

Over the centuries past, translators and commentators alike have had trouble with the Greek word Gennao. The noun form of this word means Genesis. There has not been too much trouble with this word when used of natural or fleshly things, but when it comes to the spiritual application, there has been some difference of opinion.

The word can mean either born or begotten. But the question that bothers is when to use the one or the other meaning. One rule proposed is that it should mean begotten when used of a father, and born when used of a mother. But this just does not solve the problem. Another suggestion is that in the active voice, it is begotten, and in the passive voice it should be born. But again we have difficulty.

When no set rule can be found, then the best we can do is to watch the context, both near and remote. The Word is consistent in its context, so we can be sure that if we get the meaning, then we can find the right word to use.

Used in a spiritual sense, we first meet the word in John 3:3. Note the word spiritual as we use it. It is the opposite of flesh. But here it is of the earthly things, not heavenly things, as the Lord says in verse 12. Nicodemus had the hope of the kingdom which is an earthly hope, not heavenly. It is to be here on the earth. Ephesians tells of heavenly things. Except a man be born again, this is the sole condition set forth for seeing the kingdom. Again in verse 7 it is Ye must be born again, showing that it is for the nation Israel, of whom Nicodemus was a ruler, as well as for any man as in verse 3.

Nicodemus does not misunderstand. And in accord with his reply, this word can mean nothing else but a birth, and a second one at that. There are times when another means from above or from the beginning, but that is not possible here. For he asks how that when a man is old, it would be possible for him to enter the womb and be born a second time. Context makes born again imperative as to translation.

The fact that the rebirth is essential for having any part in the kingdom has been stated. The next thing Nicodemus wants to know is HOW? This question is perfectly logical and in place. And verse 5 provides the answer, but because of traditions it has been made of none effect.

The answer; Except a man be begotten of water, yea, spiritual water. See note in **Companion Bible**. Eph 5:26 speaks of Christ sanctifying and cleansing the church by the washing of the Word. And 1Pe 1:23 says, having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God, which liveth and abideth (RV). We are still learning about earthly things. No begetting, no birth. This Nicodemus could understand, and should understand.

But at least Nicodemus had a Scripture which he should have remembered, for in Isa 66:7-9, it speaks of the resurrection of Israel as a nation born in a day. We have no doubt that Nicodemus used this key, for we find him a believer at the time of the death of the Lord. So we can say that he will be born again. Christ Himself has been the Firstborn Col. 1:18.