

# **The New Birth**

by Micky Galloway

In John 3:1-15 Jesus explains, *“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* Nicodemus was a ruler, a member of the Sanhedrin council, a student and a teacher of the Scriptures. He obviously believed, like many of the Jews, that as a descendant of Abraham and a leader among the Jews, he would have a place in the kingdom of God. Yet, Jesus told him it was necessary to be born again in order to enter the kingdom of God. Nicodemus didn't understand how he could enter his mother's womb and be born a second time. Nicodemus observed that Jesus must be a man of God, because none could do the things that Jesus did *“except God be with him.”* This was the purpose of the miracles Jesus did (John 2:11). He was not just an ordinary man (Cf. John 20:30-31). Therefore, Jesus was more than qualified to explain the new birth to Nicodemus. Jesus explained this new birth was of the water and Spirit. This was essential to enter the kingdom of God.

How is it possible to be born again? There are two elements necessary to this new birth – WATER and SPIRIT. Water of necessity must refer to water baptism. Water baptism is commissioned by Christ (Matthew 28:10). Another must administer it. (This could not be Holy Spirit baptism for it was given directly by God.) It could be obeyed. (Acts 8:35-39). It is commanded (Acts 10:47,48). Peter said it saves us (I Peter 3:20-21) and is necessary *“for remission of sins”* (Acts 2:38). It is in baptism that our sins are washed away (Acts 22:16). There is no power in the water itself, but in water baptism we reach the death of Christ, where his blood was shed (Romans 6:3-4) *“for remission of sins”* (Matthew 26:28).

How is the Holy Spirit involved in the new birth? The Holy Spirit does not affect the new birth through some miraculous operation. Holy Spirit baptism is not a part of the new birth. However, the Holy Spirit instructs us what to do to be saved. Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would come upon them and would direct them *“into all truth”* (Cf. John 16:13). As we follow this teaching, we are *“led by the Spirit”* (Romans 8:14). It is the Holy Spirit that begets us through the word. Peter said, *“Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently: having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth”* (I Peter 1:22-23). When one obeys the word he is born again or brought forth by it. James says, *“Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a*

*kind of firstfruits of his creatures ... Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:18,21).*

**In John 3:6-15, Jesus explains to Nicodemus that He is talking about a different kind of birth. Jesus is speaking of a spiritual birth that demands a different kind of life. Those born of flesh are flesh, but all who enter the spiritual kingdom must have their spirits' born again. This suggests the dual nature of man (Cf. James 2:26; Matthew 10:28). This inward part of man, the spirit, must be born again. Just as you cannot see the wind, neither do you see the spirit being born anew. However, just as you see the effects of the wind, you can see the effects of this new birth. Evidences of the new birth are the changes that are manifest in one's life (Romans 6:6-14; cf. Ephesians 4:24-32).**

**The discussion of Romans 6 is to show that one who is dead to sin is one who is separated from it. Paul argues that if they knew they were baptized into the death of Christ, they should know they must not continue in sin. *“Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4). Baptism then, is more than a dipping in water. It is an act of surrender to Christ, the consummation of faith and repentance that results in a new life. The apostle Paul continues, “and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again ... Wherefore if any man is in Christ, (he is) a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new” (II Corinthians 5:15,17; cf. Galatians 2:20). Moses E. Lard observes, “... Here ... occurs an ellipsis, which it is necessary to fill, in order to complete the sense. This done, and the clause reads: ‘Thus we also, being raised up as Christ was, should walk in newness of life.’ From this inference to be drawn is, that since we are to walk in newness of life, we cannot continue in sin” (Commentary On Paul's Letter to Romans, p. 201). A Christian cannot be indifferent about sin; he must resist the efforts of sin to reestablish its reign in his life (Romans 6:12-13). Robert Turner's comments are noteworthy. “True Christians are dead to sin in intent and purpose. Christ gave his life, was buried, and was resurrected to live unto God. When we were baptized into Christ we declared our old manner of life to be dead and buried. Shall a 'dead' man continue to be active? Having rejected our old manner of life, we must carry out our intent to live unto God” (Robert Turner; Plain Talk, Vol. 14, No. 4, p.4).***

**Have you been “born again?” Earthly birth or position does not entitle one to spiritual privileges. The kingdom is not composed of sons of Abraham or nobles**

**or those who are prestigious, but of those who have been born again. No one can enter the kingdom that is not *“born of water and of the Spirit.”* To baptize a baby, or anyone without faith (*“faith comes by hearing ...”* Romans 10:17), cannot make one a member of the kingdom, because he is not born of the Spirit. Nor can one enter the kingdom that claims he is born of the Spirit unless he is *“born of the water.”* Nicodemus, a leader and teacher of the Jews had trouble understanding these simple things. Will you accept them?**