

What's The Mystery?

Born From Above, The Way To Heaven

What comes to mind when someone tells you they're a born again Christian? Perhaps you think of a religious fanatic. Maybe it's confusing or mysterious. The person you once knew who behaved, acted or talked in a certain way has now dramatically changed. What caused this change? Is it going to rub off on me too? Or you might say "that's nice, good for you," but have no idea what it means other than it's a "religious thing." Here's a good one: you might not believe it's something you need. After all, you go to church on Sunday and consider yourself basically a good person. You try to help other people. You figure if things get really bad you can take God off the shelf and put Him into action.

For the most part, your thoughts and beliefs come from many sources: Your background and how you were raised, what church or religion you participated in, what part of the country you grew up in. Social status and the type of contact you had with Christians all impact your thoughts and beliefs. Unfortunately, most people unknowingly allow Satan to influence their ideas and concepts. Satan uses those misconceptions to keep you far from God and His truth. Satan wants you to believe you can be the god of your own life. Let's see what God has to say.

In John 3:3, Jesus declared, *"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."* At the time He was talking to a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. Nicodemus was knowledgeable of the Old Testament and Jewish law, but he didn't understand how a person could be born again. Jesus wasn't talking about physical birth, rather a spiritual birth.

In Mark 10-15, Jesus said, *"I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."* Here, Jesus was talking with His disciples. To feel secure all a child needs is a loving look and gentle touch from someone who cares. Complete

understanding is not a requirement. The child believes you if they trust you. For adults it should be the same. You don't need complete understanding to know that God loves you and provides forgiveness of your sins. You should trust God with a child's simplicity and openness (NIV footnotes).

In Acts 4:10-12, Peter said, *"It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."* There is only one God and one way to heaven, through Jesus.

In Romans 8:9, Paul said, *"You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."* Dr Charles Stanley, In Touch Ministries, further clarified that "you can't get to heaven without the Spirit of God in you. You can't get the Spirit in you unless you've been reborn. And unless you've been reborn you can't be a Christian."

Here is where your basic beliefs might get challenged. First, you have to accept that you can't earn your way to heaven. James 2:18 says, *"Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."* Deeds aren't a substitute for, but rather a verification of, your faith. And true faith always results in a changed life and good deeds. If you could earn your way to heaven how would you ever know if you did enough? When people set up additional requirements for salvation they deny the power of Christ's death on the cross. It's as if they say, "Sorry God, I don't believe Jesus' death was enough."

Second, you have to accept that you will never be able to stop sinning and therefore be good

enough to get into heaven. Since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, a sin nature became a part of each person. It's like a disease. You might control or reduce some of the sin that comes out of you, but you can't stop it all because you are permanently infected. Dr Stanley said, "Our sinful nature can only be dealt with through rebirth, because the outside stuff we do can't fix the inside of who we are." After you are reborn, your nature changes. In 2 Corinthians 5:17 Paul said, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!"* You are no longer a sinner by nature. You will still sin, but it's no longer who you are. You are now a child of God saved by His grace. When He saves you He gives you faith and the Holy Spirit to live inside you.

Finally, you have to believe and accept by faith, like a small child, that your salvation and eternal life are free gifts given to you through the death of Jesus Christ. The Bible defines salvation as deliverance from the power and penalty of sin. Jesus' death broke the power of sin's control over you and His death paid YOUR penalty for your sins.

What does He want from you for this incredible sacrifice? Simply to believe in what He did for you, to follow Him and to develop a personal relationship with Him. This truly is possible because the death of Jesus broke all barriers to God. Jesus is your bridge. You no longer need an intermediary. You can approach God any time or any place and talk with Him, pray to Him, listen to Him and ask Him to forgive us of our sins. You need to ensure you don't let religion get in the way of your relationship with Jesus. Jesus made it simple, so why add rules and complicate the instructions Jesus said were enough?

So now that you've walked your way through the original question, what's next? First, you need to ask yourself if you want to go to heaven. If you don't believe what's written or think you need more information, you should read God's Word. If you would like to believe but aren't

sure, I would suggest you give Jesus a try. You won't be disappointed. And if for some reason you are not completely satisfied with the new and improved you, Satan will always take you back. Assuming you want to go to heaven and the only way to heaven is to be reborn, how do you do that? The simplicity will amaze you and the result will change you forever, or dare I say eternally! All you need to do is pray a simple, truthful prayer to God from your heart.

Before you pray you need to believe the only way to heaven is through Jesus Christ and His death on the cross. In John 14:6, Jesus says, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

You also need to believe that Jesus died for your sins and rose again. In Matthew 28:5-7 at the tomb of Jesus, an angel appeared to the women and said, *"Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen from the dead."* Finally, you need to choose daily to follow Jesus and make Him the Lord of your life.

Pray: Lord Jesus, please forgive me of my sins. Please come to live inside me so that I can start a new life with You in control. I thank You for paying my sin penalty and ask You to be the Lord of my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen!

Congratulations! If you sincerely prayed that prayer, you've been born again!

If you did not accept this invitation because you still need answers, please search for them. If you think you can make this decision anytime, realize that you may not get another chance. Only God knows how long we will walk the earth. Psalm 139:16 states, *"All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be."*

Please consider that this information was not placed in your hand by accident. To find more answers or to begin growing in Christ, you will need to read your Owner's Manual. Didn't think you had one? Well, keep reading.