

The Blessed Person and Work of God the Holy Spirit

Lesson 3--The Holy Spirit's Work of Regeneration

Regeneration is that work of God whereby God imparts His life to a person who was dead in sin. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to impart life: "...for the letter (law) killeth, but the Spirit giveth _____" (2 Cor. 3:6). Not only is the sinner given life, but he is born into the family of God. One of the key passages with respect to regeneration is John chapter 3.

They Believed, But Jesus Did Not Believe

At the end of John Chapter 2 we learn about an interesting group of people. We are told that "many _____ in His Name" (John 2:23). Why did these people believe? (See John 2:23.)

- a. Because they knew that someday Christ would die for them on the cross and rise again
- b. Because they knew that they were lost sinners and that Jesus was the only Person who could save them
- c. Because they saw the miracles which Jesus did
- d. Because they loved Jesus and wanted to follow Him with all their hearts

Their faith was based on the miracles which they saw! Did Jesus get overly excited because of this group of "believers"? Did He say, "This is wonderful! Look at all the new followers I now have!?" No, the opposite was true: "But Jesus did not _____ Himself unto them" (John 2:24).

The word "believed" in John 2:23 is the same word as the word "commit" in John 2:24. We could say it this way: "Many *believed* in Jesus, but Jesus was not *believing* in them." They had faith in Him (because of the miracles they saw) but He did not have very much faith in them! Jesus knew that they were not to be depended on because "He _____ all men" (John 2:24). Jesus, who knew all about Nathanael (John 1:47-48), is the same Person who knew all about these men. Jesus knew that these people were not true believers. He did not receive these seeming believers with open arms because "He _____ what was in man" (John 2:25). He knew these people through and through and He knew that their hearts were not right in God's sight. Even though they had faith, they did not have the kind of faith Jesus wanted them to have. They needed to be born again!

In John Chapter 3 we are introduced to one of these men. We are introduced to a man who believed in Christ because of the miracles which he saw: "We know that thou art a teacher come

from God: for no man can do these _____ that thou does, except _____ be with him" (John 3:2). Nicodemus was a "believer in miracles" but Jesus told Nicodemus: "Ye must be _____" (John 3:7).

Religious But Not Saved

What kind of a man was Nicodemus? He is described in John 3:1.

He was a *Pharisee*. This means that he was a religious person. He prayed. He read the Bible and was well acquainted with the Old Testament. He went to the synagogue and to the temple. He tried to keep the Ten Commandments.

He was a *Ruler* (John 3:1). He was not just an ordinary Jew; he was a leader of the Jews. He was a member of the highest ruling body within the nation (see John 7:45-50) which was called the Sanhedrin. He was a man who enjoyed a high position.

He was a master or *Teacher* (John 3:10). If anyone should have had the answers, he should have! And yet, even though Nicodemus taught others, he needed to be taught himself. He needed to have a lesson on "being born again," taught by the greatest Teacher of all (John 3:2)!

Even though Nicodemus was a *Pharisee*, a *Ruler* and a *Teacher*, he was traveling on a road that was headed straight for hell. Nicodemus was not saved. Nicodemus did not have eternal life. He had many things but he did not have the most important thing. Jesus' message to Nicodemus was very clear: "Except a man be _____, he cannot see the _____ of God" (John 3:3). There is only one way to enter the kingdom! **You must be born again!**

What Does It Mean To Be Born Again?

A person does not need money to get to heaven. A person does not need education to get to heaven. A person does not need rank or high position to get to heaven. But there is one thing that is needed if anyone is to get to heaven: A NEW BIRTH! Those who are not **born again** will never see God's Kingdom (John 3:3).

Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus meant by the words "born again" (see John 3:4). He asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? Certainly he can't enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" (John 3:4; this rendering reflects the Greek text). He knew that a person could not reenter his mother's womb and be born a second time in a physical way. This would be impossible. What did Jesus really mean?

Look at the answer Jesus gave to Nicodemus in John 3:5-6. Jesus made it very clear that He was talking about a spiritual birth ("born of the Spirit"), not a physical birth. Man's first birth was physical ("born of the flesh") and man's second birth must be spiritual ("born of the Spirit"). *It is something that the Spirit of God must do!*

"Born of Water and of the Spirit"

What did Jesus mean when He said that a person must be born of water and of the Spirit? (See John 3:5.) This is a verse of Scripture that has often been misunderstood. In fact, there are many who believe that "the water" refers to **water baptism**. They would say something like this: Unless you are baptized in water you cannot enter the kingdom of God and you cannot be saved. This is not true. Water baptism is important, but water baptism does not save anyone. Water baptism is not something that a person does to be saved. Water baptism is something that a saved person does!

[For a detailed study on this question see our study [Does Water Baptism Save?](#)]

Jesus was not talking about physical water which can only cleanse a person on the outside. In John 3:5 Jesus was talking about **spiritual cleansing** (something that must happen on the inside of a person). To be clean on the outside a person must take a bath and use soap and water! To be clean on the inside there is another kind of bath that is needed. Soap and water can never remove the filth of sin! God must do something on the inside of a person. Let's see what the Bible says about being born of water and of the Spirit:

John 3:3 says that if a person is going to see the kingdom he must be _____	<<	John 3:5 says that if a person is going to enter the kingdom he must be _____ of _____ and of the _____
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Therefore, being *born again* means the same thing as being *born of water and of the Spirit*. If a person has been born again, then this person has been born of water and of the Spirit.

Water is what we almost always use whenever we wash something. *Water is the universal cleansing agent*. If you *wash* your car, what do you use? _____ If you *wash* your face, what do you use? _____ To make your clothes bright and *clean*, what do you use? _____ To make your teeth *clean*, you not only use toothpaste, but you also use _____. It is easy to see how **water** can be symbolic of **cleaning** (making something clean)!

Sinners need to be *washed* and *made clean*. Jesus wanted Nicodemus to know something very important: **No unclean person can enter God's kingdom!** God says that **no unclean person** has any inheritance in the _____ of Christ and of God (Ephesians 5:5 and see also Galatians 5:21 and Revelation 21:27). To enter the kingdom a person must be clean and washed on the inside (his sins must be forgiven!). No unwashed people will be admitted! No unclean person will enter the kingdom of God. Only **cleansed sinners** will be allowed in heaven! You must be born of water! You must be washed!

Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-10. Will any unclean or unrighteous people inherit the kingdom? _____ Will washed sinners enter the kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:11)? _____ Does the Spirit of God have a part in this cleansing (1 Corinthians 6:11)? _____

Whenever you think of John 3:5 you should also think of Titus 3:5. Both of these verses are

found in chapter 3 verse 5, so they are easy to remember! Both of these verses talk about being **born again** (the word "regeneration" in Titus 3:5 is a big word that simply means "born again"). Both of these verses talk about the WATER and the SPIRIT. Look at Titus 3:5: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the _____ of regeneration (that's the **WATER**) and renewing of the Holy Spirit (that's the **SPIRIT**)." The born again person is the person who has been thoroughly cleansed and renewed by the Spirit of God!

Let's look at three verses which talk about the WATER and the SPIRIT:

<i>John 3:5</i> "born of (1) water and of (2) Spirit"	<i>1 Corinthians 6:11</i> "ye are (1) washed . . . by the (2)spirit"	<i>Titus 3:5</i> "(1) washing (water) of regeneration and (2) renewing of Spirit"
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All of these verses are talking about that wonderful work which God does on the inside of a person, making it possible for us to enter God's kingdom!

Notice the water in John 13:5. Jesus was using this water to be a symbolic picture of an important spiritual truth. Was Peter a "washed" disciple? Was Peter **clean** on the inside (John 13:9-10)? _____ Who was the disciple who was never born of water? What was the name of the disciple who was unwashed and unclean and who had never been born again (John 13:10-11, and compare John 13:2)? _____ Would this man ever enter the kingdom? _____

The **water** is also mentioned in Ephesians 5:25-26: "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it that He might sanctify and _____ it with the _____ of _____ by the _____." How is a person washed? By the Word!

The **Word of God** is an essential part of the cleansing process. The Word of God is the mirror that shows us how dirty we really are (because of sin). Not only does the Bible show us our sin, but it also points out the only Saviour and His promises to save those who truly believe on Him. Without the Word of God a person can never be saved and can never be born again. The following verses show how important God's Word is:

- 1) **Psalm 119:9** – "How shall a young man _____ his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy _____."
- 2) **John 15:3** – "Now ye are _____ through the _____ which I have spoken unto you."
- 3) **1 Peter 1:23-25** – "Being _____ not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the _____ of _____ which liveth and abideth for ever."
- 4) **James 1:18** – "Of His own will begat He us with the _____ of truth."

God's Word does two things: 1) It shows man how great a sinner he is (Romans 3:10-23); 2) It shows man how great a Saviour Christ is (Romans 3:24-26)!

Nicodemus was a Jew who should have been familiar with the Old Testament. In John 3:9 we see that Nicodemus still did not understand what Jesus was talking about. In John 3:10 Jesus told Nicodemus that he should have known these things! He should have understood about the water and the Spirit! He should have been familiar with Ezekiel 36:25-29. Does this passage talk about the water? _____ Does this passage talk about being clean and being cleansed? _____ Does this passage talk about the Spirit? _____ In this passage God promised to do a wonderful work on the inside (see Ezekiel 36:26-27)! See also Jeremiah 4:14 and Isaiah 1:16.

How A Person Is Not Born Again

When you were born the first time you became a part of your human family. You became a child of your parents. When a person is born again, he becomes a part of God's family--**A child of God** (John 1:12). In John 1:13 we learn three ways in which a person is *not* born again:

1. "Not of blood"

There is a "bloodline" between parent and child, and there are many things that parents can give to their children: color of eyes, color of hair, facial features, body size, etc. But there is one thing that parents can never give to their children: **the new birth!** Your parents can give you your first birth, but they can never give you your second birth! Christian parents do not give birth to Christian babies! Born again parents do not have born again babies! If you are related by blood to a Christian, this does not make you a Christian! Salvation is not passed down from parent to child. Someone has said, "God has many children but He has no grandchildren." This means that the only way a person can become a child of God is to receive Christ by faith (John 1:12). A parent's faith can do nothing to bring a child into God's family. Each person must believe on his own. Christian parents wish they could believe for their children but they cannot.

Many of the Jews thought that they were saved because they had descended from Abraham (Matthew 3:9; John 8:39). Were they correct (compare John 8:44)? _____ Parents can pray for their children and teach their children and live godly before their children, but parents cannot give them a new heart and a new birth.

2. "Not of the will of the flesh"

All of man's efforts and exertions will never make him a child of God. Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is _____" (John 3:6). No matter how much man may desire to change, he cannot change himself. Just as a leopard cannot change his spots and an Ethiopian (African) cannot change the color of his skin, so a person with a sinful heart cannot change his evil nature (see Jeremiah 13:23). Only God can bring about such a change.

3. "Not of the will of man"

For many years the early Christians were persecuted by the Roman emperors and many were put to death. Finally a man by the name of Constantine came to power (about 300 A.D.). This man wanted to make Christianity the official religion of the empire. He wanted the people in his kingdom to all be Christians, but did this make them Christians? _____ No King or President or Priest or Pope or Pastor can make a person a child of God! The most powerful person on earth is unable to give a person a clean heart and a new life. Only God can do this!

The Work of God

Being born again is not man's anything, but it is God's everything (John 1:13--"but of God")! It is that wonderful, supernatural work of God by which a person becomes a child of God (John 1:12). By his first birth man became a member of Adam's fallen race; by his second birth man becomes a member of God's family. When a person is born again he receives a **new life** (John 3:15), a **new heart** (Ezekiel 36:25-27) and a **new nature** (2 Peter 1:4). The born again person is a "NEW _____" (2 Corinthians 5:17)! What must a person do to be born again and to become a child of God (John 1:12)?

The Spirit and the Wind

In John 3:8 Jesus compares the work of the Spirit of God to the wind. The wind is invisible. You **cannot see** the wind but you can see what the wind does. You can see the leaves blowing across the lawn. You can see the sailboat being pushed across the lake. You can see the flag blowing in the breeze.

The same thing is true with the Spirit of God. You cannot see the Spirit of God when you look at a Christian, but you should be able to see what the Holy Spirit does! If the Holy Spirit is really at work in a person's life, this should be seen! Although people cannot see the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, are they able to see the **fruit** of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:9)? _____ People can certainly see the way we live and act and speak, and they can see the evidence of the Spirit at work in our lives! Can the "sound" of the Spirit be heard in the way you live and act and talk day by day?