poison of asps is under their lips; Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:10–18). These words with great accuracy convey God’s picture of our sinful nature, the nature of our “heart”, which it is born into this world and which it remains until the end of the earthly days of life. In all cases of sound judgment and the testimony of the Word of God, a person does not turn to the Lord for being born again but confines himself to some attempts to “disguise” and “beautify” his corrupt, sinful nature in order to give himself an appearance—upbringing, education, various circumstances, religiosity. But this has no spiritual values.

All this does not make a person righteous in the sight of God. After all, you can train a predatory animal to jump through a hoop, sit on a chair, perform various commands, but at its core it remains a bloodthirsty beast that hides its brutal nature. God does not correct man’s old sinful nature, but creates a new creature in man, which is not a “remodeling” of the old nature in a new way, but an entirely new life in Jesus Christ. The words of the Apostle Paul are appropriate here: *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”* (2 Cor. 5:17). This is the true meaning of the words spoken by the Lord to Nicodemus, and the Apostle Peter confirms this: *“... having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever”* (1 Pet. 1:23). In the second supernatural birth, i.e., from above, man is born of the incorruptible seed of the life-giving Word of God, which is *“... spirit, and ... life”* (John 6:63). *“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation”* (Gal. 6:15.)

Too many modern “modernist theologians” reject much of the divinely inspired Word of God, trying to renew or subjugate man’s sinful nature through their own efforts, and thus do what God has condemned. They want to change sinful man: they develop religiosity in him; make it faithful to various ecclesiastical rites and ceremonies; they want to raise the moral level by using education, external culture, and in general various “highest achievements” of the human mind. But all this is fruitless work, just as one began to cloth a dead man in fine clothes.

It should also be emphasized that Christ did not speak of being born again with the immoral Samaritan woman or with other known sinners. They themselves were aware of their own need, and there was no need to convince them of the corruption of their hearts. With Nicodemus it was just different; he considered himself righteous, and it did not even occur to him that he needed a new nature. That is why, in a conversation with him, Christ repeated several times about the way of salvation, at the same time, noting that Nicodemus, if he is not born again, then neither his good qualities, nor his religiosity, nor other qualities will save him, but he *“must be born again”*. From all this follows the assertion that Christ came to save from sin and from religious piety. Such was the case with Nicodemus.

To the chief priests and elders of the people, Christ said: *“Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you”* (Matt. 21:31). It is more likely for unfortunate sinners like tax collectors and prostitutes to come to God than for pious but spiritually unregenerated “righteous” people.

A sinner, having received his sight by the grace of God, sees his own condition, but a self-righteous member of the church who has not committed particularly grave sins, how can he be called to repentance? He will only be offended.

Until the unregenerated person sees his position, how can he be helped? It remains in a very dangerous condition. Christ says: *“I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance”* (Mark 2:17), and also *“for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10).

Why is regeneration essential? Christ gave a clear and comprehensive answer: *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”* (John 3:6–7).

The law of physical reproduction of life, *“according to its kind...»* was laid down by God in all living things at its creation. *“Then God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth’; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good”* (Gen. 1:11–12). Three times in these two verses, Scripture affirms the order in which plant life is propagated—*“according to its kind”*. God said the same thing about the life of the animal world: *“Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind”; and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And God saw that it was good”* (Gen 1:24–25).

In announcing in these words the truth of the creation of life, God uses the same expression for the second time: *“according to its kind”* life reproduces only itself. From the moment of creation, life is subject to the law of God and therefore invariably reproduces only *“according to its kind”*.

Contrary to the theory of evolution, there has never been a violation of the law of God. No matter what people say, the law of God stands immutable, and that is the expression *“that which is born of the flesh is flesh”* means. The immutable law is confirmed by the word of Christ when He told Nicodemus that that which is born of the flesh is flesh. The flesh gives birth only to the flesh.

Spirit can never be born from “flesh”. The flesh may be godly, as in Nicodemus, or it may be impious, moral, or immoral, but it has no spiritual meaning. For every unsaved sinner, whether it be the godly Nicodemus or the wicked thief, must be born again, of God!

Everything that is born of the flesh, of the “flesh” has only the nature of our common progenitor Adam, that is, as it has been since the Fall.

Let us pay attention to what the Word of God says about this: *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned”* (Rom. 5:12).

The same truth is repeated in the following verses of the same chapter of the Word of God: *“For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous”* (Rom. 5:17–19).

Spiritually, Adam died on the day of the Fall. His physical death occurred only after more than 900 years. This is what the Word of God says: *“...for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die”* (Gen. 2:17). And as a consequence of the violation of God’s command, we read: *“... Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years; and he died”*. (Gen. 5:3–5). After dying spiritually, Adam lost fellowship with God, and he was no longer able to regain it. Adam’s nature became sinful, and he himself became spiritually “dead to God”. Because of Adam’s sin, all mankind was under a curse because “all have sinned in him”.

The Hebrew word “Adam” appears more than 550 times in the Old Testament. Used there in the sense of “man” and “mankind” and only in the initial chapters of the book of Genesis, it has the meaning of the personal name of the first created man.

The New Testament reveals the spiritual and physical consequences of Adam's fall for all mankind. And so the word "Adam" is again used in the sense of the proper name of our forefather. Like all living creation, so in Adam the law of reproduction was instilled: "*be fruitful and multiply*". And "reproduction" began only after the Fall. Sin and death entered Adam, and then his spiritual nature was damaged and fellowship with God was lost.

Adam's entire race was potentially in him, and therefore Adam was all mankind. And then we see what Adam became after the Fall. Potentially, this is how we were born. The Bible testifies that "... *And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings*" (Acts 17:26). And also, about the inherited nature, we can refer to the words of the psalmist: "*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me*" (Ps. 51:7).

Those who do not see our unity with Adam are mistaken, and that original sin is not our sin, and that we have inherited its consequences "unjustly". We should not forget that at the Fall we were "one" with Adam, and his sin was the sin of all.

That is why in every human being born into the world lives the sinful Adamic nature. Therefore, every human being, without exception, needs to be born again from God, from "the water and the Spirit". Man does not come into the world sinless or as a "little saint", but with a corrupted sinful nature, a potential sinner. It doesn't take long for the "little saint" to openly reveal his Adamic nature, which is typical of every sinner.

With further growth and its development, the varieties of sinful manifestations also multiply. No, it doesn't have that (man-made) "spark of God" what people called the "spark" was extinguished in Adam's spiritual death at the Fall, and therefore the need of every man is not to fan the "spark" of old Adam, but to be "born again".

The eternal Son of God, having loved the whole world when we were enemies of God and inherited eternal destruction, willed to die for us, that we might receive again what we lost on the day of the fall of man in Adam.

What does the phrase "*and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*" mean and what do we understand by it. By His grace in Christ Jesus, God offers people salvation, that is, the possibility of a new birth in the "last Adam" – Christ, the birth of the Spirit of God. The new, i.e., God's nature in the born-again man is called the "new man, "the "new creation in Christ"».

God opens up the possibility of spiritual victory in Jesus Christ. And this victorious life over sin, the world, and the devil is called sanctification by the Word of God. The Scriptures say this: "... *that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor", for we are members of one another*" (Eph. 4:22–25). We are faced with the question, how can we know if a person is born again? The answer is that the born-again live a righteous life. "*If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him*" (1 John 2:29). He who is born again does not live in sin, as it is written: "*Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him*" (1 John 3:9). The new divine nature in us cannot sin: "*We know that whoever is born of God does not sin*" (1 John 5:18). The born-again fulfills the commandment of love, "... *and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God*" (Luke 10:27; 1 John 4:7).

He who is born again lives a victorious life: "*For whatever is born of God overcomes the world*" (1 John 5:4). The born-again believes that Jesus is the Christ. "*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God*" (1 John 5:1). As a result of the new birth, the heart changes, it develops hatred for sin and love for Christ; in general, the whole life changes. Like streams of living water, new holy desires begin to flow out of a person (1 John 4:4). The new life is full of love and good works: "*He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water*" (John 7:38).

Scripture states that there are a number of unconditional outcomes that result from regeneration. They are of such a nature that they serve as a test to see if the soul has been reborn.

The born-again falls under the following truths:

- Whoever who is born of God overcomes temptation (1 John 3:9; 5:4,18);
- Loves brothers (1 John 5:1);
- Loves God (1 John 4:19, 5:2);
- Loves the Word of God (Ps. 119:97; 1 Pet. 2:2);
- Loves his enemies (Matt. 5:44);
- A regenerated person also enjoys certain privileges of a child of God, the satisfaction of his needs (Matt. 7:11);
- A person born of God is an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ.

Without regeneration there is neither salvation nor a true Christian, and many consider themselves Christians and do not understand this truth, and therefore cannot have blessings or joy in the Lord in their lives.

What is the relationship between the terms “water and spirit”? Jesus replied to Nicodemus: “*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God*” (John 3:5). Not everyone agrees with the understanding of the word “water” in Christ’s answer to Nicodemus. Others think that this refers to physical water and therefore refer to water baptism. However, this understanding is alien to God’s Word. “Water baptism” and “being born again” are not the same thing. These terms refer to completely different spiritual truths, which have a separate and independent meaning.

Moreover, turning water baptism into a “means” of being born again is downright sinful. It’s because it encroaches on the work of redemption completed by the Lord Jesus Christ, which is accepted by faith and does not require any additional human actions. The Calvary Sacrifice of Jesus Christ is complete and does not require any additional action on the part of man in the matter of the redemption of the human race in order to complete anything that would be lacking in it.

To such attempts to interpret and diminish the grace of God in Christ, which awaits its “renewal” by the works of man, the Word of God provokes “anathema” (Gal. 1:8–9). According to the Gospel, water baptism is, on the one hand, a confession of the sinner’s already accomplished conversion to Christ, of the sinful life already abandoned by him and of salvation already accepted by him; and on the other hand, the likeness of the burial of the old sinful life and the likeness of the resurrection with Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:12, 6:1–6; 1 Pet. 3:21; Acts 8:35–37, 18:8).

What does the Scriptures say about the word “water”? In addition to the literal meaning found in nature, the word “water” has three symbolic meanings in Scripture:

1. When speaking of an abundance of water, the Word of God often refers to “the judgments of God”. For example, the waters of the Flood in Noah’s day, or as the psalmist says of himself: “*...All Your waves and billows have gone over me*” (Psalm 41:8).

2. When the Word of God speaks of “water” to quench spiritual thirst, it indicates the action of the Holy Spirit in believers (John 4:13–14, 7:37).

3. And when “water” is mentioned for spiritual washing or purification, it refers to the Word of God, such as “*...the washing of water by the word*” (Eph. 5:26).

From these words, as from the context, it is clear that the Holy Scriptures speak of the “water” of the Word of God. Through His Word, God cleanses the heart of the sinner, rebukes him for his sins, and leads him to true true repentance.

Even this passage of the Word of God would have been enough to convince us of the correctness of the meaning of the word “water” in the Lord’s conversation with Nicodemus. But Scripture gives other passages that say the same thing, for example: “*You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you*” (John 15:3). Similarly, James 1:18 says, “*Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures*” (James 1:18).

Or, “having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever” (1 Pet. 1:23).

All of these words make it clear that being born again is through the “water” of God’s Word, not physical water. This is also written in Titus 3:5: “...not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit”. And although the “washing” is spoken of here, the Holy Spirit is meant, not water baptism. Therefore, along with the words combining the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, it must be said that it means “...unless anyone is born of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit...”.

In other words, God awakens the heart of the sinner and, through His Word and through the Holy Spirit, rebukes sins and calls for salvation in Christ.

Thus, “water” in its spiritual sense, when it refers to “purification” or “washing”, it refers to the Word of God, and when it refers to spiritual thirst, it refers to the Holy Spirit.

What are the consequences of being born again? The greatest result of being born again is that the regenerated person already has two opposite natures, the new and the old. The regeneration does not destroy the “old Adam”, but the old nature of the child of God remains with the new. And the old sinful nature cannot be corrected, but the new one does not sin and cannot – it is holy and blameless. The old one pleases the body, and the new one desires holiness and service to God.

A regenerated person immediately becomes aware of his own depravity, which constantly wants to turn him away from God, from service and fidelity to God.

The presence of the two natures in the regenerated man leads to an inner struggle. Inner conflict in a reborn person is not something wrong or abnormal.

There is no such conflict in the unregenerated man because he has one nature – old Adam. This is a habitual, native element for him, and his whole life flows in this direction in communication with other unregenerated people like himself. Invisibly, the prince of this world, the devil reigns there, with demons (fallen spirits) subordinate to him.

The end of such a road for man is eternal destruction. An unregenerated person has no Savior, no salvation, no joy in Christ and His Word, no peace with God, and no peace in the heart at all. Instead of true peace, the unsaved sinner can only have the fear of some false peace, the peace of spiritual death, which has nothing to do with the peace of God.

Having accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, the child of God immediately knows from his own experience that all the forces of evil have armed himself against him. But at the same time, he sees something else, that relations with the world and worldly interests have become alien. And it can boldly resist all attacks from all evil. And this is the open proof that he experienced regeneration.

After that, does it make sense to define what we mean by “flesh” and “spirit”? I would like to point out that the holier and more righteous the life of a child of God is, and the closer he is in spiritual communion with the Lord, the more clearly he experiences the corruption of his “flesh” and the more resolutely he struggles with it. Like the apostle Paul, she says: “*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells*” (Rom. 7:18). A man who lives a holy life never needs to be reminded of the sinfulness of his Adamic nature, nor will he ever be exalted in his righteousness. At the same time, it is impossible to be in the presence of a truly saved person and not feel how different he is from the people of this world.

With the passage of time, the corruption of the old nature will become a greater and greater burden to the child of God. The more the manifestations of the old life are suppressed by the power of God, the clearer become the worries of the child of God described by the Apostle Paul: “*For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil*

I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:15–24).

The Apostle Paul does not deny the presence of the old nature in himself. He acknowledges that in him, in the apostle, there is a struggle between the nature of Christ and the nature of Adam. The Apostle Paul knew from experience that it is impossible to overcome this nature by one's own power, and he points this out and gives thanks to God for granting him victory in Christ Jesus, while at the same time pointing out how it was accomplished. *“I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin”*. (Rom. 7:25). Here the conclusion suggests itself: *“... Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law”*. (Gal. 5:16–18). *“But be filled with the Spirit”* (Eph. 5:18).

When does “human nature's separation” occur? It is necessary to openly and unquestioningly recognize the important truths in our lives, namely: the existence of two natures in a man born from above, the new and the old, and the struggle between them, as well as the necessity of accepting the conditions of liberation through the victory of the new life over the old. *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us”* (1 John 1:8–10).

There is no better way to express this truth than that described in the verse. It is a mistake to insist on the sinless perfection of born-again people. If we assert the opposite, then the Word of God tells us, *“...we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us”*.

But the apostle John goes even further, arguing that to assert one's sinless perfection is to present oneself to God as a liar and *“and His word is not in us”*. But in the same epistle, the Apostle John no less categorically asserts the seemingly opposite, namely: *“Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God”* (1 John 3:9).

Despite the seeming contradiction, at first glance, there is none! The first two verses speak of the old nature, which the apostle John identifies with sin. As we can see, the Apostle Paul says the same: *“But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me”* (Rom. 7:17).

The old nature is akin to sin. But in the last verse of this chapter, the apostle John speaks of the new nature of God's man, who cannot sin because he is born of God! Everything is refuted and becomes clear if you think about every word of Scripture.

An old man is capable of only one thing and that is to sin. A new man born of God cannot sin! *“if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation”* (2 Cor. 5:17).

How, then, can we conquer “the flesh”? Is it really necessary for a child of God to always be in wrestling with “the flesh”? Of course it is! But in this struggle it is the Holy Spirit who wins. It all depends on what kind of nature we support and “feed”. If we support Adam's “old” sin nature and disdain the new spiritual nature, then more often than not, victory will be on Adam's side.

There is spiritual food – God's Word! If we live like the world and love it, then of course a spiritual person will get sick and may die. It all depends on how much time we devote to praying, reading, and studying God's Word. Someone has said that a person is who he feeds on. Life will reflect what or what we consume, that is, what our spiritual food is. *“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord”* (Col. 3:16).

Definition and Meaning of Regeneration. Regeneration is the supernatural action of the Holy Spirit, through the Holy Word of God, in the heart of man. It should be noted that regeneration or

being born again changes the state of spiritual death in which a person finds himself, it is always a certain meaningful fullness, which is expressed in the following:

1. By nature, people are spiritually dead in their transgressions and sins. *“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others”* (Eph. 2:1–3).

2. Man’s nature is sinful. *“For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh”* (Rom. 8:3).

3. Man’s carnal nature and his lusts have a powerful influence on man’s life itself, *“that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit”* (Rom. 8:4).

4. Man’s life is influenced by his sinful nature, which is at enmity with God: *“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God”* (Rom. 8:7–8). Being born again brings a person out of spiritual death. *“And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins”* (Eph. 2:1).

It should be said that man alone cannot get out of the state of spiritual death.

1. Man, in his sinful nature, cannot please God. A person cannot change his spiritual state, just as he cannot change the color of his skin. *“Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil”* (Jer. 13:23) It should be noted that being born again is a supernatural action of the Holy Spirit, which is determined by three indicators.

1. Supernatural because it is performed by Almighty God Himself.

“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood” (Gal 1:15–16).

2. The Holy Spirit gives life and brings back to life.

“...Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:5–6).

3. Gives power to be children of God *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”* (John 1:12–13).

The revival of the power of the Holy Spirit is described in different ways in the pages of the Gospel:

1. As Birth *“unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. ... unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”* (John 3:3,5; see also James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23).

2. Being born again is adoption: *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father”. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”* (Rom. 8:14-16; see also John 1:12).

3. As a new creation: *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new »* (2 Cor. 5:17). *“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation”* (Gal. 6:15).

4. As a renewal: *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit”* (Titus 3:5–6).

5. Transition from death to life. *“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren”* (1 John 3:14).

Note that the Holy Spirit uses various methods to revive a person. The Word of Truth is his primary tool. The Holy Spirit, through the Word of God, enlightens man and brings him to the realization

of his sinfulness, leads him to repentance and confession before God. *“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account”* (Heb. 4:12–13). *“But the word of the Lord endures forever”*. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you” (1 Pet. 1:25).

A person can also be revived through baptism. What is regeneration through baptism? Regeneration by baptism is the conviction that baptism is necessary for salvation, or, more precisely, that a person will not be regenerated until he has undergone the rite of water baptism.

Regeneration through water baptism is preached by numerous Christian denominations, but it is most zealously supported by the churches of the restorationist movement, including the Church of Christ and the International Church of Christ.

Proponents of this theory point to biblical texts such as Mark 16:16 to support their beliefs; John 3:5; Acts.2:38; 22; 1 Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21.

Indeed, at first glance, these passages indicate that baptism is necessary for salvation. However, there are convincing biblical and contextual interpretations of these verses that do not support regeneration through baptism.

Proponents of regeneration through baptism usually follow a four-part formula for obtaining salvation. They assert that a person must believe, repent, confess, and be baptized in order to be saved. In their view, some biblical passages indicate that each of these actions is necessary for salvation. For example, in Romans 10:9–10, salvation is associated with confession, and in Acts. 2:38 – With repentance and baptism.

Repentance, according to the Bible, is necessary for salvation. Repentance is the transformation of the mind. With regard to salvation, repentance is a change in our attitude, from rejecting Christ to accepting Him. It is not a step separate from saving faith, but rather an important aspect of it. No one can accept Jesus Christ as Savior by grace through faith without changing their minds about who He is and what He has accomplished.

Confession, according to the Bible, is a demonstration of faith. If a person has truly accepted Jesus Christ as Savior, the result will be a declaration of faith to others. If a person is ashamed of Christ or the preaching of the Good News, then most likely he has not understood the gospel and has not experienced the salvation provided by Christ.

Baptism, according to the Bible, is identification with Christ. It illustrates believers' union with Jesus in death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–4). As with confession, if a person does not want to be baptized—refuses to acknowledge his or her life as redeemed by Jesus Christ—then he or she may not have become a new creation (2 Cor 5:17) through faith in Jesus Christ.

Proponents of regeneration through baptism do not consider these four components to be works by which a person earns his salvation. Repentance, confession, etc., do not make a person worthy of salvation. Instead, they believe that faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are “works of obedience”—works that a person must accomplish before God will grant salvation. And while the conventional Protestant understanding is that faith is the only thing necessary for salvation, proponents of this theory consider baptism—and sometimes repentance and confession—to be additional elements that God requires to ensure salvation.

The disadvantage of this position is that there are biblical texts that clearly and unequivocally state that faith is the only requirement for salvation. John 3:16, one of the most famous verses of Scripture, says, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”*.

In Acts 16:30, the prisoner asks the Apostle Paul, *“What must I do to be saved?”* If Paul wanted to lay out a four-part formula, that would be a great opportunity. But Paul's answer was simple: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household”*. (Acts 16:31). Not baptism, not confession, but only faith.

There are literally dozens of verses in the New Testament that link salvation to faith without giving context any additional requirements. If baptism or anything else is necessary for salvation, then all these verses are false, and the Bible is contradictory and therefore untrustworthy.

Salvation is not a process or a multi-step formula.

Salvation is a gift, not a prescription. What must we do to be saved? If we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be saved.

Conclusions: the materials analyzed above provide grounds to draw the following conclusions:

- 1) A true born-again Christian is a “new creature”.
- 2) Regeneration is a new birth, a second birth, the creation of the new. It is the creation by the Holy Spirit of a new human life, which is called a “new creature”, or a new renewed man.
- 3) Being born again is a great work that is unique to the Holy Spirit.
- 4) Only Christians who believe in Jesus Christ can be born again.
- 5) Being born again is receiving the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- 6) Being born again, which presupposes gifts and moral virtues, entitles a Christian to be saved.

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