

The New Birth

John 3:1-36

- I. THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS (John 3:1-21)
 - A. The Necessity of the New Birth (John 3:1-3)
 1. The man Nicodemus
 - a. Mentioned on three occasions
 - (1) He desired an understanding of Jesus (John 3:1-12).
 - (2) He defended an injustice against Jesus (John 7:45-53).
 - (3) He delivered a gift for the burial of Jesus (John 19:39-40).
 - b. His identity
 - (1) A man of the Pharisees (John 3:1)
 - (2) A ruler of the Jews (John 3:1)
 - (3) A master of Israel (John 3:10); Note: a master often (and probably here) refers to a teacher (Malachi 2:12). So, here, we have a teacher who needs to be taught (Isaiah 29:11-12; 1 Timothy 1:6-7).
 - (4) One of them (John 7:50; see John 7:48)
 - (5) Nicodemus means *victor over the people*.
 - c. His character
 - (1) Fearful or shy
 - a) He is always identified as the one who came to Jesus by night (John 3:2; John 7:50; John 19:39).
 - b) A study of his three mentions in John is a good lesson on what the shy can do for the Lord.
 - (2) Natural in his understanding, he has trouble grasping the spiritual concepts presented by Jesus (John 3:4, 9-10).
 - (3) Hungry to know the truth, as indicated by his coming to Jesus (Jeremiah 29:13)
 - (4) Willing to stand for justice (John 7:50-51)
 - (5) Willing to make a stand in the end (John 19:39)
 2. The knowledge of the Pharisees
 - a. Explanation
 - (1) The Pharisees and rulers of the Jews did not receive Jesus as their Messiah.
 - (2) However, they knew that He was from God.
 - (3) And in this knowledge, they rejected him.
 - b. Evidence
 - (1) The testimony of Nicodemus (John 3:2)

- a) **We** know that thou art a teacher come from God.
 - b) No man can do these miracles...except God.
 - (2) The testimony of the council (John 11:47-48)
 - a) He does many miracles (they knew He was doing these miracles).
 - b) All men will believe on Him.
 - c) We will lose our place and nation. Note: this was their real fear. They knew who He was but refused to believe on Him.
 - (3) The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost (Matthew 12:22-32)
 - a) They knew Jesus did the miracle.
 - b) They knew that it had to be by the power of God.
 - c) They purposefully rejected Him and accused Him of doing this work by the power of the devil.
 - d) This explains the hideous evil of their sin and why the punishment (of never receiving forgiveness) was so great.
 - (4) They were indeed born of the devil who is a liar and the father of it (John 8:41-44). Although this passage certainly refers to every lost man as having the devil as his father, it **may** refer further to a new birth substitute that the devil gives to those who hear him. He may give them a false religious experience in order to counterfeit the genuine one offered by Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 13-15).
3. The kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5)
- a. Its identity
 - (1) A king(dom) is the (dom)ain of a king.
 - (2) The kingdom of God is the domain of God as King.
 - (3) Here, and in other New Testament passages, the kingdom of God refers to a *present* spiritual kingdom (see Luke 17:20; Romans 14:17; 1 Corinthians 15:50).
 - (4) *However, there are also future tangible (physical) aspects of it as well.* — The following points come from “One Book, Rightly Divided, 2018”
 - a) People will **receive** the Kingdom of God and Enter Therein (Luke 18:17)
 - b) People will **go into** the Kingdom of God (Matthew 21:31)
 - c) People will **see** the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:27)
 - d) People will **sit down** in the Kingdom of God (Luke 13:9)
 - e) People will **drink** of the Fruit of the Vine in the Kingdom of God (Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18)
 - f) People will **Eat Bread** and the **Passover** in the Kingdom of God (Luke 14:15; Luke 22:15)
 - g) People will **Press into** the Kingdom of God (Luke 16:16)
 - (5) *In Matthew 19, Jesus equated the two as equal when He spoke of the **Kingdom of Heaven** and then said “again I say unto*

you” as He repeated the same truth concerning the **Kingdom of God**. (Matthew 19:23-24)

- a) *The controversy surrounding this teaching (Kingdom of Heaven vs. Kingdom of God) and the vitriol spewed toward those who take differing positions are indicative of the problem with all Bible teaching –including dispensational teaching. If truths were easily grasped by everyone, there would be no controversy. The Kingdom of Heaven vs. Kingdom of God has befuddled some that see no difference and others that see only differences between the two. It is likely that the **Kingdom of Heaven** is simply a subset of the overarching **Kingdom of God** which is why there is so much confusion.*
- b. Its necessity
 - (1) We see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).
 - a) This requires the new birth.
 - b) This refers to discernment; to spiritual sight (1 Corinthians 2:9-14).
 - c) *One day a physical kingdom (Matthew 19:24; Mark 9:47; Mark 10:15, 23-25; Luke 14:15; Luke 18:17; Luke 22:16, 18; John 3:5; Acts 14:22)*
 - (2) We enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5).
 - a) This requires the new birth.
 - b) Cannot be done by riches (Matthew 19:24; Mark 10:24)
 - c) This is the only alternative to hell (Mark 9:47).
 - d) Must be entered in the spirit of a child (Mark 10:14-15; Luke 18:17)
 - e) Often entered through much tribulation (Acts 14:22)
 - (3) We receive the kingdom of God (Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17); compare to our receiving of Christ (John 1:12; Colossians 2:6).

B. The Nature of the New Birth (John 3:4-8)

1. The identity of the water (John 3:5)
 - a. Used as a proof text for baptismal regeneration.
 - (1) But baptism is never used as a picture of birth but of death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-4).
 - (2) Also, the immediate context gives no support for this interpretation.
 - (3) Therefore, we reject this interpretation as doctrinally false.
 - b. Water is one of the most versatile types in the gospel of John.
 - (1) Everlasting life (John 4:14-15)
 - (2) Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39)
 - (3) Word of God (cp. John 15:3 with Ephesians 5:26)

- c. In each of the above types, the meaning is easily identified by the context (try making all of them refer to water baptism). The context in John, chapter three, also identifies the meaning.
- (1) Nicodemus asks (John 3:4).
 - a) The first birth was in the mother's womb.
 - b) How can we return to our mother's womb?
 - (2) Jesus answers (John 3:5).
 - a) You must be born of water.
 - b) And, you must be born of the Spirit.
 - (3) Jesus interprets (John 3:6).
 - a) That which is born of the flesh is flesh – the first birth.
 - b) That which is born of the Spirit is spirit – the second birth.
 - (4) In order to do justice to the parallelism of this passage, the birth of water must be the first birth of the flesh.
 - a) In order to enter the kingdom of God, it is not enough to be born (that is, of water). You must be born a second time of the Spirit. Though this may seem common sense to us today, the Jews thought that they would go to heaven because they were born of Abraham. One of the great teachings of the New Testament is to explain to these who were the people of God by natural birth that this was not enough for them to enter the kingdom of God (John 8:33, 37-39; Romans 3:28-29; Romans 9:7-8; cp. Matthew 8:11-12 with Matthew 13:38).
 - b) Water is an appropriate picture of the physical birth since the infant is preserved in a sack of water in the womb.
 - c) This is probably the meaning of water in 1John 5:6.
2. Wind as a type of the Holy Spirit (John 3:8)
- a. Wind, breath, and spirit are often interrelated in scripture.
 - (1) Wind and breath (Ezekiel 37:9)
 - (2) Wind and spirit (John 3:8)
 - (3) Breath and spirit (Job 33:4; Isaiah 42:5)
 - b. This is borne out in the words for spirit.
 - (1) Respiration and inspiration are both based on the word *spirit*.
 - (2) Pneumonia and pneumatic drill are both based on the Greek word *pneuma* which means spirit or breath.
 - c. The work of the Spirit as the wind
 - (1) The Holy Spirit, like the wind, is invisible in His ministry (John 3:8).
 - (2) The Holy Spirit, like the wind, is mysterious in His ministry (John 3:8).
 - (3) The Holy Spirit, like the wind, is powerful in His ministry (Luke 1:17; Luke 4:14; 1Corinthians 2:4).
 - (4) The Holy Spirit, like the wind, is purifying in His ministry (Romans 1:4; 1Peter 1:22).

3. The agents used in the new birth
 - a. The Spirit of God (John 3:5-8; John 6:63; John 16:7-11)
 - b. The Word of God (John 5:39; James 1:18, 21; 1Peter 1:23-25)
 - c. The preaching of the gospel (Luke 4:18; Romans 10:13-17; 1Corinthians 1:18-25)

4. The doctrine of regeneration
 - a. The word
 - (1) Means to be born again
 - (2) Used only two times in the Bible
 - a) In Matthew 19:28, it refers to a period of time when the earth will in effect be born again and Jesus will sit upon the throne in Jerusalem.
 - b) In Titus 3:5, it refers to the new birth that is a part of eternal salvation.
 - (3) Though the word is used only once in reference to salvation, the idea of being born again or born of God is found many times in the Bible (John 3:3-8; John 1:12-13; 1Corinthians 4:15; Galatians 4:29; Philemon 1:10; James 1:18; 1Peter 1:3, 23-25; 1John 5:1).
 - (4) There are many other scriptures which speak of the believer being a son or a child of God. These verses for the most part go back to the doctrine of regeneration.
 - b. Regeneration and faith: the proper order
 - (1) Calvinistic theology teaches that regeneration must precede faith. This is based on the logical assumption that a sinner must be given life from above before he will be able to believe in God. This removes any element of the individual will in receiving Christ by, in effect, making the person saved before they believe in Christ.

 - (2) However, the Bible teaches otherwise.
 - a) John 1:12 teaches us that the power to become the sons of God is given to those that receive Jesus Christ. This places faith before regeneration.
 - b) Ephesians 1:12-13 places the order as such: 1) hearing the word; 2) trusting or believing; 3) being sealed with the Holy Spirit. The sealing of the Holy Spirit is not exactly the same as regeneration. But the order is clear. There is no reason to teach that regeneration occurs before the sealing.
 - c) John 3:16 teaches that the everlasting life (which is a product of regeneration) comes to those believe in Jesus Christ.

d) The belief of the sinner that leads to salvation does not have to be perfect. It only needs to be an honest and sincere response to the drawing of the Spirit. We believe to the best of our ability but our faith is completed by the perfect faith of Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16; Romans 3:22; Philippians 3:9).

(3) Bible teaching concerning regeneration

- a) Regeneration imparts the eternal life of God to the believer (John 10:10; Romans 6:23).
- b) Regeneration makes us partakers of the very life and nature of God (2 Peter 1:3-4).
- c) Regeneration births the sinner into the family of God (John 1:12-13).
- d) Regeneration puts the believer into a relationship where he can go to God as his Father.
- e) Regeneration makes us heir of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:16-17).

C. The Certainty of the New Birth (John 3:9-13)

1. Unknown by the wisdom of man (John 3:9-10; 1 Corinthians 1:18)
2. Confirmed by the Son of God (John 3:11)
 - a. Openly revealed (Acts 26:24-25)
 - b. Assuredly received (1John 5:12-13)
3. Bringing together things of heaven and earth (John 3:12)
 - a. Occurring as events on earth (Acts 2:22-23)
 - b. Leading to a home in heaven (Philippians 3:20-21)
4. Established by the omnipresence of Jesus Christ (John 3:13)
 - a. Most theologians apply this to after the ascension of Christ.
 - b. However, if Jesus Christ is God, then He must retain all the attributes of God. One of these is that of omnipresence—being in all places at the same time. Though He limited Himself in the form of human flesh, He transcended that body in His eternal existence (Matthew 18:20; Matthew 28:20; John 14:23; Ephesians 1:23).

D. The Provision of the New Birth (John 3:14-17)

1. The typology of the brazen serpent (John 3:14; Numbers 21:4-9) – According to John 3:14, the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness is a direct picture of God’s offer of eternal salvation through the death of Christ on the cross. The following outline compares the healing of the Israelites in Numbers with the statement of the gift of salvation in John 3:16.
 - a. A Divine remedy
 - (1) Numbers 21:8 – “The LORD said”
 - (2) John 3:16 – “For God” (1Peter 1:18-21)

- b. A simple remedy
 - (1) Numbers 21:8 – “a fiery serpent...upon a pole”
 - (2) John 3:16 – “his only begotten Son” (John 12:32)
 - c. An instantaneous remedy
 - (1) Numbers 21:8 – “when he looketh”
 - (2) John 3:16 – “shall have” (Acts 16:30-32)
 - d. An effectual remedy
 - (1) Numbers 21:8 – “he...shall live”
 - (2) John 3:16 – “everlasting life”
 - e. An individual remedy
 - (1) Numbers 21:8 – “every one that is bitten”
 - (2) John 3:16 – “whosoever” (Romans 10:13)
 - f. The only remedy
 - (1) Numbers 21:9 – “when he beheld the serpent of brass”
 - (2) John 3:16 – “in him” (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)
 - g. A free remedy
 - (1) Numbers 21:9 – “when he beheld”
 - (2) John 3:16 – “he gave” (Romans 6:23)
2. The use of typology in scripture
- a. Definition: a type is a divinely designed object lesson or picture that anticipates a later truth, known as the antitype.
 - b. Scriptural evidence for the use of types
 - (1) The lifting up of the brasen serpent as a type of the crucifixion of Christ (John 3:14): Note: this is only one of many designated types in the New Testament.
 - (2) Adam as “the figure of him that was to come” (Romans 5:14)
 - (3) The faults of the children of Israel as examples to us (1 Corinthians 10:6-11)
 - (4) The tabernacle, the priesthood, and the offerings as:
 - a) Examples (Hebrews 8:5)
 - b) Shadows (Hebrews 8:5; Hebrews 10:1)
 - c) Figures (Hebrews 9:9)
 - d) Patterns (Hebrews 9:23)
 - (5) The veil removed in the Old Testament (2Corinthians 3:12-16)
 - c. Classes of types found in the Bible
 - (1) People (Adam, Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, etc.)
 - (2) Events (deliverance of Noah in the ark, redemption from Egypt, passing through the Red Sea)
 - (3) Things (tabernacle, laver, lamb, oil, Jordan River, city of refuge)
 - (4) Institutions (priesthood, kingdom, the sabbath)
 - d. Guidelines for the use of types
 - (1) True types are designed by God to be types, though some are directly indicated and others are simply obvious to the spiritually minded.

- (2) Types point to something in the future. However, they are not strictly prophecy. Prophecy clearly predicts future events. Types picture them in such a way that the design can be seen only after the fulfillment (the antitype) occurs.
 - (3) The primary purpose of types is to illuminate or illustrate truth. Types are not to be used to establish doctrine not clearly taught elsewhere in scripture.
- e. Bible students disagree on how far to develop types. Some only use types that are identified as such in scripture. Others find typology in every detail of an Old Testament passage. Some of this typology can become quite speculative. One way to help in safely identifying types is to classify types according to clarity. Though Bible students will still disagree on how to classify the various types, the very act of classifying will help us put varying weights to different interpretations.
- (1) Designated types: these are types that are clearly said to be types in scripture. See John 3:14; 1Corinthians 5:7; 1Corinthians 10:4; Revelation 8:3.
 - (2) Supported types: these types have indirect but strong evidence for their use. These types are often built from evidence found in several Bible passages.
 - a) Oil as a type of the Holy Spirit. Just as a prophet was anointed with oil, so Jesus Christ was anointed with the Spirit (Isaiah 61:1).
 - b) The table of showbread as a picture of the part the word of God plays in our approach to the presence of God; taken from the comparison of the word with bread (Deuteronomy 8:3)
 - (3) Speculative types: these types are developed by comparing certain characteristics in the type with those in the antitype. Although they are valuable in study and teaching, they do not have the scriptural backing of the other two classes of types. Often, it might be best to refer to these as parallels or resemblances in order to avoid confusing people into thinking that they have equal weight with other types.
3. Eternal and everlasting
- a. Eternal and everlasting are synonyms. They both refer to that which endures in time without end. The following distinctions are very subtle and refer to connotation (emphasis) and not to denotation (exact meaning).
 - b. Everlasting
 - (1) Used 93 times in the Bible; 67 times in the Old Testament and 26 times in the New Testament
 - (2) Emphasizes quantity: something that has no ending, duration, length without end

- (3) Everlasting life or life everlasting (found 15 times in the Bible) refers to a life that will never have an end.
- c. Eternal
 - (1) Used 47 times in the Bible; 2 times in the Old Testament and 45 times in the New Testament
 - (2) Emphasizes quality: designates the special nature of that which has no end.
 - (3) Eternal is often used in the English language to refer to those things that have no beginning or ending (like the eternal God); everlasting usually refers only to those things that have no ending.
 - (4) Eternal life or life eternal (found 31 times in the Bible) refers to the quality of life possessed by one who has an unending life with prospect of spending an unending future with God.
- 4. In His first coming, Christ did not come:
 - a. Of Himself (John 7:28)
 - b. To do His own will (John 6:38)
 - c. To condemn the world (John 3:17)
 - d. To judge the world (John 12:47; compare John 5:22; Acts 17:31)

E. The Rejection of the New Birth (John 3:18-21)

II. THE TESTIMONY OF JOHN (John 3:22-36)

A. The Baptism of Christ (John 3:22-28)

B. The Bridegroom of the Bride (John 3:29-30)

C. His Belief in the Son (3:31-36)