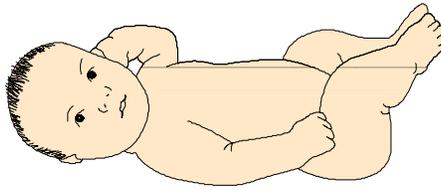


THE



THREE



BIRTHS



"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (or a reborn one): old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Corinthians 5:17).

The new birth comprises the entire change necessary to fit us for the kingdom of God, and is twofold: Firstly, a moral or spiritual change of heart wrought by repentance, confession, conversion (or forsaking of sins), faith, water baptism, and the reception of the Holy Spirit: Secondly, a physical change at the second coming of Christ, whereby if dead we are raised to incorruption, and if living, are changed to immortality.

We are not so much concerned about the physical change to take place at the second coming of Christ as we are of the moral, for the change of heart must be experienced in this present life, and God will take care of the rest in due time. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). If this wicked heart is not changed, there is no hope for eternal life.

"Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 18:31).

The Natural Birth

To illustrate a point, or to teach a spiritual lesson, Jesus often used incidents from practical life, and so did He in His endeavor to teach what He meant by a regeneration of our lives. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh (or carnal); and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (or spiritual)" (John 3:6).

In the natural before a child is born into this world, it is first conceived or begotten, and it grows in its embryonic stage until it is born, and after birth it continues to grow to perfection or manhood. In the spiritual, the same process takes place. One is first begotten or conceived of God's Spirit after he is born of the water.

"For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (I Corinthians 4:15).

"Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (James 1:18).

Being begotten or conceived by the Word and Spirit of God, and submitting in obedience to same, will bring about the first phase of the new birth. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, (of water) not of cor-

ruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (I Peter 1:22-23).

When a child is born in this world (of corruptible seed), it is a babe and is expected to grow. And so, when one is born of water and begotten of the Spirit, he is not full grown or a perfect man either, but he is expected to grow in grace and knowledge. II Peter 3:18.

If a child that is born into this world and fed on milk thrives, it is expected to be able to partake of stronger meats from time to time. And so are we expected to grow until we can get away from a mild diet to stronger meats, spiritually speaking. If a child remains dwarfed, there is reason for its parents to feel that something is wrong. What will our heavenly parent think of us if we must have milk all the time and never grow to the place where we can partake of meat? See I Peter 2:1-3.

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Hebrews 5:12-14).

Begotten Sons And Daughters

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, hereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together" (Romans 8:14-17).

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (II Corinthians 6:17-18).

Steps To The Begettal Of The Spirit REPENTANCE

When Jesus was about thirty years of age, He began His ministry, and His opening message was; "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). If one will study New Testament history, he will find that Jesus, John the Baptist, and the Apostles of Christ

preached repentance as of paramount importance.

Many modern preachers never say "repent," for that is deeper than they went. A prerequisite to repentance, however, is acknowledgment. As long as one does not acknowledge that he is a sinner, you cannot expect that he will repent. That is the trouble with so many so called morally good people. "Why shall we repent? Are we not all right? Who can say that we are so bad?" are some of their questions. But no one can claim that he has never sinned.

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Romans 5:12).

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John 1:8).

By repentance is meant a sorrow and regret for sins committed in the past, and this leads to a change from past evils. Genuine repentance means more than joining a church by one's confession of faith. Many people are deceived into thinking that repentance is merely a change from the false doctrine to the true. This is only a turning from darkness to light, but not from the power of Satan to God. See Acts 26:18. One can accept all the doctrines, prophecies, and truths of the Bible, and still be under the power of Satan as long as his heart is

still unregenerated. Head religion alone is insufficient to save anyone. The heart must be changed, and the head in most cases will come along all right. True worship consists of worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth. Read John 4:23.

It often so happens that when a preacher comes to a new place to hold protracted meetings, that some of those who attend will become convinced that what he preaches is truth. They can easily see that their own beliefs were wrong. And when this certain evangelist has preached all the doctrines that he feels are necessary for his new prospects to accept, he finally makes a call of membership or baptism. Many of his listeners have been persuaded that what he preached is truth, and so what shall they do but join his church. All that he asked of them was to accept the new doctrine, in many cases, and so they have been converted from one doctrine to another only, but what about a change of heart? Who is to blame if these people have deceived themselves into thinking that they can get by with a mere head knowledge and still finally be lost because they had no personal experience of forgiveness of former sins? Is not this one to blame whomever told them the real foundations of a Christian life? To have a personal experience with the Lord, to know when one's sins are forgiven, and to feel the power of God come into

one's life, is more than accepting new doctrines or asking the hand of a preacher. It means that he will humble himself, get on his knees, and "pray earnestly" according to the following:

"Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil" (Joel 2:12-13).

Godly sorrow worketh repentance. See II Corinthians 7:9-10. There are two kinds of sorrow, a godly and a worldly. The former leads to life, and the latter to death. To illustrate; A man steals a car and gets by with it for a long time, but is finally nabbed by a policeman. This man may be very sorry that he was caught. He may not be sorry in the least because of his sin, but just because he was caught. Such sorrow is of no use. On the other hand, if this same man were never caught by a policeman, yet finally became very sorry for the sin he had committed, and is led to repentance, he will restore the car to its rightful owner, confess his guilt, and pay of the damages. Such sorrow which leads to repentance brings forth life.

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall

come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

It is sad to see how lightly conversions are regarded today. This present generation, in professing Christianity, has departed a long, long way from the pure gospel of early days, which was the power of God unto salvation. One can see very few genuine repentances and conversions nowadays. Very few are humble and penitent enough to get down upon their knees and confess their past sins to their Creator who would be willing to forgive.

God at one time said that His Spirit would not always strive with men. Because man has grieved and rejected the pleadings of the Holy Spirit so much, is evidently the reason why so few really have spiritual experiences with God. The Holy Spirit at one time also worked mightily in the life of the Psalmist David, and not until he confessed his guilt did he have peace, Listen to his testimony:

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned in the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I

said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin" (Psalm 32:1-5).

After a person acknowledges that he is a sinner, and sees the lost condition he is in, he will confess his sins if he is in earnest about wishing to be saved. Not only is it necessary to confess sins to God who is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse from all unrighteousness; but confession and restitution must also be made to man where wrongs have been committed. Our Master said, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee: leave there thy gift, before the altar and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23-24).

That many people need to make restoration in order to be saved may further be seen from the following; "Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die" (Ezekiel 33:14-15).

You will remember the story of Zacchaeus, chief among the publicans, how he climbed the sycamore tree in his endeavour to see Jesus, and then was

asked to come down, for Jesus wished to abide in his house that day. At his home, this Zacchaeus made a confession and promised to make restitution for anything he might have taken falsely. And upon this promise Jesus said, "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19:1-9).

Some people try to hide their sins, rather than to confess them, but such will never get by. "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13). The only right way to get our sins covered or hidden is by the blood of the Lamb, and that through confession. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9).

Those who try to cover their sins any other way will not be able to do it well enough to get by all together. Fig leaves were not sufficient originally to cover sin (Genesis 3:6-7). It took the blood of a lamb to atone for sin. Read Genesis 3:21. Unconverted sins will leak out sooner or later anyway.

"But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out" (Numbers 32:23).

"For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that a man can

wrap himself in it" (Isaiah 28:20).

There is altogether too much hypocrisy manifested in so-called Christians. Just think of it! Some will boast of how they were able to put something over on someone else. Others tell how they are going to get even with those that have mistreated them, and so on. Many deceive themselves. Don't people know that they will have to appear before the judgment bar of God some day?

"For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiasties 12:14).

Conversion (Forsaking of sins)

"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him: and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." - Isaiah 55:7.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may

prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1-2).

"Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupisence; and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds: and have put on the new man..." (Colossians 3:5-10).

True reformation in one's life is brought about by the power of God, and not by our own willpower alone. Many people make resolutions to do better than they have been doing, but so many fail. It takes the power of the Holy Spirit to change one's life (to transform one), and without that power, one cannot stand. Oh, that the many people who profess Christianity would really have had a spiritual change in their lives instead of trying to be morally good in their own strength alone, how must better for them and the church also!

Faith

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1).

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

It is by faith that we are saved. Unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire. Read Revelation 21:8. We are not saved just because we do penance, sacrifice, or do works, yet the good works will follow one's faith. The way one proves that he has faith is by his works. See James 2:14-26. "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:16). There are extremists in most everything. Some apparently think they will be justified by works alone, and others by faith alone. There are those who say they will be saved just because they keep the Ten Commandments, or do works; another again will refer one to such as Acts 16:31. "...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...", and

say that is all that is necessary-nothing to do, no repentance, nothing to make right, just believe. If that were true then devils also are in a saved condition.

"Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" -James 2:19-20.

Water Baptism

"The 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." -Acts 2:38.

That it is necessary to be baptized in water in order to be saved, we have previously gleaned from Mark 16:16. It is one of the works that follows faith and repentance. Baptism is not the first step on the Christian ladder. According to the Scriptural injunction, a number of steps precede it, namely, repentance, confession, conversion, and faith. The old man of sin has to die to sin before he is buried. We do not bury people to kill them, but we bury them after they have died. Nor should anyone be baptized with the idea that this step will change him. Let the old man of sin die first, and then bury him. Baptism is the answer of a good conscience toward God. I Peter 3:21. How can anyone claim that he has a good conscience as

long as the old man of sin is still alive, as long as he has not repented of, nor confessed his sins?

When John the Baptist was immersing people in the river Jordan, and they were confessing their sins, there came also many of the Pharisees and Sadducees to him. If John had been like many preachers of today, he would have baptized them all very gladly so as to send a good report to the church headquarters to make others think of him as a good worker. But, no, he was not so much interested in quantity as he was in quality. He wanted to be sure that his candidates for baptism had a heart experience with God before he laid his hands on them. They were to show by their fruits, first, that they had repented of sin. Read Matthew 3:5-8.

We are baptized of the water to be washed from OUR SINS. Sin is the disobedience of God's Ten Commandments. I John 3:3-4 says, "And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, (receives baptism) even as he (Jesus) is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law."

Baptism is the operation of God. Read Colossians 2:12. It gives the Holy Spirit a chance to grow in the person washed free from sin. The Apostle Paul makes it very clear that we must remain free from sin by the indwelling of the Holy

Spirit. Of ourselves we can not keep the Ten Commandments of God. Only through the help of Christ (begotten in us) can we keep from sinning. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid...Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus 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" (Romans 6:1-4).

Paul's first reaction is to recoil from the idea of continuing to break the Perfect Law of Liberty. Let us put it this way in language of today what Paul meant. "Do you suggest that we should go on breaking God's Law in order for the Holy Spirit to operate? God forbid! We should never pursue such a vile idea." And yet, this is what some men are doing today. Baptism is the dividing line in a man's life. He is entering a life that is to be led by the Spirit because it is begotten in him. To be led by the Spirit is to divest himself completely of the things of the world. When a man descends into the water and is covered, it is like being buried in the grave. That man of sin has died. When the man is lifted out of the water, he is a new creature in Christ. He is begotten by the Spirit, and there is "Christ in him the

hope of glory." This is the operation of God.

The Begetting of the Spirit

"And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (Acts 19:1-6). See also Romans 6:1-6 and Acts 8:14-17.

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return unto my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more

wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" (Matthew 12:43-45).

One may be cleansed from his evil ways and become a virgin, and yet be lost. This we learn from the parable of the ten virgins. Read Matthew 25:1-13. They were all virgins (pure ones), and had their lamps (the Word of God), but had no oil (the Holy spirit). Even if they were virgins, yet they were not saved because they lacked the Holy Spirit in their lives. "And be not drunk with wine wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit," (Ephesians 5:18) is the command of God.

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Roman 8:9).

The Spirit of God dwells not in the head (the seat of knowledge) only, of its possessor, but in the heart (the seat of emotion), The heart must be circumcised (Roman 2:28-29), and the mind must become renewed. Read Romans 12:2. A true worshipper will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Read John 4:23. He will have a "know-so" religion, as well as heartfelt (blessings in the inward man) Christianity.

"Now he which stablishedeth us

with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (II Corinthians 1:21-22).

"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith..." (Ephesians 3:16-17).

The Spirit of God is necessary in one's life for sanctification (II Thessalonians 2:13), to reprove of sin (John 16:8), for power (Acts 1:8), for guidance into all truth (John 16:13), and to be sealed (Ephesians 4:30). And when one has fully surrendered his life as a living sacrifice upon the altar of God, when he has repented, confessed, and made restitution where necessary, has a knowledge of forgiveness of former sins, and has forsaken his former ways, when he has been baptized and has received the Holy Spirit, if he is a follower of the Lord Jesus, it can be truthfully said of such that he is a new creature. Read II Corinthians 5:17.

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water (at baptism) and of the Spirit) (at the resurrection), he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

THE THIRD BIRTH - BORN OF THE SPIRIT

There are two phases of redemption for us. We have been redeemed, in this life, through the blood of Christ (Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9:12), and there will also be a redemption for our physical bodies (Ephesians 4:30), having reference to the resurrection or redemption from the grave.

"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23).

The raising of the dead is also termed a birth. Christ was the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18). Others had been raised to life, but none to immortality before him. And when the righteous will be born from the graves at the second coming of Christ they also will put on immortality (I Corinthians 15:50-55), and be like him. See I John 3:2.

Here the apostle speaks of being begotten to a lively hope, and this begetting is by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead which is prefigured in water baptism.

"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus 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" (Romans 6:3-4).

When we go into the watery grave, we manifest faith in the resurrection at the last day and are begotten to that hope or begotten of the incorruptible seed.

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (I Peter 1:23-25).

Jesus is the engrafted word that was able to save our souls. He did His work of the common salvation by His death and suffering on the cross, but now has been born of the incorruptible seed. He is alive and abideth forevermore. Now, it is the Spirit of God that performs this work of making us incorruptible beings.

"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness: But if the

Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Romans 8:10-14). "For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Verses 24-25).

This shows that after we have been begotten to the lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, which is eternal salvation from death and all the causes that brought it on the people of the earth. The resurrection of Christ is spoken of as a birth. If our resurrection is going to be by the same power, and we are going to be like him, then our resurrection will be a birth to incorruption. If we are born of incorruptible seed, we will be incorruptible begins never to die any more.

"Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be

changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality, So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (I Corinthians 15:51-55).

Then there will be no more temptation, no more sin, nor no more sorrow, but we will live in God's eternal Kingdom in reality with no more death, or pain, or sorrow, or sighing, where in His presence there will be pleasures forevermore.



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