“You Must Be Born Again – John 3:7 Meaning”

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"You must be born again" - Jesus speaking with Nicodemus - John 3:7 - Shutterstock image - Used under license

"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'" **(John 3:7)**

This lesson explains the meaning of Jesus' statement, "You must be born again," in John 3:7.

The Bible verse quotations in this lesson are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) unless noted otherwise (Ref. 1).

Read: John 3:1-8

Consider. What does it mean to be "born again"? Why did Jesus say we must be born again?

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1. Who is included in "You must be born again"?

The first "you" in John 3:7 is singular (Ref. 2), referring to Nicodemus. Jesus said, "Do not marvel that I said to you ..."

The second "you" in John 3:7 is plural, meaning *you all* (Ref. 2). Jesus said, "You [*all*] must be born again" (John 3:7). Nicodemus may have understood the plural you as referring to himself and the rulers and Pharisees (John 3:1). However, the plural "you" in "You must be born again" is universal and applies to all people because all need to be born again to see [*spiritually perceive*] the kingdom of God (John 3:3, Ref. 3). That includes all of us who are reading this message.

2. Why must we be born again?

"Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned." (Romans 5:12)

Romans 5:12 tells us that because of Adam's sin, sin and death spread to all people (Greek *anthrópos - all humans - men, women, and children*) (Ref. 3; Genesis 2:16-17, 3:6-7). There are no exemptions. That is why we must be born again.

3. What does "born again" mean?

"Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" (John 3:3)

"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'" (John 3:7)

The words "born again" in John 3:3 and 3:7 in the Greek mean *to be regenerated anew* (Ref. 4, Ref. 5). The work of regenerating us anew spiritually is entirely the work of God's Holy Spirit, not our own works (Ezekiel 36:25-27, Titus 3:4-5). God's work of regenerating us anew spiritually (making us born of God) is different in nature and timing from our natural human birth (being born of earthly parents) (John 1:12-13, John 3:6).

Becoming "born again" in John 3:3 and 3:7 is synonymous with becoming

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"born of God" in John 1:13. John, the disciple of Christ and the gospel writer says, *"He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God"* (John 1:11-13). Further, John gives three characteristics of a person who is born of God:

- Does not practice [*continue to do*] sin (1 John 3:9, Ref. 6)
- Loves [*agapaó*] others (1 John 4:7, Ref. 7). Christlike love for others is the primary evidence of our regeneration (John 13:34, Ref. 7).
- Overcomes the world through faith (1 John 5:4)

In Ezekiel 36:25, God's action of cleansing us from sin (symbolized by water) is part of the inner transformation God does in us when God regenerates us anew and puts a new spirit within us (Ezekiel 36:26-27, Psalm 51:1-2, 10, Hebrews 10:22, 1 John 1:9).

To sum up, becoming born again means being *regenerated ane*w by God's Holy Spirit (John 3:3, 7). God cleanses us from our sin. God puts a new spirit -- the Holy Spirit -- within us, and transforms us into a new person, born of God (Ezekiel 36:25-27, 2 Corinthians 5:17, 1 John 5:1).

4. How do I become born again?

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 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)

John says quite clearly that to be born of God, we are to "receive him" and "believe in his name." "Him" refers to Jesus Christ, the Word who became flesh, the only Son from the Father (John 1:1, 14, 17). To "receive" him means to *accept* him and not to reject him (John 1:11, Ref. 8, John 13:20). To "believe" in him means *to have faith in him and to trust him* (Ref.9). The Lexical Summary in Ref. 9 adds that "believe" means *to entrust (especially one's spiritual well-being to Christ).*

Once you receive Jesus as your Savior and believe in (*entrust your life to*) him, the Holy Spirit will dwell in you to help you on an ongoing basis daily

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throughout the rest of your life (John 14:16-17, Colossians 1:27). The Holy Spirit will help you:

- Know that you are a child of God (Romans 8:16)
- Study, learn, and practice the word of God (John 14:26, John 16:13, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 NASB)
- Mature as a child of God (1 Peter 2:1-2)
- Love others with Christ-like love (John 13:34; 1 John 4:7, 5:1-2)
- Serve God in the world (Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:19-20)
- Build up the body of Christ using spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit has given you (Ephesians 4:11-12 NASB, Romans 12:6-8 NIV, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 NIV)

Prayer. Lord Jesus, I am sorry for my sins. Thank you for dying on the cross to forgive my sins. Come and live in my heart. I yield control of my life to you. Teach me, and make me into the person you want me to be. Help me to love you and to serve others in your name. Amen.

Related Lesson
"Becoming a Child of God" - John 1:12-13

References
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