

We need to be born again!

by C.J. Koster

Among true worshippers there is uncertainty about this all-important teaching. As with any other Scriptural teaching, the only way to get certainty on this issue is to diligently search all Scriptures, to scrutinise all relevant texts and to take all of them into consideration under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth. Only then can we come to a conclusion on what the Scriptural teaching or truth on this matter is. This is the only way we can come to a unity in the Faith. We need to get unanimity on every vital Scriptural teaching if we are to be "*One, truly 'One'*".

The Greek word is "*genn_o*" and means to be born or begotten. The KJV renders it as "*born*" in Yoch. 3:3, 5, 7; 1 Yoch. 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1a, 5:4, 5:18a. However, the same word is rendered in the KJV as "*begotten*" in 1 Yoch. 5:1c and 1 Yoch. 5:18b. This inconsistency in the KJV has caused some people to distinguish between a present "*begotten again*" and a future "*born again*". But this is not true. In the RSV, NASB and Rotherham versions, this error has been corrected and they render "*born*" in all the above texts. This misunderstanding would have been avoided if the KJV had been as consistent as the RSV, NASB, Rotherham Version, NIV or RAV (New King James).

Dr Bullinger, in his Companion Bible (Mt. 1:2), points out to us that, strictly speaking, a father '*begets*' a child. So, a child is '*begotten*' by a father, but is '*born*' by a mother, strictly speaking. It might have been a good idea to speak only of us as '*begotten*' to indicate the Father's role as "*One bringing us forth*", as His children. However, we need to be consistent. Whether we speak of '*born*' or whether we speak of '*begotten*', it is only **one** idea, it is only **one** experience and it is for **now** - it is not two time-separated experiences.

We need to point out at this stage that Scriptural prophecies speak of yet another birth, the birth of a new nation, prophesied for the end-time and that is the birth of the New Covenant Israel, of which we read in Ps. 22:31, Ps. 102:18, Yesh. 66:7-9, Micah 4:9-10, Mt 24:8 and Mk 13:8. However, this birth is not to be confused with the present '*born again*' experience.

Yoch. 3:3, "*In reply (Yahushua) declared, I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of (Elohim).*" Verse 5: "*(Yahushua) answered, I tell you the truth, unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of (Elohim).*" Verse 7: "*You should not be surprised at my saying 'You must be born again.'*"(NIV)

In Yoch. 3:3, 5 and 7 the adverb "*an_then*" accompanies the simple verb "*genn_o*" and this "*an_then*" more correctly means "*from above*". These verses should read "*born from above*" rather than "*born again*". Thus rendered it puts a stronger emphasis on the fact that the rebirth is actually done from Above. And this we all firmly believe. However, in 1 Keph (Peter) 1:3, 23 the prefix is "*ana*" which means "*again*" (v3 "... *in his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of (Yahushua Messiah) from the dead.*" 3Verse 23, "*For you have been born again, not of the perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of (Elohim)*" (NIV).

This apparent distinction between "*born again*" and "*begotten again*" which was caused by an inconsistency in the KJV has led some believers to believe that the "*born again*" experience is still to come in the future, at our resurrection. Let me say from the outset that this teaching is

dangerous for it can lead to setting our minds at ease, that we can continue in sin until the Saviour comes! This false assurance is contrary to the clear truth of the Messianic scriptures that Yahushua came to deliver His people from sin (Mt. 1:21) to redeem us from all lawlessness and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous unto good works (Titus 2:14). The Messiah clearly commanded: "*Go and sin no more*" (Yoch. 8:11 and Yoch. 5:14). In Mt. 5:48 He commands, "*Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*".

The fact of the present "*born again*" experience is repeatedly confirmed by many other Scriptures stressing the fact that:

(1) we need to become new creatures **now**, e.g. 2 Cor 5:17: "Therefore if any man is in (Messiah), he is a new creature; the old things have passed away: behold new things have come." (NASV);

(2) the necessity of letting Yahushua renew every converted sinner **now** into a new wineskin bag which is able to retain the wine - Mt 9:17: "*Nor do men put new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the wineskins burst ... but they put new wine into fresh wineskins and both are preserved.*" (NASV) (see also Lk 5:37-38);

(3) the fact of Yahushua making a new man of us **now** as the old man is put to death, for instance, Romans chapters 6-8. NOTE ESPECIALLY: Rom. 6:2, 6, 7, 11, 18, 19, 22 and Rom. 8:10; Eph 4:22-24; Col. 3:9-10.

If we read the following texts we can clearly see that being born from above (or born again) is in the present or past tense and not in the future tense:

1 Kepha 1:3 Blessed be the (Elohim) ... who ... has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of (Yahushua Messiah) from the dead.(NASB)

How plain - past tense!

1 Kepha 1:23 For you have been born again ... through the living and abiding Word of (Yahuweh). (NASB)

If you had any doubts, this is conclusive evidence of "*born again*" in the past tense!

1 Yoch. 3:9 Whoever has been born of (Yahuweh) does not sin, for his seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been of (Yahuweh).(RAV)

Of course we will not sin in the next life; this text is not sinning in this present life. We cannot sin because we love Yahuweh too much. If you love your wife very much you *cannot* commit adultery and be untrue to her.

1 Yoch. 5:18 We know that whoever is born of (Yahuweh) does not sin, but he who has been born of (Yahuweh) keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him. (RAV)

How simple: if you have been born of Yahuweh (past tense) you keep yourself from evil because you now love Yahuweh and you do not want to show Him anything but love. We read in 1 Yoch. 5:3: "*For this is the love of (Yahuweh), that we keep His commandments and His*

commandments are not grievous". If we love Yahuweh we show Him our love by keeping His commandments in this present life! Is it still grievous for you to keep His commandments?

Or do you love Yahuweh with all your heart, all your mind and all your soul?

Most believers have different testimonies of how they came to belief in Yahushua. *"Many will say to me on that day, 'Master, Master, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and in Your Name cast out demons and in Your Name perform many miracles?' And then will I declare to them, I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS."* (Mt. 7:22-23, NASV) Yes, many will say to the Master, *"We ate and drank in your presence ..."* and He will say *"I tell you, I do not know where you are from; DEPART FROM ME ALL YOU EVILDOERS"*. (Luke 13:26-27 (NASV))

How then, can we know that we are truly a child of Yahuweh? Yes, we do find the answer so clearly in the Scriptures. We are not going to be judged according to an experience. No! We are going to be judged according to the fruit we bear, according to the good works that follow after being born again. The necessity for good works is the plain message of the Messianic Scriptures: Mt. 3:8, Mt. 5:16, Yoch. 5:29, Eph 2:10, Titus 2:14, 1 Kephah 1:17, 1 Kephah 2:12, Rev 2:5, Rev 2:23, Rev 3:8, Rev 22:12, etc.

The first epistle of Yochanan clearly describes the fruit by which we too can know the born again believer. No matter what testimony you might have.

THE FOLLOWING SEVEN TEXTS IN THIS EPISTLE CLEARLY DESCRIBE SOMEONE WHO IS BORN AGAIN:

1 Yoch. 5:1 Whosoever believeth that (Yahushua) is (Messiah) is born of (Yahuweh)".

This is the most vital and initial step of our faith. Without believing with all your heart that Yahushua is the Messiah, the Son of Yahuweh the Father, you cannot come into the spiritual kingdom of Yahuweh. *"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by me."* (Yoch. 14:6) Who reveals to you that Yahushua is the Messiah? Only the Set-Apart Spirit. And that is where you are born of the Spirit. This then must be followed by water baptism into the Name of Yahushua, to be born of water.

1 Yoch. 4:7 Beloved let us love one another, for love is of (Yahuweh) and everyone that loveth is born of (Yahuweh), and knoweth (Yahuweh).

The fruit of the Spirit is love - loving the children of Yahuweh (1 Yoch. 5:2) and loving Yahuweh by keeping His commandments (1 Yoch. 5:3).

1 Yoch. 3:9 Whosoever is born of (Yahuweh) does not commit sin, for His seed remaineth in him. And he cannot sin because he is born of (Yahuweh). (KJV)

The Messiah commanded those who believed on Him, *"Go and sin no more"* (Yoch. 5:14 and Yoch. 8:11). Sha'ul commanded it in 2 Tim 2:19 too and Yochanan stresses the importance of this command emphatically in his epistle in the following text:

1 Yoch. 5:18 We know that whosoever is born of (Yahuweh) sinneth not keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. (KJV)

The father of all lies will try his utmost to bring us into disobedience! We must keep ourselves from all evil. We must purify ourselves (1 Yoch. 3:3). We must resist the devil (Yacov / James 4:7; 1 Kepha 5:8-9).

1 Yoch. 2:29 ... **everyone that doeth righteousness is born of Him.** (KJV)

The irrefutable truth is that the only Scriptural definition of righteousness is to keep the commandments of Yahuweh (5 Mosh. 6:25 and Ps. 119:172).

5 Mosh. 6:25 **And if we are careful to obey all this law (teaching) before (Yahuweh) our (Elohim), as He has commanded us, that will be our righteousness.** (NIV)

1 Yoch. 5:4 **For whatsoever is born of (Yahuweh) overcometh the world ...** (KJV)

Satan uses the world and the things that are in this world as a final subtle onslaught to estrange us from the Mighty One. *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father IS NOT IN HIM. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."* (1 Yoch. 2:15-16)

Is this not the way Satan succeeds to choke the third type in the Parable of the Sower? Luke 8:14 tells us, *"they have heard, they go forth, and are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and BRING NO FRUIT TO PERFECTION"*.

Brothers and Sisters, are you allowing the worldly pursuits and pleasures of this life to divert your love for Yahuweh towards the love of the things of the world? If so, repent - before it is too late!

These seven (the perfect number) texts in the first Epistle of Yochanan are the Scriptural characteristics of a born-again believer. If your life bears the fruit as described in these texts then you are born-again. If not, then you have to look at them again, repent of your sin and lukewarmness, and ask Yahushua to forgive you!

You might say to me, "What about Mt. 19:28?" See it for yourself literally translated in Young's Literal Translation or in the Rotherham Version. Correctly and literally translated, the text in Mt. 19:28 emphasises the fact that we need to be born-again **now**. It reads, *"And (Yahushua) said to them, 'Truly I say to you, that you who did follow me in the rebirth; when the Son of Man shall sit on His throne of (esteem) you also shall sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel'"*.

But let us listen to and accept the final clear witness of Yoch. 1:12-13. In verse 12 we read of the children of Elohim. In verse 13 they are described as *"they who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man but of (Elohim)"*. Note the "were" being past tense.

YET TO ALL WHO RECEIVED HIM, TO THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN HIS NAME, HE GAVE THE RIGHT TO BECOME CHILDREN OF (ELOHIM). CHILDREN BORN NOT OF NATURAL DESCENT NOR OF HUMAN DECISION OR A HUSBAND'S WILL BUT BORN OF (ELOHIM). (Yoch. 1:12-13 NIV).