

TEST 1: BEING BORN AGAIN

1 JOHN 05:01–05

Introduction

The great majority of people believe in God. By contrast, a small percentage claim to be atheistic or agnostic. But while most people claim to believe in God, their beliefs and ideas about God differ significantly. Think about the range of viewpoints and attitudes toward God across the world, the positions held by Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, Christians and so on. In reality, there are nearly as many ideas about God as there are people upon the earth, for every individual has his or her own mind, and his or her own idea about God. This fact brings about a critical question: Who is right? Whose beliefs about God are true? Whose concepts are correct? One thing is certain: if God really does exist, then it is of the utmost importance that we be accurate in what we believe and think about Him. One day we will all stand before Him to give an account of ourselves to Him.

How can we tell if we believe in God, if our beliefs and concepts of God are accurate? How can we tell if we really believe in the only living and true God? This is the discussion of this last chapter of First John. There are four tests that will show us. The first test is basic: Have we been born of God? If we have been born of God, then we definitely believe in God. God would not have given His divine nature to a person who does not believe in Him. Therefore, if we have the divine nature of God, if we have been truly born again, then we believe in God, in the living and true God. But how can we tell if we have been born of God? There are three proofs.

- I. Proof 1: believing Jesus is the Christ (v. 1).
- II. Proof 2: Loving God and obeying His commandments (vv. 2-3).
- III. Proof 3: conquering the world (vv. 4-5).

1 JOHN 05:01–05

NEW BIRTH, BORN AGAIN, NEW CREATION, REGENERATION

Being born of God means a spiritual birth, a rebirth of one's spirit, a new life, a renewed soul, a regenerated spirit. It is the regeneration and renewal of one's spirit and behaviour (2 Cor. 5:17). It is the endowment of a new life, of a godly nature (2 Pet. 1:4). The new birth is so radical a change in a person's life that it can be described only as being *born again*. Something so wonderful happens to the soul that it is just like a *new birth*. It is a spiritual birth, a birth beyond the grasp of man's hands and efforts.

It is so radical, so life-changing, and so wonderful that it can be wrought only by the love and power of God Himself.

The New Testament teaching on the new birth is rich and full.

1. The new birth is a necessity. A person will never see (Jn. 3:3) nor ever enter (Jn. 3:5) the Kingdom of God unless he is born again (Jn. 3:7).
2. The new birth is a spiritual birth, the birth of a new power and spirit in life. It is not reformation of the old nature (Rom. 6:6). It is the actual creation of a new birth within — spiritually (Jn. 3:5-6; cp. Jn. 1:12-13; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:10; 4:24). (See notes, Eph. 1:3; 4:17; *New Person, Self*, Eph. 4:24.) A person is spiritually born again:
 - a. By water, even the Spirit (see *Water and Spirit*, Jn. 3:5).
 - b. By the will of God (Jas. 1:18).
 - c. By imperishable, incorruptible seed, even through the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23).
 - d. By God from above (1 Pet. 1:3). The words new birth (*anagennao*) in the phrase “given us new birth” can mean given a new birth *from above*. (Cp. Jn. 1:12-13.)
 - e. By Christ, who gives both the *power and right* to be born again (Jn. 1:12-13).
2. The new birth is a definite experience, a real experience. A person experiences the new birth:
 - a. By believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (1 Jn. 5:1; cp. Jn. 3:14-15).
 - b. By the gospel as it is shared by believers (1 Cor. 4:15; Phile. 10).
 - c. By the Word of God (1 Pet. 1:23), or by the Word of Truth (Jas. 1:18).
3. The new birth is a changed life, a totally new life. A person proves that he is born again:
 - a. By doing righteous acts (1 Jn. 2:29; cp. Eph. 2:10; 4:24).
 - b. By not practicing sin (1 Jn. 3:9; 5:18).
 - c. By loving other believers (1 Jn. 4:7).
 - d. By overcoming the world (1 Jn. 5:4).
 - e. By keeping himself (1 Jn. 5:18).
 - f. By possessing the divine seed or nature (1 Jn. 3:9; 1 Pet. 1:23; 2 Pet. 1:14; cp. Col. 1:27). □

I. 1 John 05:01 New Birth: Belief in Jesus Christ

The first proof of the new birth is this: believing that Jesus is the *Christ*. The word *Christ* means *Messiah* or *Anointed One*. Jesus Christ is the Son of God anointed to be the Saviour of the world. He was anointed by God for a very special mission, the mission of coming to earth to save man and to give man eternal life (see notes, 1 Jn. 2:1-2; *Atoning Sacrifice, Propitiation*, 1 Jn. 2:2; notes, 1 Jn. 3:23; 4:2-3; 4:9-11). The person who believes that Jesus is the *Anointed One* of God, that He was sent into the world to save man, that person is given a new birth by God.

=> He is “born of God.”

1 John 5:1 *Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well.*

=> He is “born again.”

John 3:3-5 *In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” “How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.”*

=> He is made into “a new creation.”

2 Cor 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

=> He is made into “a new person, a new self.”

Eph 4:24 *And to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*

Col 3:10 *And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.*

Note two significant facts.

1. A person who is “born of God” loves God. He cannot help loving God, for God does this most wonderful thing for him. God recreates him into a new creature who will live forever in God’s presence. When we really think about what God has done for us in Christ, that God sacrificed His Son to save us, our hearts just flood with love for God.

Thought 1. We should often get alone and meditate on the great love of God. The very thought that God sacrificed His Son to bear our sins is enough to break us in humble adoration. But we must take time to get alone and study the Scriptures that cover God’s love and sacrifice. We must take time to meditate upon the great truth in order to see and understand it in all its depth and meaning.

John 15:9 *“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.”*

John 16:27 *“No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God.”*

2 Cor 5:14 *For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.*

Gal 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Eph 6:24 *Grace [God’s salvation] to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.*

1 Pet 1:8 *Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy.*

Jude 1:21 *Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.*

Deu 6:5 *Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.*

2. A person who loves God will love other believers as well. Note why: because God has given other believers a spiritual birth as well. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ. They too have been born of God and made into new creatures. We are all of the family of God; God is our Father who has given birth to us all. Therefore, we are brothers and sisters of one another. We share...

- the same God
- the same Father
- the same rebirth
- the same divine nature
- the same adoption

The point is that we love one another. If we have truly been “born of God” and love God, then we love the whole family of God. We love all those who have been *born of God* we love all our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Thought 1. True believers love one another. There are no believers who do not love their brothers and sisters in Christ. How can we say this? Because a true believer has the nature of God, and God is love. If a person has the nature of God (been born of God), then he loves: he loves the family of God. Differences do not matter, differences of...

- opinion
- position
- colour
- race
- class
- denomination
- neighbourhood
- social status

Nothing keeps us from loving one another if we have truly been born of God. The person who is born of God loves God, and he loves all those who love God. He loves his brothers and sisters in the Lord.

John 13:34-35 *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”*

John 15:12 *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”*

1 Th 3:12 *May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.*

1 Pet 1:22 *Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.*

1 John 3:16 *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

II. 1 John 05:02–03 *Obeying God's Commandments: Love*

The second proof of the new birth is obedience. The person who is born of God loves God and obeys His commandments.

=> Do we really believe God? Yes, if we obey His commandments. No, if we do not obey His commandments. The person who *really believes* God, who *really casts himself* upon God and relies upon God, does what God says. He depends upon God's Word; he believes that God's Word works. Therefore, he obeys God.

=> Do we really love God (v. 2)? Yes, if we obey His commandments. No, if we do not obey His commandments. If we really love God, really care for Him, then we want to please Him. We want to do what He says. Therefore, the person who really loves God is the person who obeys His commandments.

Now note what these two verses say:

1. Our obedience and love for God prove that we love the children of God. God commands us to love our brothers and sisters in Christ; therefore, if we obey God, we *must* love them. If we love God, then we obey Him and love one another.

Thought 1. A person has no choice; this is not an optional commandment. If a person is going to love God...

- he must obey God.
 - he must obey by loving the other children of God — all of them no matter who they are.
2. Our obedience to God proves our love for God (v. 3). In fact, this is the love of God, that we obey His commandment. Obeying God's commandment proves...
 - that we *love* God
 - that we *are loving* God
 - that we *possess love* for God
 - that we lift up our hearts in love to God

There is no other way to show God that we love Him except by doing what He says. Note: some people feel that God's commandments are grievous, a real burden. They feel that the commandments of Scripture restrict them too much, and keep a person from the pleasures and possessions of the world. They feel that to be a Christian disallows a person from having fun and enjoying life. To them the demands of God are just too large a price to pay, that demanding all one is and has is too much to ask of a person. But the exact opposite is true: Scripture declares that God's commandments are not grievous. They are not too large a burden for men to carry. How could this be, for there is no question: God demands the total allegiance of all one is and has.

=> Jesus Christ gives rest to the soul. All the restlessness, disturbance, distress, pain and suffering that man experiences in this world is replaced by peace when a person turns his life over to God and begins to love and obey God.

Mat 11:28-30 “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

⇒ Jesus Christ never allows a trial or temptation to come upon a person beyond what the person can bear. Christ always provides the strength or the way to escape.

1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

2 Cor 2:12 Now when I went to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ and found that the Lord had opened a door for me.

Eph 3:20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.

2 Tim 1:7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.

⇒ Jesus Christ gives a person the greatest hope in all the world; He gives us the greatest promises of reward. Therefore, when a person keeps his eyes upon the hope, the commandments of God become light and easy to bear.

John 14:2-3 “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”

Titus 2:12-13 It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Titus 3:7 So that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

⇒ God gives all true believers His Spirit, and the Spirit gives all the assurance, confidence and security, and all the love, joy and peace that one could ever need or want. The believer is filled with life and all the real and meaningful things of life. Therefore, the believer never thinks of God’s commandments as being burdensome. They are a joy to him, for they bring abundant life to him.

Gal 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self—control. Against such things there is no law.

1 Cor 2:12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

John 14:15-18 “If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him.

But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”

John 14:26-27 *“But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

=> God gives the true believer fellowship with Himself and with Christ, then He floods the heart of the believer with joy.

John 15:11 *“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”*

1 John 1:4 *We write this to make our joy complete.*

III. **1 John 05:04–5 Faith, Victory Over the World**

The third proof of the new birth is this — we are overcoming the world. These two verses are two of the great verses of Scripture, verses that should be memorized and lived by every believer. Note that the same point is being made in every statement; the very same thing is being said three times. What emphasis! The point is to be understood and followed.

=> The person who is *born of God* overcomes the world.

=> The victory that overcomes the world is our *faith*.

=> The person who overcomes the world is the person who *believes* that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Who is it that is *born of God*? It is the person who *believes* that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The world is overcome by faith. Victory is gained over the world by faith in Jesus Christ, by believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Now note: the one thing that man needs is victory over the world. Why? Because the world is full of...

- suffering
- murder
- disease
- war
- accidents
- arguments
- corruption
- backbiters
- hate
- pride
- bitterness
- arrogance
- immorality
- hunger
- destroyed families
- homelessness
- wickedness
- pain
- drugs
- hurt
- drunkenness
- selfishness
- envy
- greed

Then there is the most fatal blow of all: corruption and death. Without exception we are all corrupt and we all die. The one thing that man needs above all else is victory over the world with all its corruption and death. How then can he triumph and conquer the world? How can he overcome the world? By believing that Jesus Christ

is the Son of God, God gives him a new heart. He is “born of God”—*spiritually born of God*. It is his faith that overcomes the world. What does this mean?

⇒ It means that God gives the believer victory over all the trials and temptations of life.

John 16:33 *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

1 Cor 10:13 *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

2 Tim 4:18 *The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

2 Pet 2:9 *If this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.*

⇒ It means that God gives the believer victory over all the forces and difficulties of life.

Rom 8:35, 37-39 *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

2 Cor 2:14 *But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.*

Psa 28:7 *The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.*

Isa 41:10 *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

Isa 43:1-2 *But now, this is what the Lord says — he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*

⇒ It means that God gives the believer victory over sin.

Rom 6:6-8 *For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin — because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.*

Rom 6:11-14 *In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil*

desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.

Rom 6:22 *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.*

1 Pet 2:24 *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

⇒ It means that God gives the believer victory over death.

John 5:24 *“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”*

Heb 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

⇒ It means that God gives the believer victory over judgment.

John 3:16-18 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”*

Rom 5:8-10 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

⇒ It means that God gives the believer victory over fear and despair and fills him with love, joy and peace.

John 14:27 *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”*

John 16:33 *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

Rom 5:10-11 *For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! Not only is this so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

Gal 5:22-23 *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

1 Pet 5:8-10 *Be self— controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*

=> It means that God gives the believer victory over Satan and all other spiritual forces.

Eph 6:11-13 *Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.*

Col 2:15 *And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. ■*