*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be His peoples, and God Himself will be with them and be their God; He will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.” And the one who was seated on the throne said: “See, I am making all things new.” Also He said: “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” Then He said to me: “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning, and the End. To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life.”* Revelation 21:1-6

*Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to Him: “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with that person.” Jesus answered him:* *“Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born from above.” Nicodemus said to Him: “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered: “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you: ‘You must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Nicodemus said to Him: “How can these things be?” Jesus answered him: “Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into Heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life. “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through Him.* John 3:1-17

*The Sunday School teacher asked her preschool class: "Now, how many of you would like to go to heaven?"*

*All the children raised their hands except Tommy.*

*The teacher asked Tommy why he wouldn't like to go to heaven.*

*Tommy said: "I'm sorry, but I can't. My mother told me to come right home after Sunday school."*

On Being a New In Christ

1. What does it mean to be a “new in Christ?” How to be a *“new in Christ?”* and why to be a *“new in Christ?”* These are essential questions we must ask of ourselves and to know how to answer if approached by others with the same or similar question. As Christians we know how important it is to follow Jesus but following Him requires of us to be transformed into His image, and this entirely new *“ballgame”* is a process and not a onetime event.

2. Becoming a different person is a quite common theme in the literature as well as in many other art venues. Changing the name is often the first step in acquiring a new identity. Very often this change is total, which means that the person has truly changed own character. Number of years ago while still living in Canada I saw a 1982 movie based on the story of a “Grey Fox,” the man who lived a steady and peaceful life in Kamloops, British Columbia, a small Canadian town until he was arrested for train robbery. For the people of the town it was a total surprise – he was known there as a different man. The story of *“Grey Fox”* is just one of many stories focusing on a person’s transformation. In reality however, Bill Miner, for this was his real name, never truly changed, he just pretended.

3. In the “Book of Acts” we have an excellent example of someone who truly changed his life and even a name. And he is not the only one cited in the New Testament. This man we know as Saul of Tarsus, the persecutor of the Early Church and of Jesus. But because the miracle on the road to Damascus, his life was indeed changed, he become a new man. Today, he is known as St. Paul, the Apostle. Paul and Saul of Tarsus were the same person. One has been the sworn enemy of the Church and Jesus, while the other became Jesus Christ’s apostle and the Early Church’ teacher..

4. People may look the same physically as they did before the transformation, and they even keep their own character, but when transformed by God, they gain a *“new personality.”* They change their attitudes towards life, and they became *“new people.”* They may keep their zeal, their spirit, their passions, but their convictions are completely different. I met a number of people like this in my life, but unfortunately, I also met some who although changed but changed in the opposite direction. People who once were kind and decent to only become violent and brutal. The true change depends on who or what changes us.

5. Jesus tells Nicodemus: *“Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the Kingdom of God without being born from above.”* (John 3:3) A new man is the one who threw away his old habits, old nature and old personality and starts again from the beginning. The change into a new man is not a physical change but it is the spiritual one. It means the change of one’s feelings, desires, goals in life and patterns of thought. It means a *“new personality,”* a personality either influenced by God or by the human vision. Later on Apostle Paus will say that a new man is someone who *“clothed with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.”* (Ephesians 4:24)

6. This means that the new nature is not totally new. Yes, it is new for a particular person, but it is the nature which we, as God’s creation, received in the process of creation but consequently decided to abandon it for our own creativity, the *“human wisdom.”* Expelled from the *“Garden of Eden”* people were no more the same as at the moment of creation. Sin has overtaken their nature and led them on the path of destruction. Transformed by the power of God we become a *“new creation in Christ,”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). We become *“new”* because it is Christ who changes us and through Him we receive the assurance of a new, eternal life.

7. One might ask however how to become a *“new in Christ?”* Once again, let’s listen to what Jesus says to Nicodemus: *“Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.”* Whatever decision we make concerning us as *“a new one,”* we have to realize the meaning of it. First, a new man is different than people around because he or she is filled with the Holy Spirit, and this means that the entire activity of that person depends on Jesus – *“whatever I do, I want to be like Jesus.”* Being *“new in Christ,”* means to endure everything in love and focus on only one God, not the world, the society or self.

8. Finally, one may ask: *“Why to be new in Christ?”* The best answer to this question is found in today’s reading from the book of Revelation 21:1-6. Here, on earth we may have changed our personalities, and our spiritual image, but then we will also achieve another stage of change. Here, on earth we live with our problems, desires, feelings, and wishes, there we will live life without any of these. Our earthly transformation prepared us for something new, something yet to come. It prepared us for the eternal, total transformation. *“Whoever is in Christ is a new creation; old things are gone, and everything becomes new.”*

9. There is an old Egyptian tale that entered Greek mythology and then passed on into the world of the Western culture, which speaks about a mythical bird called *“phoenix.”* Upon death *“phoenix”* bursts into flames only to be reborn from its ashes. Being *“new in Christ”* we do not need a mystical bird to be reborn, because being in unity with Jesus Christ we already have been reborn, and now we are prepared to the new life in the new earth and the new heaven. Nicodemus learned that lesson on the night when he met with Jesus and this prompted him eventually to openly, without fear, acknowledge who Jesus is and take Christ’s body from the cross and place it in the Tomb. The night he met with Jesus truly has changed him.