

What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?

Crucial Questions

R. C. SPROUL

What Does It Mean
to Be Born Again?

Crucial Questions booklets provide a quick introduction to definitive Christian truths. This expanding collection includes titles such as:

Who Is Jesus?

Can I Trust the Bible?

Does Prayer Change Things?

Can I Know God's Will?

How Should I Live in This World?

What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?

Can I Be Sure I'm Saved?

What Is Faith?

What Can I Do with My Guilt?

What Is the Trinity?

TO BROWSE THE REST OF THE SERIES,
PLEASE VISIT: LIGONIER.ORG/CQ

CQ

What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?

R. C. SPROUL



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?

© 2010 by R.C. Sproul

Published by Ligonier Ministries
421 Ligonier Court, Sanford, FL 32771
Ligonier.org

Printed in China
Amity Printing Company
0000823

First edition, sixteenth printing

ISBN 978-1-64289-041-9 (Paperback)

ISBN 978-1-64289-069-3 (ePub)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the publisher, Ligonier Ministries. The only exception is brief quotations in published reviews.

Cover design: Ligonier Creative
Interior typeset: Katherine Lloyd, The DESK

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the King James Version. Public domain.

The Library of Congress has cataloged the Reformation Trust edition as follows:
Sproul, R.C. (Robert Charles), 1939-2017

What does it mean to be born again? / R.C. Sproul.
p. cm.

ISBN 978-1-56769-206-8

1. Regeneration (Theology) I. Title.

BT790.S67 2010

234'.4--dc22

2010009282

Contents

One	Must I Be Born Again?	1
Two	Regeneration Is a Mystery	13
Three	Regeneration Is the Beginning	25
Four	Regeneration Is a Sovereign Work of God.	37
Five	Regeneration Is Immediate.	47
Six	Regeneration Is Permanent.	59

Chapter One

Must I Be Born Again?

I once spoke with a gentleman who said he wanted to learn more about the Christian faith. He said he thought that he was a Christian and wanted to know more of what Christianity involved. But, he cautioned, “I don’t want to be a *born-again* Christian.”

When I heard that, my mind snapped back to the 1976 presidential campaign, when Jimmy Carter identified himself as a born-again Christian. About that same time, Charles Colson, who had been an adviser to President

What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?

Nixon and who became embroiled in the Watergate scandal, was converted to Christ and wrote a book titled *Born Again*, which sold millions of copies and was made into a movie by the same title. Black Panther leader Eldridge Cleaver and even Larry Flynt, the publisher of *Hustler* magazine, got into the act by announcing to the world that they had been “born again,” though Flynt now calls himself an atheist.

Suddenly the term *born again*, which had been known only in a very small segment of the church, became a hot news item and started to receive national attention. It was borrowed by the secular world and applied to things outside the Christian faith. For instance, if a baseball player had a good year following a particularly bad year, it was said he was a “born-again” player.

Somewhere in all the hype, however, the true meaning of the term *born again* became obscured. As a result, much confusion exists, even within the church, as to the precise nature of the new birth. The purpose of this booklet, then, is to examine what it means, biblically and theologically, to be born again.

At the outset, I must note that the phrase “born-again Christian,” in a narrow, technical sense, is a redundancy.

Must I Be Born Again?

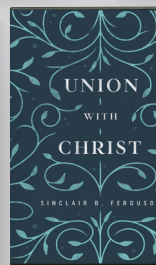
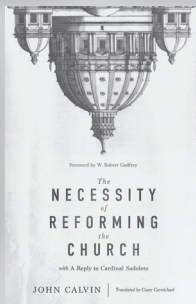
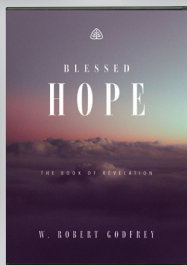
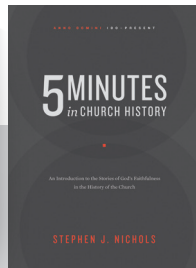
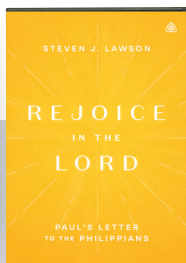
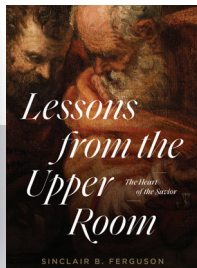
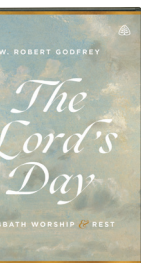
This is because, according to the New Testament, in order to become a Christian, one must first be born again (John 3:3–5). Therefore, if a person is born again, he or she is a Christian. So to call somebody a “born-again Christian” is like saying that such a person is a Christian Christian. The New Testament knows of no other kind of Christian.

Also, the term *born again* is a popular synonym for the theological term *regenerate*. I know of no church in the history of Christendom that has not had a doctrine of regeneration or rebirth. That is, every Christian body in Western history has had to develop some kind of concept of what it means to be reborn spiritually. This is because the concept did not originate with theologians, Bible commentators, or preachers. The very idea of spiritual rebirth has its origins in the teaching of Jesus. Since Christians identify themselves as followers of Christ, naturally they have been interested in understanding what Jesus says about this idea.

Jesus' Conversation with Nicodemus

The account of Jesus' first teaching on this subject is found in John 3. I would like to work through this passage slowly

We want to see men and women
around the world connect the deep truths
of the Christian faith to everyday life.



Order your copy of this title, download the digital version,
or browse thousands of resources at **Ligonier.org**.



LIGONIER MINISTRIES