

How To Identify A Christian

Part 1

Becoming A Child Of God

Romans 1:20 [NIV] *“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”*

This is a basic principle for understanding spiritual concepts.

We look at physical things that we can understand through our physical senses to be guided by the Holy Spirit to understand the unseen eternal spiritual concepts.

For example: God’s character and His desired relationship with human beings can be understood by human relationships.

God uses things we know to teach us unknown, deep spiritual truths about ourselves.

Genesis 1:26-27 [NIV] *“Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*

We are made in God’s image.

What does this mean?

The Hebrew word translated “*image*” means a shadow of the real self.

We can often recognise an object by its shadow, but we know it is **not** the real thing, just something that lasts subject to certain conditions.

This describes human beings when compared with God.

Don’t overlook one thing in this scripture that gives us a reason for our existence as human beings.

God’s overall stated intention is to make humans in his “*image and likeness*” but at the original creation only the “*image*” was made, **not** the “*likeness*”.

The Hebrew word translated “*likeness*” means one and the same, referring more to character than physical resemblance.

Character cannot be created instantly, it takes time to form.

Character is mainly generated through intimate relationships over a period of time with another person, personal experience and background influence.

As far as humans are concerned we are all created children of God, and dependent on Him for sustained life.

But we were all also born into Adam’s image (shadow) and likeness (character).

Genesis 5:3 [NIV] *“When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth.”*

Seth resembled Adam and had the same rebellious character as his father Adam.

Our original parents plunged the whole human race into sinful rebellion against our Creator, God the Father.

The account of this rebellious sin is found in **Genesis 3:1-24** the end result being that the first humans were driven out of the presence of their Creator God.

Hence humanity could **not** develop the “*likeness*” that God desired through an intimate relationship with Him.

To be born into the Adam family is therefore the same as to be born with a sinful nature.

Ephesians 2:1-3 [NIV] *“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.”*

Following the example Satan the “*evil one*.”

1 John 5:19 [NIV] *“We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.”*

Revelation 12:9 [NIV] *“The great dragon was hurled down, that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”*

This Satan the serpent who is the same being, constantly hostile to God who deceived Adam and Eve in the beginning of humanity’s existence. [See **Genesis 3:1-24**].

King David understood this truth.

Psalms 51:5 [NIV] *“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”*

The Old Testament history of humanity reveals how sinful we really are because it is “*the book of the generations of Adam*”.

Genesis 5:1 [NIV] *“This is the written account of Adam’s line.”*

But this is not the end of the history of humanity.

Just the hopeless and failed beginning and its outcome, being cut off from God.

The New Testament begins with a different genealogy.

Not that of Adam but that of Jesus Christ the Eternal Son of God.

After our first parents fell into rebellious sin God in His Grace started a new family, the Emmanuel [“*God with us*”] family.

1 Corinthians 15:45-49 [NIV] *“So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of*

heaven. *And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.*”

We are to bear the likeness [character] of the man from heaven, Jesus Christ.

The Good News is the sinning sons of Adam may be forgiven and experience the miracle of being “*born again*” into the Emmanuel [“*God with us*”] family through personal faith in Jesus Christ the only non-created Son of God.

How do we enter this new family?

John 3:3, 7 [NIV] *“In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no-one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” ... “You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’”*

The only way we entered the human Adamic family was through a human birth.

Likewise the only way we “*see*” [experience] get into God’s created family is by a birth, a spiritual birth.

Just as human children we have to have two parents to be born a human child, so to be born as spiritual children of God we have to have two parents.

John 3:5 [NIV] *“Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no-one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of **water and the Spirit.**”*

The Holy Spirit of the godhead is one parent.

1 Peter 1:23 [NIV] *“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”*

The Word of God is the other parent, Jesus Christ is that Word.

John 1:1, 14 [NIV] *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” ... “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

Jesus Christ the Eternal Son of God and the spokesman [word] of the Triune godhead, became Jesus Christ the Son of Man, the second Adam, and head of the “*Emmanuel family*” [“*God with us*”].

This miracle birth takes place in us when the Spirit of God applies the Word of God to the mind and heart of the sinning son of Adam, and generates faith in Jesus Christ as our Saviour.

Ephesians 2:8-9 [NIV] *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no-one can boast.”*

The sinner believes in Jesus Christ, receive new life, and is “*born again*” into the created family of God, the Emmanuel family.

John 1:11-13 [NIV] *“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”*

Jesus born a Jew but rejected in the main by them, makes available to all who trust in Him the right to become part of the created family of God.

What about the mention of “*born of water*” as well as “*born of spirit*”?

Is this referring to water baptism?

Probably not.

Romans 6:4 [NIV] *“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.”*

Water baptism is referring to death not to a birth.

John 3:4 [NIV] *“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!”*

Nicodemus refers to a physical birth, and anyone who is acquainted with human birth knows that water is involved, a human baby is “born of water”.

We have to be “born of water”, that is a physical human birth, before we can be “born of spirit”.

Jesus makes a point of this in His discourse with Nicodemus.

John 3:6 [NIV] *“Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”*

First the physical birth then the spiritual birth.

John 1:11-13 [King James] *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 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.”*

This new birth is **NOT** the result of our own efforts, sincere and religious as they may be.

We cannot be “born again” through our family connections [“blood”], just because our parents are Christians doesn’t make us Christians!

Nor are we “born again” of the religious acts we may do [“the will of the flesh”] or any good works that others may do to us or for us [“the will of man”].

This marvellous spiritual birth can only come from God.

The Greek word translated “again” in this passage of scripture means “from above”.

[The same Greek word is translated “from above” in **John 3:31** and **John 19:11**].

No earthly religious ceremony can impart heavenly life.

Water baptism is important as a personal testimony of what God has done for us and our response to His Grace.

Acts 2:41 [NIV] *“Those who accepted his message were baptised, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”*

Acts 10:47 [NIV] *“Can anyone keep these people from being baptised with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have.”*

Baptism is an outward sign of what God has already done for us through Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:3-14 [NIV] *“Or don’t you know that **all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death?** We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 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. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 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.”

Baptism is the death of our old nature that caused us to sin so that with the help of the Holy Spirit, God in us.

Being “*born again*” into the “*Emmanuel family*” we can then live a new life of serving our Creator instead of our own physical lusts.

Water baptism cannot save us from the penalty of sin, only the acceptance of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and our new birth into the eternal created family of God can save us from eternal death.

We now know:-

Why we were born?

Why we sin, that leads to eternal death?

Romans 3:23 [NIV] “*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*”

Romans 6:23 [NIV] “*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

Also how we can receive the gift of eternal life through being “*born again*” into a new “*Emmanuel family*” [“*God with and in us*”].

This happens to us individually after accepting the death of Jesus Christ, the only uncreated, eternal Son of God, as a substitute for our own deserved death.