

The New Birth

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(John 3:3-8) 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. (4) 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? (5) 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. (6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (7) Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. (8) 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 every one that is born of the Spirit.

The doctrine of new birth should not have been totally strange to Nicodemus. This promise was given to Ezekiel, (Ezekiel 36:25-26) Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. (26) A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

Jesus divided the new birth into two components to explain it. However, the new birth is a single experience consisting of two parts; one part is incomplete without the other. Therefore, there is only one new birth not two.

Birth of Water

We believe that the birth of water occurs when God remits sins at water baptism.

The first church commonly used water to mean water baptism; (Acts 10:47) Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?

John used water in a literal way when he spoke of Spirit, water, and blood agreeing in one purpose of salvation; (1 John 5:8) And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.

The context of John 3:5 strongly suggests water baptism. John 1:25-34 and John 3:23 speak of John the Baptist ministry of baptism. John 3:22 and John 4:1-2 describes baptism administered by Christ's disciples on His authority.

There is one baptism; (Ephesians 4:5) One Lord, one faith, one baptism. Therefore, water and Spirit baptism are two parts of one whole, with one being incomplete without the other. Doctrinally speaking, if one is a part of the new birth, the other must be also.

God remits sins at water baptism. Therefore, water baptism must be a part of the new birth, for how could there be a new, spiritual life until the old life of sins is erased? (Acts 22:16) And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

Water baptism according to the Word of God; (Ephesians 5:26) That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

Birth of the Spirit

Nicodemus should have understood the birth of Spirit meant Spirit baptism from Old Testament prophecies; (Joel 2:28-29) And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: (29) And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.

John the Baptist prophesied of the baptism of the Spirit; (Mark 1:8) I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

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Other Old Testament prophecies where God promised a new covenant in which He would write His laws upon the hearts of His people; (Jeremiah 31:33) *But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.*

This promise is fulfilled by the outpouring of the Spirit, who writes the laws of God on our hearts; (2 Corinthians 3:3) *Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.*

The Spirit gives us power to fulfill the righteousness of the law; (Romans 8:4) *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

The disciples received this promise on the Day of Pentecost when they were filled with the Holy Spirit; (Acts 2:4) *And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.*

This promise is for us also; (Acts 2:38-39) *Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. (39) For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

Comparing the natural birth to the new birth. We can view each as a single event, but all are needed for the birth process. One process is incomplete without the other.

Natural Birth

1. Conception.
2. Baby leaves womb.
3. Baby takes first breath.

New Birth

1. Hearing of gospel; beginning of faith.
2. Water baptism.
3. Baptism of the Holy Ghost.

From "The New Birth" by David Bernard, adapted by Mark Starin.

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