

1 John 5:1-12 What does it mean to be “born again?”

Admittedly it sounds kind of cheesy. The phrase has been so overused, misused and misrepresented that few of us are really sure any more what being “born again” even means. We might not want to use it at all just to avoid being misunderstood. There’s a problem with that strategy, however, because the expression is in the Bible. Our best evidence indicates that Jesus made it up. So, it seems we’re stuck with it. The best we can do is clear about the term. In this passage John uses an alternate phrase “born of God to describe the same transformation.

I. 5:1-5 Six things that are totally interconnected:

1. Believing that Jesus is the unique, that is, only one of His kind, **Son of God.** 5:1, 5
2. Being born of God – what John calls “born again” in his Gospel. 5:1, 4
3. Loving God 5:1, 2, 3
4. Loving God’s children – which we now are. See 3:1 5:1, 2
5. Keeping the commandments. (They are not a pain in the neck.) 5:2, 3
6. Overcoming the world 5:4, 5

Read **John 3:1-21**

- Story of the Bronze Serpent is in **Number 21:4-9**
- We too have been “bitten by the serpent.” We’ve been tempted and enticed into sin.
- We need to look to Jesus who was lifted up to hang on that cross and be saved.

II. 5:6-8 Three things that bear witness.

First, about that extra bit. We have more MS evidence available to us than the translators of the KJV – on which the NKJV is based. The words don’t appear in any Greek MS until the 14th Cent., except in two examples – one from the 11th, one from the 12th – and in both cases they were added in the margins. They appear earlier in Latin, and it is supposed that they made it into Greek from there.

- The Spirit – that is the Holy Spirit.
- The Water – that is, the water of baptism, which signifies our death to the world and newness of life in Christ. The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at his baptism, beginning his public ministry.
- The Blood – that is, the blood of Christ shed for our sins which spiritually washes us clean.
 - John emphasizes that baptism alone is insufficient. We need to be washed in Christ’s cleansing blood.

“If the Son of God did not take to himself our nature at his birth and our sins at his death, he cannot reconcile us to God.” – John Stott

III. 5:9-12 The Need to Believe in the Son.

Eternal life is found in the Son of God and it cannot be found anywhere else. You can't have life without Jesus, but if you have Jesus you have life. He is life itself. See **1:1-2**

We don't earn eternal life through our good works. It is a gift. When we put our faith in Christ, we receive eternal life as our possession now – in the present tense.

As a result we receive the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit who bears witness within us as to our new family relationship with God. As He is life itself, so we now have eternal life through our eternal connection with him.

Toward the end of his Gospel John wrote:

***John 20:31** but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*

IV. 5:13 The Purpose of John's Letter. More on this next week.

Additional Scriptures:

- Read also: **1 Peter 1:17-25**. Peter sounds a lot like John. Remember they were friends.
- Paul words it a bit differently.

***2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

- Paul also gives us some vital information of the process of growth. Read **Colossians 3:1-17**

Conclusions about being born again:

1. We must be born again – even if it sounds kind of meaningless.
2. When we are born again we receive a new kind of life that we did not possess from the time of our physical birth.
3. From our perspective we are born again through faith in Jesus Christ.
4. Nonetheless, God really does give us new life, eternal life in Christ. This implies:
 - a. Likeness to God.
 - b. Potential for growth.
5. We put off the old person that we once were. We put on the new.
 - a. Choose something from **Colossians 3** to put off.
 - b. Choose something from **Colossians 3** to put on.

End with Communion.