

Born of God

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The kind of relationship we have with God is certainly one of the most important things that as Christians we should understand. The reason is that there are various kinds of relationships, and if we do not know what is the specific one that connects us with God, it is very possible to not utilize to the full extent all that God has made available to us. Given therefore the importance of this topic and the relative confusion that there is about it, it is necessary to see what the Bible says.

Our Relationship with God

The first thing that will be considered in this article is the kind of relationship that is available for us to have with God. That will leave for the next two sections the examination of how and when this relationship becomes a reality. Starting therefore from John 1:12-13, we read:

"But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become CHILDREN OF GOD, to those who believe in his name: who 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)
[All scripture verses cited in this article are from the KJV or NKJV unless otherwise noted]

As we previously said, there are various kinds of relationship that one may have. One of them, and doubtless one of the most important, is the relationship that connects us with those that bore us. However, in addition to those about whom we usually think of when we hear about birth (i.e. our human parents), there is someone else from which one can also be born. Who is he? The answer is God. As the above passage tells us, those who believe in the name

that God has made available to believe in – i.e., in his Son - are CHILDREN OF GOD and ARE BORN OF GOD. In other words, there are two births that a man may have. The one is from his human parents and the other is from God. The fact that there are two births is also confirmed by other passages, as John 3:1-8, where starting from verses 1-3, we read:

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 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. Jesus answered and said to him, Verily, verily, I say to you, UNLESS A MAN IS BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD." (John 3:1-3)

As we can see from this passage, to enter the kingdom of God it is necessary to be "born again". Regarding now the phrase "born again", it is a translation of the Greek phrase "*gennethe anothēn*" which means "born from above", where the word "above" is put for God who is in heaven "above". In other words, "born from above" means "born of God", who is in heaven above. As can be seen, therefore, this passage, similarly to John 1:12-13, speaks about a second birth that a man may have, the birth from God, which, as Jesus explains, is a prerequisite for the entering into the kingdom of God.

The fact of the two births is made even plainer in verses 4-5 of the same chapter, where we read:

"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? Jesus answered, "Verily, verily, I say to you, unless one is BORN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:4-5)

As it can be seen, this passage again tells us that there are two births that one must have to enter the kingdom of God. The one is the birth from the water, where the word "water" is put for the first birth - which as we will see later is also called birth from the flesh. This is the birth that all people have i.e. the birth from our human parents. However, apart from this birth the above passage speaks also of a second birth, the birth from the Spirit.

Regarding now the word "spirit", though it has many usages, most of the time it is used either (i) of God who is Spirit (John 4:24) or (ii) of what God gives and which is also spirit. Determining the usage of this word in any specific passage, is something that should be seen from the context of the respective passage. Regarding our case, it is obvious that this word is used with the first usage, as it speaks of the giver, the parent of the second birth i.e. God. To this also agree, the context of the passage (see verses 1-3) that is about the birth from above which as we saw is an expression that is used to denote the birth from God.

The distinction between the two births, as well as what is taken from them, is made clearer in verses 6-8 of the same chapter of John, where we read:

"THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE FLESH IS FLESH; AND THAT WHICH IS BORN OF THE SPIRIT IS SPIRIT. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again [Gr.: born from above]. The Spirit^z breathes where it desires, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is every one that is born of the Spirit.'" (NKJV - Interlinear Bible) (John 3:6-8)

As in the first birth, the birth from our human parents, we got what they are, i.e. flesh, so in the second birth, the birth from above, or from God, we get what the parent of this birth is, i.e. spirit. And as the five senses, the flesh that we

inherited from the first birth, enables us to communicate with our human parents, so also the spirit that we inherited from the second birth enables us to communicate with our spiritual father, God.

To conclude therefore: God has made it available for man to become His children, through a second birth that gives them what He Himself is, i.e. spirit. How it is possible for a person to become a child of God, is something that we will now examine in the section that follows.

Our Relationship with God: the "How"

To see how one becomes a child of God, we will go again to John 1:12-13, where we read:

"But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become CHILDREN OF GOD, TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIS NAME: who 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).

This passage, apart from telling us that one can indeed become a child of God, also states *how* this may happen. As it says, this occurs by believing "on his name", i.e. on the name that God has made available to believe in and on which there is no other name to believe in for salvation – that is, the name of Jesus Christ. As Peter characteristically said in Acts 4:12 about this name:

"Neither is there salvation in any other, FOR THERE IS NO OTHER NAME UNDER HEAVEN GIVEN AMONG MEN, by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

The only name that God has made available to believe in and be saved by is the name of Jesus Christ. What exactly one should believe about Jesus Christ to be saved and therefore born again, is something that is given in Romans 10:9, where we read:

"That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you shall be saved." (Romans 10:9-10 NKJV-KJV)

The only that is required to be saved and born again, thus entering the kingdom of God, is to believe that Jesus is Lord and God raised him from the dead.

The fact that the only way to be born of God is through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, is also confirmed by other passages about the same topic. One of them is I John 5:1, where we read:

"WHOEVER BELIEVES THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST IS BORN OF GOD: and everyone who loves him who begot also loves him who is begotten of him." (I John 5:1)

Moreover I John 4:15 tells us:

"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."

As it can be seen from these passages, when one **believes** that Jesus is the Christ i.e. the Messiah, the chosen one of God, he is born of God. Thus, this passage as the previous one, tells us that the only way to be born of God is by believing in Jesus **CHRIST**. And because almost everyone believes something about Jesus (wrong or right), it should be made clear that what is important is not that ones believes, but **WHAT** one believes. Only believing what the Bible says are the things that should be believed for salvation, can really give salvation.

This is really a point of special importance, as the devil has guided great masses of people to believe some "good" things about Jesus (as for example that he was "a good man", "a great humanitarian" etc.), denying however such fundamental truths for salvation as the resurrection or that he is the Messiah and the Son of God.

To conclude therefore: We are not all children of God, as many believe, because as they say, "we all believe in the one God". To their surprise, the Bible does not speak for one God. Instead, it speaks for ONE **TRUE** God, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ and another false god, the devil, the "god of this world", as II Corinthians 4:4 characteristically calls him. Moreover, the Bible defines ONE and not many ways that guide to the ONE TRUE God. This way is no other than Jesus Christ. As Jesus said in John 14:6:

"Jesus said to him, "I AM THE WAY, the truth, and the life: NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER, EXCEPT THROUGH ME."

Jesus is the **ONLY** way to God. By believing what the Bible requires to believe about him, we are saved and born of God. All the other beliefs that are supposed to guide to "the one god" are false ways that though indeed guide to a god, they do not guide to the big "G" God, the Father of Jesus Christ but to the false god, the devil.

Though from the above two passages it should already be clear that one is born of God by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, let's also examine one more passage that will reconfirm what we have seen by now. This passage is Galatians 3:22-4:7, where starting from verses 22-24 we read:

"But the scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up to the faith which would afterwards be revealed. Therefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith." (Gal. 3:22-24 NKJV-KJV)

Many Christians believe that the law is still valid and continue to follow it, thinking that there they will find the will of God for our

administration. Obviously, the main cause of this confusion is the inability of discriminating among the various Biblical administrations. As the above passage tells us, "the law WAS OUR SCHOOLMASTER to bring us unto Christ THAT WE MIGHT BE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH". Obviously therefore, the law is not still our schoolmaster. It WAS. The fact that now we are no longer under the law is made even clearer in Galatians 3:25, where we read:

"But after faith [or believing] has come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster." (Gal. 3:25 NKJV-KJV)

Who was our schoolmaster? The law. Are we still under a schoolmaster? NO. Why? Because "faith [or believing] is come" and we can, by believing in Jesus Christ, be saved, and at the same time born of God, thus becoming sons and daughters of God. Really, as verses 26-28 tell us:

"FOR YOU ARE ALL SONS OF GOD BY FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 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." (Gal. 3:26-28)

WHAT are we? The children of God. HOW? BY BELIEVING IN CHRIST JESUS. Now, there is neither Jew nor Gentile (this is meant by the word "Greek") there is neither male nor female, there is neither bond nor free. Instead we, all that believe in Jesus Christ, are all one, being all members of the same family, the family of God. In contrast therefore to the world, whose main characteristic is discrimination, in Christianity the main characteristic is unification, under the name of Jesus Christ. Reading further, verses 1-7 of the fourth chapter tell us:

"Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all; But is

under tutors and stewards until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because YOU ARE SONS, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. THEREFORE YOU ARE NO LONGER A SLAVE, BUT A SON; AND IF A SON, THEN AN HEIR OF GOD THROUGH CHRIST." (Gal. 4:1-7)

What are we? What is our identity? Children, sons and daughters of God. Do we have therefore the right to call God our Father? Of course yes, as we are His children. That's why the title "father" is used of God so many times in the part of the Bible that refers to our administration. For God is really our father, our "Abba father" as the text says, and as Christ called him in Mark 14:36. There, it was Christ that called Him "Abba Father". Today it is the spirit of Christ in us by which we also call Him with the same title. As also the text says, today we are no longer slaves of God, as many believe, but CHILDREN OF GOD, and thus heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. Really as Romans 8:17 tells us:

"AND IF CHILDREN, THEN HEIRS - HEIRS OF GOD, AND JOINT-HEIRS WITH CHRIST;" (Rom. 8:17)

How was this obtained? Only by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and in his resurrection. Isn't that amazing?

Now We are the Children of God

In the above sections we considered our relationship with God and how it becomes a reality. Among the passages that speak for this reality is also I John 3:1-3. There we read:

"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know him. Beloved, NOW ARE WE THE CHILDREN OF GOD, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure." (1 John 3:1-3)

What are we? Children of God. When? The text does not say when we reach a certain level of good works and behavior or after wedie. What it says is that WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD NOW, at the present time. It is a reality that happens NOW, and started from the day we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and in his resurrection. If we think and care for our children, really how much more God thinks and cares for his own children, among whom many of us also belong? As Matthew 7:11 and Psalms 40:5 characteristically tells us:

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, HOW MUCH MORE will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him?" (Matt. 7:11)

and Psalms 40:5

"Many, O LORD my God, are your wonderful works which you have done, and your thoughts toward us cannot be recounted to you in order; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered."

God thinks and cares for us, his beloved children, many times more than we care for our children (his thoughts towards us are innumerable, as Psalms 40:5 tells us). As a good father (the best), He is always with us, protecting and caring for us. As He Himself confirms and encourages us:

"I will NEVER leave you, nor forsake you. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me." (Heb. 13:5-6)

and Matthew 10:30-31

"But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. DO NOT FEAR THEREFORE..."

We might have had reasons to fear when we didn't have the Lord as our helper. However, this does not happen now. Today we are the children of God, the children of the creator of heaven and earth, of the one that made everything, seen and unseen. Really, what is impossible, when we have such a mighty Father? What should we fear? "... tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?....NO, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." (Romans 8:35-37). For as Jesus says in John 14:12 and Paul confirms in Philippians 4:13

"HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME, THE WORKS THAT I DO HE WILL DO ALSO; AND GREATER WORKS THAN THESE HE WILL DO, because I go to my Father." (John 14:12)

and Philippians 4:13

"I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME"

Such is the power that we have as children of God. It is not a power that comes from our first birth but from the second one, the birth from God. It is not a power that we have by "believing in ourselves", but a power that we have by believing in Christ and the abilities of the almighty God, who is now our father and who backs up our steps in life.

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