Lesson 8 - The New Birth



On one occasion, Nicodemus, one of the chief officers of the Jewish religion, came to visit Jesus at night. He greeted Jesus with these words, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him” (John 3:2).

In response to this confession Jesus replied, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). This statement surprised Nicodemus since he had never heard of the new birth. He responded, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born” (John 3:4)?

But Jesus was not referring to the physical birth. “Most assuredly, I say to you,” He responded, “unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:5, 6). In order to be a true Christian, every believer must experience the new birth. We touched on this in Lesson 7, but in this lesson, we will consider the full significance of the new birth, something that is essential to salvation.

1. What must take place before one can see the kingdom of God? John 3:3

2. Of what two things must one be born to experience salvation? John 3:5

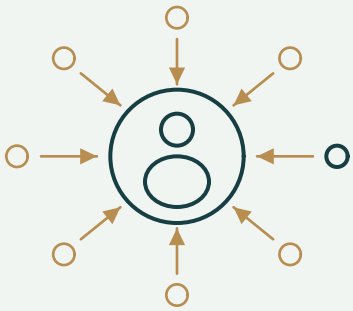
Being born of water is the experience of baptism, which we considered in Lesson 7. Being born of the Spirit is referring to our spiritual birth. In baptism, we participate by faith in the death, burial, and

resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this experience, the life of sin we were born with is surrendered to the cross of Christ and in exchange, we receive the life of Christ through the Holy Spirit. This is the new birth experience.

3. Is being born of the flesh the same thing as being born of the Spirit? John 3:6

The new birth is not a transformation of the old life of sin but an exchange of the old life for the new. God told Adam and Eve that in the very day they sinned they would surely die (see Genesis 2:17). We know that this did not take place physically the day they sinned. It was their spiritual life that came to an end. The Holy Spirit who was dwelling in them left them and they were plunged into spiritual darkness or death. Because Adam could not pass on to us what he did not have, all his children were also born spiritually dead. This is our natural inheritance.

4. How did God restore this spiritual life back to sinful humanity? Ephesians 2:4, 5



In the incarnation, God united our spiritually dead humanity to the divine life of Christ. This was accomplished by the Holy Spirit (see Luke 1:26-35). This is also part of the good news of the gospel since it makes it possible for us to experience the new birth (see Titus 3:3-6).

5. What two things must we do to be made the children of God? John 1:12

The words “received” and “believed” used in this text are synonymous. Believing in Jesus Christ is more than a mental assent to the truth as it is in Him; it involves receiving Him - making Him part of your life.

6. By whose will and act does one experience the new birth? John 1:13

7. Can one belong to Christ and yet not experience the new birth? Romans 8:9

8. Why is the body dead, but the Spirit is alive in the "born again" Christian? Romans 8:10

(Body):

(Spirit):

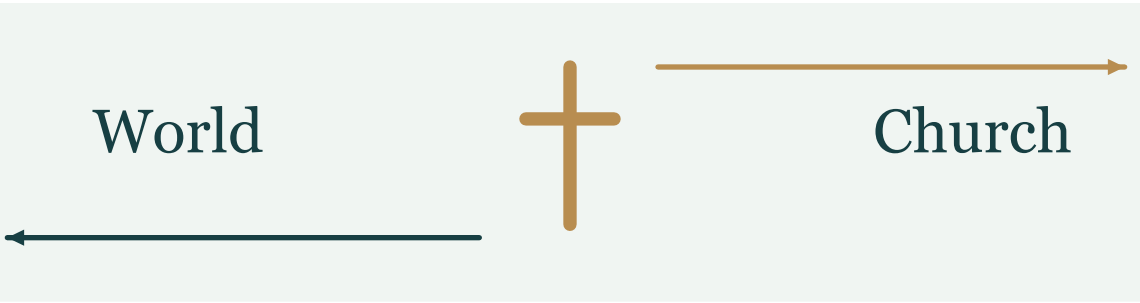
The new birth is not an option but essential to salvation. In the above two texts, Paul uses the terms "Holy Spirit" and "Christ dwelling in you" interchangeably. This is because the Holy Spirit represents Christ in the experience of salvation. This fact is the foundation of true Christian experience.

9. What change does the new birth bring to our lives? Romans 8:15

Without Christ and the experience of the new birth, we stand condemned to eternal death and therefore live in fear of the judgment. But the moment we experience the new birth we not only pass from death to life but we also become the adopted children of God and can call Him "Dear Father." In the Bible an adopted child has all the legal rights of a natural child (see Romans 8:16, 17).

10. What trustworthy or faithful saying must all Christians know? 2 Timothy 2:11

We cannot experience the new birth and still cling to our old life of sin. Between the world under sin and the church (the body of Christ) stands the cross of Christ. This cross will allow nothing of the world to creep into the church.



As Christians, we must consider ourselves as being delivered from this wicked world into the church, the kingdom of God on earth.

11. What did God restore in saving us in Christ? Titus 3:5

Through the truth as it is in Christ (the gospel), God has restored the Holy Spirit to mankind. The new birth is receiving the life of Christ, the Holy Spirit, in exchange for our life of sin. This is what regeneration is all about. Receiving the life of Christ is experienced by the renewing of the Spirit.

12. In obeying the truth of the gospel, of what do we purify ourselves? 1 Peter 1:22

The word "soul" means the life principle. When we obey the truth of the gospel, we surrender the life of sin to the cross of Christ. On the cross Jesus not only (1) delivered us from the guilt and punishment of sin, but also (2) cleansed us from the very principle or life of sin, which is the love of self. When we obey the gospel and experience the new birth, both these truths become ours by faith.

13. How does Peter describe the new birth experience? 1 Peter 1:23

By experiencing the new birth we receive a life that has not only conquered and condemned sin in the flesh (see Romans 8:3), but we also receive a life that will last forever, because it is the eternal life of Christ.

14. What heart exchange takes place in the life of the bornagain Christian? Ezekiel 36:26

In the new birth experience, God takes away our stony hearts of self and replaces them with Christ's heart of love. This love becomes the driving force in Christian living and is what makes it possible to keep the commandments of God.

15. What happens when God puts His Spirit in us? Ezekiel 36:27

16. When the Spirit of God dwells in us, what do we become? 1 Corinthians 3:16

When the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in us through the new birth experience we become temples of God. It is for this reason we must not abuse or mistreat our bodies by indulging in alcohol, drugs or the wrong kinds of foods.

17. When the Holy Spirit dwells and lives in us, to whom do we belong? 1 Corinthians 6:19

18. According to Paul, what two things does God want to do in us? 2 Corinthians 6:16

God wants to dwell in us so that He may give us the hope of salvation. He also wants to walk in us so that He can demonstrate to the world what He is like, a God of love (see John 13:35). That is the privilege of being a Christian.

19. According to Isaiah, what two things does God want to do in us? Isaiah 57:15

20. What blessed hope does the new birth bring to the Christian? 1 Peter 1:3, 4

21. When will this blessed hope be realized? 1 Peter 1:5

By "the last time" Peter is referring to the Second Coming of Christ. The ultimate hope of the Christian is not in this world but in the world to come (see 1 Corinthians 15:19-23 and Lesson 12). Until then, we are saved by faith.

22. Why does God allow Christians to go through many trials? 1 Peter 1:6, 7

The purpose of these trials is to strengthen our faith so that it may endure unto the end, (i.e., until Christ comes to take us home). May this be true of you.

Notes

My Response to Lesson 8

• Unless you are born from above (of the Spirit), you cannot experience the salvation Christ obtained for you. Is it your heartfelt desire to experience the new birth?

Response: _____

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