



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## The Herald of His Grace

Presenting *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume VIII  
Issue 181

### Born Again

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

*Marvel not that I said unto thee, "Ye must be born again." (John 3:7).*

**"Born Again"** and "The New Birth" are among the many popular terms used by many believers. Over the years some have brought us into question for our disuse of such terms in relation to God's message for today.

Although these terms are used by many dear brethren as synonymous with salvation, they in fact have a very **limited application**, being used for the **nation of Israel** and therefore are not "*present truth*" for the Body of Christ.

We are fully aware that some view this teaching as extreme, or would even accuse us of being "caught up" with simple semantics. We can understand such a reaction, for once the keystone of our own ministry was, "*Ye Must Be Born Again!*"

#### **THE NEW BIRTH: Not a Part of Paul's Gospel**

It is most interesting that this term finds its *limits* within the writings of John and Peter, the apostles of the Circumcision; and that Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, never used this term in his writings and ministry.

Some might think it strange that Paul, in all of his God-inspired letters does not even

once use these specific terms. How could he have carried on such a God-appointed and -approved ministry, having omitted these from his doctrine? That is, unless they were not a part of the "*revelation of the mystery*" (Romans 16:25) committed to him by God.

It is Paul who is the apostle to the Gentiles. He is God's spokesman to us.

*For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office (Romans 11:13).*

It is Paul whose teaching is our pattern for today.

*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, **the same commit** thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also (II Timothy 2:2).*

This pattern extends to the actual words that we are to use in our teaching.

**Born Again..... 1773**  
**Approved Workmen - Select Readings on the Study of the Scriptures, Part 3..... 1776**

Hold fast **the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me**, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus (II Timothy 1:13).

How true is the statement of C.I. Scofield (1843-1921),

In his [Paul's] writings alone we find the doctrine, position, walk and destiny of the church" (*Scofield Reference Bible*, page 1252).

Paul did not accidentally leave out the term "born again" from his message. No, there is a reason why it was not a part of the divine revelation given to him.

### THE NEW BIRTH: Old Testament Truth

The term "born again," used by Peter and John, represents Old Testament truth. This can be clearly seen in the statement by Jesus Christ to Nicodemus:

... Art thou a master [teacher] of Israel, and knoweth not these things?" (John 3:10).

Contrary to what many may believe, Christ was **not** teaching anything *new* to Nicodemus; rather, Nicodemus should have been well acquainted with what Christ was saying.

How could Nicodemus have known about the *new birth*? The answer is really quite simple. Obviously the *new birth* was Old Testament teaching.

### THE NEW BIRTH: A National Rebirth

John's gospel is distinctly Jewish (as are the synoptic gospels) and has no *direct* bearing on

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This weekly publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
  - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
  - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
  - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

*Bible Student's Notebook™*

PO Box 265, Windber, PA 15963

Office: (800) 784-6010

bsn@studysshelf.com

www.BibleStudentsNotebook.com

Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr. – Editor

André Sneidar – Managing Editor

Rick Lemons – Associate Editor

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the Body of Christ. It is important to notice the usage of the plural pronoun in “**YE** must be born again” rather than the singular “**THOU** must be born again.”

This *new birth* was directed toward a group. This group was the *nation of Israel*. In our study of Scripture we must learn the principle of “*rightly dividing the word of truth*” (II Timothy 2:15), leaving doctrines where they belong (i.e., where God placed them, and with those to whom God gave them).

Israel was nationally born the *first* time as God brought them out of Egypt under the *old covenant*.

*Israel is My son, even My **firstborn***  
(Exodus 4:22).

*Have I **conceived all this people**, have I **begotten them*** (Numbers 11:12).

*The Rock that **begat thee*** (Deuteronomy 32:18).

The nation Israel was trusting their *first* birth, but this was not sufficient. Israel must be born nationally the *second* time (re-born, a new birth – “*born again*”) as God restores them under the *new covenant*.

### **THE NEW BIRTH: A Nation Born in a Day**

Israel’s great prophet Isaiah had prophesied of them being a “*nation ... born at once*” (Isaiah 66:8; c.f. Ezekiel 36, 37). The word “*once*” here is also translated in the *King James Version* as “*two times*” (Genesis 27:36), “*twice*” (Genesis 41:32; Numbers 20:11; I Samuel 18:11; I Kings 11:9; Ecclesiastes 6:6), and “*this second time*” (Genesis 43:10; Nahum 1:9).

Jesus Christ was dealing with Nicodemus concerning Israel’s New Covenant, and their *Rebirth* of the favored nation. This *new birth* ministry was a ministry to Israel. Christ was *exclusively* their minister at this time (“*Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision*” Romans 15:8; c.f. Romans 9:4-5; Matthew 1:21; 10:5-6; 15:24), and the alien Gentiles were yet without him – not being covenant children by *first* birth (i.e., “*aliens from the commonwealth of Israel*” Ephesians 2:12).

### **A NEW CREATION: A Ministry of Reconciliation**

Instead of a *new birth*, Paul taught about a *new creation* – a creation where Jews and Gentiles were being formed into “*one body*” (Romans 12:4-5; I Corinthians 12:12-13, 20; Ephesians 2:16; Ephesians 4:4; Colossians 3:15) – the “*Body of Christ*” (I Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:22-23) – the “*one new man*” (Ephesians 2:15) – the “*new creature*” (II Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15).

It is incorrect to preach a message which was intended for a covenant people (Israel), giving it to those who are “*strangers from the covenants of promise*.” Ours is not a ministry of *new birth*, but rather a “*ministry of reconciliation*” (II Corinthians 5:18). This reconciliation is purely of grace, without any regard to one’s birth, and should be carefully (in the full Pauline pattern) separated from the Jewish message of which being “*born again*” is a part. Our message is not, “*Ye must be born again*.” Instead it is, “*Be ye reconciled to God*” (II Corinthians 5:20).

As members of the Body of Christ we must not lower the glorious *high calling* by mixing teaching from the other dispensational workings of God with ours.



# Approved Workmen

## Select Readings on the *Study of the Scriptures* (Part 3)

### TRUTH HAS NOTHING TO FEAR

The bottom line is that truth has nothing to fear. Investigation will only identify and clear away the clutter, and there's so much clutter. Actually, it's error that fears scrutiny. People should be encouraged to think beyond the box and challenge the limits. If what they previously believed is true, their convictions will only be confirmed, and truth will become the presence and power of God within their very souls! ...

To blindly and thoughtlessly cling to a doctrine or tradition, and persistently resist and refuse investigation is a clear mark of the spirit of religion, which is a source of grief and great offense toward God. This spirit has nothing but pride and arrogance at its core and was the prevailing spirit in those who rejected and finally crucified the Savior.

Though we may possess truth, if we cling to it blindly, we have not yet received it as God intends. Those who have rightly received truth not only have a great love for truth, but a profound confidence in the same, and a passionate desire to know it better! Because of this they're continually seeking and growing. To them the definitive statement of truth is not found in their creeds or confessions, neither in their denominational distinctives nor present understanding, but in Scripture and Scripture alone!

Truth to the humble seeker is not a destination he reaches or an intellectual pinnacle he achieves early in his Christian walk, but a glorious, lifelong journey and quest toward the very heart of God!

Allan Ernest Chevrier  
*Whatever Became of Melanie?* (2005), pp. 43, 44

### MEANING OF WORDS

If we fail to study the meaning of the words of Scripture, then we will be in very serious danger of making Scripture mean what we want it to mean, and not what God wants it to mean.

William Barclay (1907-1978)  
*Daily Celebration*, p. 21

### NO NEED TO FEAR THE FULLEST LIGHT

He who has the truth need not fear the fullest light, but will know beforehand, that if what he holds is truth, the fuller the search the fuller will be the confirmation. Moreover, if his desire be honest, he will welcome the testimony of *all Scripture*, so that should any error have crept into his creed it may be exposed and put away.

C.H. Welch (1888-1967)  
*Hell or "Pure from the Blood of All Men"*

### WRITING TO UNDERSTAND

My motivation in writing was not so much to be understood as it was to understand.

Henry Hudson  
G.I.F.T., Study 4  
*Magna Carta of the Kingdom*, p. 5

### PORTION OF A LETTER CONCERNING AUTHORS

You see I take, and have done so for years, a differing attitude toward authors. I look for the positive and greedily eat on what feeds me. I do not attempt to assess them on what might be regarded, by me or others, as negative aspects of

them. Indeed that is how I seek to see and align myself with all brethren in Christ.

I cannot bear to see you digging out all you can find to prove what is error to you, with hardly a word on the glory. To me all of us have areas about us which can look like clay feet, but God has taught me to jump clear into the solid gold about them ...

Norman P. Grubb (1895-1993)  
*Notes from Norman*

## FOUR KINDS OF MEN

According to Paul's inspired epistles, the human race is divided into four categories:

### The Natural Man

The natural man is the fallen son of Adam, as he is, without God. Of him the Apostle says:

*The **natural man** receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (I Corinthians 2:14).*

### The Babe in Christ

When a person sees himself as a sinner and trusts Christ as his Savior, he becomes a "babe in Christ." Babes can and should grow, so these are exhorted:

*As newborn **babes**, desire the sincere [pure] milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby (I Peter 2:2).*

### The Carnal Christian

This is one who, though perhaps a Christian for years, has not grown, due to indifference and neglect of the Word of God. He still has to be treated as a babe in Christ. The Corinthian believers were examples of this. Paul had to write them:

*I ... could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto **carnal**, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear [digest] it, neither yet now are ye able (I Corinthians 3:1-2).*

Everybody loves a baby, but the joy that fills the hearts of loving parents turns to bitterest sorrow if their baby fails to grow.

## The Spiritual Christian

The spiritual Christian is one who, through prayerful study of the Word of God, has grown to spiritual maturity. He is no longer merely a child of God; he is a "man of God." We should all "desire the sincere [pure] milk of the Word that [we] may grow thereby" (I Peter 2:2),

*That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive (Ephesians 4:14).*

Cornelius R. Stam (1909-2003)  
*Two Minutes with the Bible*

## TRUTH

Do not imagine for a moment that any great truth is in danger. Truth is the most solid and enduring thing in the universe. "The Word of God ... abideth forever."

Alexander Kent (1837-1908)  
*Voices of the Faith (1887)*

## DEFINITION OF BIBLE WORDS

Bible terms are often used in a very loose and careless way; if we wish to arrive at the truth we must be careful how we use Bible terms. God's wonderful "counsel" is "darkened by words without knowledge" (Job 38:2). The best way that I know of to get the true meaning of a word in Scripture is to trace it through the Book and ►

notice in what sense the sacred writers used it. Collate all the passages where the word occurs; and then from these passages and the context, the meaning of the word may be very readily and surely gathered ...

In these days we have many helps to Bible study, and any Christian who does not, so far as is possible, avail himself of these helps to understand the "Wonderful Words of Life," is "willingly ignorant" (II Peter 3:5) ...

We will thus endeavor to determine the meaning of words, according to their origin, and also according to the sense of the passages where they occur.

Arthur P. Adams (1847-1925)  
*The Spirit of the Word* (1885)

### **THOROUGH INVESTIGATION WILL EXPOSE ERROR**

I have received many letters containing objections, suggestions and questions, which I shall endeavor to answer in due time. I am always glad to receive such letters, when written in the right spirit, as I do not expect that readers will accept everything that appears in the paper unquestioned, nor would I have them do so, but rather "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" ... Not infrequently great light is brought out by questions or objections; the truth never can be harmed in this way; thorough investigation will expose error, but it will make the truth shine brighter and brighter.

Arthur P. Adams (1847-1925)  
*The Spirit of the Word* (1885)

### **OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THOSE WHO DIFFER WITH US**

What should be our attitude toward our kindred in Christ who differ with us ...? Above all, it should be an attitude of love and respect. Certainly, this should never be a barrier to fellowship ...

Let us who rejoice in the revelation given by the risen Christ to the Apostle Paul not try to force our thinking on one another in these matters in which

we may differ, but rejoicing in the many, many truths we hold in common ...

At the same time, let us continue to study in love as the noble Bereans, the things on which we differ.

R.B. Shiflet  
*The Lord's Supper*

### **WORD MEANINGS**

In all languages, it is usage that determines meaning. ... Since usage always determines meaning, biblical usage, certainly, always determines biblical meaning.

Loyal Hurley (1886-1967)  
*The Outcome of Infinite Grace*  
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### **EXERCISING OUR SACRED DUTY**

For my part, I shall always claim the right of thinking and judging for myself, and of fully and freely expressing my views, whether these correspond with those of others or differ from them. This I conceive to be a high and holy privilege, and its exercise a sacred duty.

Robert Richardson  
Cited by John M. Bland in  
*Men Who Would Be Kings* (1995)

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S WORD TO THE BELIEVER**

The Bible will always have first place in the life of the spiritual Christian.

It is of utmost importance that we understand this, for some who *feel* themselves quite spiritual give much time to prayer, but little, if any, to the study of the Word ...

In saying this we do not for one moment minimize the importance of the holy Word of God. In this we are surely Spiritual, for David says, by inspiration,

*For Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all  
Thy name (Psalms 138:2).*

Miles Coverdale (1488-1568)  
*Prologue to the Reader, Coverdale Bible (1535)*

Of those who would still object and place first emphasis upon prayer rather than upon the Word, we would ask one simple question: Which is the more important, what we have to say to God or what He says to us? There can be but one answer to this question, for obviously what God has to say to us is infinitely more important than anything we might have to say to Him. Our prayers are as fraught with failure as we are, but the Word of God is infallible, immutable and eternal.

Yet some, having fallen for one of Satan's "devices" and feeling quite spiritual about it, are like the talkative person to whom one listens and listens, occasionally to "get a word in edgewise." They do all the talking, but give little time listening to what God has to say to them.

Cornelius R. Stam (1909-2003)  
*Two Minutes with the Bible*

### WHAT ARE ...?

What are heavy?  
Sea-sand and sorrow.

What are brief?  
Today and tomorrow.

What are frail?  
Spring blossoms and youth.

What are deep?  
The ocean and truth.

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)  
*Poems for a Good & Happy Life*

### UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE

It shall greatly help thee to understand Scripture, if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and unto whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstance, considering what goeth before, and what followeth after.

### IN RELATION TO THE WHOLE

Any single verse of the Bible, taken in isolation, may actually be dangerous to your spiritual health. Every part of it must be read in relation to the whole message.

Louis Cassels (1922-1974)

### THE TIME ELEMENT IN SCRIPTURE

How many scriptural problems would be solved, how many seeming contradictions explained, if we were more careful to note the time element, emphasized so strongly in the Word of God.

In Romans 5:12 we learn that sin entered the human race by Adam. Then later "*the law entered*" (:20). [S]till later the Apostle Paul arose to say, "**But now, the righteousness of God without the law is manifested**" (Romans 3:21).

Early in man's history blood sacrifices were required for acceptance with God (See Genesis 4:4; Hebrews 11:4), later circumcision and the Law (Genesis 17:14; Exodus 19:5), and still later, repentance and water baptism (Mark 1:4; Acts 2:38). [N]ot until Paul do we learn of salvation by grace through faith alone, on the basis of Christ's finished, all-sufficient work of redemption.

This is why the Apostle refers in Galatians 3:23 to "*the faith which should afterward be revealed.*" This is why he declares that our Lord "*gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,*" and adds: "*whereunto I am ordained a preacher and an apostle*" (I Timothy 2:6-7).

It is only as we recognize the time element in Scripture that we see the difference between "*the kingdom of heaven*" and "*the Body of Christ,*" between "*the gospel of the kingdom*" and "*the gospel of the grace of God,*" between the "*dispensation of law*" and "*the dispensation of the grace of God.*"

A comparison of Romans 3:21 and 26 shows how this time element is emphasized in Scripture. After discussing the function of the Law in :19-20, the Apostle Paul declares, “**But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested ...**” Then, in :26 he states that it is God’s purpose “**To declare, I say, at this time His [Christ’s] righteousness; that He [God] might be just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.**”

Cornelius R. Stam (1909-2003)  
*Two Minutes with the Bible*

### SEISMIC SHIFT IN UNDERSTANDING

No is almost always our first response to God. Especially when God wants us to think or act in a new way ...

Peter’s vision [Acts chapter 10] represented a seismic shift in the popular understanding of God’s grace. Such shifts unsettle the world ...

It’s not easy to believe and act in opposition to your religious tradition. It earns you few friends and many enemies ...

It’s helpful to remember we weren’t born with beliefs ... We were taught what to believe ...

The problem is our tendency to carve our beliefs in stone. We too easily adopt uncompromising attitudes and replace once-cherished beliefs with a new collection of rigid assumptions. We forget life is a series of experiences that continually challenge the beliefs we hold sacred ...

I’ve learned that asking why is never being unfaithful. *Why* we believe is every bit as important as *what* we believe. I once focused on *what* I believed and gave little thought to *why* I believed it.

Philip Gulley / James Mulholland  
*If Grace Is True*, pp. 23-24, 27, 30-31

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