

When Is Someone Born Again?

Recently, I was asked this question during a study and I was somewhat surprised, not by the question, but by the deep and meaningful conversation that ensued. I know the question of when someone is born again might seem to be a simple question to answer. After all, many would say, "One is born again when they accept Yeshua (Jesus) as Messiah." Others might say, "One is born again when they say the sinner's prayer." Still, others might include the actions of repentance, baptism by immersion and infilling of the Spirit in their answer of when someone is born again.

When starting with these answers, the conversation dug deeper into discussion of what it means to accept Yeshua as Messiah. How does one know when they have truly accepted Him as the Messiah? Another question asked was "What is the sinner's prayer? Where do we see this prayer in the Bible? Does a sinner's prayer have to include specific words, phrases or concepts to be a 'real' sinner's prayer?"

The conversation continued with more questions, such as "What is repentance and how does someone know when or if they have really repented?" "Does one have to be immersed to be born again, and if so, does it make a difference how and where someone is immersed?" "When or how is someone filled with the Spirit, and how do they know that they have been filled with the Spirit?" "Is someone filled with when they profess faith in Yeshua, or does it happen as a separate experience?"

Question after question was voiced, and each question was discussed at length, some with agreement among those gathered and some tabled for further discussion at a future study. However, there was one question that was asked that I had never heard anyone ask before. That question was: "Does someone get born again once, or are we born again twice?"

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Because I had never heard this question asked before, I asked a few questions so that I would understand what the questioner was trying to verbalize. They clarified with the following: "I know the Bible tells us that we must be born again in John 3, and I know that the born-again experience spoken of in John and other places, such as Romans 6, speaks about an experience that takes place in the life of a believer that gives them a new life or a life more abundant here on earth, this earth."

They continued by saying, "It also appears that at some time in the future, there will be both a resurrection from the dead for those who have died and a changing from mortal to immortal for those who are still alive," as we read in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15.

So, they continued, "Are there two born-again experiences, the first when one comes to faith in Yeshua and is Spirit filled, and a second time when either resurrected or transitioned from mortal to immortality? After all, wouldn't either being resurrected or being transformed into an immortal body be like being born again also?"

After taking a moment or two (or 10) to contemplate such an important question, I began to answer in true rabbinic form. I said I think that there are both: one born-again experience, and two born-again experiences. I believe if we look at them through one lens, a true believer in Yeshua gets born again twice. Once when they come to faith and are born again into this world, and a second time when they transition from this world to the world to come.

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I also believe that a true believer is only born again once,

in two parts: the first part being the start of our new birth here on earth when we become a new creation, old things passing away and all things becoming new; and the second part at the completion of our new birth when we are either resurrected or transformed into immortality, and G-D completes our new birth from this world to the world to come.

For a biblical example, let's look at the children of Israel, who found themselves in Egypt, a symbolic type of sin. They cried out for salvation and G-D heard their cries and redeemed them from Egypt, bringing them through a tunnel of water (a birth from sin to redemption). They then traveled for 40 years in the wilderness and, once again, went through a tunnel of water, the Jordan River, to cross from the wilderness into the land of promise (a birth from the wilderness to the fullness of G-D's promised redemption).

This example plays out in the life of a believer. We start out in Egypt, or sin. We cry out for deliverance, and G-D redeems us. We repent and go through the waters of immersion, as we read in 1 Peter 3:21. Then we live our life in the wilderness of this world until such a time when we cross through the waters once more, as we go from this world to the world to come. In this example, we begin to be born again when we leave the bondage in sin, but the born-again experience is completed when we are transformed to immortality.

When is someone born again? In one view, they are born again when they come to trusting faith in Yeshua as Messiah, and then they are born again again through resurrection or transformation. In the second view, they begin to be born again at their entrance into G-D's redemption, and G-D completes their new birth when they enter immortality.

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