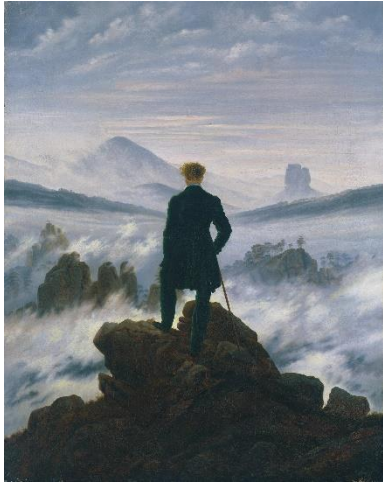


A BORN-AGAIN CREATION
A Devotional Meditation from
Genesis 1:26-27, 2:7; Isaiah 42:1-9; John 3:1-6; Luke 4:14-21, 7:20-23
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There's a universal longing in the human heart for something better than what we experience in this life. The German composer Richard Strauss expressed that longing in his tone poem, *Tod und Verklärung* (*Death and Transfiguration*). In 1894, he wrote a description of his work:



Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer (The Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog), Caspar David Friedrich, c 1817, [Kunsthalle Hamburg via Wikimedia Commons](#).

It was six years ago when the idea came to me to write a tone poem describing the last hours of a man who had striven for the highest ideals. The sick man lies in bed breathing heavily and irregularly in his sleep. Friendly dreams bring a smile to the sufferer; his sleep grows lighter; he awakens. Fearful pains once more begin to torture him, fever shakes his body. When the attack is over and the pain recedes, he recalls his past life; his childhood passes before his eyes; his youth with its striving and passions and then, while the pains return, there appears to him the goal of his life's journey, the idea, the ideal which he attempted to embody, but which he was unable to perfect because such perfection could be achieved by no man. The fatal hour arrives. The soul leaves his body, to discover in the eternal cosmos the magnificent realization of the ideal that could not be fulfilled here below.'

Strauss lived in the era that produced Germany's humanist philosophical inquirers such as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Hegel. None of them could be considered good Christians in the usual sense, yet each expressed in writing what Strauss expressed so movingly in music: the recognition that mankind is imperfect, and the hope that we might one day overcome our imperfections and transcend to our full potential.

It should not surprise us that secular humanists embrace such a hopeful outlook. That hope is what God Himself put in each one of us, as we learn from Genesis –

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness! Let them rule over the fish of the sea, over the flying creatures of the sky, over the livestock, over the whole earth, and over every crawling creature that crawls on the land." God created humankind in His image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27 TLV)

Then *ADONAI Elohim* formed the man out of the dust from the ground and He breathed into his nostrils a breath of life—so the man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7 TLV)

This explanation of our origin indicates that humanity is to be the Creator's expression of Himself in His Creation. But we failed; in our quest to achieve the ultimate expression

of God in the universe, we tried to become gods ourselves, and thus we lost the essential spark of life that our Creator placed in us. We died spiritually somehow, and there is only one remedy, as Messiah Yeshua says –

“Amen, amen I tell you, unless one is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . unless one is born of water and spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised that I said to you, ‘You all must be born from above.’ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.” (John 3:1-6 TLV)

Born from above? Born again? What does that mean? The Jewish scholar Nicodemus asked Yeshua about that. Perhaps he wondered where in the Torah Yeshua might have found this concept of being born anew from above.

The answer is in Genesis 5:1-3, the account of Adam’s descendants:

When God created Adam, in the likeness of God He made him. Male and female He created them, and He blessed them and called their name “Adam” when He created them. **Adam lived 130 years, then fathered a son in his likeness, after his image,** and named him Seth. (Genesis 5:1-3 TLV, emphasis added)

God made mankind in His image, but when Adam had children, they were born in his own fallen image. The spark of eternal life the Creator had placed in us had been snuffed out by our ancestors’ rebellion. Since that spark came from the Spirit – the Living Breath – of God, only God Himself could reignite it. That has been the hope of humanity ever since. It is not a vain hope, as the prophets testify. Hear what Isaiah says:

Thus says God, *ADONAI*, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it, and *Ruach* to those who walk in it— “I, *ADONAI*, called You in righteousness, I will take hold of Your hand, I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the nations, by opening blind eyes, bringing prisoners out of the dungeon, and those sitting in darkness out of the prison house. I am *ADONAI*—that is My Name! My glory I will not give to another, or My praise to graven images. Behold, the former things have come to pass, now I declare new things. Before they spring forth I announce them to you.” (Isaiah 42:1-9 TLV)

This is the tragedy and the glory of human existence. We were made and called in perfection, in righteousness, but we chose to grasp the glory of God for ourselves. That left us in the dark prison of death – a prison only the Messiah could break open. Yeshua proclaimed this when He read from Isaiah at the beginning of His ministry, saying, “The *Ruach ADONAI* is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of *ADONAI*’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19 TLV) Later, when His cousin John the Baptizer sent messengers to ask if He was the promised deliverer, Yeshua answered, “Go report to John what you saw and heard: the blind see, the lame walk, those with *tzara’at* are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news proclaimed to them. Blessed is he who is not led to stumble because of Me.” (Luke 7:22-23 TLV)

The church has proclaimed this for 2,000 years. But do we really know it? Is the message of salvation in Jesus so familiar that we miss the wonder, the joy, the indescribable rapture of souls suddenly freed from eternal darkness? That is what began at the cross, but it is only the beginning. It is not merely a human issue; it is a *Creation* issue. Humankind had been given dominion over the entire earth, so when we fell, earth fell. Now all creation shares our suffering, and our hope, just as Paul explains –

For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us. For the creation eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility—not willingly but because of the One who subjected it—in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans together and suffers birth pains until now—and not only creation, but even ourselves. We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the *Ruach*, groan inwardly as we eagerly wait for adoption—the redemption of our body. (Romans 8:18-23 TLV)

This is the universal longing in the hearts of all people, regardless of what they believe about God – or even if they believe there is no God. We who know Him are entrusted with this message of hope. Not only are we to speak it out, we are to live it out. If we truly long for the new heavens and new earth, then it is our responsibility to create them where we are, over that little portion of God’s universe which He has entrusted to our care. The work will not be done until He Himself finishes it, but the progress is up to us. Will we do the works that our Messiah did, and even greater works, or will we sit back and wait for Him to do it all? And while we wait, how many will suffer while waiting for the rebirth and transfiguration that comes from the hope within us?