**Study Notes for the Sunday Mass** Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

# Do Catholics and Everyone Need to Be Born Again and How Does it Happen?







Revised and corrected on 2/24/2013

In an article[i] by Roman Catholic apologist Mark Brumley the author answers the question, do Catholics need to be born again?" He opened the article with the headline, "'Have you been born again?' the Fundamentalist at the door asks the unsuspecting Catholic.'

Brumley goes on to explain that as a Roman Catholic one is born again through baptism, and that the fundamentalists are wrong about their understanding of the need for a spiritual conversion experience or confession of salvation through praying of a sinner's prayer. He incorrectly states, among his various false assertions throughout the article, that "The only biblical use of the term "born again" occurs in John 3:3-5 . . . although, as we shall see, similar and related expressions such as 'new birth' and 'regeneration' occur elsewhere in Scripture (Titus 3:5; 1 Pet 1:3, 23)"[ii]

What's at stake with being wrong on the answer to this question whether one needs to be born again to go to heaven? What happens if one sticks with a false belief for their entire life and then passes into realm of the dead with an incorrect understanding? Would a just God condemn a person

just because they held an improper belief about this one thing?

The Bible records not one use; as stated by Brumley, of the phrase translation "born again," but three. One may do a search for themselves through the use of a popular online Bible study tool called Blue Letter Bible by visiting the web page cited below.[iii] From a quick search we see that there are actually three mentions of this exact phrase, two in the Gospel of John and another in the Epistle of First Peter. Delving a little deeper into study through the use of this online study tool we find that if one clicks on the number just to the right of the phrase we can locate the underlying word in the Greek (or Hebrew, depending upon if we are looking at the New or Old Testament) original. In this case we see by using that web site tool that the original word is "anothen."[iv] We urge the reader to follow the links and see this for themselves. Without even a basic understanding of the pronunciation of the Greek we can find that the word was most likely read in a way sounding like "ah – know – then." Digging a litter bit deeper on the Blue Letter site we see that it reveals that there are thirteen (13) uses of the Greek word in the New Testament! Brumley was mostly correct in his assertion that the other appearances are for related terms but looking over those thirteen we find that the exact phrase does appear one other time outside of John's Gospel and that is in the Epistle of First Peter. We will look at that further in our article.

First, let's read what John was saying about the need to be born again in the Gospel according to third chapter of John. We will hbold the uses of the important phrase that we are studying, and as well will mark the text anytime the phrase is referred to either by Jesus or Nicodemus through the use of brackets [].

John 3:1-14

> 1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:
>
> 2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.
>
> 3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
>
> 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time **[born again]** into his mother's womb, and be born?
>
> 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit **[born again]**, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
>
> 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
>
> 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be **born again**.

> 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.
>
> 9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?
>
> 10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?
>
> 11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.
>
> 12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?
>
> 13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.
>
> 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:[v]

We see from a simple reading of the text above that Jesus mentioned the phrase "born again" to Nicodemus no less than three times and Nicodemus evidently understood since he repeated it to Jesus in verse four. Jesus said very clearly in the text; we are paraphrasing, "you must be born both physically (which happens by default) and spiritually (born again, 'anothen') to enter the kingdom of heaven." Again, you must be born spiritually to enter the kingdom of heaven either in the present sense to become a Christian or in the eternal sense, go to heaven. Regardless of the intellectual musings of the noted Catholic apologist can you see that you must be born again? Can you also see that being born again is a mystery done through the Holy Spirit such that even the learned Jewish teacher Nicodemus didn't understand at this point in his life? How could he when the church was yet a mystery to be revealed after the rejection of Messiah Jesus?

A critical question arises. How does one become "born again," is it through being baptized in the Roman Catholic Church *and* faith in Jesus Christ as alleged by Mark Brumley or through faith in Jesus Christ alone? Let's look at what the Bible has to say about this very important necessity of having to be born again to enter the kingdom of heaven. In Ephesians chapter two we find Paul stating the following about how one enters the kingdom, or becomes born again (emphasis added):

> 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
>
> 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.
>
> 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.[vi]

At the same time as we reason the meaning of those verses consider one of the other mentions of the exact Greek word (anothen) in I Peter 1 verse 3 (emphasis added): "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be **born again** to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." From these two biblical texts we answer the question, "Who (or what) causes someone to be born again (anothen)? Is it the work of another in baptizing us and through our faith in Jesus, or the work of God alone through faith in Jesus? Can we see that it is God at work here, through the instrument of our faith, which God has given to us as a gift, if we accept the free gift?

Let's look at another passage (emphasis added). In Romans Paul explains this concept of salvation through faith alone a bit further. "9 That if thou shalt **confess with thy mouth** (*this is the sinner's prayer mentioned by Brumley*) the Lord Jesus, and shalt **believe in thine heart** (*faith alone!*) that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."[vii] The sinner's prayer *does* appear in the Bible! The Bible is clear that we believe through God's gift of a changed heart and then as evidence we confess to others this belief and together we can have the certainty that we are saved. John said in the Book of First John, verse thirteen, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may **know that ye have eternal life**, and that ye may **believe** on the name of the Son of God."[viii] We can know and believe, or know through belief, that we are in the kingdom of heaven, both in a present sense as we live our lives as believers, and in a future sense that when we die we will go to heaven. Far be it from what the Roman Catholics call the "sin of presumption," we can have this certainty right now.

As a former Roman Catholic we came to the knowledge of truth back in 1999 I make a tearful request that you consider the truths of what God says through His Bible about finding eternal life through the Lord Jesus Christ. I urge you to see these truths for yourself, like what Nicodemus died in his inquires of Jesus. If you would like to read a deeper analysis of Jesus' discuss with Nicodemus in John Chapter 3 of the Bible please consider another article that we wrote which is posted on our web site.[ix]

May God bless your journey towards the truth. My prayer is that you are not misled by our enemy to misguide you into believing that you are saved through being a "good person," weekly attendance of mass on Sundays and "holy days of obligation," and obtaining the sacraments of the Catholic Church. You are saved by faith in the Lord Jesus and even that faith is a gift from God because there is none that does good, no not one, all of us have turned away, for "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."[x]

Jim Hill, Winona Lake, Indiana

**End Notes**

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[i] Brumley, Mark, Catholic Education Resource Center. [http://www.catholiceducation.org/articles/apologetics/ap0022.html] cited 2/23/2013.

[ii] Ibid.

[iii] Blue Letter Bible. [http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/translationResults.cfm?Criteria=born+again&t=KJV] cited 2/23/2013.

[iv] Ibid. [http://www.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm?Strongs=G509&t=KJV ] cited 2/23/2013. All Bible verses are from the King James Version (KJV).

[v] Bible Gateway. [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john%203:1-14&version=KJV ] cited 2/23/2013.

[vi] Ibid. [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ephesians%202:8-10&version=KJV] cited 2/23/2013.

[vii] Ibid. [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans%2010:9-10&version=KJV ]. Cited 2/23/2013.

[viii] Ibid. [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20john%205:13&version=KJV ]. Cited 2/23/2013.

[ix] See http://www.christiansforchrist.org/articles/bible-studies/where-does-spiritual-life-come-from

[x] Bible Gateway. [http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=romans%203:23&version=KJV ]. Cited 2/23/2013.

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