



The Birth of the Spirit (John 3:3-8)

Section I: Christian Beginnings Handout

The Holy Spirit's convictions of our sin, God's righteousness, and coming judgment are not an inevitable chain of events with a bitter ending but are like birth pangs which mark the humble beginnings of a much sweeter life!

“So is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (Jn 3:8).

A) Born Again/Spiritual Rebirth (John 3:3-8)

3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?” 5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ 8 “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” (NASB)

I. What is Spiritual Birth?

- Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (3:3). Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God (3:5).
- Water: Not baptism, maybe physical birth. Spirit (also 3:6): Points to Holy Spirit's role. Also Ezek 36:25-28. Kingdom of God: the new society directed by God and composed of His people born of His Spirit.
- Spiritual birth: the start of true spirituality when we become privy to the reality of God's kingdom around us
- Regeneration by the Holy Spirit: Lit. re (again) + generate (birth) is the same thing as Spiritual rebirth

2. Who receives Spiritual Birth?

- Anyone can be born again (John 1:12-13)
- Physical birth is not enough (3:6). Neither are religion, class, status, birthright, family, going to church.

3. How does one receive Spiritual birth?

- The Spirit is working in us, even if we are unaware (3:8). Respond to the Spirit's conviction by faith in Jesus!
- By God's mercy, it is our faith, not our deeds, which bring about Spiritual rebirth! (Titus 3:4-7; Eph 2:8-9)

Summary: There is no work we could do that could ever substitute for the Spiritual rebirth by God that occurs when we believe. It is a singular act of God that opens the door to the wonders of the kingdom of God.

B) Spiritual Rebirth in the Epistles

Ten times Peter, Paul, and John use the pregnant word “born” to refer to spiritual birth. Key thoughts from the verses solidify our understanding of the spiritual birth.

- **Peter** (1 Pet 1:3,23) emphasizes God's _____ to His people by choosing and empowering His people.
 - God “caused us to be born again.” “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pe 1:3).
 - The new birth comes from the “living and abiding Word of God.” “For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God” (1 Pe 1:23).

Note: This is the reason the Holy Spirit will only direct us according to the Word of God, the Bible.

- **Paul** (Gal 4:23,29) uses the new birth to identify the one _____ a person gains the life of God.
 - The first birth represents the life of works or merit through human endeavors while the second by the Spirit's work in us. "But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also" (Gal 4:29).
- **John** (1 John 2:29, 3:9; 4:7; 5:1,4,18) emphasizes the _____ of the spiritual life (i.e. life from birth).
 - The genuine believer's spiritual nature loves the things of God and hates those things of the flesh because he/she now has the same nature of God. "No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1Jo 3:9).
 - Those regenerated by God's Spirit necessarily love one another and know God. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God" (1Jo 4:7).



Summary: The spiritual birth has many implications, three of which the apostles expound upon.

- Peter: Like a mother that gives birth, so God gives _____ to our spiritual lives.
- Paul: We gain the new birth not from our _____ but from God's promises.
- John: Believers should anticipate _____ from their lives consistent with God's purpose.

C) Baptized with Fire (Luke 3:16)

John (the Baptist) answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire (Luke 3:16; also Mat 3:11; Mk 1:8).

To become Jesus' disciples a greater work from God must happen! John the Baptist refers to this when He spoke of baptism of fire and the indwelling of the Spirit of God (i.e. Act 2:3)—initiating the new age of Spirit's work.

- "Fire" represents a thorough purging of the sinful self through the Spirit's conviction and repentance which is also pictured by baptism (Ro 6:2-4; 1 Pe 2:24).
- Water baptism speaks of both repentance and importantly the Spirit's new work (spiritually alive). The ceremony does not save but the Spirit's (fire) powerful work.
- "He will baptize you." This is God's work. If we depend only on water baptism and tradition, we will completely miss God's work for our lives. God brings forth this birth of spiritual life.
- It is important to note that the word 'fire' after Acts 2:3,19 associated with the Holy Spirit was not used in Acts giving evidence that this baptism with 'Holy Spirit and fire' is a special and unique event for every believer though depicted generally by its beginning at Pentecost.



Summary: A true believer obtains a new birth from the Spirit of God and, though not often understood at the start, the Spirit of God brings increasing comfort, security, leading and empowering to do God's will.

Conclusion

- A clear understanding of the new birth is necessary to differentiate God's genuine spiritual work in the believer from religion or man's efforts. A spiritual new birth negates any contribution to our Christian lives and causes us to constantly seek His help to live out God's purposes through our lives.

Discussion Questions

- How is a person 'born again'? Are there different ways to be saved? Why or why not?
- Why do you think some believers are very clear on the time when they came to know the Lord while others are not?
- How does the pictures of the fire and wind help us understand God's spiritual work in one's life?