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CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

An International Course of Biblical Understanding



You Must Be Born Again!

LESSON 8

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Garner Ted Armstrong

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David Jon Hill

MANAGING EDITOR

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Staff Writers

Lawson C. Briggs William F. Dankenbring

Art Editor

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ADDRESS COMMUNICATIONS to the Editor at the nearest address below:

United States: P. O. Box 111, Pasadena, California 91109.

Canada: P. O. Box 44, Station A, Vancouver 1, B.C.

Latin America: Institución Ambassador, Apartado Postal 5-595, México 5, D. F.

United Kingdom, Europe, India, Africa and West Indies: P. O. Box 111, St. Albans, Herts., England.

South Africa: P. O. Box 1060, Johannesburg, Transvaal, R. S. A.

Australia and Southeast Asia: G. P. O. Box 345, Sydney, NSW 2001, Australia.

New Zealand: P. O. Box 2709, Auckland 1, New Zealand.

The Philippines: P. O. Box 1111, Makati, Rizal D-708.

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About Our Cover . . .

Creation is still going on! All human beings since Adam represent only the

FIRST PHASE of man's creation. All people — including the beautiful baby on our cover — must be "born again" to complete God's supreme masterpiece of creative workmanship. Just what is God creating in mortal man? What does it really mean to be "born again"? This very important lesson makes the Bible answers plain!

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WHAT IT MEANS TO BE "BORN AGAIN"

Many professing Christians sincerely believe they have been "BORN AGAIN" — but do not understand the REAL MEANING of the new birth. The truth about being "born again" is not only surprising — it is startling — the MOST AWESOME REVELATION of your Bible!

NICODEMUS was a high-ranking Pharisee — one of the rulers of the Jews. He knew Jesus was a miracle-working prophet sent by God, and was deeply interested in His teachings.

But because Nicodemus did not want to be seen speaking with this man the other Pharisees called a "heretic" and a "deceiver of the people," he came to Jesus secretly at night.

Jesus told Nicodemus a profound truth — something that completely mystified the man.

"You Must Be Born Again!"

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God," said Jesus (John 3:3).

Nicodemus was totally perplexed. He asked Jesus: "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (Verse 4.)

Jesus told him: "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (verse 7). But Nicodemus simply did not comprehend what Jesus was talking about (verses 9-12). How like so many people today! They, too, are baffled by these simple words of Christ.

Most professing Christians think they were "BORN AGAIN" when they "accepted Christ" and were "baptized." From that time, supposedly, they received the Holy Spirit and have been living a NEW LIFE in Christ.

True, a real Christian has received the Spirit of

God, and is indeed living a NEW LIFE in Christ (Eph. 4:22-24). But is *this* what it means to be "born again"?

The new birth described in the Bible is FAR MORE than most professing Christians have assumed. When Jesus spoke of being "born again," He did *not* mean what most people think.

Two Literal Births

Nicodemus was familiar only with the process of physical birth. Therefore he understood when Jesus said to him, "That which is born of the flesh *is flesh*." But then Jesus explained we must be *born again* — not again of the *flesh* — *not* again entering our mother's womb, as Nicodemus thought He meant. He explained that we must be *born of the Spirit* — born of God! God must be our Father this time! As we were born of the flesh through fleshly *human* parents, even so we must be born of the Spirit of our spiritual heavenly Father.

Here are *two different kinds* of birth — one physical, the other spiritual. When you were born of your fleshly parents you were composed of flesh. But "that which is born of the spirit *is SPIRIT*" (John 3:6) — no longer composed of flesh, but of spirit!

There will be no blood in the body of one "born of the Spirit." He will not have to breathe air to exist. He will be literally COMPOSED OF SPIRIT, declared Jesus.

That's the plain teaching of your Bible! The



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new birth is *not* an emotional experience, but a *literal birth!*

So Nicodemus would not mistake the true meaning of being born of the Spirit, Jesus explained to him: "The wind bloweth where it listeth [where it wills], 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*" (verse 8).

Notice that carefully. When you are "born again," born of the Spirit of God, you will be *invisible* to mortal eyes *like the wind* (unless you choose to manifest yourself). The effects of the wind may be easily discernible, but the wind itself cannot be seen.

Clearly, Jesus compared the spiritual birth to the physical birth. The latter is a *type* of the former. Human parents pass on a *physical* nature at birth to their children; so when we are born of our heavenly Father, we will possess His *Spiritual* nature in its fullness!

Man the "Clay Model"

God formed the first man, Adam, not out of spirit, but "of the dust of the ground" (Gen. 2:7). God said to Adam: "DUST thou art" (Gen. 3:19).

HURRICANE-FORCE WINDS — You can't see the wind, but the effects of its tremendous power in a storm are quite visible. When "born again" you will be invisible like the wind and possess tremendous power!

Not immortal spirit — just plain old earth! Man is *mortal*, physical, not yet immortal or spiritual.

Adam was a perfect *physical* specimen. What God created was a physical, fleshly man — a mortal flesh and blood human being. He was the perfect "clay model" which God intends to mold and reshape spiritually into a perfect SPIRITUAL Son of God!

Adam, in other words, was not created complete. He was created to need a second "birth" — a SPIRITUAL birth!

But how? When? Why? All these vital questions will be answered in this tremendously important lesson.

NO SUBJECT IS MORE IMPORTANT TO YOUR LIFE! Unless *YOU* become "born again," you cannot enter the Kingdom of God! So be sure to open your Bible to *every scripture* reference cited in answer to the questions asked, and PROVE to yourself just what it means to be "born again."

LESSON 8

Who — What — Is "God"?

To fully understand what it really means to be "born again," it is necessary to comprehend some very basic revelations concerning what God Himself is — and the very PURPOSE for your existence.

Turn to the very beginning of the Bible. The first words are: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). The original Hebrew word for "God," here and throughout the account of creation, is *Elohim*, which actually means *more than one*. It is the plural form of Hebrew *Eloah*, which in English means "Mighty One." So *Elohim* means "Mighty Ones" — *more than just one person*.

Elohim is a uniplural or collective noun, such as "church," or "family," or "kingdom." In other words, *Elohim* stands for a SINGLE CLASS composed of TWO or MORE individuals. *Elohim*, then, is the "God KINGDOM" or "God FAMILY." (In actual usage the word was also applied to any single member of the God Family or, by analogy, even to a heathen idol.)

But who are the individuals presently composing "Elohim"? Let's notice what the Bible reveals:

1. Who was with "God" when God created the universe? John 1:1. Is the "Word" also God? Verses 1-2. Was it the Word who actually created all things? Verse 3. What did the Word later become? Verse 14.

2. By whom was *all* the material universe created — including this earth and mankind? Eph. 3:9; Col. 1:16-17. Who, then, is the "Word" of John 1:1? And who is the other divine member of the God Kingdom? I Cor. 8:6.

COMMENT: John 1:1 and Genesis 1:1 are two accounts of the same event — the original creation

of the universe. They both reveal that these two Supreme Beings of the God Family created all things.

The Greek word translated into English as "Word" in John 1:1 is *Logos*. It can also mean spokesman, or one who speaks. It was actually the *Logos*, the "Spokesman" — the "Word" of the God Family — who *said*, "Let us make man in OUR image" (Gen. 1:26), thus executing His awesome office as the executive of the God Kingdom. And so everything was created and made by the divine being who later became the human Jesus Christ!

The "LORD" of the Old Testament

Do you know which one of the two members of the God Kingdom took part in the affairs of this world in Old Testament times? Was it the "Father"? Could it possibly have been Christ? Very few have understood this important truth. But the Bible makes it plain.

1. Has any human being ever seen the Father? John 1:18. What did Christ say regarding the Father? John 5:37.

2. But did people ever look upon the God of the Old Testament? Gen. 17:1; 18:1, 22; 32:30; Ex. 24:9-11; 33:18, 20-23. (Notice in Exodus 33:18 that Moses had specifically requested to see the LORD in *all His "glory,"* but could *not* view Him directly in His glorified state lest he DIE from seeing His brilliance!)

COMMENT: Clearly, then, the God of the Old Testament could not have been the "Father."

3. Who was called the "Rock" in Old Testament times? II Sam. 22:2-3. Did David call the LORD his "Rock" and his "God"? Psalms 18:1-2.

COMMENT: The King James Version of the Bible and some other translations use the word "LORD," usually in capital letters, to translate the Hebrew word *YHWH*. Most scholars believe *YHWH* to be some form of the verb "to be" or "to exist." Hence *YHWH* signifies "the self-existent One," One who "*lives*" — from eternity, and to

THE "LORD'S" NAME — Transliterated into English, these Hebrew characters (read from right to left) spell out *YHWH* — the "LORD" of the Old Testament. The exact pronunciation of these Hebrew characters is uncertain and unimportant today, but His identity is very plain.

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eternity. Revelation 1:8 clarifies the meaning of this name, speaking of Christ, “the beginning and the ending . . . which *is*, and which *was*, and which *is to come* . . .” Consequently both Moffatt’s *“The Eternal”* and Fenton’s *“Ever-Living”* are excellent translations.

In ancient Hebrew, the vowels were not written. They were supplied by the reader. Since the ancient Jews considered the name *YHWH* too holy to pronounce, they read instead *Adonai* or “Lord,” or occasionally *Elohim*. When the Masoretes — Jewish textual scholars — wrote down the vowel points (about 600-800 A.D.) to preserve the proper pronunciation, they wrote the vowel points of *Adonai* or *Elohim* with each occurrence of *YHWH*. From this combination later came the hybrid form “Jehovah.” Thus the precise pronunciation of *YHWH* is not definitely known today, *nor is it necessary for us to know it today*.

4. According to I Corinthians 10:4, who was (and still *is*) the “Rock”?

COMMENT: Thus the Bible identifies the “Rock” as *Christ*! How surprising to those who have *assumed* that the God of the Old Testament was the one the New Testament calls “the Father”!

And so the “LORD” who spoke and was seen of men was always the one who became Jesus Christ.

GOD’S AWESOME CREATION

— It was by His awesome POWER that God created the fathomless universe. At right is a spectacular spiral galaxy containing billions of stars. Above is a small section of our own Milky Way Galaxy, which is similar in shape and size.

For no *mortal man* has ever seen or heard the Father! (John 1:18; 5:37.)

5. Was it *also* the Word — the One who became Christ — who spoke the Ten Commandments? Ex. 20:1-2.

COMMENT: The Hebrew word for “Lord” in Exodus 20 is *YHWH*. So here again it was the *Logos*, the “Spokesman” — who later became Christ — who actually spoke the Ten Commandments!

But what difference does this revelation make? It makes *all* the difference.

Understanding the true identity of the God of the Old Testament is vital to becoming re-born



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with the spiritual nature of God. For the God of the Old Testament, commonly assumed to have been harsh and stern, was really our SAVIOR — loving, kind, merciful *and* just (Ex. 34:5-7).

The POWER of God

Most of professing Christianity today also assumes that God is a “trinity” composed of God the Father, God the Son and God the “Holy Spirit.” Could this be true? Let’s learn what the Bible tells us about the Spirit of God.

1. Is God’s Spirit the POWER by which He creates? Jer. 32:17; Gen. 1:1-3; Psalm 104:30.

COMMENT: It was by the Spirit of God that the Eternal (YHWH) — the *Logos* (Christ) — created the entire vast universe. Invisible spirit energy was literally transformed into the material creation we see about us (Heb. 11:3). And by His Spirit, God reformed the surface of the earth (Ps. 104:30). No wonder the Bible calls it the “power” of God!

2. How did the Eternal God utilize His Spirit of power to bring His various creations into being? Psalm 148:1-5. Notice the word “commanded” in verse 5. Also read Psalm 33:8-9 and Genesis 1:2-3.

COMMENT: God, the ultimate source of all power, willed that spirit *energy* emanating from Himself be TRANSFORMED into physical energy

and matter. Christ — the *Logos*, or “Word” (John 1:1) — “spake and it was done.” He is the One who said, “Let there be light.” And the Spirit of God, moving over the face of the waters *performed* the command, and “there was light” (Gen. 1:3).

3. Does God also use His Spirit of power to sustain, preserve and rule His vast creation? Neh. 9:6; Heb. 1:2-3; Psalm 66:7.

COMMENT: God sits at the controls of the entire universe — He *rules and sustains everything* by the POWER of His Spirit!

4. Does God’s Spirit fill the entire universe? Psalm 139:7; Jer. 23:24. But do the Father and Christ have definite form and shape? Gen. 1:26; John 14:9.

COMMENT: God’s Spirit is not a “third person” in the God Family. It is His divine POWER that emanates from Him and permeates the universe!

5. But what about I John 5:7 which many suppose proves God is composed of three persons?

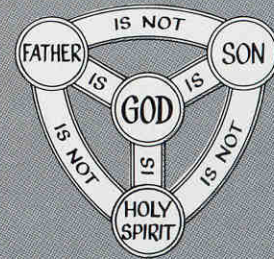
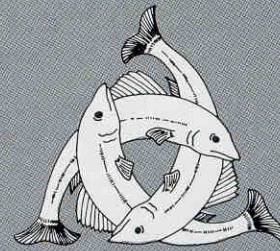
COMMENT: This verse is left out of most modern translations of the Bible — for a very good reason! It is spurious — a *fraud!* Most any Bible commentary reveals that this verse is not found in *any* old Greek manuscript and was not found even in the Latin Vulgate until as late as the eighth century. Admits Adam Clarke: It is lacking in “all the ancient versions but the Vulgate; and even of this version many of the most ancient and correct MSS. [manuscripts] have it not.”

Those who believe in a “trinity” grasp at this verse to support their belief because they have NO Bible proof for their conviction! Rather, history reveals the trinity concept is a *pagan* invention and belief found in many ancient countries. The Egyptian trinity consisted of Isis, Osiris and Horus; the worship of the trinity traces back to the worship of Nimrod, Semiramis and Tammuz soon after the Flood!

6. Is the Holy Spirit referred to in the Bible simply as “it” — *not* a person? John 1:32; Rom. 8:16, 26; I Peter 1:11.

COMMENT: In Greek, as in English, the word “spirit” is *neuter*. It naturally requires a neuter pronoun which is rightly translated into English as “it,” and is usually so translated. However, in some cases the translators have used a masculine pronoun where the original Greek uses “it.” John 14:17 is such a case. The pronouns “he” and “him” should have been rendered “it.” No doubt the translators erred because they themselves *assumed* the Holy Spirit to be a person.

In John 14:26; 16:7-8, 13-14 the Holy Spirit is personified as the “Comforter” (Greek *parakletos*, which is grammatically masculine), hence the pronoun “he” (*ekeinos*) was used in the original Greek to agree with “Comforter,” but should also be translated “it” in an English version.



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TRINITY SYMBOLS — Most of professing Christianity today believes that God is limited to a “trinity” composed of three persons — God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ) and God the Holy Spirit. Shown here are two of many symbols used to represent the Trinity.

The plain fact of the whole matter, which few have ever realized, is that the commonly accepted “trinity” doctrine attempts to *limit* for all time the size of the Family of God. It denies the very PURPOSE for which *Elohim* created mankind! You will grasp this astonishing truth more fully as you continue studying.

The Nature of God

1. What is the composition of God? John 4:24. But of what is man composed? I Cor. 15:47.

COMMENT: One of the great *differences* between the God Kingdom and the human kingdom is that God is composed of invisible spirit, while man is mortal flesh and blood — made from the dust of the earth.

2. Just before He was taken to be crucified, to what state did Christ ask His Father to restore Him? John 17:5. Was Christ again to share His Father’s *glory* in the God Family? Same verse.

3. How do Christ’s and the Father’s powerful, *glorified* spirit bodies appear? Rev. 1:13-16. The “Son of Man” mentioned here is the glorified Christ!

COMMENT: To be "glorified" means to have GREAT POWER and BRIGHTNESS! The power of the Father and Christ is *so great* that it makes their spirit bodies shine as BRIGHT AS THE SUN IN FULL STRENGTH!

4. What is another great difference between God and man — what is God's characteristic attitude and general mental makeup? Psalm 99:9. Is there anyone as "holy" as God? I Sam. 2:2. Would you consider man of himself as being "holy"? Rom. 3:10-18, 23; 8:7; Jer. 17:9.

COMMENT: The word "holy" means *pure of heart* or free from sin. The two Persons presently composing the God Family possess a sinless, "holy," *spiritual* attitude and mind.

But what does all this have to do with *your* being "born again"?

EVERYTHING! When born again you will possess the *same* power, glory and holiness of God! But more about this later.

A "Father-Son" Relationship

Have you ever wondered how the "Father-Son" relationship of the God Family developed? This is vital to know, to understand the purpose and Plan of God, and being "born again."

1. What did Jesus say of Himself and His "Father"? John 10:30; 17:11. Yet who is *greater* in authority? John 14:28. Notice also I Corinthians 11:3.

COMMENT: The Father and Son are one *in purpose and attitude*. But the Father is greater in authority since Christ — the "Word," or *Logos* — made all things by His authority. The Father has always been in supreme command in the Family or Kingdom of God — long *before* the Word became a human being.

2. Why did the *Logos* (Christ) become a flesh-and-blood human being? Heb. 2:9, 14.

COMMENT: *All* mankind has sinned (Rom. 3:23). And "the wages of sin is [eternal] death" (Rom. 6:23). The *Logos* became a mortal man so He could *die* to pay the death penalty for the sins of ALL mankind. Christ was able to do this because His human life was far more valuable than the lives of all human beings put together — He was *God incarnate* — *GOD made flesh!* (John 1:14.)

3. But exactly how did the *Logos* become composed of flesh and blood? Matt. 1:18-21. ("Ghost" in this passage, as elsewhere, is an unfortunate translation in the King James Version. It should rather be rendered "Spirit" as it is in most other translations of the Bible.) What *title* did the other member of the God Kingdom acquire as a result of this miraculous begetting? Matt. 18:35; John 1:14.

COMMENT: Before Christ (the *Logos*) was con-

ceived in Mary, He was not the "Son of God." He was one of the two original members of the God Kingdom. He, like the one who became the "Father," had existed eternally. But He is nowhere in God's Word referred to as a SON of God prior to His conception in Mary. His *human* birth was His *first* birth. He gave up the glory He had shared with the other divine being, who became His "Father," in order to be born into the world as a human being, live a perfect life, and then give His life to pay the penalty of all the sins of mankind.

And so Jesus was begotten within His human mother Mary. But unlike all other men, He was *miraculously* begotten by the One who became the Father, through the agency and power of the *Spirit* of God (Matt. 1:20; John 1:14 — here is further proof the Spirit of God is not another person). Christ thus became the "Son" of God, and He called the other person of the God Kingdom His "Father." And so began the "Father-Son" relationship, which is a FAMILY relationship!

Now let's begin to understand exactly what all this has to do with our being "born again."

Man Created in God's Image

Man is not just another "animal" as evolutionists claim. God's purpose for creating man surpasses anything ever conceived by the mind of man. Let's turn to the first chapter of Genesis and begin to understand the most astounding revelation of your Bible!

1. After what "kind" were the animals created? Gen. 1:20-25.

COMMENT: These verses plainly say, without any interpretation, that God created fish to reproduce after their own particular *kind*, birds after their particular kind, and cattle after the cattle kind. Each *kind* may have many varieties within it, but all creatures reproduce only after *their own "kind."* That is why dogs reproduce dogs, monkeys reproduce monkeys, sheep reproduce sheep, etc.

2. But what about man? After whose "image" and "likeness" was man created? Gen. 1:26-27.

COMMENT: In God's pattern for all life, like reproduces like. And just as each created form of plant or animal reproduces after its own kind, so man reproduces man. But *UNLIKE* any of the animals created by God, man was created in *God's* likeness.

These scriptures *refute* the theory that man is merely the "highest" of the animals, having "evolved" from lower mammals. They clearly state that God created man after *His own* "image" and "likeness"! God made man *LIKE* Himself — same form and shape. And He is now creating men after *HIS KIND!*

Only a very few have really grasped the tremendous significance of this astounding truth. But this is what salvation is all about. This revelation affirms that *God is REPRODUCING HIMSELF*. Our destiny is to become the literal “children” of God — MEMBERS of His own divine *Family*!

3. Even though man is made in the likeness of God, are both now composed of the same type of “material”? John 4:24; Gen. 2:7.

COMMENT: There is a vast difference between spirit and dust. Although man was created in the very shape and likeness of God, he was NOT created out of the same material. He was made of the dust of the earth, subject to decay. But God’s purpose is to eventually create him out of *spirit*!

In I Corinthians 15:46 we read: “Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and AFTERWARD that which is *spiritual*. The first man [Adam] is of the earth, earthy: the second man [Christ] is the Lord from heaven And as *we* [speaking of converted Christians] have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (verses 46-49).

Clearly, man is much more than any animal. Man has the *potential* to become divine spirit — just as GOD is spirit!

Our Awesome Destiny!

Astonishing as it may seem, God is now in the process of creating His greatest creation of all — His supreme masterpiece! God’s Plan is to create *perfect spiritual characters* out of mortal mankind. Notice the overwhelming evidence:

1. Is God still in the *process* of forming and

molding man as a potter works with clay? Isa. 64:8.

COMMENT: Man’s creation in the Garden of Eden was complete only in the *physical* sense. Adam was created a perfect physical specimen — but *not* a perfect SPIRITUAL creation. He was created of the dust — not of divine SPIRIT. He was created corruptible — not incorruptible. He was created subject to death — not immortal.

But God did not intend man should remain that way!

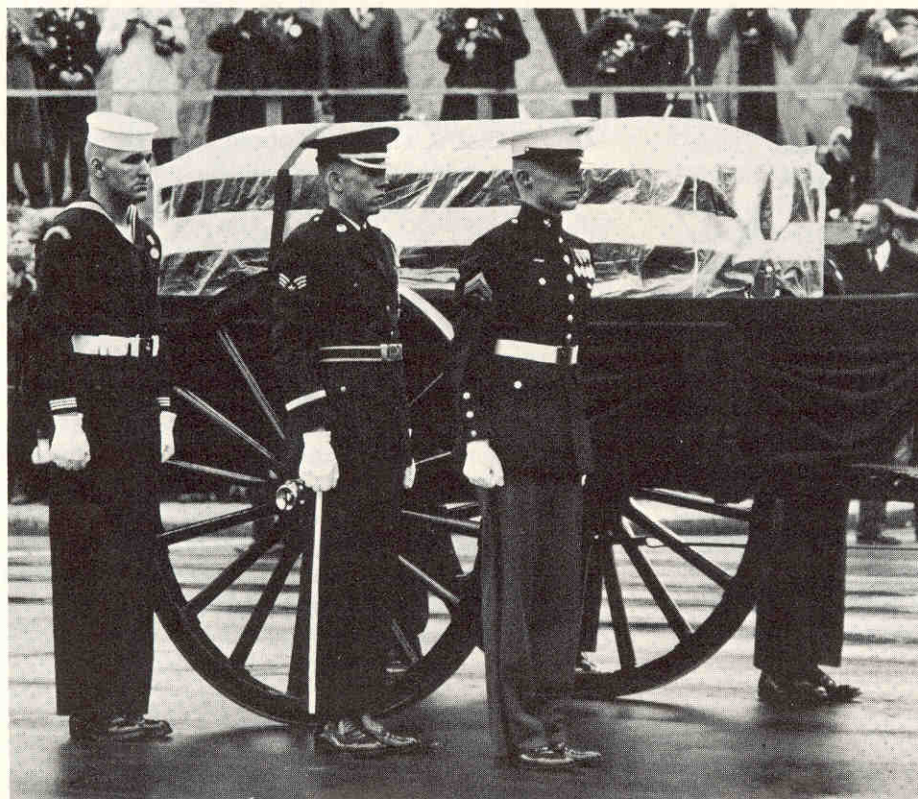
2. Did Job realize God was forming a *special creation* in his life? Job 14:14-15.

COMMENT: Notice especially the latter part of verse 15: “. . . *thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.*” The “work” was *Job*. Job knew he was merely a piece of divine *workmanship* in the hands of the Master Potter.

3. Are true Christians being fashioned by God for a *specific* purpose? Isa. 43:7; Eph. 2:10.

COMMENT: The word “*we*” in New Testament language usually refers to *Christians*, as Paul intended in verse 10. We, then — *if we are Christians* — are God’s “workmanship.” We today are being “created” — WHY? — “unto *good works*.” God, with the Holy Spirit He has put within us, is forming in us perfect spiritual *character*! He is creating us in His own *character*-image! He is creating us to be the supreme masterpiece of all His works of creation — individuals who will ultimately be capable of exercising awesome powers in the universe!

Man, the material creation, is only the *first phase*. Now the clay model has to be fashioned and molded by experience, and with the aid of



“IF A MAN DIE, SHALL HE LIVE AGAIN?”

— These were the inspired words of Job (Job 14:14). Job knew the answer. He knew all the dead would awaken in a resurrection to fulfill the purpose of life. Photo shows General Dwight D. Eisenhower’s casket in funeral procession.

Kilburn — Ambassador College



Josip Ciganovic

POTTER AT WORK — As a potter shapes and molds a piece of pliable clay into a work of art, God — the Master Potter — is fashioning "mortal clay" into His supreme masterpiece of creative workmanship!

God's Holy Spirit, into the finished *spiritual* masterpiece. An analogy of this process would be a caterpillar going through a metamorphosis and emerging a beautiful butterfly. Man must undergo a spiritual "metamorphosis," or CHANGE — to emerge as perfect SPIRITUAL MEMBERS in the divine GOD FAMILY!

What It Means to Be "Born Again"

The Gospel Jesus brought to mankind is simply the "good news" of the *Kingdom of God* — and that Kingdom is DUAL. It is not only the ruling government which Christ will establish on the earth when he returns, but it is also the FAMILY of God — the God Kingdom composed of the spirit members of the God Family.

And, incredible as it may sound, Jesus taught that humans can be "born" into the FAMILY, or KINGDOM, of God.

There are *only* two members in the God Family or Kingdom at the present time — God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. But God is *increasing His Family!* And YOU can be "born" into it!

1. Does God plainly show it is His purpose to increase His divine Family by bringing *many* sons into it? Heb. 2:10; Rev. 21:7. Isn't Jesus Christ actually the "*firstborn*" of MANY sons of God? Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:18.

COMMENT: To be "conformed to the IMAGE" of Christ means to become LIKE Him — to be glorified as He is glorified — to be of the divine FAMILY OF GOD as much as Christ now is.

2. But what must happen to flesh-and-blood Christians *before* they can enter God's Family? I Cor. 15:49-51; John 3:3-8.

COMMENT: Jesus said we must be "born again" — *CHANGED INTO SPIRIT!* Yes, born *again* — this time born of the Spirit of God as divine Sons in the Family of God.

Begotten Sons Now — Not Yet Born Again

1. If we are true Christians, are we already — in this life — the *children* of God? I John 3:1-2. Are we already inheritors of the Kingdom of God, or only *heirs* to it? Rom. 8:14-17.

COMMENT: Notice that although we are now the “sons” and “children of God,” we are only heirs — ones who shall, in the future, inherit. Why? Because we are now only *begotten* children. It is only when we are *born* of God that we become inheritors of God’s Kingdom — divine members of the Family of God.

Before the second phase of man’s creation — our *spiritual creation* — can begin, God the Father must *first beget* each of us by placing His Holy Spirit *within* our minds. We are then *impregnated*, so to speak, by the “seed” or germ of *eternal* life. It is the *begetting* of the spiritual life of God within our minds. And much as a newly begotten physical embryo begins to grow in its mother’s womb, we begin to *grow* in SPIRITUAL CHARACTER after we are begotten by God’s Spirit. This growth comes through study, prayer, and walking with God.

2. Now compare Galatians 3:26 and Ephesians 1:5 with Romans 8:14-17. Do these verses reveal the *same truth* — that Christians are already the children — the sons — of God, destined to inherit eternal life?

COMMENT: Some versions of the Bible use the expression “adoption of sons” or “adoption of children.” Although linguistically possible, these do not give the real meaning. The original inspired Greek expression *huiiothesia* does simply mean “sonship.” But when we receive the “spirit of sonship,” as an impregnating “seed” (I Pet. 1:23), that is not an “adoption.” The Holy Spirit makes us the *literal begotten sons of God*, for we are going to be just like our Heavenly Father when finally born into His Kingdom.

And so all Spirit-begotten Christians have become the (as yet unborn) *children* of God the Father, in the same sense that an unborn human fetus is the child of its human parents!

3. Do we actually receive of the divine nature of God when begotten by His Holy Spirit? II Peter 1:3-4. What are some of the divine characteristics or “fruits” of God’s nature that are made manifest in the lives of obedient Christians after they are begotten by God’s Spirit? Gal. 5:22-23.

4. Is love (“charity”) the greatest single attribute of God’s nature that is transmitted to us by His Holy Spirit? I John 4:16; Rom. 5:5; I Cor. 13:1-13 (notice especially verse 13). Is this the *same* love that enables us to “fulfill” — to OBEY — God’s Law? Rom. 13:10.

COMMENT: The Holy Spirit that a person may receive from God can be compared to the sperm of a human father. God’s Spirit transmits His spiritual attributes to us, even as a physical sperm cell transmits a human father’s attributes to his newly conceived offspring. The Holy Spirit — the germ or “seed” (I Pet. 1:23) by which we are spiritually begotten — imparts to us the nature and very life of God our heavenly Father.

If you are truly the kind of Christian described in the Bible, then you are now a *begotten* child or son of God. God the Father placed within your mind His Spirit, the *sperm*, so to speak, of eternal life. He begot you with the Holy Spirit just as the sperm from a human father impregnates the egg of the mother. Your mind can be compared to an “egg” or ovum. You were impregnated with the spiritual germ or sperm of eternal life so you could begin the process of *spiritual growth*. But you are not yet born of God — not yet composed of spirit — not yet immortal. If you are not yet truly converted — a genuine Christian — then you have *not yet even begun this process!*

Born Again at the Resurrection

1. Can flesh and blood inherit God’s Kingdom? I Cor. 15:50. What must happen before we can be born as divine sons in God’s Family? Verses 51-53.

COMMENT: Whatever is born of spirit is spirit, said Jesus (John 3:6). But we have not yet been born of spirit. We are STILL FLESH AND BLOOD! If you think you have already been “born again,” then take the “pin test.” Stick a pin in your finger. Do you feel pain? Does your finger bleed? Then you are still flesh and blood — you haven’t been “born again.”

When Christ was resurrected — “born again” — He was able to pass through solid walls (John 20:19, 26). Do you think those who claim to have been “born again” can match this feat?

Obviously, any human beings who claim to be already born again are terribly mistaken, for they are still flesh and blood. Jesus said you must be “born of spirit” — you must become *composed* of spirit — to ever see or enter the Kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5). And so the new birth is something yet to occur *at the resurrection!*

But exactly why aren’t all true Christians already *born* of God? Notice:

2. What are Christians exhorted to do in this life? II Peter 3:18; Eph. 4:15. How and by whom are they to be “fed” and nurtured so they may *grow* into the stature of Christ? I Peter 5:1-2; Eph. 4:11-13.

COMMENT: The Father begets. He does not “bring forth”; the *mother* does that, later. After the father’s part, which *initiates* the PROCESS,

there is always a lapse of time leading to final birth. At the time of begettal, birth (parturition) has not yet occurred. In the case of human beings, it follows about nine months later.

During the intervening time, just as the mother nourishes and protects the unborn son or daughter in her womb during the gestation period, so the *true Church* is commissioned to nourish and protect true Christians in her spiritual womb — to “feed the flock.” God’s spirit-begotten children must be nourished on the *spiritual food* supplied by God — the words of Scripture — and live by every word of God, in order to grow up spiritually.

If by the return of Jesus Christ we have grown and matured in spiritual character, we will become *born* “children of God,” being “*children of the resurrection*” as Christ was at *His* resurrection. We will then no longer be subject to death (Luke 20:35-36). But if the spirit-begotten child of God does *not* grow spiritually, he can become a spiritual miscarriage — an abortion.

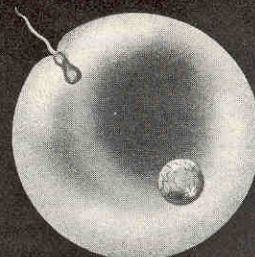
3. Speaking of the resurrection, when the second birth will occur, what did Paul say regarding the new body Christians will receive? I Cor. 15:42-44. Will they become as Jesus Christ is today? Phil. 3:20-21; I John 3:2; Matt. 17:1-2; Rev. 1:13-16; Matt. 13:43; Dan. 12:3.

COMMENT: Because God is spirit, when one is “born” of his heavenly Father he will **BE SPIRIT** — he will be composed of the same substance of

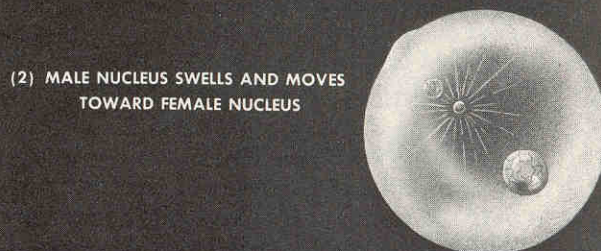
Begettal of Human Life

These seven steps illustrate the impregnation of a human ovum, or “egg,” by the male sperm, and subsequent growth. This process of physical begettal and growth of human life is analogous to the spiritual begettal of a Christian’s mind by the Spirit of God, and subsequent growth in spiritual character.

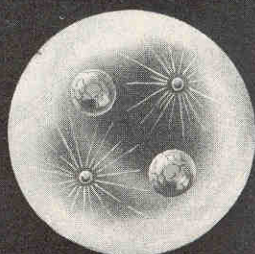
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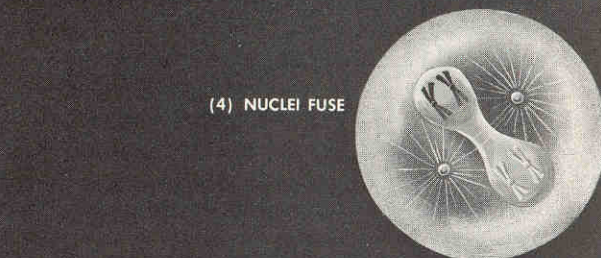
(1) SPERM WIGGLES INTO EGG



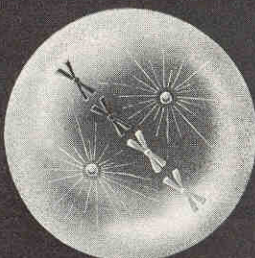
(2) MALE NUCLEUS SWELLS AND MOVES TOWARD FEMALE NUCLEUS



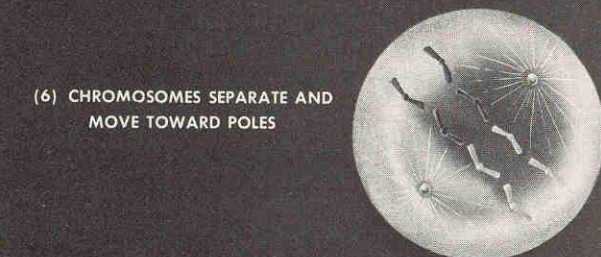
(3) CENTROSOME DIVIDES AND SPINDLE FIBERS FORM



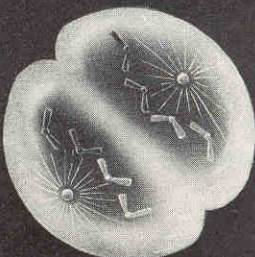
(4) NUCLEI FUSE



(5) CHROMOSOMES LINE UP



(6) CHROMOSOMES SEPARATE AND MOVE TOWARD POLES



(7) CELL DIVIDES

which God is composed. He will be given a spirit body just like Christ's and will be GLORIFIED and given tremendous SPIRITUAL POWER. The spiritual power and glory "born-again" Christians shall receive at the resurrection will be so great that it will make their spirit bodies *shine as the sun*, and make their raiment dazzling white!

And all who are thus "born of God" will be able to see God because they will be *in* the Kingdom — the divine Family — of God!

The Great Difference Between "Begotten" and "Born"

Most professing Christians assume they were "born again" when they first "accepted Christ." Then by misapplying the King James Version's rendition of I John 3:9, "Whosoever is *born* of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and *he cannot sin*, because he is born of God," many also assume that they are no longer capable of sinning in this life.

That assumption is *false*! Notice:

1. Did the Apostle John say that Christians do sometimes commit sins? I John 1:8-10. Did he use the *present tense* of the verb in verse 8? Then he meant they sin *after* becoming Christians, didn't he? Notice that he includes *himself* by saying "we."

2. Was the Apostle Paul beset with recurring sin long *after* he repented and received — was begotten by — the Holy Spirit? Rom. 7:14-25. Is there a just man on earth who does not at *some time* commit sin? Eccl. 7:20. So isn't it plain that Christians in this mortal flesh are *not now* perfect — not yet born of God?

3. Now notice I John 5:18. Does this verse further substantiate the fact that Christians are *not yet* born of God?

COMMENT: The person who has been finally "born of God" will not sin any longer. Once we are born of God at the resurrection we will be able to live without ever sinning again. How? Simply because we will then possess the *fullness* of God's perfect character and divine nature. We will no longer possess a nature which can fall victim to sin.

But as long as we are only "begotten" of God we must "keep ourselves" — we must continue to *resist* the evil temptations of the flesh. Such a one can commit sin. *When caught off guard or in a moment of weakness, we can sin!* But we cannot "practice [or continually live in] sin" and be the begotten sons of God, which is another possible meaning of I John 3:9.

Life, to the begotten Christian, is a *constant struggle* against the wiles of the devil, temptations in the world, and the pulls of his own flesh. Al-

though he has now received the *begettal* of God's *divine nature* (II Pet. 1:4), he still has human nature as well, and the one wars against the other (Gal. 5:17).

But what about the Old Testament men of God? How can we prove whether any of them were either begotten or born of God? Let's understand:

4. Did David have God's Holy Spirit? Ps. 51:10-11. What about all the "holy men of old," including Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? II Pet. 1:21; Rom. 8:14; Luke 13:28. And yet, was Jesus Christ the "FIRSTborn from the dead"? Col. 1:15, 18.

COMMENT: Now since those Old Testament personages had God's Holy Spirit, and yet Christ was *first* to be born of God by virtue of His resurrection, then it follows that those men of old were merely "begotten" of God — not yet "born" into His Family. And the same is TRUE OF EVERY CHRISTIAN SINCE CHRIST!

The Greek Word Gennao

Much of the confusion about being "born again" has resulted from misinterpreting the original Greek of the New Testament. With one exception (James 1:15, 18) the Greek word used in reference to spiritual begettal and birth — spiritual salvation — is always *gennao*. This word means both "to conceive," or "to beget," and also "to bear," or "to be born" — all or any part of the *whole* process which produces a new individual human being; whereas in English we use two separate verbs — "begotten" and "born."

Since both begettal and birth are included in the meaning of *gennao*, we must often let the Bible interpret the Bible in order to know which meaning is intended in a particular passage.

Here are several examples where the Greek word should rightly have been rendered *begotten*, not born: John 1:12-13; I John 2:29; 4:7; 5:1 (three times); 5:4. The King James Version is correct by using "begotten" in I Corinthians 4:15; Hebrews 1:5 and I John 5:1.

Now what about the scriptures that call Christ the "ONLY-begotten"? (John 1:14, 18; 3:16; I John 4:9.) Do these, after all, *disprove* the truth that true Christians are only "begotten" of God's Spirit, growing toward being *born* of God at the resurrection?

Of course not!

The simple answer is that all these verses are referring to Christ's *miraculous begettal* in His mother Mary's womb. Christ's physical begettal and birth (*gennao*) were unique. No other person — ever — has been begotten by the Spirit of the Father in a human mother's womb! In this sense He is — and always shall be — "ONLY-begotten." But *many* have been "begotten again" (I Pet. 1:3)

to ultimately become — through the process of spiritual growth and birth — the *spirit-born* sons of God.

You MUST Be Born Again!

What God created at the time described in the first chapter of Genesis was a *physical* creation. Man, made of the dust of the ground, was the MATERIAL being which God planned to mold, shape and form into a perfect SPIRITUAL creation. He pictures us as the clay, Himself as the Potter — forming us into the spiritual image of Himself!

God uses human reproduction to picture the process by which He is reproducing Himself. Each human since Adam and Eve started from a tiny ovum, the size of a pinpoint, produced in the body of the mother. But the egg is *incomplete* of itself. It lives only about 48 hours, according to some authorities. Unless fertilized by the life-giving sperm cell from the human father within the limited time, it dies. A human life can only begin when that sperm cell impregnates — enters — the ovum.

Spiritually speaking, each human mind is like an egg. Each of US was BORN INCOMPLETE — able to live only a relatively short span of years. We were made to *need* the impregnating spiritual life of God's Holy Spirit so we could be created in God's spiritual "image" and live forever!

The physical ovum, once it is fertilized, becomes a *begotten* human life called an embryo. The mother's womb nourishes and protects it — carrying it in that part of her body where she may best protect it from physical injury or harm — until it has grown enough to be *born*. After a number of weeks, the embryo develops to what is called a fetus, and at birth it is called a human baby.

Likewise God's CHURCH protects and spiritually feeds begotten Christians with the Word of God so they may GROW SPIRITUALLY (II Peter 3:18) in the divine character of God until ready to be born into His Family.

But there is one great difference in this analogy!

The physical fetus does not attain physical and mental maturity before birth. However, the spirit-begotten Christian must attain a reasonable measure of spiritual maturity *before* he is spirit-born. The newborn physical babe's main growth occurs after birth, but this is a type of the spiritual growing which spiritually begotten Christians must do before their spiritual birth (I Pet. 1:23; 2:1-2). Christ did not grow into spiritual perfection *after* He was resurrected, but during His *human* lifetime, setting us the example, being *made* perfect (Heb. 2:10 and 5:8-9).

Surely nobody will be foolish enough to suggest that when Christ was BORN the very son of God by

the resurrection (Rom. 1:4) He was resurrected as a tiny *infant's* body composed of spirit! He was resurrected full grown. How did the apostles know He was the same Jesus? Because they knew what Jesus looked like — and in His resurrected body He *looked the same* as He had before in the flesh, except He now was composed of spirit instead of flesh and blood!

When *we* are "born again" — born of God, changed into spirit bodies at the resurrection — we, too, shall look essentially as we do now, as far as physical features are concerned. But the resurrected body will be a *different* body — composed of SPIRIT instead of flesh and blood (I Cor. 15:35-44).

Now what, exactly, *is* spiritual growth? It is CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT!

Such character is the ability, as a free moral agent, to *discern* right from wrong — the true values from the false — truth from error — and then to make the *right choice or decision*, even against self-desire, impulse or temptation; plus the *will* and self-discipline to *resist* the wrong and to *do* the right.

But as mentioned before, we must BEGIN developing spiritual character and grow toward spiritual adulthood *during this life* — NOT AFTER we are born of God at the resurrection! Our vile, carnal nature (Rom. 8:7; Jer. 17:9) must be *gradually* changed NOW! This spiritual growth comes by feeding on the Word of God, through prayer and wholehearted participation in the Work of God.

Then, when the glorified Christ returns to earth the second time, we shall be resurrected, or instantaneously changed, into bodies that will be like His (I John 3:1-2) — full grown — adult! At that instant, our present physical bodies will be made like His glorified body — "BORN AGAIN" AS MEMBERS OF GOD'S OWN FAMILY — as God's own glorious offspring with eternal life inherent within ourselves — as His immortal sons to reign along with Jesus Christ our elder BROTHER!

That, according to your Bible, is what it means to be "born again." God help you to comprehend this glorious truth, and become one of His spiritually begotten children!

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1-B	5-C	9-D	13-F	17-I
2-A	6-B	10-B	14-T	18-F
3-B	7-C	11-T	15-F	19-C
4-A	8-C	12-T	16-J	20-B

Rate Yourself

19-20 correct	excellent
16-18	good
13-15	fair

TEST YOUR MEMORY

This quiz is designed to help you remember the important facts you learned in the lesson. You simply circle or underline each correct answer. After you've finished the test, check your choices with the correct answers listed on page 15, and then rate yourself.

1. "God" **A.** is one person. **B.** is a family presently composed of only two persons. **C.** is a "trinity" of three persons — the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **D.** has no plans for expanding His Family-Kingdom.

2. The divine Person who became Jesus Christ **A.** was the "Spokesman" of the God Family in Old Testament times. **B.** was never the Logos or "Word" of God. **C.** was never seen by man in Old Testament times. **D.** did not exist until the Father begot Him.

3. The Spirit of God **A.** is a divine being. **B.** is the very power of the God Family. **C.** may be touched and felt. **D.** is not everywhere.

4. The Father and Son **A.** are both included in the original uniplural Hebrew word for God — Elohim. **B.** have always had that relationship to one another. **C.** are of equal authority. **D.** both dealt with mankind in Old Testament times.

5. God originally created **A.** animals that evolved into their own kinds. **B.** man after the God kind. **C.** physical man in God's "likeness" and "image." **D.** man of spirit.

6. Man was created **A.** as the ultimate, completed, finished product. **B.** as only the clay model which God would shape and develop in His own spiritual character. **C.** with perfect spiritual character. **D.** as a glorified being.

7. When Jesus spoke of being "born again," Nicodemus **A.** understood exactly what He meant. **B.** thought He meant "be baptized and live a Christian life." **C.** knew He was talking about a literal birth, but did not understand that it was a *spiritual* birth. **D.** did not realize Jesus was talking about the subject of birth.

8. To be "born again" **A.** is to be changed into a higher level of human being. **B.** is merely a sentimental experience. **C.** means to be changed into a literal immortal member of the God Family! **D.** is just a metaphorical expression Jesus used in talking to Nicodemus.

9. One who is born of God's spirit **A.** is a nebulous ghost. **B.** will have no great power. **C.**

will be like the angels, but not like God. **D.** is spirit.

10. True Christians now **A.** are already born of God and are not able to sin. **B.** are only begotten of God's Spirit. **C.** are already *inheritors* of God's Kingdom. **D.** are in no need of growing in God's spiritual character before being "born again" at the resurrection.

TRUE OR FALSE

11. The Logos — the "Word" or "Spokesman" — was a member of the God Kingdom before being miraculously begotten in Mary's womb. **T F**

12. The Spiritual begetting of a Christian by the Spirit of God is analogous to the physical begetting of an ovum by the sperm of a human father. **T F**

13. True Christians call the Father of Jesus Christ "Our Father in heaven" because tradition says they should, not because the Father is now begetting many sons to become "born again" brothers of Jesus Christ. **T F**

14. The Greek word *gennao* describes a process which includes both begetting and birth. **T F**

15. It is impossible for us to sin once we have been begotten by God's Spirit. **T F**

MATCHING

Draw a line from each phrase in the left-hand column to the correctly related phrase in the right-hand column.

16. LORD, YHWH, Rock

17. *Gennao*

18. True Christians

19. Spiritual growth

20. "Born again"

A. The Holy Spirit

B. At the resurrection

C. Character development

D. Never been seen

E. The Father

F. Spirit begotten

G. Begetting only

H. Birth only

I. Begetting and birth

J. Jesus Christ