



Seek The Old Paths

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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THE NEW BIRTH #1

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One “born of water and of the Spirit” is a penitent believer immersed in water and brought forth therefrom according to the teaching of the Spirit. When we are thus baptized we enter into the kingdom of God. One hears the voice of the Spirit speaking through inspired men, receives that word into the heart and obeys it, and is born of the Spirit, is “born of water and of the Spirit.”

CHRIST AND NICODEMUS John 3:1-8

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, Verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him. How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I say unto thee, Ye must be born

again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.”

There are many hurtful errors taught in connection with the subject of the new birth. To many people, it is a deep mystery; a theme that can neither be explained nor understood. Let us give the language of the Bible on this subject a thoughtful study and learn what the new birth is. Let us take the language of John 3 and study it carefully; study it in connection with other scriptures on the same subject and see if there is anything so difficult about it.

THE MAN NICODEMUS

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.” Is there anything hard to understand about this verse? I think not. *“There was a man”* — we can understand that. His name was *“Nicodemus”* — this is easy to understand. He was a

“Pharisee” — this refers to his religious belief. In his day there was a religious sect known as the Pharisees, and he was a member of it (Acts 23:7). Then, too, he was *“a ruler of the Jews.”* This means that he was a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court, a council made up of seventy-one men, whose purpose it was to try people who had violated the Law. This suggests that he was a man of some reputation and ability among the Jews. His position must have been one of honor and responsibility. By John’s references to him later (John 7:50-52; 19:39), he must have been a very kind man, willing to investigate, and these are commendable traits of character.

Nicodemus *“came to Jesus by night.”* Why, we do not know; the Bible does not say. The truth Jesus gave him that night is the important thing for us to consider. When he came to Jesus, he opened the conversation by saying: *“Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest,*

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The New Birth...



Editorial...

ALL THE CONVERSIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Garland M. Robinson

Please examine the chart at the bottom of the page. You will see that water baptism is the final step that puts one INTO Christ, taking away sins and making that person a new creature — a Christian, a child of God.

Water baptism is no more important than **Believing, Repenting** or **Confessing**, but neither is it less important than **Believing, Repenting**, or **Confessing**. It is simply a part of every conversion account in the New Testament. As a matter of fact, there is no conversion to Christ without it — just as there is no conversion without Faith, Repentance or Confession. Each point is simply a step taken in order to receive forgiveness of sins and entrance into the kingdom/church of God (John 3:3-5).

None of the examples in this chart (this is all the accounts of conversion in the New Testament) shows a sinner was saved before baptism. One's "new life" as a Christian begins AFTER baptism, not BEFORE (Rom. 6:3-5). Sprinkling or Pouring water on someone has absolutely zero to do with baptism, even though men call it baptism. Baptism is an immersion, a burial, a planting (Rom. 6:4-5; Col. 2:12). The definition of "baptism" is "immersion." There is no burial in sprinkling or pouring. Those who have had water sprinkled or poured on them have never been baptized.

Baptism is when a sinner, called an "old man of sin," is crucified — put to death (Rom. 6:6). That does not happen at the point of **faith**, nor at the point of **repenting**, or at the point of **confessing**. It happens when one is baptized. Baptism is the final step in completing obedience to the Gospel of Christ. It is the exact moment "when" one is made free (forgiven) of their sins. This is exactly what we read a few verses later in verses 17-18. When one "obeys from the heart" the doctrine of water baptism (vs.3-

6), verse 18 plainly says, "*being THEN made free from sin.*" If sins are forgiven at the point of "faith" as commonly believed, then verse 18 is a lie! The word THEN is very clear. It reveals the exact moment that one becomes a Christian. There is no passage that says a sinner is made free from their sins the very moment they believe. Denominational preachers are bold in telling people to just "believe" by accepting Jesus into their heart as their personal savior and they will be saved. BUT, you will never hear them refer to a passage in the Bible that says (teaches) that! They follow uninspired men instead of Holy Spirit inspired men who gave us the Scriptures.

Jesus himself made it very clear what a sinner must do to be saved in Mark 16:16: "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" Lord, what did you say? Tell us again what to do to be saved. "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*" If you read Jesus' statement a thousand times to first graders and then asked them what Jesus said to do to be saved, what would their answer be? It would not be "just believe." Jesus made it so simple when he said: "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*" How could first graders say anything else than what Jesus said? But "learned" men, "educated" men, answer this question, not only in their "words," but also in their "practice" when they say, "He that believeth and is **NOT baptized** shall be saved." What if men twisted your words around to make you say something you did not say? We're not left to wonder what Jesus thinks about men doing that to His words! "*Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say*" (Luke 6:45)? His condemnation is obvious.

Anyone with even an elementary knowledge of the Bible remembers what God told Adam and Eve in the

garden of Eden. "*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*" (Gen. 2:16-17). Satan comes along and says to Eve: "*...hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall NOT surely die*" (Gen. 3:1-4).

Satan added the word NOT to what God said, just like he does when he speaks through denominational preachers today by adding the word NOT to what Jesus said. God said, "*thou shalt surely die,*" but Satan says "*thou shall NOT surely die.*"

Jesus said, "*he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,*" but Satan says, "*he that believeth and is NOT baptized shall be saved.*" Multiplied millions of people fall for Satan's lie regarding baptism. They will go to great lengths to circumvent the simple words of our Lord. The Bible condemns "adding to" or "taking from" God's holy inspired word (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19). But, men think they have a better solution to the forgiveness of sins than what Jesus gave. They convince men to disregard what the Lord said — ignore baptism! They say that Jesus really didn't mean what He said. But to these who corrupt His words He said: "*except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*" (Luke 13:3,5).

In Mark 16:16 the word AND connects "believeth" and "baptized." No man can successfully separate these two words. To do away with one is to do away with the other. It's impossible to ignore the word AND! Jesus plainly said, "*He that believeth AND is baptized shall be saved.*" All the twisting and wrangling in the world will not take away what Jesus said: Belief + Baptism = Salvation — B + B = S, not B = S + B.

Consider two simple illustrations. "**He that eats and digests food shall live, but he who does not eat shall die.**" Eating and digesting are inseparably linked together. Unless you eat and the food is digested, you will die. You may eat all you want to,

but unless your body digests it, you will die. On the other hand, if you do not eat, you will die. It makes absolutely no sense to say “he that does not eat and does not digest the food will die.” If you don’t eat, there’s nothing to digest! If you don’t eat, you will die. At that point, digestion has nothing to do with it!

“He who gets on the train to New York AND does not get off, will arrive in New York. But he who does not get on the train will not get there.” Does it need to be said, “He who does not get on the train to New York and does not stay on the train will not get there?” That makes absolutely no sense. Obviously, if you don’t get on the train you can’t get off the train and certainly will not make it to New York. See how simple this is?

Those who don’t like what Jesus said about baptism, or think he made a mistake, want Him to say, “he that believeth not and is not baptized will be condemned.” While that’s true, he did not say that. But, if one doesn’t believe, he certainly won’t be baptized.

“Faith only” advocates think the comparison of “eating and digesting” and “riding the train and staying on the train” is flawed and ridiculous. They think that, because they can’t answer it. In reality, their “faith only” doctrine would have us believe that the very moment you step on the train you’re in New York! or the moment you eat, the food is digested!

Many say Saul was saved on the road to Damascus; but if so, he was the most miserable man you could ever meet (Acts 9:9). He never “ate a bite, drank a drop, or slept a wink” until AFTER he was baptized to wash his sins away (Acts 22:16). If he was saved on the road, he did not have any sins to wash away at Damascus! Ananias did not lie to him about his sins. He told him the truth. Saul did not quibble and argue that he was saved on the road and did not have to be baptized to have his sins washed away. He simply complied with the Lord’s words and was baptized (Acts 9:18).

Actually, sins are washed away by the “blood of Christ” (Rev. 1:5; Eph. 1:7). But it is in water baptism that sinners contact Christ’s blood. Jesus shed his blood in his death and was buried. Sinners die to a life of sin and are buried (baptized in water). As

Jesus was raised from the dead, those baptized are raised from the water of baptism to live a new life (Rom. 6:4). The first 18 verses of Romans 6 makes this very clear — death to sin and rising from the water to live a new life in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). Salvation is IN Christ, not OUT of Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). Sinners are OUT of Christ. Baptism puts believing, penitent, sinners INTO Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). If one is IN Christ before baptism, why do these two verses say one is baptized INTO Christ? The Bible does not contradict itself.

The connection of water baptism to salvation is also made clear in the account of Noah and the flood. *“Eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us”* (1 Peter 3:20-21). Noah and his family were saved by “water.” Baptism in water now saves us. God makes this comparison, not man. This fits perfectly with all the Scriptures on the subject of salvation. The Bible does not contradict itself (1 Cor. 14:33). Being saved by water (in baptism, converted, Acts 3:19) is only possible when one acts upon their **“faith”** (Heb. 11:6) by **“repenting”** of their sins (Acts 17:30), **“confessing”** faith in Christ (Acts 8:37) and being **“immersed into water”** (baptized) for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Water baptism is WHERE and WHEN one contacts the saving blood of Christ that washes sins away (Eph. 1:7). I’m not going to argue with God when He says water baptism

saves us just like water saved Noah and his family. Are you ready to argue with God on that point?

Jesus also made it plain when he connected water with salvation in John 3:3-5. He said: *“Except a man be born again...born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”* This is in accordance to what He said in Mark 16:16: *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”* However, man changes what Jesus said by saying, “he that believeth and is **not** baptized shall be saved.” The devil added the word “not” to what God said (Gen. 3:4), just like men today add the word “not” to what Jesus said. They claim Jesus made a terrible mistake when he said *“he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.”*

The Holy Spirit knew men would attempt to get around baptism having a connection to salvation by introducing “faith only” as the means of salvation. Therefore He wrote: *“Ye see then how that by works a man is justified and **not by faith only**”* (James 2:24). This is the only time “faith only” is found in the Bible; and it says *“**not by faith only**”* (James 2:17). The “works” by which man is justified are not works of his own merit; instead, they are works of obedience that God has commanded. Faith without obedience to God’s commands is dead, barren, useless (James 2:17). As a matter of fact, even “faith” is a work (John 6:29). It is the work God commands sinners to do. “Faith only” is a lie of the Devil

ALL THE CONVERSIONS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

TEXT	TEACHING	BELIEVING	REPENTING	CONFESSING	BAPTIZED
Acts 2:37-41	YES	Implied	YES	Implied	YES
Acts 8:12	YES	YES	Implied	Implied	YES
Acts 8:13	Implied	YES	Implied	Implied	YES
Acts 8:35-39	YES	Implied	Implied	YES	YES
Acts 9:1-18	YES	Implied	Implied	Implied	YES
Acts 10:34-48	YES	YES	YES	Implied	YES
Acts 16:14-15	YES	Implied	Implied	Implied	YES
Acts 16:25-33	YES	YES	YES	Implied	YES
Acts 17:32-34	YES	YES	Implied	Implied	Implied
Acts 18:8	YES	YES	Implied	Implied	YES
Acts 19:1-5	YES	Implied	Implied	Implied	YES
SUM OF THE WORD	✓ HEAR	✓ BELIEVE	✓ REPENT	✓ CONFESS	✓ BAPTIZED

* Implied – not stated expressly in the text, but is demanded when every account is considered.

(James 2:17,24,26).

Jesus is the savior of those who BELIEVE “and” OBEY him. He is not the savior of those who disobey Him. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that DOETH the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21). Jesus is the “...the author of eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY him” (Heb. 5:9). “...Whosoever shall DO the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Matt. 12:50; Mark 3:35; Luke 8:21). “Except ye be CONVERTED, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3). “Well done, thou GOOD and FAITHFUL servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:21). “...Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and DO NOT the things which I say” (Luke 6:46).

Are YOU ready to study more and obey God’s word by believing, repenting, confessing and being baptized? There’s no salvation without it!

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The New Birth...

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except God be with him.” Whether Nicodemus was truly honest in this noble confession or using a little flattery to get on the good side of Jesus, we do not know. Anyway, he expressed a vital truth concerning the miracles of Jesus. They were to convince any honest person that God was with Christ. But Jesus passed by his compliments and went directly to the thing Nicodemus had in mind; namely, entering the kingdom of God. Since Jesus “knew what was in man” (John 2:24-25), He knew what Nicodemus had in mind, therefore, went directly to the subject of how to become a citizen of the kingdom. “Jesus answered and said unto him. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, **except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of god.**”

The thought of the Saviour’s language is this: “Nicodemus, the miracles do testify of me, but if you think because you are a Jew and a prominent man among them that you are entitled to a place in my earthly kingdom when it is established, you have it all wrong. The kingdom that I am soon to inaugurate is not an earthly, fleshly kingdom, and YOU will have to be BORN AGAIN to get into it. Your birthright will give you no membership in the kingdom soon to be established.”

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

By the expression, “the kingdom of God,” Christ meant the church — that spiritual institution soon to be set up by the Lord among them. The “church” and the “kingdom” mean one and the same thing (Matt. 16:18-20; Heb. 12:22-23, 28).

A fleshly birth introduced Nicodemus into the old Jewish kingdom, a fleshly kingdom; but the Lord’s kingdom was to be a spiritual kingdom, and it would take a new birth to put him into this kingdom. One cannot enter this kingdom, the church, unless he is born again, for the condition of entrance as given by Jesus is that “you must be born again.” The Jews expected the Messiah to establish an earthly kingdom, one like David’s, and reign on the earth as the king; this is the kind of kingdom Nicodemus

had in mind.

By the expression, “see the kingdom of God,” Jesus meant not to see with the natural eye, but to experience or enjoy the blessings of the Lord’s kingdom by entering into it.

THE KINGDOM ESTABLISHED

The kingdom was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. It is NOW in existence and Christ is reigning in Heaven as “King of kings and Lord of lords” (cf. Mark 9:1; Acts 1:6-8; Acts 2; Dan. 7:13-14; 1 Cor. 15:25-26; Rev. 14:14; Heb. 12:28). Some today claim that the kingdom has not been established. If so, the new birth is not a reality; people are not being born again. But Paul wrote to people who had been “translated into the kingdom” (Col. 1:13), and John said he was a brother “in the kingdom” (Rev. 1:9). The kingdom was in existence in the days of the apostles, and people were members of it. The kingdom is now in existence, and men and women are entering into it.

This refutes the theory that there is no kingdom in existence now and will not be until Christ comes again.

THE NEW BIRTH A NECESSITY

Since we must be born again to enter into the kingdom, it is impossible to overestimate the importance of the new birth. No one will ever be in the kingdom until he has been born again, for this is the ONLY way to enter into it. It is not that you should be born again, or that it would be better for you if you were born again, but you MUST be born again. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, the educated and the uneducated — all alike, must be born again or find no place in the kingdom of God. This subject is one of vital importance!

WHAT THE NEW BIRTH IS

“Born again” is figurative language. There is a similarity in some respects to a natural birth. Since one enters into new life in a new realm, or becomes a new creature spiritually, this process is called a birth. In other places in the Bible the change is called “conversion,” “creation,” “forgiveness of sins,” etc. (Matt. 18:3; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 2:13; Eph. 2:10). To be saved or to

become a Christian, is what Jesus meant by being “born again.”

The language of Jesus puzzled Nicodemus. He could not understand how it was possible for an old man, such as he, to experience another physical birth. Hence, he said: *“how can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?”* Jesus explained by saying: *“except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”* He told Nicodemus what the new birth was — HOW it could be possible. (In verse three Jesus expresses the NECESSITY of the new birth; in verse five He tells of what it CONSISTS). It is a birth of “water” and of “the Spirit.” There are not two births — only one, but a man must be born both of “water” and of “the Spirit” to be born again.

BORN OF WATER

What does *“born of water and of the Spirit”* mean? Let us take the first: “born of water” — what does this mean? The word “water” means water. If not, why not? The way of entering the kingdom of God may be given under the figure of a birth, but that does not mean that the word “water” is figurative. The words “water” and “Spirit” are used literally, they mean what they say — water and Spirit. If “water” does not mean water, then does “Spirit” mean Spirit?

Nearly all scholars understand the word “water” to refer to baptism. This is correct. In fact, BAPTISM IS THE ONLY THING TO WHICH IT CAN REFER! It is the only religious act pertaining to salvation in which water is used. In the Christian system water is NEVER used in any ordinance or ceremony except in the act of baptism. Then this makes baptism necessary to the obtaining of all blessings in the kingdom, and that, by the authority of Jesus Christ, the highest authority in Heaven and earth. Also, this makes the ACT of baptism immersion, a burial and a resurrection (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). One is dipped in, and comes forth out of the water. Therefore, the expression, *“born of water”* may be applied to baptism. But a thing cannot be born of that which is smaller than itself. So, how can a man be born of a spoonful of water? The man who has had water

sprinkled or poured upon him cannot truthfully say he has been BURIED with Christ in baptism. The man who has not been immersed (born of water) is not in the kingdom, for this is a part of the new birth, and one must be “born again” to get into the kingdom.

Paul used a similar expression in referring to the resurrection of Christ. He said Christ was *“the firstborn from the dead”* (Col. 1:18). Christ was buried in the grave and from it he came forth — hence, “born from the dead.” He was the first to come from the grave to die no more and is, therefore, “the FIRST-born from the dead.” If to arise from the grave means to be born from the dead, then the burying in water and the arising therefrom is a birth of water. It cannot mean sprinkling or pouring water ON a person. Hence, one must be BURIED with Christ in BAPTISM that he may be born of water.

To be born of water and to be immersed and raised to walk in *“newness of life”* are identical. *“Born of water and of the Spirit”* in John 3:5 means baptism!

The reason some say that the word “water” does not mean water is because it would make baptism essential to salvation, and they think baptism is not a condition of pardon.

According to Wm. Wall, a reliable church historian, John Calvin was the first man to ever say that “born of water” in John 3:5 did not mean baptism, and Calvin confessed that his interpretation was a new one.

“There is not one Christian writer of any antiquity in any language but what understands it of baptism. And if it be not so understood, it is difficult to give an account how a person is born of water, any more than of wood.” *Wall’s History of Infant Baptism*, Vol. 1, p. 92.

“All the ancient Christians (without the exception of one man) do understand that rule of our Saviour, John 3:5. VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO THEE, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN OF WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT, HE CANNOT ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD; of baptism. I had occasion in the First part

to bring a great many instances of their sayings: where all that mention that text, from Justin Martyr down to St. Austin, do so apply it: and many more might be brought. I believe Calvin was the first that ever denied this place to mean baptism. He gives another interpretation, which he confesses to be new.” *Ibid.*, p. 443.

Therefore, it may be regarded as a settled fact that from the days of Christ to the time of Calvin, to be “born of water,” when referred to by all writers, meant to be baptized.

Many quibbles have been made by people in order to get around the obvious teaching of Jesus. Some say the word “water” means the “word,” others tell us it means “grace” or “Spirit,” and others say, “I do not know what it means, but I know it does not mean water.” A common error is the idea that the “birth of water” occurs at the natural birth, and the “birth of the Spirit” is the second birth. But this theory does violence to the language of Jesus. Christ said: *“except a MAN be born again, born of WATER AND of the Spirit, he — the man already born physically — cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”* The natural birth is NOT the birth of water in John 3:5. Nicodemus had already been born of fleshly parents — natural birth — and now Christ tells him he must be born again, not physically, but of water AND of the Spirit (both), in order to become a citizen of the kingdom of God.

BORN OF THE SPIRIT

What does the phrase, *“of the Spirit,”* mean? This refers to the Holy Spirit. When one becomes a Christian it is according to the Spirit’s instruction. One is baptized according to the teaching of the Spirit after he has been made a believer by hearing the Spirit’s message, the word of truth, as contained in the New Testament. Hence, one *“born of water and of the Spirit”* is a penitent believer immersed in water and brought forth therefrom according to the teaching of the Spirit. When we are thus baptized we enter into the kingdom of God. One hears the voice of the Spirit speaking through inspired men, receives that word into

the heart and obeys it, and is born of the Spirit, is “born of water and of the Spirit.” (The work of the Holy Spirit in conversion will be noticed more fully later).

THE HUMAN SPIRIT BEGOTTEN BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Here Christ is still trying to convince Nicodemus that the “new birth” is not a “fleshly birth.” Christ was not talking about a birth of the flesh, a natural birth. He had in mind a spiritual birth. Watch carefully the reading: “that which is born of the Spirit” (capital S) “is spirit” (small s) — meaning, that which is born (begotten) of the Holy Spirit is the human spirit. It is an inward or spiritual change that takes place. The mind is renewed. The flesh remains the same; our bodies will not be changed until the resurrection (Phil. 3:21; 1 Cor. 15).

Consequently, Christ said: *“Marvel not (do not be surprised) that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”* (John 3:7). The trouble with this ruler of Israel was his failure to realize the existence of the “inner man” dwelling in the body. This is the subject of the change contemplated by the new birth. (f1) The SPIRIT of man is born anew.

(f1) It has been argued that the entire man (body included) participates in the new birth, and that it is not completed until the entire man has participated. This is true. The BODY is immersed in water, yet it is the changed spirit in man obeying the command of the Lord in this overt physical act. Technically speaking, baptism is not just a mere physical act. If this were so, to force a man under the water and bring him out would constitute baptism. (A good way to baptize some if this is all it takes). But scriptural baptism requires faith and repentance on the part of the one baptized. (This is the reason a baby cannot be scripturally baptized; the infant is lacking in the prerequisites of baptism). It is the spirit of man (the inner man) that hears the Gospel, believes, and turns to God with a sincere desire to serve Him. Two things are accomplished: (1) The mind is renewed, the heart is changed, faith is produced, and (2) the individual

is immersed — baptized into Christ.

(f1) After the spirit of man has been changed by the Holy Spirit — the message of the Spirit containing God’s thoughts and ideas — it should maintain the mastery over the body, consecrating it to divine service. The converted man should bring his body into subjection — use it as a holy instrument to the glory of God (1 Cor. 9:27; 1 Cor. 6:15,20; Rom. 12:1; Rom. 6:12-13, 19; Rom. 8:12-13; Matt. 15:18-20).

THE WIND — AN ILLUSTRATION

Jesus gave this illustration: *“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the spirit.”*

This is the hard verse of the whole story. It is thought to teach the direct, incomprehensible, mysterious operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion, and that the new birth is a deep mystery, a thing brought about all of a sudden in some way unknown, and the experience of it is better felt than told.

Please note that Jesus did NOT say: “So is the DIRECT OPERATION of the Spirit.” The comparison is between “hearing the wind” and “hearing the Spirit.” One must HEAR the Spirit.

Jesus did not use the illustration concerning the wind to give an example of the MYSTERY of the new birth, or to show that it is brought about in some incomprehensible manner, but to point out that we are “born of the Spirit” by HEARING the Spirit’s message. Our Lord often used things in nature to teach something concerning the kingdom. The wind cannot be seen, yet we HEAR its sound and we see the effects of it. This is true of the Holy Spirit. We HEAR the Holy Spirit — hear Him as He speaks through inspired men. We see the effects of the Spirit’s message as it produces obedience in man.

Before the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, many things concerning the Spirit were not known; now they have been explained. Hence, Nicodemus did not know where the Spirit cometh or goeth; we do today. The Holy Spirit came to the apostles (John 14:16-17; 16:7-14; Acts 2:1-4), and they spake *“as the Spirit gave*

them utterance” (Acts 2:4). The people heard the apostles — HEARD THE SPIRIT SPEAK THROUGH THE APOSTLES — and this message, when believed and obeyed, produced the new birth. Then the real point of the comparison is simply this: Just as we hear the sound of the wind, we hear the voice of the Spirit speaking through the apostles, and a man is born again by HEARING and OBEYING the voice of the Spirit. (f2) There is nothing mysterious or miraculous about it.

(f2) Some claim that the Greek word “*pneuma*”, translated “wind” in John 3:8, should be translated “Spirit.” The word “Spirit” is given in the footnote of the American Standard Version. This word is found many times in the New Testament, and in practically all instances it is rendered “Spirit,” or the equivalent, “Ghost.” There is not another case in all the New Testament where the word is rendered “wind.” (The word is found in the Greek New Testament 386 times, and 384 times it is rendered into English either by the word “Spirit” or “Ghost,” once by the word “life” and here, “wind.”) By the word “*pneuma*” translated “Spirit,” the correct meaning of the verse would be: “The Spirit breathes (speaks) where he pleases, and you hear his voice, but cannot tell where the Spirit comes or where he goes (but you can HEAR him); so (an adverb, meaning: In this way, or in such a manner: that is, by HEARING the voice of the Spirit) is every one (born) that is born of the Spirit.” (This is the commonly accepted meaning of this passage of Scripture.)

(f2) But if the word in the original, here rendered “wind,” should be translated “Spirit,” the thought would not be changed. We would then have a literal statement of the fact that BY HEARING THE SPIRIT’S MESSAGE WE ARE BORN (BEGOTTEN) OF THE SPIRIT (James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 5:1; Rom. 10:17); now we have an illustration of exactly the same idea. It would still be the spirit of man, not his body, begotten by HEARING the voice of the Spirit, the words of the New Testament: and by HEARING Him, faith is produced in the heart.

(f2) Hence, people are “born again” today by hearing, believing, and obeying the Spirit’s teaching. This is the only way the Spirit brings about the new birth. This is the way people were “born again” in the days of the

Apostles. (I will refer you to a number of cases of conversion later). The word of God was first spoken by the Spirit through inspired men, and afterwards written down by men guided by the Spirit. Now, we have the inspired BOOK. We hear the Spirit today when we hear the Gospel message. Thus we see why this change in man resulting from hearing, believing, and obeying the truth, is represented as a birth of the Spirit.

A NEW LIFE BEGINS

A birth means a translation, a change of state or relationship, and results in a new life in a new realm. By the new birth one is translated into a new environment.

When does this new life begin? Where is that realm?

“Therefore if any man be IN CHRIST, HE IS A NEW CREATURE; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Since we are new creatures in Christ, we enter into the new life when we enter into Christ.

But, when does one enter into Christ?

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in NEWNESS OF LIFE” (Rom. 6:3-4). *“For as many of you as have been BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST, have put on Christ”* (Gal. 3:27). The man IN CHRIST is born again.

Therefore, baptism is a part of the new birth.(f3)

(f3) The expression, “the WASHING OF REGENERATION,” shows that baptism is a part of the new birth (Titus 3:5). “The washing of regeneration” — the washing that pertains to or is connected with regeneration — is admitted by all scholars to refer to baptism. (See Acts 22:16; 2:38; Eph. 5:26; Heb. 10:22; 1 Cor. 6:11). It will be noticed from Rom. 6:4 that one is buried with Christ in baptism; and not only this, he is raised from the watery grave to “walk in newness of life.” If one is saved before he is baptized, why is it that he does not walk in “newness of life” until after he is baptized? Hence, “baptism doth also NOW SAVE US” (1 Peter 3:21).

(f3) This verse also teaches that baptism is NOT a work of righteousness — man’s righteousness. It is placed in contrast to self-righteousness. Baptism is a work of God’s righteousness, not our righteousness (cf. Matt. 3:15; Rom. 1:16-17; 10:1-3; Acts 10:34-35; Psa. 119:172). Too, we see how we are saved by grace. Titus 3:6-7 is in perfect accord with Eph. 2:8-9. In being baptized, we are saved by grace.

One is not a “new creature” (2 Cor. 5:17) — born again — until he gets “into Christ,” but according to the Bible, one is not “in Christ” until he has been baptized into Him (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). The new birth translates one from the kingdom of Satan into

the kingdom of Christ where he obtains the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:13-14).

Part 1 of 3

Editor’s Note: I had the privilege of knowing Brother Cotham. He was a great encourager as he would often write and commend the work of *Seek The Old Paths*. He always encouraged me to write and print tracts. He was a great debater, especially on the subject of the Holy Spirit. He sought desperately to dispel the confusion on that topic.

His tract on “The New Birth” was written more than 70 years ago. I’ll give you more details about it in the July issue (Lord willing). —gmr

MARRIAGE IS... #2

Bill Boyd

In our homes we treat our weaker vessels with greater honor. We handle them gently; we often have a special place for them on our shelves. A man should honor his wife as he honors his weaker vessels. He should treat her like a fine piece of china, not like an old bucket.

Marriage is for “the grace of life;” that is where this article is going. This is the last of a six-part series on what marriage is not and what it is. We have seen how that the Bible teaches that marriage is not of man, not just a civil union, not sin nor an accommodation of sin, not for animals, and not for the self-centered and immature. Marriage is of God, what God hath joined together, from the beginning, older than sin, a sacred spiritual covenant, a God blessed relationship, honorable in all, a relationship that exceeds all other human relationships; and, a commitment. Marriage is for companionship, for a godly seed, for man’s good, woman’s good, good for society’s good. Marriage is something God loves, for it is “very good.” We have learned of marriage from Moses, Solomon, Hosea, Malachi, Jesus, and Paul. This series will end with what we learn

from Peter.

Peter was a married man. In Matthew 8:14-15 and Mark 1:29-31, Jesus was in the house where “Simon’s wife’s mother” lay sick of a fever. In 1 Corinthians 9:5, Paul said he had the right to lead about “a sister, a wife, as well as the other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas.” In 1 Peter 5:1, Peter called himself as “an elder” (Peter did not call himself “the Pope”). It is necessary that “an elder” be “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6). This ancient apostolic tradition that was necessary for Peter to be qualified to be “an elder” would disqualify him to be “a Pope” (under current Roman tradition).

Peter began his discussion of marriage with the obligations of a believing wife to an unbelieving husband. Paul wrote of believers married to unbelievers in 1 Corinthians 7:10-15. He told them to remain married, but he

said that if the unbelieving spouse was to depart, then the believing spouse was to let them depart. They were married, but they were not and had never been bound to their spouse as a slave. Paul did not tell the abandoned believers that they could marry another, he said, *“If she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband”* (1 Cor. 7:11). Jesus gave one exception for remarriage following a divorce (Matt. 19:9); Paul did not give another exception to the Corinthians.

Peter told the believing wife to *“be in subjection to her own husband”* (1 Peter 3:1). Freedom from sin does not free one from the obligations of marriage. Peter taught that the godly submission of believing wives could open the hearts of unbelieving husbands to the Gospel, and that they may *“without a word be won by the conversation of their wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear”* (1 Peter 3:1). What Peter said has often occurred.

“Conversation” in the King James Version refers to her manner of life. The “fear” of which Peter spoke is not fear of harm from her husband, but respect for him in the fear of the Lord. Peter clarified a few verses later saying, *“not afraid with any amazement.”* A wife’s submission to her husband does not come from a woman’s fearful weakness, but from the inner strength of her meek and quiet spirit. With this inner quiet strength, she is not afraid to call her husband her lord (1 Peter 3:5-6). We learn from this that for the married, a commitment to Christ includes a commitment to their marriage.

Peter also had a few things to say to husbands; *“dwell with them according to knowledge”* (1 Peter 3:7). Husbands cannot cop out saying, *“I do not understand her,”* and be the husband God expects him to be. It is true that sometimes a wife can be hard to understand, but it is just as true that sometimes a husband can be hard to understand. Men and women are different, and part of the joy of marriage is getting to know and learning to understand one another, and then, having that knowledge and understanding, to complete one another.

Peter also said, *“giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel”* (1 Peter 3:7). It is true that men are often physically stronger than their wives, but I am not convinced that this is what Peter is referring to. A wise surgeon told me, *“Men are often stronger, but women are usually tougher.”* Men should stand amazed at what women endure. Peter’s admonition to give *“honor to the wife as unto the weaker vessel”* reminds me of how Paul said that the potter will *“make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor”* (Rom. 9:21). In our homes we treat our weaker vessels with greater honor. We handle them gently; we often have a special place for them on our shelves. A man should honor his wife as he honors his weaker vessels. He should treat her like a fine piece of china, not like an old bucket.

At the end Peter writes, *“as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”* “The grace of life” is the best of life. I am reminded of how Solomon said, *“Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favor from the LORD”* (Prov. 18:22), and, *“Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest, all the days of the life of thy vanity”* (Eccl. 9:9). The married enjoy “the grace of life” because, *“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one*

will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up. Again, if two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone? And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him” (Eccl. 4:9-12). The married enjoy the grace of life when they walk hand in hand together, sharing all life has to offer. Paul says, *“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep”* (Rom. 12:15). There is comfort in marriage when you weep together, and joy is magnified when you rejoice together.

In the normal course of events, the day will come when one will walk away from the grave of the other. Even then, if they have done things God’s way, so that their prayers have not been hindered, there is the grace that comes with the hope of being together again. Jesus said, *“in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage”* (Matt. 22:30); nevertheless, we will know each other in heaven, and the married should anticipate a special joy in knowing how they helped each other get there.

Those who know the grace of hope and joy, know what marriage is.

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