

Being “Born Again” (“Born Anew”) Being Re-Birthed Of “Water And The Spirit”



‘Christ Instructing Nicodemus,’
by Crijn Hendricksz Volmarijn (ca 1604-1645)¹

JOHN 3:1-3 (King James Version) 1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:
2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God:
for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.
3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee,
Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Welcome to this Bible study on being “Born Again” or being “Born Anew” or being “Born from Above”.
“Being Reborn of Water and The Spirit”. Let’s begin in prayer.

**Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful;
And enkindle in them the fire of Your love.
Send forth Your Spirit, and they shall be created.
And You shall renew the face of the earth.**

Let Us Pray . . .

**O God, Who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
grant that by the gift of the same Spirit, we may always be truly wise and ever rejoice
in His consolation, through Christ Our Lord. Amen.**

**Hail Mary, Full of grace the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.**

¹ ‘Christ Instructing Nicodemus,’ attributed to Crijn Hendricksz Volmarijn (ca 1604-1645), oil on panel, 87.5 x 111.4cm.



Image of modern door-to-door missionaries².

**“Ma’am. Are you saved?
Are you Born again?
Have you accepted Jesus Christ
into your heart as personal Lord and Savior?”**

Notes

² Image query made by me and generated on perchance AI. <https://perchance.org/ai-text-to-image-generator>

Introduction

Technically speaking, this is not a Bible study on Baptism and Baptismal regeneration. This study focuses more on door-to-door missionaries (DDMs) attempting to “evangelize” you out of your Catholic Christian faith.

Never the less, this study has much overlap with our study on Baptism. This is necessarily so, because almost always, Protestant Christian DDMs will inevitably appeal to the question of have you been “born again”. Jehovah’s Witnesses (JWs) who also are heavy into DDM activity, do NOT typically use this appeal (JWs often say something else to the effect of: “How would you like to live in a Kingdom, where there is no suffering, plenty to eat, no wars, etc.?”). In this study we will not deal much with the JWs.

Our catechesis in this review will be “sprinkled” (no pun intended) throughout our study, and we will touch on at least one of the Early Church Fathers (Patristics) to remind us that our faith is unbroken over the last two thousand years and given to us from Jesus Christ Himself! Our faith has a supernatural continuity when discussing officially taught faith and morals from the time of Christ and His Apostles.

We will investigate what “faith” is, and what “SUPERNATURAL faith” is too, from the CCC and the Bible.

We will see the importance of the PHYSICAL INCARNATE realm (“**Physicalness**”) that Jesus takes upon Himself, to redeem mankind and all of creation and to save us from sin and from ourselves.

We will look at being born again of “Water and the Spirit” and see that “water and spirit” is a common theme foreshadowed in creation and in some of the Old Covenants (which should not surprise us as Baptism into Jesus, fulfills these “water and Spirit” foreshadows, and brings us into the New Covenant³).

We will include some Tables if you want to go deeper on your own.

Today’s Door-To-Door “Missionaries”

Some GREAT Catholic door-to-door missionary (DDM) groups exist such as the “Legion of Mary”. I have personally been involved in door-to-door Catholic missionary activity (but not with the Legion of Mary).

In our day, occasionally non-Catholic people, out of at least a natural charity sometimes go door-to-door to try to help people to get to know God better (but they themselves LACK a fuller and Catholic Christian understanding of the Gospel. But they do what they can). Bless them for their good intentions.

But good intentions notwithstanding, many DO pass-on theological errors.

Frequently the DDM will have a set line to begin to engage you in a faith conversation. It often (not always but frequently) includes the question “**Are you Born Again?**”

³ Circumcision and the Abrahamic Covenant is ALSO a prefigurement of Baptism (see Colossians 2:8-15) but we will not be focusing on circumcision as a foreshadowing of the New Covenant in this Bible study because THAT prefigurement does not use a “water and Spirit” theme and for this study, our focus is on John 3:3-7 which DOES have THE FULFILLED water and Spirit theme.

What Door-To-Door Missionaries Mean When They Ask You “Are You Born Again?” And WHY Do They Think This?

Q: When a DDM asks you if you are “Born Again” what are **they** thinking that phrase means?

A: They are basically asking: “Have you have asked Jesus into your heart as your personal Lord and Savior and admitted you are a sinner?” And some will ALSO ADD (in their minds) “And was this asking Jesus into your heart accompanied by an emotional experience?”

There is nothing wrong with asking Jesus into your heart. Catholic Christians call this a “Spiritual Communion” and many do this frequently. It is said St. Maximilian Kolbe made Spiritual Communions every 15 minutes while a prisoner in the Auschwitz concentration camp.

But as good as it is to ask Jesus into your heart, this is not what “Being Born Again” is.

Being “Born Again” is being baptized, and baptism is the “gateway” to the Christian life and ALL other Sacraments, and becoming not merely “forgiven” of sin, but becoming REAL CHILDREN of God by adoption, and thus members united to one another through Jesus’ Mystical Body, The Church!

CCC 1213 Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*),⁴ and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: “Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.”⁵

Q: Why do many DDMs think being “born again” is a “sinners prayer”?

A: This tradition of men has been passed down to generations from shortly after the Reformation. So they grow-up in this environment, and never make a serious historical Apostolic investigation of being “Born again”. And they continue to pass-on these traditions of men to others learning from them since the time of the “Reformation”. That has a profound effect upon Protestants, especially if they have been taught these **anti-incarnational** or anti-PHYSICAL ideas of being “born again” from childhood.

Q: Why is this NON-PHYSICAL (with water) means of being “born again” so attractive to some?

A: It has to do with an anti-physical outlook. An anti-incarnational view. Satan has peddled an easy anti-gospel of anti-incarnation because we are all⁴ under the injury of “Original Sin”. So everybody can relate to “the flesh” being fallen quite readily. We all have a FALLEN NATURE.

EPHESIANS 2:3 3 Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so **we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.**

So it is easy to fall into the mindset of: Physical bad. Spiritual good. (An anti-incarnational viewpoint.) But Jesus, in His restoration, is reclaiming His creation. At the end of time this will be complete and we will even have a “new Heavens and a new earth” (2nd Peter 3:13). We are moving toward, by grace, Physical good, Spiritual good. Jesus using physical matter in the Sacraments in transmitting grace illustrates some of this restoration.

⁴ Adam and Eve, and the New Adam, Jesus (Romans 5:14), and the New Eve, Mary are exceptions.

A Sacrament is an outward PHYSICAL sign, that God “oaths” or “promises” to transmit His grace with to the recipient.

We ALL want to think that we would be BELIEVING disciples of Jesus if we were around 2000 years ago. But in order to do this, we would HAVE TO BELIEVE that Jesus is not only True man (that would have been easy for most), but also that Jesus is Truly God too. And THAT is a TRUTH that is ABOVE REASON.

Since this TRUTH is ABOVE REASON, we could never believe it by using our mere five senses the way we should believe it. It is impossible on our own. That’s part of WHY God HAS TO make the first move⁵. He HAS TO give us initial faith to draw us to Himself.

JOHN 12:32-33 32 and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, **will draw all men to myself.**" 33 He said this to show by what death he was to die.

Then after we are Baptized, God ELEVATES/SUPERNATURALIZES our faith, hope, and Charity (“love”).

Protestants often emphasize we must make a “personal choice” of faith. This is correct, but only partially correct when taken by itself. We NEED Jesus to GRACE US with faith too.

Faith is a human act

CCC 154a Believing is possible only by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit. But it is no less true that believing is an authentically human act. Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed is contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason. Even in human relations it is not contrary to our dignity to believe what other persons tell us about themselves.

Faith is a grace

CCC 153b *Faith is a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him.* "Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God . . .

But believing on our own isn’t good enough! We need the GRACE that can elevate our belief to a SUPERNATURAL faith so we can believe TRUTHS that are ABOVE reason, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, The Sacraments, etc.

That’s what SUPERNATURAL faith is: believing with assurance of things that you cannot detect with the mere five senses, but can only HOPE FOR.

HEBREWS 11:1 1 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

⁵ Some heretics in the early Church thought THEY could make the first move towards God. This is the heresy of semi-Pelagianism. God MUST make the first move towards us. Then we need to respond in cooperation with that GRACE.

2nd CORINTHIANS 6:1-2 1 Working together with him, then, we entreat you not to accept the grace of God in vain. 2 For he says, "At the acceptable time I have listened to you, and helped you on the day of salvation."

That kind of saving faith only comes as a grace via not only Calvary, but from the Resurrection of Jesus as well (Romans 4:25). Natural belief is necessary, but it isn't enough. **Jesus has to elevate our faith.**

JOHN 2:23-25 23 Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover feast, **many believed⁶ in his name** when they saw the signs which he did; 24 **but Jesus did not trust (literally "BELIEF") himself to them**, 25 because he knew all men and needed no one to bear witness of man; for he himself knew what was in man.

I want to repeat this because of its importance. Jesus "faithing" Himself to us comes from His Resurrection and also necessarily **His work on Calvary** (John 6:51) because without real death, there can be no real Resurrection⁸.

Jesus draws us to Himself. Then Jesus (through Baptism) ELEVATES our faith, hope, and charity (love).

CCC 1266 The Most Holy Trinity gives the **baptized** sanctifying grace, the grace of *justification*:
- enabling them to **believe** in God, to **hope** in him, and to **love** him through the theological virtues⁹;
- giving them the power to live and act under the prompting of the Holy Spirit through the gifts of the Holy Spirit;
- allowing them to grow in goodness through the moral virtues.
Thus the whole organism of the Christian's supernatural life has its roots in Baptism.

Jesus is the AUTHOR AND FINISHER of our faith . . .

HEBREWS 12:2a (KJV) Looking into **Jesus the author and finisher of our faith**; . . .
HEBREWS 12:2a (DRV) Looking on **Jesus the author and finisher of faith**; . . .

So we've talked about a natural faith (man), a supernatural faith (GRACE), and how we need both.

Q: WHY do many DDMs think they are "Born Again" by "accepting Jesus into your heart as personal Lord and Savior"? Where would THEY SAY the Biblical evidence for this is? THEY would say . . .

A: Based on John 1:12-13 we "receive the Lord" through "belief" or faith (**but unfortunately many Protestants then ADD the word "ALONE" to the passage, at least in their mind**).

JOHN 1:12-13 12 But **to all who received him, who BELIEVED in his name, he gave power to become children of God**; 13 **who were BORN**, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, **but of God**.

Because many Protestants ADD the word "alone" to the text of John 1:12 (in their mind), those Protestants never understand it theologically to include "WATER".

⁶ Greek = episteusan

⁷ Greek = episteuen

⁸ Again see Romans 4:25 on your own. "He was RAISED for our justification."

⁹ Underline and bold here in CCC 1266 mine

They exclude water from this, even though Jesus explicitly **includes WATER** later in John 3 when Jesus teaches us HOW we are to be “Born” “of God”. Let’s take a sneak-peek at that passage now . . .

JOHN 3:3, 5 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." . . . 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of **WATER AND the Spirit**, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Spiritualizing-away WATER in being born again, is especially true in low-church Protestants (i.e. “home churches”, “community Churches”, Baptist Churches, E-Free, etc.).

Higher Church Protestants (i.e. Anglicans, Episcopalians, Lutherans and others) typically understand in John 3:3 that being “born again” includes REAL PHYSICAL **WATER** as Jesus commanded (John 3:5), and that is HOW they (properly) “receive” the Lord—via Baptism.

Q: HOW do lower church Protestants (i.e. Baptists, E. Free, etc.) “receive the Lord Jesus”?

A: “By doing a sinner’s prayer and asking Jesus into your heart.” (That is how MY Baptist Bible groups looked at this anyway.)

What is “a sinner’s prayer”? A “sinner’s prayer” is where you admit you are a sinner to Jesus in prayer and ask Jesus to save you. A “sinner’s prayer” is found NOWHERE in the Bible.

There is nothing wrong with going to Jesus in prayer and admitting your sinfulness and inability to save ourselves (Catholic Christians do that all the time in our “examinations of conscience”) and asking Jesus into your heart (Catholic Christians frequently do this too when we do a “spiritual communion”). . . But this is not what “being born again” is. Being “born again” is what the passage says (being re-born of water **AND** the Spirit).

The PHYSICAL portion of being “Born Again” (REAL PHYSICAL water) is the part that some people have **faith problems with** because to “see” Jesus extending His GRACE through physical things, violates our five senses. Do you recall the thought process that we discussed earlier that some people have? Physical bad. Spiritual good. (An anti-incarnational outlook.)

One big problem with denying the INCARNATE PHYSICAL aspects of salvation, is Jesus Himself used real actual “PHYSICALNESS” to redeem the world (John 6:51) and heal people during His earthly ministry¹⁰.

Denying this PHYSICALNESS of Jesus Himself is one of the hallmarks of the antichrist (1st John 4:2-3¹¹).

And that is fitting, because to a certain extent “**physicalness**” (via Adam and Eve) led to the downfall of creation. So God chooses also to a certain extent, to use **physicalness** to UNDO the Fall.

But it is HARDER to believe in the realm of grace through incarnational “physicalness”.

¹⁰ Mud and spittle, washing in the Pool of Siloam, a woman with a hemorrhage touching Jesus’ garment, etc.

¹¹ 1st John 4:2-3 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that

Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, 3 and **every spirit which does not confess Jesus** is not of God.

This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already.

Why? Probably because physical things like grace via water, VIOLATE our mere five senses and are so mundane. Jesus 2000 years ago, would VIOLATE our mere five senses such that you could NEVER conclude that Jesus IS GOD almighty in the flesh from merely using your five senses. That's WHY it is called **the MYSTERY of the Incarnation** (it is ABOVE reason).

It is also hard to believe with sinful priests, bishops, etc. administering Sacraments. Yet Jesus promises or "oaths" ("Amen, Amen") to PERSONALLY work IN and through these fallen things extending His grace. Jesus PERSONALLY works in and through sinful people also.¹²

We will see that the Sacraments, are an extension of the INCARNATION of Jesus in a sense. Those who BELIEVE Jesus at His word BACK **THEN** (even with Jesus then violating their five senses), are the same groups or same types of people who can believe Jesus **NOW** too, likewise violating our five senses.

We NEED GRACE to believe despite our FIVE SENSES being violated! We cannot "DO" this on our own accord as we already saw earlier in JOHN 2:23-25 and Hebrews 12:2.

EXCERPT FROM JOHN 1:12-13 . . . all who received him, who BELIEVED in his name, he gave power to become children of God; 13 who were BORN, . . . of the will . . . of God.

Q: So again, HOW do you "receive" the Lord Jesus?

A: "Belief". But it **never** says "Belief ALONE".¹³ And we don't want to ADD WORDS to Sacred Scripture.

¹² **JEREMIAH 3:15** 15 "'And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.

MATTHEW 28:19-20 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

(By the way. Notice HOW we are to make "disciples" of Christ. By BAPTIZING them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and catechesis or "teaching them").

See also Isaiah 43:2 on your own which in one sense concerns Israelites like Elijah and Elisha going through waters and flames (flaming chariot). In another and FULFILLED sense, the passage almost certainly has to do with Baptism and Pentecost (Confirmation—your "personal Pentecost").

¹³ Some Protestants think (to varying degrees), if we are saved by faith ALONE, and Baptism is a WORK, then Baptism MUST NOT be factored into our salvation. Some Protestants think it is (i.e. Lutherans, and Episcopalians) factored in to our salvation (they just often deny Baptism is a "work"), some think Baptism is a mere proverbial SHOW for the community AFTER you BELIEVED (i.e. Baptists), other Protestants REJECT Baptism altogether, criticizing it saying it is a "WORK", and therefore REFUSE to be Baptized on that account (i.e. The Salvation Army and Quakers). Some Protestant offshoot sects CHANGE the Apostolic words of Baptism and thus those "baptisms" are NOT Christian Baptisms at all (i.e. the Jehovah's Witnesses).

Without wading too deep into the Justification issue (as that's a separate Bible study), there were two hinges of the Protestant Revolt or "Reformation". 1. The Bible ALONE is the Protestant's ultimate authority for faith and morals (sola Scriptura). 2. And you are justified or made fit for Heaven, by faith ALONE (sola fide). Please see our "Sola Scriptura" and "Sola Fide" studies on those two topics.

What else, if anything in the context of being “BORN” does Jesus instruct us to do to receive Him in the New Birth? After all, we already saw from St. John’s Gospel (John 2:24) that OUR mere belief on its own isn’t enough, and so Jesus has to “faith Himself” to us in addition to our mere faith (our natural faith must be supernaturalized). So what else are we called by Jesus to do if anything?

Fortunately, we don’t have to speculate as John’s Gospel just a few verses later in chapter three tells us. We need to be “**born again**” (sometimes translated as “born anew”).

With All Of This In Mind, Let’s Dive Into John 3 And Being Born Again (“Anew”)

JOHN 3:1-3 1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered him, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew¹⁴, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**"

Now we just saw that Nicodemus, a Pharisee, comes to Jesus by “night”. What does THIS mean?

- I would suggest this means it was night-time out and Nicodemus did not want his Pharisee buddies seeing him going to Jesus.
- I would also suggest this means it was “night” in Nicodemus soul and he NEEDS “illumination” or “light”.
- I would suggest in addition, this means Nicodemus is a real historical person and this was a REAL event, but ALSO Nicodemus is a microcosm of mankind and it was “night” in souls of all mankind via Original Sin and we all need the light and Christ is the source of that light (as was stated in John 1).

Jesus says, “**Truly, truly**” in John 3:3. In the Greek that is “**Amen, Amen**”. “Amen” is an oath formula or “promise”. You can see that in Numbers 5:21-22 and Nehemiah 5:12-13. In John 3:5, Jesus will repeat this oath. The Latin word for “oath” by the way, is “**sacramentum**”.

Let’s go on . . .

JOHN 3:4-6 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.** 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

So Jesus states we’ve got to be born anew (again), and clarifies its meaning by saying it is being “born of water AND the Spirit”. This is Baptism.

Some will object saying the water is the water of the amniotic fluid when you are birthed and the RE-BIRTH has NO PHYSICAL aspect, nothing INCARNATIONAL except ME doing a sinner’s prayer.

The problem with that is, the waters of the amniotic fluid came when you were birthed the FIRST time. Being born AGAIN is water AND the Spirit! That’s exactly what the Scripture passage states.

¹⁴ The Greek “anōthen” as in “born **anōthen**”, can be correctly translated as “**again**”, “**anew**”, or “**from above**”.

Objection: The context here has nothing to do with Baptism!

Answer: This is wrong. The context DOES have to do with Baptism! Immediately AFTER Jesus has this WATER and Spirit discussion with Nicodemus, Jesus and His disciples go out and practice what He just preached. They go out and BAPTIZE!

JOHN 3:20-22 20 For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does what is true comes to **the light**, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God. 22 After this Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea; there he remained with them **and baptized**.

So we clearly see a new birth, a new creation, associated with darkness & light and water and The Spirit.

Q: Where have we seen THAT before?

A: Right! In God's FIRST CREATION.

Let's go to Genesis 1, unpack some of that, and go back and see St. John the Evangelist's Gospel as a reflection and FULFILLMENT of Genesis 1.

GENESIS 1:1-4 1 **IN THE BEGINNING God created** the heavens and the earth. 2 The earth was without form and void, and **darkness** was upon the face of the deep; and **the Spirit of God** was moving over the face of **the WATERS**. 3 And God said, "**Let there be light**"; and there was **light**. 4 And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

In Genesis 1 we see a REAL PHYSICAL ("physicalness") creation, we see a light and dark theme, and we see a Water and the Spirit theme. Then God proceeds to make man in His image and likeness.

Now let's go to St. John's Gospel and see how John teaches us Jesus is FULFILLING Genesis hearkening us back to "IN THE BEGINNING" in Genesis!

In John 1 we see a REAL PHYSICAL creation ("physicalness" — "the Word became flesh"), we see a light and dark theme (in John 1), and we see (in John 3) a water and the Spirit theme! Then God proceeds to "dwell among us". Jesus is FULFILLING CREATION and making us a "NEW CREATION"!

JOHN 1:1-5, 9, 14a 1 **IN THE BEGINNING** was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God; 3 all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. 4 In him was life, **and the life was the light of men**. 5 The **light shines in the darkness**, and the darkness has not overcome it. . . 9 **The true light** that **enlightens** every man was coming into the world. . . . 14 And **the Word became flesh** and dwelt among us . . .

JOHN 3:5 5 Jesus answered, "**Truly, truly**, I say to you, unless **one is born of water and the Spirit**, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

And we know from elsewhere in Scripture, that when we get IN CHRIST, we become a . . . (you know what I'm going to say) . . . a NEW CREATION!

2nd CORINTHIANS 5:5, 17-18a 5 He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who **has given us the Spirit** as a guarantee... 17 Therefore, **if any one is in Christ, he is a NEW CREATION**; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God . . .

And in Galatians 3, we see just what we'd expect, that we are "Baptized INTO Christ". And also that this is associated with God's "**PROMISE**¹⁵" or oath or "sacramentum"!

GALATIANS 3:27, 29 27 For as many of you as were **BAPTIZED into Christ have put on Christ**. . . 29 And if you are Christs, then **you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to PROMISE**.

In the Old Covenant of Abraham, MALE Israelites (or their MALE slaves) needed to be circumcised to God (Please see Genesis 17:9-14). Circumcision "covenanted them to God.

But now in the New Covenant, there is now no such distinction as Jew, free, or male for the "New Covenant Circumcision", which is Baptism (Colossians 2:11-12)!

GALATIANS 3:27-29 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is **neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female**; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christs, then **you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise**.

In Baptism "INTO" Christ, we have "put on Christ", we have thus become a **NEW CREATION** IN Christ.

CCC 1999 The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it. It is the *sanctifying* or *deifying grace* received in Baptism. It is in us the source of the work of sanctification:⁴⁸

Therefore **if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation**; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself.⁴⁹

2nd CORINTHIANS 5:17a,18a 17 Therefore, **if any one is in Christ, he is a NEW CREATION**; 18 All this is from God . . .

JOHN 3:3-5, 22 3 Jesus answered him, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew**¹⁶, he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water AND the Spirit**, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. . . . 22 After this Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea; there he remained with them **and baptized**.

Q: So WHAT does being "Born Again" mean?

A: It means we need to be re-borned by "**water and the Spirit**" (John 3:5), **Baptism**. This is also how we are "**covenanted**" to Christ or "put on Christ". In a sense, it is "partaking of the Divine nature"¹⁷

¹⁵ You can see this explicitly also in Acts 2:39 on your own.

¹⁶ The Greek "anōthen" as in "born **anōthen**", can be correctly translated as "**again**", "**anew**", or "**from above**".

¹⁷ **2nd PETER 1:3-4** 3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great **promises**, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and **become partakers of the divine nature**.

Q: So can we now just do away with “belief” then and Baptize ALONE without belief?

A: No! Belief is an utterly necessary part of the baptismal package too. We just saw that in John 1:12. The Church explicitly teaches us the need for faith associated with Baptism . . .

CCC 1226b . . . The apostles and their collaborators **offer Baptism to anyone who believed in Jesus: Jews, the God-fearing, pagans.**²⁷ **ALWAYS, Baptism is seen as connected with FAITH.** . . .

Objection: If faith is “always connected” with Baptism, WHY do you Catholics baptize babies?

Answer: It is beyond the scope of *this* study to wade into the topic of infant Baptism, but the short answer is, the parents use **their faith** and God-given authority to speak on behalf of their babies, just like they did with circumcision in the Old Covenant. More can be seen in our infant Baptism Bible study.

Objection: Well this can’t be! It is too simple.

Answer: That’s what Naaman the Syrian said in 2nd Kings 5:9-14 too.

Naaman’s washing in the Jordan River was also a prefigurement or “shadow” of REAL Baptism which was to come. Naaman in this PREFIGUREMENT of Baptism, washed himself (and God GRACED him) seven times to cleanse himself of ~~original and committed sin~~ leprosy.

St. Irenaeus saw it that way too in the late 100’s A.D. And this is important, because **St. Irenaeus was a disciple of St. Polycarp, who himself was a disciple of St. John the Evangelist**, the “Beloved Disciple” of Jesus! The same person who the Holy Spirit used to write John 1 and John 3 (etc.) that we just studied!

So let’s see what St. Irenaeus had to say about this and how he quotes John 3! . . .

SAINT IRENAEUS “ ‘And dipped himself,’ says [the Scripture], ‘seven times in Jordan.’ It was not for nothing that Naaman of old, when suffering from leprosy, **was purified upon his being baptized**, but [it served] as **an indication to us**. For as we are lepers in sin, **we are made clean, by means of the sacred water** and the invocation of the Lord, from our old transgressions; being spiritually regenerated as new-born babes, even as the Lord has declared: ‘**Except a man be born again through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.**’ ”

- St. Irenaeus, Fragment, 34 (A.D. 190), in ANF, I:574

So we see “Covenanting” to God through Jesus, by being re-birthed by water and the Spirit.

We see a darkness and light theme. Do we see any OTHER prefigurements or shadows of this? Yes.

You know the story of the Passover so I won’t re-hash it all here. As Moses and the Israelites escaped Egypt, Pharaoh had a change of heart and sent his army after the Israelites.

Q: And HOW were the Israelites guided through the desert?

A: By the Holy Spirit! As a CLOUD by day, and a FIRE by night. The Shekinah Glory Cloud.

You know the story. Pharaoh’s men moved in and “cornered” the Israelites. But that still did NOT SAVE them. God WANTED to use a PHYSICAL INCARNATE aspect of creation to help SAVE them. God used the Red Sea! Then on the other side God gave them another “Covenant”! These are not mere coincidences.

The Israelites were SAVED (from the Egyptian army) by a WATER and the Spirit theme. With a light and dark aspect too. St. Paul even refers to this as a type of a Baptism!

1st CORINTHIANS 10:1-2 1 I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were **baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea**, . . .

The Church sees this mystery as well . . .

CCC 1094b . . . This catechesis unveils what lay hidden under the letter of the Old Testament: the mystery of Christ. It is called "typological" because it reveals the newness of Christ on the basis of the "figures" (types) which announce him in the deeds, words, and symbols of the first covenant. By this re-reading in the Spirit of Truth, starting from Christ, the figures are unveiled.¹⁶ **Thus the flood and Noah's ark prefigured salvation by Baptism,¹⁷ as did the cloud and the crossing of the Red Sea.** Water from the rock was the figure of the spiritual gifts of Christ, and manna in the desert prefigured the Eucharist, "the true bread from heaven."¹⁸

Notice CCC 1094 discusses Noah's Ark as well. That too is a type or prefigurement, or shadow of Baptism. How was Noah and his family saved? By WATER and 40 DAYS and NIGHTS! And what did the "DOVE" represent when Noah released the DOVE three different times (see Genesis 8:7-12)? **The Holy Spirit**. What occurred shortly after, in Genesis 9:8-17? Noah makes "COVENANT" with God, offering a blood sacrifice (in Genesis 8:20) and further ratification of that Covenant occurs in Genesis 9:8-17.

Q: Objection! I think you and the Catholic church are stretching this to see Baptismal imagery in Noah's Ark!

A: Well the inspired St. Peter didn't think so . . .

1st PETER 3:18-21 18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made **alive in the spirit**; 19 in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, 20 who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, **were SAVED through water**. 21 **Baptism, which corresponds to this, now SAVES you**, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ**, . . .

Noah. Darkness and light (40 days and 40 nights). REAL PHYSICAL Water. Spirit. Dove. Saves them.

1st PETER 3:21 a, c 21 **Baptism, . . . now saves you**, . . .

In Conclusion

The next time someone asks you if you are "Born Again" or "Born Anew" you tell them with certainty you have been BORN AGAIN, you have been born of **water AND the Spirit** in Baptism and thus saved, by the blood of Jesus Christ. You have been Baptized.

Let's close with a prayer.

TABLE 1

Objections

Objection: The “water” with being born of water and the Spirit is merely the amniotic fluid when you are born. Later when you accept Jesus into your heart as personal Lord and Savior is “the Spirit”.

Answer: Except that is NOT what the text says and amniotic fluid is not “water”. It is “amniotic fluid”.

Also the amniotic fluid is where you are being BORN the FIRST TIME.

But being born AGAIN, is being BORN of “**WATER AND THE SPIRIT.**” These are different “waters”.

JOHN 3:3-5, 22 3 Jesus answered him, “**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew¹⁸, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**” 4 Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water AND the Spirit,** he cannot enter the kingdom of God. . . . 22 After this Jesus and his disciples went into the land of Judea; there he remained with them **and baptized.**

Q: Is John the Baptist’s Baptism of Jesus, Christian Baptism?

A: No. St. John the Baptist’s baptisms were ALSO a prefigurement or shadow of what was to come in Christian Baptism.

CCC 720 Finally, with John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit begins the restoration to man of “the divine likeness,” **prefiguring** what he would achieve with and in Christ. **John's baptism was for repentance; baptism in water and the Spirit will be a new birth.**

This is WHY St. John the Baptist’s disciples who HAD “John’s baptism” still NEEDED to be Baptized. They NEEDED Christian Baptism.

ACTS 19:1-5, 8 1 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. 2 And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” 3 And he said, “**Into what then were you baptized?**” **They said, “Into John's baptism.”** 4 And Paul said, “John baptized with the **baptism of repentance**, telling the people to **believe** in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” 5 **On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.** . . . 8 And he entered the synagogue and for three months spoke boldly, arguing and pleading about **the kingdom of God**;

Q: Why are there many of passages of scripture that refer to salvation through faith, without mentioning baptism (John 5:24, John 6:29, Acts 13:39, Acts 16:31, Romans 1:16, Romans 4:5, Galatians 3:24, 1 Peter 1:5, etc.)?

A: For the same reason some passages refer to Baptism without mentioning faith. Because they are PARTS of the fuller truth. The Scripture writers are writing Scripture, not a catechism. The Scripture writers are writing to Churches and peoples who have various specific needs. In order to have a full understanding, we must look at the TOTALITY of Scripture. . . AND . . . NOT ADD the word “ALONE” when it is not there!

¹⁸ The Greek “anōthen” as in “born **anōthen**”, can be correctly translated as “again”, “anew”, or “from above”.

Q: Will God send to Hell ALL the unbaptized?

A: God judges people perfectly according to the gifts given them. People of the Old Covenant did not have Baptism.

Q: If “belief” being necessary is true, how can babies be baptized? They don’t have any faith.

A: Actually Babies CAN have faith, and we will look at that issue in another Bible study. But they cannot usually MANIFEST or COMMUNICATE their faith (but by grace, there are exceptions even to that too! You can see them in Luke 1:41, 44 and Matthew 21:15-16; verse 16 explicitly states “**sucklings**¹⁹”).

But when babies are baptized, the parents, who have God-given authority, speak and act on behalf of their infants. Just like parents of old, spoke on behalf of their eight-day old babies in “covenanting” their babies to God in the Old Covenant (see that REQUIREMENT in Genesis 17:9-14 and how Moses almost got himself killed FROM GOD (!) for NEGLECTING to Covenant his son to God as a baby - see Exodus 4:24-26). Joshua likewise, used his God-given authority to speak on behalf of his family. . . .

(Here is Joshua using his authority to speak on behalf of his household.)

JOSHUA 24:15b 15 . . . **as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.**"

TABLE 2

Covenants Are Always Ratified With Blood

Covenants by the way are always ratified in blood. That’s WHY Moses took a hyssop branch and sprinkled the blood of the slain cattle upon the Israelites. That’s WHY Noah sacrificed “clean animals”. Those were prefigurements or “shadows,” which are FULFILLED by Jesus Who Jesus gives us HIS BLOOD (and Body) on Calvary **and** in the Eucharist for us.

HEBREWS 9:22-23 22 Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. 23 Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

1st CORINTHIANS 11:23-26 23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given **thanks**²⁰, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is **the new covenant in my blood**. Do this, as often as you drink it, in **remembrance**²¹ of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

TABLE 3

Some Misc. Catechesis

But does the Church see John 3:3-5 as referring to Baptism? Yes!

¹⁹ Greek = “**thelazontin**” (Strong’s number 2337).

²⁰ Greek = Eucharisto

²¹ Greek here is anamnesis. This when examined in light of the Old Covenant, has clear liturgical sacrificial connotations. It is much MORE than mere intellectual “reflection”. It is beyond the scope of this study to unpack this here though.

CCC 1257 The Lord himself affirms that **Baptism is necessary for salvation.**⁵⁹

He also commands his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all nations and to baptize them. Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament.

The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are “reborn of water and the Spirit.”

God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.

Footnote #59 in CCC 1257 above cites John 3:5 specifically!

And listen to the language of CCC 1266a. Here is that SUPERNATURAL faith, hope, and charity (“love”) that we discussed in the study.

CCC 1266a The Most Holy Trinity gives the baptized sanctifying grace, the grace of justification:

- enabling them to believe in God, to hope in him, and to love him through the theological virtues . . .

Are unbaptized people necessarily going to Hell?

CCC 1257b The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are “reborn of water and the Spirit.”

Baptism is called “The ordinary Means” of salvation.

So the question becomes can GOD CHOOSE to work OUTSIDE His Sacraments that He gives to us?

CCC 1257c God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism, but he himself is not bound by his sacraments.

When God works OUTSIDE of the Sacramental Commandments He gives us, we term THOSE workings of God . . .

“The extraordinary means” of salvation.

Is a Baptized person guaranteed to go to Heaven? No. They can sadly REJECT these gifts in this life.

"Outside the Church there is no salvation"

CCC 846 How are we to understand this affirmation, often repeated by the Church Fathers?³³⁵ Re-formulated positively, it means that all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body:

Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through Baptism as through a door. Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it.³³⁶