

“Born Again”

Abstract

Rethinking “Born Again” Through Rightly Divided Scripture

This paper challenges one of the most widely accepted assumptions in modern Christianity: that being “born again” is an individual requirement for salvation in the present age. While commonly taught in churches as a foundational doctrine, the author argues that this belief is rooted not in careful biblical analysis, but in **tradition—passed down, repeated, and rarely examined in context.**

Grounded exclusively in Scripture, the study demonstrates that the phrase **“born again” appears only a few times in the Bible and, when properly understood in context, consistently refers not to individuals today, but to the future spiritual rebirth of the nation of Israel.** This interpretation emerges only when Scripture is **rightly divided**—recognizing distinctions between Israel’s prophetic program and the present age of grace revealed through the apostle Paul.

The paper traces Israel’s full biblical arc:

- Its **first birth** as a nation in Egypt, called to be a kingdom of priests.
- Its repeated rejection of God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- God’s resulting decision to **set Israel aside temporarily**, introducing the current dispensation of grace.

Within this framework, Jesus’ statement to Nicodemus—“Ye must be born again”—is reexamined not as a universal command for individual salvation, but as a prophetic reference to Israel’s future national restoration, long foretold by the prophets.

The study further highlights a critical source of doctrinal confusion: the failure to distinguish between **Jesus’ earthly ministry to Israel and the later revelation given to Paul for the Church, the Body of Christ.** The book of Acts is presented as a transitional record between these two programs, not a singular blueprint for church practice.

A central implication emerges: if the church has misapplied a phrase as foundational as “born again,” it calls into question how many other doctrines may rest on **unexamined tradition rather than rightly divided truth.**

The paper concludes with a direct exhortation: spiritual understanding is not inherited through institutions or leaders, but developed through personal study of Scripture. Believers are called to move beyond reliance on tradition and instead engage the Word directly, testing all teaching against the full counsel of God.

Key takeaway:

Right doctrine does not come from repetition—it comes from **right division, context, and personal study of the Word of God.**

The Traditions of Men

A Study on “Born Again” and the Importance of Rightly Dividing the Word

Introduction: A Warning from Scripture

Colossians 2:8

“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

Have you ever wondered why so many doctrines taught in modern churches seem firmly established, yet lack clear grounding in sound biblical doctrine?

Much of what passes as “Christian teaching” today is not derived from careful study of Scripture, but from **tradition—ideas passed down, repeated, and accepted without being tested against the Word of God.**

This study examines one such tradition—one that radically reshaped my understanding of Scripture and exposed how subtle deception can operate within the church.

Scripture repeatedly warns us about this danger:

2 Timothy 2:16

“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness.”

1 Timothy 6:20

“O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called:”

1 Timothy 1:5–7

“Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.”

The Tradition: “Ye Must Be Born Again”

From childhood, many of us were taught something like this:

If you walk down the aisle, repeat a prayer, repent of your sins, and give your life to Jesus—you are “born again.”

While there are several doctrinal issues with that statement, this study focuses on one central phrase:

“Ye must be born again.”

This phrase has become one of the most widely used and assumed doctrines in Christianity.

But what if it has been misunderstood?

To Understand “Born Again,” We Must Understand Israel

The meaning of “born again” cannot be understood apart from the **history and purpose of the nation of Israel**.

Israel was born as a nation in Egypt:

Exodus 4:22

“And thou shalt say unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my firstborn.”

Genesis 46:3

“And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation:”

Genesis 45:10

“And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen, and thou shalt be near unto me, thou, and thy children, and thy children’s children, and thy flocks, and thy herds, and all that thou hast:”

Genesis 47:27

“And Israel dwelt in the land of Egypt, in the country of Goshen; and they had possessions therein, and grew, and multiplied exceedingly.”

After Joseph’s death, a new king arose who enslaved Israel:

Exodus 1:8

“Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph.”

After nearly 400 years of bondage, God delivered Israel:

Acts 7:6

“And God spake on this wise, That his seed should sojourn in a strange land; and that they should bring them into bondage, and entreat them evil four hundred years.”

Genesis 15:16

“But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.”

Israel was called to be a **kingdom of priests**:

Exodus 19:5–6

“Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”

Israel’s Rebellion and Rejection of God

Despite God’s provision, Israel rejected Him repeatedly.

They rejected God’s direct voice:

Exodus 20:19

“And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.”

They rejected:

- **God the Father**

1 Samuel 8:7

“...they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.”

- **God the Son**

Luke 19:14

“...We will not have this man to reign over us.”

John 19:6

“...Crucify him, crucify him...”

Matthew 27:25

“...His blood be on us, and on our children.”

- **God the Holy Ghost** (at Stephen’s stoning)

Acts 7:57–60

(Full account of Stephen’s martyrdom and Israel’s final rejection.)

This final rejection led to Israel being **blinded and set aside**:

Romans 11:25

“...blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in.”

The Shift: The Age of Grace

After Israel’s rejection, God introduced a new program—the **age of grace**—revealed through the apostle Paul.

Paul himself was an example of extraordinary mercy:

1 Timothy 1:13,16

“...who was before a blasphemer... but I obtained mercy... that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern...”

So Who Is “Born Again”?

To answer this, we must go back to the prophets.

The phrase “born again” is rooted in **Israel’s future restoration**:

Isaiah 66:8

“...Shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children.”

Psalms 22:31

“...unto a people that shall be born...”

Micah 5:3

“...until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth...”

These passages clearly describe **a nation being born again**—not individuals in this present age.

Jesus and Nicodemus: Context Matters

When Jesus speaks of being born again:

John 3:5–7

“...Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God...”

He is speaking to **Nicodemus—a ruler of Israel**—about **Israel’s future spiritual rebirth**, not a universal formula for individual salvation today.

Who Was Jesus Speaking To?

Jesus’ earthly ministry was directed specifically to Israel:

Matthew 15:24

“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

The apostles were also sent only to Israel:

Matthew 10:5–6

“Go not into the way of the Gentiles... But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

Acts: A Transitional Book

The book of Acts records a **transition**:

- From the **Kingdom gospel** (to Israel)
- To the **gospel of grace** (through Paul)

Peter later acknowledges Paul’s writings as Scripture:

2 Peter 3:15–16

“...even as our beloved brother Paul... hath written unto you... which they that are unlearned... wrest... unto their own destruction.”

The Role of the Holy Spirit Across Ages

The Holy Spirit operates differently across dispensations:

Old Testament (upon individuals):

- Judges 6:34
- 1 Samuel 11:6
- 1 Samuel 16:13

Present Age (within believers):

Colossians 1:27

“...Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

1 Corinthians 2:16

“...we have the mind of Christ.”

Growth today depends on engagement with the Word:

Ephesians 4:7,13

Romans 12:3

The Core Conclusion

Here is the matter plainly stated:

- Israel was **born once** as a nation (in Egypt, of the flesh)
- Israel will be **born again** (in the future, of the Spirit)
- This occurs **after the present age of grace**

Future prophecy confirms this:

Ezekiel 36:27

“...I will put my spirit within you...”

Jeremiah 31:34

“...they shall all know me...”

Final Exhortation

If the phrase “born again” has been misunderstood so widely, it raises a serious question:

What else might we have accepted without proper study?

Scripture gives the answer:

2 Timothy 2:15

“Study to shew thyself approved unto God... rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Closing Thought

This study is not meant to attack individuals—but to expose a system of inherited belief that must be tested.

Because if we rely on tradition instead of Scripture, we risk being led somewhere very different than we expect.

And the responsibility for that does not belong to pastors.

It belongs to each of us.
