

Creation Revelation



God is in the details

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*Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one
of thy righteous judgments endureth forever.*

Psalm 119:160

Born Again - What Does It Mean?

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

A Pill Won't Cure It

Recently, someone close asked me, "What does it mean to be born again?" Lately these words keep popping up. The most recent was in an Alan Colmes' interview when Senator Robert C. Byrd announced that he is a born again Christian. I pray that this is true, and not an old democrat's reaction to the witness of the "red states" of the 2004 presidential election. I hope that Robert Byrd understands the meaning. I can tell you from experience that it is not just words. Anyone can claim to be born again, but unless you actually are, you cannot possibly understand what it means. If you are born again, you know it without a doubt. It is not just an emotion - it's a change. It's a change that sticks. You can't take a pill, go to bed, and wake up in the morning recovered from whatever insanity hit you.

Are You Born Again

Are you a Christian? Then, if so, can you truly say, "I am born again." If you hesitate in uncertainty, you are probably not born again. You will know it absolutely. In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells Nicodemus, "You must be born again." It's not an option.

There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 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. 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.** Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.** That which is born of the **flesh is flesh**; and that which is born of the **Spirit is spirit**. Marvel not that I said unto thee, **Ye must be born again**. 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. John 3:1-8

In contrasting flesh and spirit, Jesus is indicating that there are two births that man goes through. The first is natural birth (flesh) and the second is spiritual birth (spirit).

A Choice

Early in 1975 I considered myself an agnostic. I had little interest in things biblical. Certainly I considered Jesus little more than a man - a great teacher at best. Possibly, if God did exist, He was one of many great prophets - and as such, certainly not "the only way." I could not discover that He was God in the flesh. This idea seemed preposterous. But in spite of the doubts, in the

back of my mind a nagging possibility persisted. No matter what I did, I could not rid myself of the possibility that God did exist, that beyond the grave there was not just eternal blackness, but a choice.

The scary thought was that the choice to be made was on this side of the grave, not the other. Certainly, I was not a murderer; I didn't purposely hurt anyone. But, was that enough? The possibility persisted that if God existed, then Heaven and Hell were the choices to be made in this life – but by whose rules?

I was not interested in making the choice. The only choice that I was interested in was to convince myself that God did not exist, and that Jesus Christ is not His Son. If only I could convince myself of this, then I had nothing to worry about, I could get on with my lifestyle just as I was living it. Party on!! Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die, then nothingness.

A Witness

Sometime during 1973, while living in Kobe, Japan, a friend of mine witnessed to me about the necessity of being "born again." I rolled my eyes as I listened to his message. I liked the man, so I wasn't rude, but I was clearly uncomfortable. I while later I was riding a train with this man between Kobe and Osaka, Japan, and listened again as the man invited me to a regular prayer meeting that was held in the English speaking Christian community of Osaka/Kobe. I wanted no part of any commitment to prayer meetings, so I politely declined. My eyes were again rolling in their sockets just thinking about such a waste of time.

The company I worked for moved us in January of 1974 to Singapore, where I did pick up a Bible and attempted to find out what it was all about, but I couldn't understand a word. How could any human being live like Jesus indicated? The world wasn't like that. The world was full of good people that didn't go to church, didn't pray to God, enjoyed themselves immensely, and didn't worry about some God applying the spiritual and mental thumbscrews or sending lightening bolts out of the blue. Is God such a party-pooper that He wouldn't allow His children to have fun? The very idea of God brought to mind images of a powerful judge sitting on high, keeping track of my wrongs, and ready to whack me the moment I get out of line. God seemed to be unfair. It seemed that all the good things in life were either fattening, cause clogging of the arteries, or forbidden by the God that created those very things. I soon quit reading that Bible. I was completely unaware that man in his natural state can only believe that spiritual things are nothing but foolishness.

But 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**. 1 Corinthians 2:14

Three Events

Three things happened in 1975 that was about to change all that. First, I attended a Catholic church in San Jose, California during summer home-leave. I was Catholic at that time, although I was just going through the motions, as my wife would later describe it – "dummy in, dummy out." By this time I was going to church to humor my wife. However, she also didn't understand why or what she believed. She felt that church was a good influence for the children. So we continued the weekly ritual of "dummy in, dummy out." The priest giving the Sunday sermon that day was a dynamic speaker and was able to present a clear Gospel message relevant for today. This was the first sermon that I paid attention to in years. He made the Gospel seem as if it were written for twentieth-century people, rather than the old Christians of the first-century. I would later discover that the message is for all ages and people. I wasn't there yet. But this priest was the first to make the message of Scripture relevant for me.

Secondly, I was browsing through a secular bookstore looking for something to read on the return flight overseas. By this time my company had decided to send us to Korea. I found Hal Lindsey's bestseller, *The Late Great Planet Earth*. We stopped in Honolulu on the way back, where I finished that book while sitting around the hotel pool. The interesting thing about that book was the realization that the Bible, including the cryptic prophetic books could be understood in a literal sense.

Thirdly, after arriving in Korea, I read Catholic Bishop Fulton J. Sheen's book, *The Life Of Christ*. Bishop Sheen presented an intellectual historical argument for Jesus Christ being who He claimed to be, the Son of God, in fact, God in the flesh. He then graphically portrayed the reality of the suffering of Christ for the sins of mankind. This affected me deeply.

Something Was Different

I then began reading the same Bible, the same one that I had cast aside as unintelligible. This time something was different. Something had happened to me. I was different. The process may have occurred over several weeks, but the change was immediate. It was an instantaneous change.¹ In reflecting on what had happened, I realize that the day before, I was still my agnostic self, and am sure that the Bible was unintelligible, while the very next day it was a different story. The previous day I may have been simply curious about these matters, still uncertain about God and Jesus, preferring instead to find an excuse to continue in the same lifestyle, and preferring to convince myself to become an atheist. The next day was different. I knew the truth without a shadow of a doubt. I embraced Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, and began reading a Bible that suddenly came alive, and couldn't be put down. I knew for certain that Jesus is who he claimed to be; there was simply no question. I knew, that I knew, that I knew! Joy flooded my existence; I needed to tell my wife. I needed to convince

my wife!

Another Experience

Unknown to me, my wife had gone through the same metamorphous, at exactly the same time, but by an entirely different manner. When I asked her to come to the living room to hear my revelation, she surprised me by first telling me that we had to live our lives committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. I was speechless. We serve a marvelous God, who is able to make everything new every morning. What had happened to us was certainly more than a coincidence. How could two different people, through two different channels, each oblivious to what the other was going through, come to the same conclusion at exactly the same moment? Coincidence? I think not. I have discovered that God is always in control.

What Happens

Some believe that it is God that firsts brings about the new birth, and that experience is followed, often immediately, by saving faith. Regeneration makes it possible for us to truly believe – not mental assent, but a change of heart. The response is that the regenerated one will acknowledge his sins, ask for forgiveness, and accept Jesus Christ as his Savior. Often the experience is so close together that the experiences seem to be one and the same.² Wayne Grudem puts it this way:

[A]t the time when we were continuing in the state of being dead in our sins, God made us alive.³

Another view is that belief (saving faith) brings about regeneration, and that both occur at the same moment. Charles C. Ryrie expresses it this way:

God regenerates (John 1:13) according to His will (James 1:18) through the Holy Spirit (John 3:5) when a person believes (1:12) the Gospel as revealed in the Word....

Of course, there can be no chronological order; both faith and regeneration have to occur at the same moment. To be sure, faith is also part of the total package of salvation which is the gift of God (Eph. 2:9); yet faith is commanded in order to be saved (Acts 16:31). Both are true.⁴

From my own experience, I believe that Ryrie's chronology is the most accurate.

Shortly after my experience, my company decided that it needed me back in Kobe, Japan. My exodus was finished; I had crossed over, together with my wife.

Born Again

It wasn't until some time later that I discovered the name for the process that Mary and I went through - "born again." Born again is a phrase that rankles most non-believers and even nominal Christians when they hear it. They can't possibly understand what it means; they have no like experience to which to equate it. To them it's a

nonsensical concept. The very day before my experience, if anyone suggested to me that I would commit my life to Jesus, become an obsessive Bible student, and attend Church whenever the door was opened, I would have said that they were out of their minds. I considered anyone that did those things to be nice, but somewhat unbalanced. I avoided such people. Any religious talk or mention of the Bible, except for historical interest, caused me to want to look for an exit. No one can live like that I thought.

The born again experience is like an awakening. You are convinced of the truth of the Bible and the words of Jesus. You know that you cannot return to your former state. That's not to say that we quit sinning. No one can do that, except Jesus. We are forgiven by the shed blood on the cross, which matched the requirement of God for forgiveness for sin, planned from the foundation of the world according to Scripture. This theme runs all through the Bible, reaching its culmination in the New Testament once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Jewish Temple sacrifice for sin was only a shadow of the final sacrifice to come.

But into the second went the **high priest alone once every year**, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was **a figure for the time then present**, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that **could not make him that did the service perfect**, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But **Christ being come an high priest** of good things to come, by **a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands**, that is to say, not of this building; **Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.** Hebrews 9:7-12

I didn't understand the implication of Christ's once-for all sacrifice at the time, but I knew that Jesus Christ was who He claimed to be – God in the flesh. There was no question about that. I had become one of those "unbalanced" people that I tried to avoid.

New Friends And Prayer Meetings

When I arrived back in Kobe, I contacted my old friend, the one that tried to convince me of the truth of Jesus Christ. I asked him if his invitation for those regular prayer meetings still stood. While we were in Japan for the next few years, we never missed a prayer meeting, church, or an opportunity to get together with our new

“unbalanced” friends. Only now, the world seemed unbalanced, not our new Christian friends.

Regeneration Changes

“Genuine regeneration must bring results in life.”⁵ Ultimately, things of the world became of less interest. Sometimes the old ways are hard to change, but with Christ's help, and faith in God, some things in my life became distasteful and I discarded them. Sure, the world glitters with its attractions; there are always temptations, but I know the occasions when I'm up to the line and need to back off. If I stumble and cross the line occasionally, I know that He is willing to forgive and bring me back into His fellowship. The key is that born again Christians are not caught up in continual sin. This is what John is referring to when he wrote:

The person who has been born into God's family **does not make a practice of sinning** because now God's life is in him; so **he can't keep on sinning**, for this new life has been born into him and controls him - he has been born again. 1 John 3:9 The Living Bible

It's Real

How can I describe this born again experience? Until it happened, I know that nothing could have convinced me that it was a real experience. According to *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* it is referred to as “regeneration”:

*The spiritual change wrought in man by the Holy Spirit, by which he becomes the possessor of a new life.... It is... a change in our moral and spiritual nature.... [Regeneration is] the change from the state of depravity, or spiritual death, to that of spiritual life.*⁶

An Act Of God

Regeneration is an act of God. Man cannot bring it about by himself. You can refuse it, but you cannot impart it. Regeneration has a positive effect on the one being regenerated. There is an experience, not momentary (emotional), but lasting. There is also a period of maturing in the faith. In that, it is like a new birth where we advance from babes to adulthood.

Conversion And Regeneration

Conversion and regeneration are two different things. According to Nelson's *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* conversion is:

The initial change of attitude and will that brings a person into right relationship with God.... Conversion involves turning away from evil deeds and false worship and turning toward

*... serving and worshiping the Lord. Conversion marks a person's entrance into a new relationship with God, forgiveness of sins, and his new life as a part of the fellowship of the people of God.... The experience of conversion may differ with various individuals. The apostle Paul's conversion was sudden and radical, while the conversion of Lydia (Acts 16:14-15) was apparently gradual and gentle. But the results of conversion are always a clear change of attitude and a new direction for life.*⁷

Repentance and faith are important in the conversion process, but it is only true repentance that leads to a change of heart. The definition of repentance, a requirement of conversion, is:

*A turning away from sin, disobedience, or rebellion and a turning back to God (Matt 9:13; Luke 5:32). In a more general sense, repentance means a change of mind (Gen 6:6-7) or a feeling of remorse or regret for past conduct (Matt 27:3). True repentance is a "godly sorrow" for sin, an act of turning around and going in the opposite direction. This type of repentance leads to a fundamental change in a person's relationship to God.*⁸

“Like repentance and faith, both involved in conversion, conversion is an act of man which he is enabled to perform by divine grace.”⁹ Incomplete conversion (lack of true repentance) may involve mental assent, but not a change of heart. According to J. Dwight Pentecost, there is a distinction between those calling themselves Christians that he refers to as the “true church” and the “professing church.”

*The true church is composed of all those in this age who have received Christ as Saviour. Over against this we have the professing church composed of those who make a profession of receiving Christ without actually receiving Him.... The rapture will remove, not all who make a profession of faith in Christ, but only those who have been born again and have received His life.*¹⁰

Jesus Christ says it this way:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and **in thy name done many wonderful works?** And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you:** depart from me, ye that work iniquity. Matthew 7:21-23

Regeneration is the completion of the conversion (true repentance) process and involves a change of the heart. That's why we find the “yo-yo” effect among many Christians today. They have a mental assent to following

Christ, but their heart isn't truly in it. They have not been regenerated. That's why many make an emotional "commitment" to Christ at altar calls, but they still go about as defeated Christians; and many are never heard from again. Some "commit" to Christ at every opportunity, as if this time it will take hold, but still remain un-regenerated. Their mind says yes, but their heart isn't committed. To be truly born again they must be regenerated, where their life is Spirit filled and are led by the Holy Spirit.

When I accepted Christ I did a couple of things according to Scripture that constitutes the requirements for salvation. I believed in the Lord Jesus. I truly believed. I just didn't will to believe, I truly believed with every fiber of my being – spirit, soul, and body. I was convinced that He was who He said He was, God in the flesh. I believed that by the power of the Holy Spirit He was raised from the dead. I was sorry that I had lived a life of sin, and truly wanted to serve the Lord. I knew that God had forgiven me. The day before I didn't believe these things, but at this moment I did. I believed these things in my heart, not just mental assent. I made a firm commitment and acted on that commitment. I didn't know it at the time, but this was a requirement for salvation. Paul had made this clear in his letter to the Romans.

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, **the word of faith**, which we preach; That **if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved**. For with the **heart** man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For **whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved**. Romans 10:8-13

I was not saved by what I did, but my firm commitment involved continual Bible study. I wanted to know everything I could about the Bible. I discovered that the more I learned, the more my faith grew, and the more I was resolved in my commitment to follow Christ. I believe that the new birth requires commitment, and study is part of that commitment.

So then **faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God**. Romans 10:17

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth**. 2 Timothy 2:15

Although salvation is a "free gift" of God, the initial conversion process is very important, and requires a heart commitment. Without that commitment, there is no lasting

effect and regeneration does not take place. It's like the parable of the sower.

Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one **heareth the word** of the kingdom, and **understandeth it not**, then cometh the wicked one, and **catcheth away that which was sown in his heart**. This is he which received seed by the way side. But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that **heareth the word**, and anon **with joy receiveth it**; Yet **hath he not root in himself**, but dureth for a while: for **when tribulation or persecution ariseth** because of the word, by and by he is offended. He also that received seed among the thorns is he that **heareth the word**; and **the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word**, and he **becometh unfruitful**. But he that received seed into the good ground is he that **heareth the word, and understandeth it**; which also **beareth fruit, and bringeth forth**, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Matthew 13:18-23

Good Works And Salvation

Many make the mistake that salvation depends upon what they do. If this were true then we wouldn't need a Savior. If I could have saved myself, then why was I so uneasy about my life? I thought that I was basically good. I didn't purposely hurt anyone, but why was I burdened with the knowledge of things in my life that were not right? I couldn't save myself. Paul also wrote of this.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath **quicken us [made us live]** together with Christ, **(by grace ye are saved:)** And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For **by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast**. Ephesians 2:4-9

If we can save ourselves then God would be a fool to let His Son die on a bloody cross for our sins. Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote that:

*Emphasis should be placed on the fact that it is not in the power of anyone to make himself a child of God. God alone can undertake such a transformation, and He undertakes it only on the one condition which He Himself has imposed, that Christ shall be believed upon and received as Savior.*¹¹

Paul again refers to this transformation when he

wrote:

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to **his mercy** he saved us, by the **washing of regeneration**, and **renewing of the Holy Ghost**; Titus 3:5

He saves us; we do not save ourselves. Regeneration means a new life. "It means the origination of the eternal life which comes into the believer in Christ at the moment of faith, the instantaneous change from a state of spiritual death to a state of spiritual life."¹² It's a work of God.

But **as many as received him**, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that **believe on his name**: Which were **born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God**. John 1:12-13

The born again believer is made spiritually alive from a state of being spiritually dead.

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but **yield yourselves unto God**, as those that are **alive from the dead**, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. Romans 6:13

Man's Original Condition

Being spiritually dead is not man's original natural state. It was not always so. Man lost his natural state by his rebellion in the garden. In Genesis 1:27 we find:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. Genesis 1:27

If man was created in God's image, then the natural state of man must be to be spiritually alive. But God warned Adam from the first:

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: **for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die**. Genesis 2:16-17

God was warning man that not only physical, but also spiritual death would result as a consequence of rebellion against God. Jesus offered man a way back into fellowship with God by being regenerated, or "born again." That's why we are encouraged to put on the "new man" and become a "new creature."

And that ye **put on the new man**, which after God is **created in righteousness and true holiness**. Ephesians 4:24

Therefore **if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature**: old things are passed away; behold, **all things are become new**. 2 Corinthians 5:17

True Spiritual Rebirth

If a man is truly born again He will "long after the things of God." He will have a desire for a "new direction" for his life. He was once dead, but now is alive to spiritual things. If he yields to God and the leading of the Holy Spirit, "his experience will be a wonderful, supernatural demonstration of what God can do with a life that is yielded to Him."¹³

If the believer is truly regenerated by God, then he can know that he is saved and born into eternal life. If he is truly born again he will not revert to his old dead state. That is not to say that he won't ever sin, but he will ask forgiveness and know that God forgives. Chafer puts it this way:

*As natural birth cannot be reversed, so spiritual birth cannot be reversed; once effected, it assures the believer that God will always be his Heavenly Father.*¹⁴

John assures us that anyone that is born from above will be kept safe from Satan. He may experience attacks, but he will be protected.

We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; **the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him**. 1 John 5:18 The Living Bible

Wayne Grudem summarizes the results of regeneration as follows:

*If there is genuine regeneration in a person's life, he or she **will** believe that Jesus is the Christ, and **will** refrain from a life pattern of continual sin, and **will** love his brother, and **will** overcome the temptations of the world, and **will** be kept safe from ultimate harm by the evil one... it is impossible for a person to be regenerated and not become truly converted.*¹⁵

Grudem adds:

*If there is true regeneration then... the fruit of the Spirit will be more and more evident in that person's life. But by contrast, those who are unbelievers, including those who are pretending to be believers but are not, will clearly lack of these character traits in their lives.*¹⁶

If a person is truly born again we can recognize it by his fruit. What are those fruits that we need to look for in the truly born again believer?

But the fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance**: against such there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23

Grudem points out that the fruits may not be seen at first,

but the fruits will inevitably follow in a truly born again believer.¹⁷

Man's Conditions

A popular tract of the Bible Believers Evangelistic Association, *A "Battle Map" For The Christian Walk*, by Leon Bates, presents two views of man and his relationship with God. The first view is that of the spiritually dead natural man. This man is walking the "broad road" in life, depending on "good works," that leads to Hell. The second is of the "baby Christian" that is born again, but spiritually immature. This man can have an early or delayed dedication and walk with God. Depending on his choices, he is either walking victoriously or in a defeated state. According to Bates, the defeated Christian is saved, but not victorious. I would question whether the defeated Christian is actually regenerated. He may instead have mental assent that might later be followed by heart faith (regeneration) resulting in a delayed dedication and walk with God.

Remember that true Christians are not perfect, but they are following a consistent walk with God, thus they are not continually sinning. They exhibit the fruit of the spirit in their lives.

National Conditions

According to statistics found at the website of *Christian Leadership World*, the 2005 Christian population of the United States is 69% (196,652,690) of the total population (286,256,000). That percentage has remained unchanged since 1995.¹⁸ According to George Barna research, the percentage of the population that is considered born again is between 35-41% over the years 1991 to 2004. George Barna estimates that out of the 196.7 million professing Christians there are 80-85 million born again Christians in the United States as of 2004.¹⁹ Less than half (43%) of those professing to be Christian are considered born again!

Barna also finds that so-called "born again" Christians cannot seem to agree on many important issues that effect core Christian beliefs. 38% believe that if a person is "good enough" they can earn a place in heaven. 31% believe that Jesus committed sins while he lived on earth, like everyone else. 15% believe that after Jesus was crucified and died He did not return to life physically. 26% believe that it doesn't matter what faith you follow because they all teach the same lessons. Only 32% believe in moral absolutes.²⁰ If these statistics are accurate then I believe that possibly no more than about 60% of those professing to be born again are actually born again. My fear is that the number of actual born again Christians is far fewer than that. This is the answer to many questions, particularly why things never seem to improve. The heart problem of this nation may be directly related to the heart condition of the population. The answer to what is wrong with our court system, even with so-called conservative Christian judges, may be the condition of their heart. It seems that the court system is

relying on justice un-tempered by mercy. Judges are so caught up in their "rule of law" that they cannot accept mercy as an ingredient of justice. By the same token, they are so caught up with the rights of the guilty, that they fail to fully dispense justice. Something is radically wrong when a large segment of our population, including the court system, cannot see that it is morally wrong to starve a person to death.

We are in a "culture of death" according to Rush Limbaugh and others. Starving a person to death is vastly different than pulling life support from a brain dead person whose heart or lungs cannot otherwise function. Terri Schiavo in all respects was a living person. She didn't need help breathing. Her heart and lungs functioned on their own, and she had parents who wanted to care for her. On 29 March 2005, in support of saving Terri Schiavo, the Reverend Jesse Jackson said that Terri was not on life support in the usual meaning of the term, but was on a feeding and water tube. In the same conversation with Sean Hannity, Jesse said, "Law must be tempered with mercy to bring about justice." Somehow the hearts of the Judges were so unbending in their love for the law (mental) that they were incapable of tempering law with mercy (heart).

What is wrong with our society? I fear that the larger motive may be political. The prevailing liberal "right-to-die" lobby believes that having now succeeded in starving Terri Schiavo to death it will go smoother the next time around. Fewer people will complain. It will become the accepted method of getting rid of "useless eaters." It has now been codified into law. Like the abortion issue, we will create a new language to assuage our conscience so that it will become acceptable (death with dignity). Eventually someone will get the bright notion that there is absolutely nothing wrong with using a lethal injection, after all, isn't that the humane thing to do? Dying with dignity is the rallying cry - euthanasia is the goal. Doesn't this sound a little like "a woman's right to choose"? God have mercy on us all.

With so many diverse opinions, even within the "Christian" community, how can we hope to set things right? The answer is probably no chance at all. Activist judges are subverting our Constitution, reading into it what they believe fits our current moral, ethical, and political situation. They choose to ignore the implication that if the Constitution can be manipulated that way, then there are no absolute rights or wrongs. Right and wrong is whatever the judge wants it to be. We are incapable of righteously judging ourselves. We have ourselves to blame. We have elected into office those politicians that reflect our own moral state, without thought for seeking righteousness. Those same politicians are the ones that select our judges. If we continue to send liberal politicians to Washington, then we must expect liberal laws and decisions. With this in mind, realize that the world is preparing for the final phase when we will see lawlessness increase until finally tribulation will come over the whole earth, and then Christ will come again as the Righteous Judge.

Some Final Thoughts

The question is this, "are you born again?" Jesus said that you "must" be, otherwise you cannot see the "kingdom of God." It is not an option. Unfortunately, most people don't even understand the term. In fact, they are incapable of understanding.

Remember that God loves you and invites you into His family, but you must believe that He exists, that He sent His Son to die on your behalf, and that He conquered death by rising from the dead.

Most people have problems because they don't study the Scriptures. Hosea wrote:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast **rejected knowledge**, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: **seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.** Hosea 4:6

If you don't know God, your children won't know God. If you don't study, why should you expect that your children would? Jesus was able to defeat Satan by His knowledge of Scripture. If you don't know Scripture, how can you expect to stand against the onslaught of Satan?

But he answered and said, It is written, **Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.** Matthew 4:4

And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but **by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.** Deuteronomy 8:3

It is by attending church and studying God's Word with our family that we build up our faith so that our children and we can stand.

So then **faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.** Romans 10:17

Our main weapon against the spirits of darkness is the Scriptures. How can one be born again and not study the Scripture or attend church?

And take the helmet of salvation, and **the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:** Ephesians 6:17

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Hebrews 4:12

By the Word of God we are born again. That's why we must study and teach our children. If we fail, we fail our children.

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, **by the word of God**, which liveth and abideth for ever. 1 Peter 1:23

And thou shalt **teach them [the Scriptures] diligently unto thy children**, and shalt **talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.** Deuteronomy 6:7

If you are not now in the family of God, ask Jesus Christ to come into your life and heart as your personal Savior. Read the Gospel of John. Then read the Bible daily. We need to hear God's Word as well as read it. Attend a church that teaches the whole Bible, including prophecy and end-time events, (Genesis to Revelation) and that believes that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God (not all do). The Bible is God's love letter to you and me. Pray for saving faith and that God will give you the new birth by the power of the Holy Spirit. **AΩ**

¹ Wayne Grudem, SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, p. 701.

² Grudem, SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, pp. 702, 703.

³ Grudem, SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, p. 703 (footnote 8).

⁴ Charles C. Ryrie, BASIC THEOLOGY, Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1986, p. 326.

⁵ Grudem, SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, p. 704.

⁶ Merrill F. Unger, R. K. Harrison (Editor) THE NEW UNGER'S BIBLE DICTIONARY, Regeneration, Chicago, IL: Moody Press, The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, 1957, 1961, 1966, 1985, 1988.

⁷ Herbert Lockyer, Sr. (General Editor), NELSON'S ILLUSTRATED BIBLE DICTIONARY, Conversion, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986.

⁸ Lockyer, Sr., NELSON'S ILLUSTRATED BIBLE DICTIONARY, Repentance.

⁹ Unger, Harrison, THE NEW UNGER'S BIBLE DICTIONARY, Conversion.

¹⁰ J. Dwight Pentecost, THINGS TO COME, A Study In Biblical Eschatology, Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1958, p. 199.

¹¹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, MAJOR BIBLE THEMES, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1926, 1953, 1974, p. 50.

¹² Chafer, MAJOR BIBLE THEMES, p. 98.

¹³ Lewis Sperry Chafer, MAJOR BIBLE THEMES, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1926, 1953, 1974, pp. 99, 100.

¹⁴ Chafer, MAJOR BIBLE THEMES, p. 100.

¹⁵ Grudem, SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, p. 705 (emphasis in original).

¹⁶ Grudem, SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, p. 705.

¹⁷ Grudem, SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY, p. 705 (footnote 11).

¹⁸ Christian Leadership World at www.teal.org.uk/stats/usa.htm.

¹⁹ George Barna at www.barna.org.

²⁰ George Barna at www.barna.org.

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