

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF A “BORN- AGAIN” CHRISTIAN**

### **DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE?**

The Bible is a true Book, but it is not widely read. People will not read what they are not interested in, and they cannot be interested in what they do not understand.

What is wanted is, to put aside human tradition and get back to the Bible, from which we discover that religion is not the mysterious and gloomy thing it has always been supposed to be; and that the state of man is not oppressed by the fearful problems that belong to the old way of thinking concerning heaven and hell. Rather, true religion concerns the future of the earth and man, the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, and the glory that will flood the world at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

God offers you salvation, His plan is to people the earth with immortal men and women who have faithfully come through the present evil state in subjection to His will. The Bible offers individual hope and comfort where philosophy and science utterly fail. It brings God nigh, heals conscience with forgiveness, and brightens life with hope, both for self and the race. It has “promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come.” It enlightens the mind and rejoices the heart by revealing the true purpose of creation, providing you with an objective in life by which you are enabled to look forward to the future with anticipation and joy.

Read yourself rich by reading the Bible.

*“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” -  
Jesus to Nicodemus (John 3:14-15)*

### **Are You Interested in Salvation?**

Most People are indifferent to what they cannot understand. This includes Salvation, for most have been brought up in an environment of Bible ignorance. In their minds, the expression is related to church-going paid clergy, immortal devils, hell-fire torment, and a vague idea of bliss somewhere above the clouds.

Many believe that they are “born again” Christians because of the feeling of well being and satisfaction they experience in the company of similar motivated people; moved by eloquence, stirring music and hymn singing. This gives them pleasure, and fills them with joy. But nonetheless there is something missing from their Christianity.

They do not have a clear understanding of the Atonement, nor a true appreciation of “salvation”, and therefore, largely, are indifferent to the facts of both.

They have a vague idea that all is right because they feel right, and they are prepared to leave the rest to God.

But God has clearly spoken in His word as to what is required, and the purpose of this booklet is to appeal to such people to give added thought to what He has stated therein. The Bible warns that “ignorance alienates from the life of God” (Ephesians 4:18), and that those who are content to remain in that state, ignoring His specific teaching, are “without God and without hope in the world” (Ch. 2:12). On the other hand,

a sound understanding of Bible truth, and particularly the Atonement, projects a believer along the way of hope and salvation; providing a satisfying answer to the most vital need of those who would seek God in truth. The Bible clearly warns against those who though claiming to be Christian, “will not endure sound doctrine” but “heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2 Timothy 4:3-4). To fall into that category is a tragedy! We read that “The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin”. But what is meant by the expression? The Atonement, when correctly understood shows what man is, what he can obtain (immortality in the Kingdom Christ will set up on earth), and the means whereby this can be achieved.

The Bible sets before believers a wonderful hope. It shows us how they can win the victory over the power of sin and death, and attain to life eternal by a change of nature at the coming of Christ.

We invite the reader to lay aside his indifference, and perhaps prejudice, to the words *Atonement* and *Salvation*, by simply reading on . . .

### **Man in the Shadow of Doubt.**

When many hear the name of Christ, they prefer to stand back in the shadows and not be seen. They fear that the crowd may point and say: “This fellow is one of them—he is a follower of Jesus!”

The Bible intentionally illustrates this situation by providing an actual example of it. Meet Nicodemus, the man in the shadow of doubt, and learn how Christ drew him to the light of truth.

Nicodemus (see John 3) was an orthodox Jew in the time of Jesus Christ. He adhered to the Judaism of the Pharisees, and was a member of the most prominent Jewish council of his day.

Early in the ministry of Jesus, Nicodemus sought him out that he might learn more of him. He had heard of the miracles he performed, and was confident that Jesus was a man with a Divine mission. But he wasn't sure; so he came by night (John 3:2). He did not wish to be seen. He did not desire to have to explain to his friends, or religious associates, why he was interested in Jesus of Nazareth, whom so many of the leaders despised.

### **The Interview**

The Lord Jesus explained many things to this Jew. Among other matters, he emphasized the need for a spiritual begetting or re-birth from above, before a person could “see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3 -mg), and re-birth by baptism and by spirit before he could “enter the kingdom of God” (v.5).

A person must first “see” or “perceive the things of the Kingdom of God, before he can qualify for baptism (or birth of water), and he must be baptized, if he desires a change of nature from his present mortality to one of immortality (a birth of spirit - cp. 1 Cor. 15: 46-52) at Christ's return.

Before “birth” there must be conception. As in the natural, so in the spiritual. Conception to a newness of spiritual life, is brought about by a knowledge of saving Truth. This is described as “the seed of God” which in the heart of a believer, develops a new mode of thinking, a new motivation which finds its manifestation in a changed moral life.

This new way of life demands sacrifice without which eternal life will not be granted. Jesus, himself, has shown the way, for he was prepared to give himself even unto “the death of the cross”; and Paul exhorts: “Let this mind be in you which was in Christ

Jesus” (Philippians 25-8). But the Lord rose from the dead to life eternal and glory with his Father, and is to return to earth to establish his kingdom and reign over a world at peace. His example and destiny shows what his followers should do, and what they will receive for so doing (see Revelation 5:9-10).

Thus conception leading to this “new birth” is brought about by a knowledge of basic divine truth, which is described as “the seed of God” in a believer (1 Peter 1:23-25). This knowledge creates a new mode of thinking in a person, which manifests its outworking in a changed life. Thus, by the sanctifying influence of Divine truth (see John 17:17), a foundation is laid for the bestowal of life eternal (spirit nature) at Christ’s coming.

This new way of life requires the denial of flesh. Jesus told Nicodemus that the way to eternal life is to apply the lesson learned by the children of Israel when they wandered in the wilderness:

**“For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15).**

This represented to the Israelite the terms whereby God was prepared to forgive their sin. They had to recognize that flesh of itself is sinful in its tendency, a condition that is trace-able to the serpent in the Garden of Eden, and they had to endeavor to figuratively immobilize the lusts of the flesh so applying the principle suggested by the serpent on the pole inasmuch as it lacked the venom and bite as possessed by those on the ground.

#### **How Could the Serpent Save?**

You may reply: “I know nothing of the wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel! Does salvation depend on all that?”

It does! The Lord found it needful to draw the attention of Nicodemus to the incident in order to lead him to salvation. It can help us in the same direction.

Let us briefly outline the relevant points of the wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel.

Many hundreds of years before Christ was born, a young Jew named Joseph, became Prime Minister of Egypt, and saved the nations from famine. Later, his father Jacob (re-named Israel) brought the remaining eleven sons and their families into Egypt to settle there. After the death of Joseph, however, the Egyptians systematically enslaved the Jews. Oppression was severe when Moses was born some time later. Eighty years afterwards, Moses led the descendants of Israel out of Egypt and from oppression, after that nation had suffered severe plagues from God.

The Jews were saved from the last terrible plague of death, through the Passover Lamb they offered. They were “baptized into Moses” (1 Corinthians 10:1-2) when they passed safely through the waters of the Red Sea. They were educated and given a form of Divine worship at Sinai where the Law of Moses was delivered to them. Then, for forty years, they wandered in the wilderness, until the rebels were purged out, and they were allowed to enter the Promised Land, ultimately named “the Land of Israel.”

At one stage of the journey, the people became so discouraged by the harshness of the way, that they “spake against God and Moses” and expressed their doubt as to whether they would ever enter the Land of Promise (Numbers 21:4-9). In punishment, God “sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died” (v.6).

Why serpents?

Because it was a serpent that had introduced sin and brought death to the first human pair (Genesis 3), and the complaining attitude of the Israelites in the wilderness was serpentine in its characteristics.

The reality of death in their midst impressed the people with their need of God's mercy and help. In fear (Numbers 21:7) they humbly asked Moses to intercede with God on their behalf that He might save them. Moses made this a matter of prayer. The merciful reply of God was:

**“Make thee a fiery serpent of brass, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live” (v.8).**

Moses did as he was instructed:

**“He made a serpent of brass and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if the serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived” (v.9).**

Why should God forgive sin because of a serpent of brass? Because in Scripture, both the serpent and brass, are used as symbols of sinful flesh, and in this the believer saw the serpent (representing unrestrained flesh) rendered powerless, and inactive, with no venom in its fangs, with the brass purified by having passed through the fire, and polished by friction. The serpent hung lifeless, impaled on a pole, or a stake (the word “cross” in the N.T. is translated from a Greek word signifying *stake*) a symbol of sacrifice. Upon the condition of the believer understanding the symbol, acknowledging his sins and pleading for forgiveness, God, in mercy, was pleased to grant this unto him. The serpent on the pole taught that flesh must be figuratively crucified, and it was this serpent to which Jesus made reference in his conversation with Nicodemus.

Now carefully note the principle involved in this incident which Christ used to illustrate his mission to Nicodemus.

### **How Can Jesus Save?**

Death is as much a reality to us today as it was to those Israelites in the wilderness; and we, too, need God's help if we would live. Moreover, God has provided a way.

Jesus told Nicodemus, that as the serpent was lifted up, so also must he be, that “whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:14-15).

What does this mean?

Let us first express the principle, and then supply the proof.

All mankind, without exception, are under sentence of death because of inherited mortality. Through weakness of the flesh all sin and the sentence is justified.

There is only one man who has never sinned: he is the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet he died, and by Divine appointment (Acts 2:23). Was his death justified? It was, because the righteousness that he exhibited in life, came not from the flesh, but in spite of it; not from obedience to its will, but by “crucifying” it to perform the will of God (John 10:17-18).

From whence did Jesus derive the strength to accomplish that which no other person has done: render perfect obedience unto God?

He received it from God who tabernacled in him by His spirit (2 Corinthians 5:19). He was “begotten from above” (Luke 1:32-33), was anointed with Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34), and was thus strengthened to conquer the flesh (Psalms 80:17; Isaiah 11:2-5).

This Divine help, of course, was not sufficient in itself; Jesus willingly gave himself in co-operating with God by performing His will. His death and resurrection provided the means of justification through forgiveness of sin for all who came to God through him (Romans 3:25-26)

Therefore, without minimizing Jesus' own efforts in this grand victory over flesh, Scripture emphasizes that it was only possible by the joint labors of the Father and the Son. Jesus put no confidence in the flesh (John 6:63), and drew heavily upon the resources that the Father placed at his disposal (John 5:30; 16:32).

At the end of a life of perfect obedience, his flesh was publicly crucified and exhibited as a final demonstration that "the flesh profiteth nothing". Like the serpent in the wilderness it was set forth that all might see and ponder, and recognize that victory is only possible by figuratively following this example (see Galatians 5:24).

Jesus' nature was the same as our own. He came in death-doomed, sin's flesh, but triumphing over it, even unto the death of the cross, he was raised to life eternal and led the way for others "in him" to do likewise through the forgiveness of their sins.

### **God: Both Just and Merciful**

In proclaiming the doctrine of the Atonement, Paul taught that God is shown therein to be both "just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

We respectfully suggest, that the common doctrine of the Atonement, which sets forth Jesus as a substitute sacrifice, does not reveal God as just.

This doctrine teaches that Jesus died *instead* of others; that he paid a debt of death that they had incurred but to which he was not associated.

Does this set forth God as just?

We suggest that it does not! Would anybody acknowledge a government to be just that put to death an innocent man instead of the guilty one? By no means! There would be an out-cry against any government that did such a thing!

Jesus did not die instead of others; he died as a representative of humanity; as one who was involved in the common destiny of mortality, along with every other person, and who, therefore, was in need of redemption from that death-doomed state as much as anybody else.

His righteousness ensured his redemption, and revealed God as just.

That God is just in every way is revealed by the facts.

God was just in placing man under law (Gen. 2:16-17), for it is right that man should recognize the wisdom and supremacy of his Creator by obedience.

Was God just in punishing sin and death? Certainly, for otherwise sin would have triumphed.

Was God just in so punishing Adam, that the effect of the punishment rested upon his posterity? Certainly, for that was the inevitable consequence of a physical state of mortality. But God is also shown to be just in that He made provision for Adam's posterity to escape from it.

Was God just in demanding the death of a righteous man, even Jesus? He was, for Jesus Christ, son of Adam, (Luke 3:23,38) was of the same flesh and blood nature (Hebrews 2:14), and as such inherited the physical consequences of the original sin (Romans 5: 12; Hebrews **5:7**). The righteousness he manifested came from denying the flesh, not obeying it. God raised him from the dead, because His justness or righteous-

ness made it impossible that one manifesting complete obedience “should be holden by death” forever (Acts 2:24).

In every way, therefore, God is shown to be just. It is comforting to recognize this, for it shows that virtue will never go unrewarded. But God is more than just; He is also merciful. “He knows that we are dust,” He realizes that flesh is weak and prone to **sin**, and that unless one is Divinely strengthened, he must inevitably succumb to it. Therefore, having sacrificially illustrated this principle in His only begotten Son, He is prepared to offer forgiveness of sins to those acknowledging their sins and seeking forgiveness through the blood of the Lamb He provided as a cover (or atonement) for such, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Doctrine of the Atonement reveals God as both just and merciful.

### **Is God Responsible for the Weakness of Flesh?**

Many people blame God for the sins of humanity. They recognize that sins stem from the flesh, as Jesus truly taught (Mark 7:21-23), and therefore excuse them as only natural. They place the responsibility of sin on God, claiming that He made flesh as it is.

The Bible, however, is careful to show that man brought this condition upon himself. It teaches: “God made man upright, but he (man) sought out many inventions” (Ecclesiastes 7:29). Man was made “very good”, but he succumbed to temptation, and brought upon himself the fruit of sin: a nature that strives against its Maker (Romans 7:18-19), and inevitably terminates in death (Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12; 6:23).

To understand this, we must go back to the epoch of creation. Very few people today know how the human race started. Education turns our thinking in a wrong direction by propounding the false theory of evolution, which is little more than an attempt to evade responsibility towards God by dispensing with Him.

In the records of man’s beginning is found the explanation of the terrible fact and problems of sin and death that afflict us.

Man originated about six thousand years ago by a specific act of creation on the part of God. He made both man and woman, and provided for all their needs. They sinned and mortality was the consequence:

**“By one man (Adam) sin entered the world, and death by sin” (Romans 5:12).**

When man was made, he had a physical constitution termed “very good” (Genesis 1:31). He was not then a dying creature under sentence of death; nor was he immortal because he was a product of the dust of the ground, and a dust-constitution is not designed to exist for ever. Adam was in a unique condition. Whether he would become a dying or an immortal being depended upon what his response would be to God’s law.

He was forbidden to partake of the fruit of a particular tree in the garden in which he dwelt (Genesis 2:17).

If he disobeyed, Death, which was until then only a possibility, would become a certainty.

**“... thou shalt surely die!” (Genesis 2:17).**

What did Adam do?

**“...and he did eat” (Genesis 3:6).**

Paul shows in Romans 5, that through Adam's offence, "many be dead" (v.15.); "death reigned" (v.17.); "therefore judgment came upon all men to condemnation" (v. 18). We conclude therefore, that God is not responsible for the weakness of flesh, but that man brought this upon himself\* by his disobedience, so that sin hath reigned unto death" (Ro-mans 5:21).

But the mercy of God has provided in the Lord Jesus Christ, an atonement (the word signifies "cover" and denotes the covering away of sin - see Galatians 3:26-28) whereby we can obtain forgiveness of sins.

### **Why Man Sins**

Theology has invented an immortal devil that tempts man to sin, but the Bible knows nothing of such teaching. It speaks of a "law of sin and death" that is found "in our members" (Romans 7:23). In everyone apart from the Lord Jesus, this law has its inevitable outworking in active transgression and death.

Mortality is an incurable disease that because of the first sin has invariable afflicted human nature. Even such a man as David, the King of Israel, and "a man after God's own heart" was forced to lament:

**"Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me"**  
**(Psalm 51:5).**

In these expressions he described the fallen state of human nature as the result of the entrance of sin and death. No matter how high the ideals, how hard or sincere the strivings, man [unfortunately the original text that this article is taken from is missing the rest of this sentence]

\* We point out that death is a reality, a state of unconsciousness in which all conscious existence ceases (Psalms **6 5** ; Ecclesiastes **9: 10**). There is no such thing as an immortal soul in man (see Ezekiel 18:4). The Bible reveals that man's only hope is in a physical resurrection, apart from which the dead perish (1 Corinthians 15:16-18). Man walks a path marred by sin that terminates in death.

**"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing"**  
**(Romans 7-8 -not even an immortal soul!)**

He continued:

**"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death, I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord"** (Romans **7:24**).

Jesus gained the victory, for he conquered over the flesh. He "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrew 4:15). He was born of a woman in order that he might have the same nature as those he came to save, but whereas in their case this nature leads them to sin: to murder, commit adultery, strive unlawfully, manifest hatred, and so forth, it did not do so in his case, because with God's strength he suppressed it.

Paul taught:

**"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil"**

**(Hebrews 2:14).**

Here we learn two things: (1) -Christ came to destroy the devil; and (2) - The devil is that which had the power of death.

Both statements illustrate that the devil is sin. Hebrews 9:26 declares that Christ came to “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” whilst 1 Corinthians 15:56 declares that “the sting of death is sin”. The devil or sin (synonyms for human nature) was rendered powerless by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

### **The Serpent of Sin**

What is sin?

Primarily it is transgression of law (1 John 3:4), so that sin is disobedience.

Paul likened sin to a king which reigns (Romans 5:21). The territory over which this king reigns is human nature in ignorance of God’s Word. There sin, as a law in one’s members, reigns as absolute monarch.

But the word is also used to personify that from whence transgression stems: the flesh with its affections and lusts. In that sense, it is used in the following passages:

**“He was made sin for us who knew no sin” (2 Corinth - Jesus was made of our nature, though he did not transgress).**

**“By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners” (Romans 5:19 -they were born into a constitution of sin in that they inherited the consequences of transgression -but they were not made transgressors)!**

**“Sin dwelleth in me” (Romans 7:17 - Paul was speaking of the lusts of the flesh, not actual transgression).**

**“He died unto sin once” - (Romans 6:10 - Christ put to death the desires of the flesh that run counter to God, and physically died on the cross, but he never transgressed).**

As Jesus literally “died unto sin” in that he was put to death on the cross, his followers must figuratively do so also, for he is their representative and they are accounted as “dead to sin” (Romans 6:2), and are exhorted to “reckon” or “conduct” themselves as such (v.10).

They are therefore to act as though the flesh has no dominion over them.

### **How Can We Die Unto Sin?**

It is obvious that Jesus saved himself from endless death - that was the first result of his sacrifice. When he expired, the Father in heaven had before Him the record of a perfect life of obedience on the part of His Son. In justice, He raised him from the dead, so that the Lord Jesus, by the shedding of his own blood, obtained eternal redemption (Hebrews 1:3; 7:26-28; 9:12; 13:20).\*

But what of us? How can salvation be extended to us? We do not render perfect obedience unto God, and does that mean we are without hope?

No, for the grace or mercy of God, comes to our aid. God

\* Jesus as a representative man, who bore in his nature the same flesh-promptings as all other men but conquered them (1 Peter 2:21-24), was in need of redemption from that nature (not from actual sin for he never committed any) as are all mankind. He obtained this by his own offering. This is the clear teaching of Heb. 13:20. Hebrews

9: 12 states that by his offering he “obtained eternal redemption.”

The “for us” of the **A.V.** should be excluded as it is in the **R.V.** and all other versions. It being the case that the Lord Jesus had to seek his own redemption, how can it possibly be true that he is God? Send to us for a copy of the booklet, *God is One Not Three*.

is prepared to forgive the sins of those who acknowledge the principles of the atonement, and having been brought into a relationship with Him through knowledge and baptism “into Christ,” plead forgiveness of their sins.

Like the children of Israel in the wilderness, we have to do something towards our salvation. They had to gaze in faith upon the serpent of brass; we have to be baptized “into Christ” after belief of the gospel of the Kingdom to come. This is styled by Paul as “obeying from the heart that form of doctrine delivered unto you”. (Romans 6:17).

Like the children of Israel, we must acknowledge that we are the sinners.

Like the children of Israel, we must recognize that we are death-doomed creatures.

Like the children of Israel, we must gaze upon that one displayed before us on the stake, and apply the lessons of his life.

How do we do that?

By the very means Jesus explained to Nicodemus. Firstly, by being “begotten from above,” that we might “see” or perceive. We do that by absorbing the message of salvation. Peter declares that those who do are “begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever” (1 Peter 1:23). Thus Jesus told his disciples: “Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3).

It is absolutely essential for us to grasp an understanding of God’s purpose as revealed in the Bible if we are to experience that “new birth” of which Jesus spake to Nicodemus.

This revelation will show that God is one, not three; that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the perfect man, not God the Son; that he is to return to this earth to accomplish his purpose in it. It will demonstrate the helpless, hopeless state of mortal man, the true nature and extent of sin, the inevitability and finality of death, the need of a physical resurrection to attain unto the life of God.

It will show us the need to seek God’s forgiveness, and will reveal that baptism is the means to that end. The Lord Jesus sent his disciples forth with the commission:

**“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel; he that believeth and is baptized will be saved” (Mark 16:15-16).**

This is the “birth of water,” to which Jesus made reference to Nicodemus.

In itself, immersion accomplishes nothing; but in its significance it performs a lot. It is the means that God has provided for the forgiveness of sins. So Peter taught the people to whom he had first preached the Gospel:

**“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).**

Why is baptism appointed as the means whereby this will be done?

Because, as a rite, the person undergoing baptism publicly acknowledges the principles exhibited in the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus; it is tantamount to gazing intelligently and faithfully at the serpent on the cross.

To be properly baptized, a person must be baptized “into the death” of the Lord Jesus (Romans 6:3). He acknowledges that he has figuratively “died” to the old way of life in which the flesh dominated (see Romans 6:6), he has been buried in water, so that his past sins have been covered over, or washed away; and, as did Jesus, he has been raised to newness of life in Christ (Romans 6:4).

He may continue to sin in lesser measure, but now he has an advocate with his Father, and can turn to Him with every confidence that humble confession might be followed by forgive-ness for Christ’s sake.

Figuratively, though not literally, he has “crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof” (Galatians 5:24), for baptism is the token of that.

Like the sheep following the shepherd, he is led by the Lord through the valley of death, to the glory beyond (Psalm 23).

### **Born of the Spirit**

And the glory leads him to the “birth of the spirit” (John 3:5). When Jesus was brought again from the dead, his heavenly Father bestowed upon him Divine nature. This is a physical body energized by God’s spirit rather than by blood, and the Lord attained to this through “the resurrection from the death” (Romans 1:4). So Paul taught that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 15:50), but perfected flesh energized by the spirit can do so: He showed that the physical body, brought from the grave, must be subjected to change:

**“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:44).**

**“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. . .for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (v.53).**

That is what Jesus meant when he said to Nicodemus:

**“Except a man is born of water and spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God”.**

Birth of water relates to baptism; birth of spirit relates to the change of nature at Christ’s return.

Both are necessary before a person can enter the Kingdom of God.

Birth is preceded by conception and quickening. In relation to baptism, the conception takes place when a person’s attention is directed to truth. Quickening follows when his under-standing is deepened. Birth finally takes place when he “obeys from the heart the form of doctrine delivered him” by being baptized.

In turn, baptism initiates the process that will lead to the birth of the spirit at Christ's return. It can be likened to a conception, whilst the quickening relates to the moral development that follows when a person learns to "walk in the Spirit" Galatians 5:16), or in accordance with the teaching of Christ John 6:63) the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17), or the Truth 1 John 5:6); all of which are styled spirit in Scripture, because they constitute the revelation given man through the outpouring of God's spirit.

The sequential process of salvation, therefore, is (1) Knowledge; (2) Baptism; (3) Moral rejuvenation; (4) A change of nature at Christ' return.

Peter wrote:

**“There are given unto us great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4).**

The possession of divine nature, or a change from mortality to immortality, constitutes the “birth of the spirit” which will ensure entrance into the Kingdom of God.

### **Nicodemus' Conversion**

Nicodemus never forgot the teaching of the Lord relating to the serpent in the wilderness. At first he could not understand it, but he pondered the matter deeply, and at last the Truth dawned upon him as a blinding light.

As a member of the Jewish Council, he had firsthand know-ledge of the utter illegality of the Lord's trial, and the false charges pressed against him. With Joseph of Arimathea, he opposed the wickedness of the Jewish leaders, but in vain. The Lord was condemned by a group of fleshly-minded men, and given over to death. Moreover, the death demanded, was not the normal Jewish death for blasphemy, which was by stoning, but the Gentile death of crucifixion.

Nicodemus saw the Lord impaled upon the cross: he witnessed the death of this one whom he realized had appeared with a divine mission of mercy, and at last, he appreciated the significance of the statement that had been earlier made to him:

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3: 14-15).

He comprehended now the significance of the Lord's mission to Israel and the world. His doubts were swept aside, and turning from his Jewish companions, he identified himself completely with the Lord (John 19:39-40). It had been difficult for him to come to an understanding of these things; he had to struggle against the prejudices of his Judaism, but at last his mind penetrated through to Truth, and he recognized in the Lord Jesus Christ a Savior who could redeem him from sin and death and provide for him an eternal inheritance in the Kingdom he will establish on the earth. Out of the darkness of night he had emerged to the brightness of truth. He saw the Lord for what he truly is, and from thence onwards lived in harmony with God and in anticipation of a resurrection from the dead to life eternal.

Are you prepared to follow his example?

Or as the name implies, *the brethren in Christ* (Heb. 2: 11), are a body of people associated together by a belief in the things concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 8:12); and by immersion into Christ (Gal. 3:27) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and a part in his resurrection (Rom. 6:5 ) .

They do not profess to have received any new revelation, but hold that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are able to make wise unto Salvation (2 Tim.

3:15.17). Believing in the Divine Authorship of the Bible, they think it only reasonable to eschew any interpretation thereof which fails to harmonize all the testimonies of the Holy Scriptures; and finding that the creeds of the various sects around are, in a great variety of ways, opposed to the direct teaching of the Bible, they feel compelled to stand apart, making appeal in all such matters to the statements of Scripture, and testing all creeds thereby.

They believe in the personal, visible return of Christ to the earth, to set up his power and reign thereon, and they seek to share this knowledge with others. They offer their services in expounding the message of the Bible without cost of any kind.

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