

Born From Above - a solution to the mystery of the New Birth

(part 1)

A Story of Survival

You participate in a survivaltour in the wild together with a group of people. In the beginning of the tour, the survivalguide, a strong and peaceful man, assures you, that if you trust him, you will make it safely through this tour. You look upon him and because of his charisma and character, you feel really calm and confident. Things will go fine!

But the tour starts with a small test of that confidence: you have to show your trust and courage by crossing a river, with cold, near-freezing water coming down from the mountainside. Firstly, the guide crosses the river on his own, carrying a big rope with him, and safely makes it to the other side.

Now each of you are asked to do the same, safely holding onto the rope, which your guide has tied securely at the other side. You trust that guide, and cross the river – no problem – easy enough!

“Well done!”, says your guide! And every person who makes it to the other side receives a small badge with a star on it – proof of you being a real member of the survivalteam. And that is the beginning of a life-changing adventure!

Looking back to the beginning of your survivaltour, one could ponder the question: “How exactly did you become a member of the survivalteam? How did you become a “survivor”? Let’s ask this question to 4 different members of the team, and how they answer it:

Anna (she has always been a little bit star-struck) says: *“All honor to our survivalguide! Because of him I became a member of the team! He made me a survivor, when he inspired me to go through the water, and after that, when he gave me the badge!”*

Bernard (who is always very thoughtful) says: *“The reason is, that I felt I really could trust the survivalguide. My trust in him made me a survivor.”*

Caroline (she is a practical person) says: *“I became a member by crossing the river! Simple as that!”*

Daniel (he is a little bit materialistic) says: *“Do you see my badge! How cool! The badge made me a member of the team!”*

Now, who would you think is right?

Surely, all answers are correct in a way! Let us see, how that can be:

The *guide* made you part of the survivalteam. He is that strong person, you knew you could trust him! He went through the water first to fix the rope on the other side. And after you went through the water, he gave you the badge.

Your *trust* in the guide made you a member of the team. If you would not have trusted him, you would never have gone through that river!

The *act of crossing the water* made you a part of the team. That was the condition for becoming a survivor. If you would not have decided to go, you would not be part of the team.

The *badge* has made you a member of the team. The badge is the visible difference between you, a real survivor, and someone, who is not part of the team. It is the sign and final qualification of you as a survivor.

What I want to argue for in this piece, is that the beginning of that survivaltour is a picture of the New Birth; a picture of our (initial) salvation: obtaining the forgiveness of sins and peace with God; a picture of how we become children of God; a picture of how we enter God's Kingdom.

The "survivalguide" in this picture is of course *Jesus Christ*. He went through death to save us. He is the one who pours God's Spirit into us, making us alive in Him. It is by His grace and goodness we are saved.

But we have role to play. We *trust* Him, because we see Him as the trustworthy man, while at the same time being a holy God. *By our faith in Him* we are saved. Real faith in Him leads to repentance – turning away from sin. And this forgiveness of sins is obtained in waterbaptism.

Yes, the bible informs us, that *baptism* saves. It is not a work, but an act of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we trust. It is the occasion and the sacrament (an holy act) of our salvation and our regeneration.

We become children of God by our faith. And because we are his children, God has given us *His Holy Spirit*. The Holy Spirit is the sign and seal of our salvation and our new birth. Without His Spirit we would not be part of God's family.

Faith, Repentance, Baptism, and Receiving the Holy Spirit (or Spirit-Baptism) are the four elements of the New Birth. Together, they describe how a person can be born again. That is the central truth that I wish to prove in my articles.