



THE
NEW
BIRTH

Mark W. Fenison, ThD.

The New Birth

THE
NEW
BIRTH

By

Mark W. Fenison ThD, PhD

Published Under the Authority of

Victory Baptist Church

3 Alpine Court Vader, WA 98593

The New Birth

Contents

Preface	
My Salvation Testimony	5
Introducing the basics	13
Understanding the Problem	21
What is Death?	24
Man's Relationship to Adam	41
How Death is "passed upon" all men	57
How Good is Good in God's Sight?	64
The Biblical Definition of Works	88
Spiritual Separation from God is opposition to God	94
Understanding the Solution	106
Spiritual Union	109
Spiritual Union Reveals God in the Heart	125
Gospel Faith is the Work of God	158
Faith Cometh by Hearing	162
Does Elective Faith make God unjust?	171
The Tripartite Nature of Man	177
Regeneration and Gospel Repentance	183
The Evidences of New Birth	189
Regeneration, Justification and Sanctification	194
The New Birth and Romans 7:14-25	199
The New Birth before Pentecost	204
Indwelling before Pentecost	211
The New Dispensation of the Spirit	229
The Church and Spiritual Union	260
Seven different uses of "in Christ" and what it means	265
The New Birth and Modern Evangelism	267
The Metaphors light/dark and seeing/hearing	270
Appendix I – The Image of God	281
Conclusion	297

The New Birth

Preface

The nature of the new birth has been one of the most highly debated issues within Christendom since the first century. It has been especially a hot point of debate between sacramental and non-sacramental denominations.

What exactly is it? How does it relate to salvation in general? How does it relate to other aspects of salvation in specific (gospel conversion, justification, sanctification, glorification, etc.)? How does it relate to Old Testament saints? How does it relate to spiritual union, indwelling and sealing by the Spirit? How does it relate to the “*old*” and “*new*” covenants and the “*everlasting covenant*”?

The following pages attempt to provide a clear and easy explanation of the new birth. Whether or not this attempt proves to be successful or not, only time will tell, and the reader will be the judge.

Mark W. Fenison
January, 8, 2015

The New Birth

My Salvation Testimony

Jesus told an old religious man that he must be “*born again*” (Jn. 3:3,5). The old man thought that Jesus meant that he must reenter his mother’s womb again and come out again. Of course, that would only result in being “*born of the flesh*” a second time.

Understand that to be “*born of the flesh*” refers to your natural parents and your natural birth which brought you into this natural world. To be “*born of the flesh*” is how one became to be “*in the flesh.*” Those who live “*in the flesh*” will also “*walk after the flesh*” as that birth predisposes you for life in a natural world.

In direct contrast to this fleshly birth, Jesus was not talking about natural parents and a natural birth that predisposes you to live in a natural world, but a spiritual birth by a spiritual parent (“*born of God...Spirit*”) that predisposes you to live in a spiritual world/kingdom (“*the kingdom of God*”). To be “*born of the Spirit*” is how one comes to “*live in the Spirit*” and is enabled to “*walk after the Spirit*” just as those “*born of the flesh*” live “*in the flesh*” and “*walk after the flesh.*” Just as the natural birth gives you a disposition for life in a natural world, so the spiritual birth gives you a disposition for life in the supernatural world (kingdom of God).

Let me illustrate the truth of the new birth in my own life. At the age of three, my mother tragically died because of an unfortunate accident. My father and his pastor improperly installed a gas heater which leaked gas fumes. This was before the time propane gas was required by law to contain an agent that would give off an odor, so

The New Birth

that it could be detected. My father came home from work to find my mother dead and me almost dead.

Unfortunately, the guilt and strain on my father was too much and caused a chemical imbalance in his brain. From that point forward, he was in and out of mental institutions for the rest of his life.

So, my brother and I were simply passed from family to family whenever dad was frequently in the hospital for long periods of time. I did not realize it at the time, but during my early childhood, I was bitter and that bitterness manifested itself in continual fights, and trouble in my elementary school years. Later, in Junior High and High School I began to hang out with the wrong crowds.

At the age of nine my father married a woman that he did not really love in order that we might have a mother to take care of us in his absence. However, this new mom was jealous of dad's love for us and treated us horribly. So, my bitterness grew and I was always in trouble.

When I was 11 years old, my father had been out of the hospital for over a year and was taking us to church. He began to bribe me with a quarter for every scripture verse I memorized. At 11, a quarter could purchase a 16oz RC cola, the largest candy bar and a package of twinkies or cupcakes. So, I began to memorize scripture ferociously until he had to reduce it to a dime per verse. Because of this memorization program I knew more scripture than any of the other children in our Sunday school. At this little Baptist church, the Sunday school children were divided up into teams to compete in Bible quizzes. Because I had memorized so much scripture our team won every competition. Because I knew more of the Bible than even

The New Birth

those in the teenage class, the church awarded me entrance into the teen class at only 12 years old. However, with all this Bible knowledge I was not a professing Christian, but a lost and bitter boy who was continuing to fight at school.

One Sunday morning in the middle of summer at the age of 13, I entered the congregational service after Sunday school and sat in my normal place at the back seat beside the door. That was the best place to sit in order to get out of church faster. Dad made me go to church or else I would not have been there.

However, as I sat there that Sunday morning, minding my own business, something began to happen inside of me of which I had no control over. I began to experience an inner awakening that revealed to me things I never understood or saw before. For the very first time in my life, I realized I was a sinner and deserved the wrath of God. Something, or someone, was active within me exposing my mind and heart to my sinful condition and I was being convicted of my sinfulness through the very scriptures I had memorized. Inside me I felt like a bowl of jello without any control over what was happening inside of me. I was miserable within because I did not like what I saw in myself. I didn't realize it at the time, but I was experiencing a real moral transformation within me, a change, which I had no part producing. I don't know to this day what the pastor preached about as I was so caught up with what was going on inside of me. By the time the service was over for the first time in my life I understood and knew I was a sinner justly condemned, and that Christ was my only hope of salvation, and coming to this understanding had nothing to do with what was going on outside of me in church that day. I say, I "knew" it to be so because I had

The New Birth

experienced this revelatory knowledge and nothing could ever undo or change that experience. I did not need anyone to convince me because I had been already convinced internally and supernaturally. I no longer existed in spiritual darkness but that very experience had created that light of knowledge within me. I knew I was a sinner and I knew that Christ was the only hope of salvation. That experiential knowledge was not obtained by reading or studying or being convinced by any human or by anything taking place outside of me.

Not only had my mind experienced a changed state but my heart had experienced a changed state. Prior to coming into the building, I had no guilt of sin, no conviction about sin, no inclination toward righteousness. I had no desire to believe in Christ, or to please God, or submit to His will. However, when I left that building my heart had been made sensitive to sin, and the moral inclination of my heart had been transformed from self-pleasing to pleasing God. I never walked the isle that morning, and I never was led to say a prayer or told to make a decision. My whole mode of thinking about myself and God had been totally transformed. I no longer viewed myself or God the same as I did when I entered that building Sunday morning. I was no longer the same person that entered that building. My thinking about God, myself, sin and Christ had changed and I had no part in making that change. It was that experience that actually changed my inclinations and desires from rebellion and resistance to submission and willingness.

It was that inner supernatural encounter with God that changed me and I came out of that experience with a new “want to.” From that point in time Dad no longer needed to bribe me to read the Bible because now I wanted to. Dad no longer needed to force me to go to

The New Birth

church because I wanted to. I stopped fighting at school because I no longer wanted to fight or hurt anyone. God had changed my “want to” that Sunday morning. God had awakened me to my sinful condition, convicted me of my sins, and convinced me that Christ was my only hope, and changed my “want to” so that I left the church building that Sunday morning a new person inside wanting to do what was right. I entered in unbelief and left believing in Christ for eternal life. I entered with a resistant spirit but left with a submissive heart to God. I entered loving darkness but exited loving light. I entered blind to my own sins and sinful nature but left awakened and horrified about my condition. I had experienced the new birth in spite of myself, in spite of my bitterness, and in spite of my blindness. I experienced being saved by grace and could not claim any credit for any part of that experience.

I never heard an audible voice from God during that experience, but I did experience the Word of God which I had memorized being brought to my consciousness in an orderly and powerful manner by the Spirit of God. I had experienced Paul’s words in 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5:

Knowing, brothers beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

My later public profession of faith in Christ was not in order to obtain that experience but was a consequence of that experience and a testimony of that experience. I was simply a witness of that experience and I gave my testimony. Just as Jesus had told Peter

The New Birth

about his confession of faith in Christ – *“blessed art thou Simon bar jona for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee but my Father in heaven”* (Mt. 16:17). Just as Paul had told the Galatians, *“But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me by his Grace, to reveal his Son in me....”* Paul was on the road to Damascus going about to persecute and prosecute Christians but in spite of himself, something was going on inside of him that he had no control over. He found it hard to *“kick against the pricks”* of his conscience, and on that road, and before he ever reached his destination God had already changed him.

I did not walk the aisle to get saved, but later (that Sunday evening) I walked the aisle to announce I had been saved. Everything I did was a reaction to what God had already accomplished within me. Both repentance and faith in Christ were gifted to me as inseparable aspects of a total grace experience (Rom. 4:16; Acts 11:18). My mind had been changed from unbelief to belief. My heart had been changed from loving darkness to loving light. My will had been changed from resistance to submission. The supernatural change was the new birth but my experience of that change is what the Bible calls repentance. In other words, my testimony of salvation was about what God did in me and for me, nothing about what I did.

Now, I was still a 13-year-old spiritually immature child and Dad still had his bouts with depression and there was no consistency in church attendance. So, I didn’t grow much in my teen years until after coming home from Vietnam at the age of 19 when I started attending church more consistently.

The New Birth

My own salvation experience is echoed by many. One of the most famous men who had a gift for using words was Noah Webster, the author of the Webster's Dictionary. He gives his own salvation testimony as follows:

My mind was suddenly arrested...fastened to the awakening and upon my own conduct. I closed my books, yielded to this influence which could not be resisted or mistaken, and was led by a spontaneous impulse to repentance, prayer, and entire submission and surrender of myself to my Maker and Redeemer. – Noah Webster

Today, I abhor what I call manipulation evangelism, especially of small children. The manipulator asks everyone to bow their head while soft music is being played while he attempts externally to accomplish through human persuasion what only the Holy Spirit can accomplish internally through the creative power of His Word. To such evangelists, salvation is all about making a “decision” rather than experiencing the transforming power of God due to His Word. Instead, the evangelist appeals to their lusts and fear, asking them if they want eternal life and want to escape hell and then provides the easy recipe “just believe in his promise.” They have replaced the true object of saving faith with consequences of salvation. The promise of eternal life and escape from hell are the consequences of saving faith but not the object of saving faith. The sole object of saving faith is only **THE PERSON** and **HIS SUBSTITUTIONARY PROVISION** as declared in the gospel. The promise of eternal life and escape from hell are the necessary consequences for only those who first believe **IN HIM** and **HIS PROVISION** for them. True saving faith is inseparable from the new birth and where there is no

The New Birth

new birth, no new creation, no spiritual union with God, there is no true saving faith but only an empty false profession which bears no fruits of life, love, light or holiness.

Giving an invitation is not wrong, but every invitation found in scripture is directed only to those whom the Spirit has already convicted by the preaching of the gospel, already made thirsty, already made hungry, already made weary of sin, and already experienced a “new want to” (“whosoever is willing”). To those who have not experienced such things, the command (not invitation) is to “repent and believe.” There are no invitations in the Bible that are parallel with the “bow your heads and close your eyes” used today where soft music and 10 lines of “Just as I am” and every other manipulative salesman tactic is used to produce “a decision for Christ.” This kind of invitational system is unbiblical and produces more false professions than anything else and fills churches with sincere reformers but lost professors. New birth is about transformation not reformation.

Modern “decisional” evangelism does not trust the Holy Spirit to empower the gospel to effectuate change in the audience. How can I say that? I can say that because they believe and operate on four unbiblical principles which contradict that truth.

1. They believe that making a decision for Christ and coming to Christ is one and the same thing, when it is not, as many who make such a decision have been proven to be false professors (Jn. 8:64-65).
2. They deny that fallen man is unable to come to Christ (Jn. 6:44) but believe every man has faith ability and needs only

The New Birth

to make a decision and hence they call for decisions and define decisions as one and the same thing as true saving faith.

3. They believe and operate on the principle that the human will is free from the consequences of the sin nature and only needs to be persuaded to choose contrary to the sin nature when in fact it is a servant of the sin nature and in bondage to sin (Rom. 8:7, Jn. 6:44).

Modern evangelism reverses the Biblical cause and effect and makes conversion the cause and regeneration the effect. Hence, their focus is on decisionism rather than depending on the power of the Spirit of God to transform the soul. They believe that it is the *sincere* decision that produces the internal change from darkness to light, from love of sin to love of righteousness, and from rebellion to submission unto God rather than a supernatural internal change that produces all these as consequences. In essence, modern evangelism does not understand and/or accept the Biblical definitions of either “works” or “grace.” Neither do they understand or accept the Biblical definition of gospel repentance or saving faith, or understand they are gifts of God and all by grace.

The New Birth

Introducing the Basics

“Exactly what happens in regeneration is mysterious to us”
– Wayne Grudem, **Systematic Theology**, Zondervan, 1994, p. 701

Most theology books start out expressing this exact sentiment by Professor Grudem in regard to understanding the new birth. There is no doubt that at least one particular element of new birth (creative aspect) is mysterious and above our level of comprehension to understand, but most theologians make the new birth more “mysterious” than necessary because they lack understanding of basic essentials of the new birth.

There are five Biblical essentials that must be understood or else the new birth becomes more “mysterious” than it needs be.

1. The nature and extent of the fall of man
2. The essential nature of salvation
3. The metaphors for initial salvation
4. The tripartite nature of God’s salvation
5. The tripartite nature of man

In this chapter these five Biblical essentials will be provided in summary form and will be expanded and defended throughout the later chapters.

A. The Nature and extent of the Fall of man

The thesis of this book is that the new birth is the solution to natural birth and its defects due to the fall of man. However, how can anyone understand the solution if they don’t understand the nature

The New Birth

of the problem? Salvation is the solution to a problem that began in the Garden of Eden. Most orthodox theologians believe in some kind of problem that began in the Garden by which they call the fall of man. This problem is identified in Genesis 2:17 to be death (Rom. 5:12) as the consequence of sin.

In this book, it will be argued that “death” with regard to its initial nature takes the form of spiritual separation between the Spirit of God and the human spirit. It is sin that causes this separation between the spirit of man and the Spirit of God. As an immediate consequence of this spiritual separation, there is a complete transformation of the moral nature and moral inclination in the soul of Adam from good to evil that defines and determines the deliberating processes which are ultimately manifested through the words and actions by the body in the daily life. This internal deliberating process inclusive of its manifestation through the body is what the Bible calls “works.” Therefore, what begins as spiritual separation between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man, immediately transforms the moral nature of the soul manifested in enmity and disobedience to God. This principle of separation continues to manifest itself in the physical body through aging, sickness and eventual separation of the material body from the immaterial nature of man producing physical death. However, this principle of death/separation is ultimately consummated in the eternal separation of man from God in Gehenna or what the Bible calls the “second death” (Rev. 20:14) after the material and immaterial natures of man are reunited in resurrection of the body and judged according to their works.

The New Birth

The initial act of separation of the human spirit from the Spirit of God is that the human spirit is cut off from the life, light, love and holiness which have as their only source in the Spirit of God. Hence, spiritual separation from God can be classified under four thoughts.

1. God is the source of life – separation means death
2. God is the source of light – separation means darkness
3. God is the source of holiness – separation means depravity
4. God is the source of love – separation means enmity

At the moment of spiritual separation from God, the human spirit is immediately characterized by death, darkness, enmity and depravity. This condition first occurred in Adam at the precise time of the fall from his upright condition into sin (Gen. 2:17 “in the day”). This fourfold condition of “death” is “passed” from Adam to all his descendants through procreation whereby they receive that same fallen human nature, or same moral condition, at conception in the womb of their mother.

The thesis of this book is that when God tested Adam, the whole human race existed and acted as one undivided human nature in the person of Adam in the Garden. Hence, when Adam acted, so did the entire human nature. That singular act by that singular human nature “in Adam” is the fall of mankind into sin and death. It is this fallen nature that is characterized by this four-fold condition of death that is “passed” through procreation to all of Adam’s descendants (Rom. 5:12). Hence, from conception every human being by nature is spiritually separated from God, spiritually dead, in spiritual darkness, totally depraved and at enmity toward God because their human nature is the fallen human nature of Adam. Thus, every

The New Birth

human comes into the world “condemned already” (Jn. 3:17) loving darkness rather than light (Jn. 3:18-19) under the wrath of God (Jn. 3:36) in the state of unbelief.¹

B. The Essential Nature of Salvation

Having understood that the nature of the essential problem is spiritual separation from God, then there can be only one possible solution to that problem. The only possible solution is being brought back into spiritual union with God, or being reunited with life, light, love, and holiness found solely in the Being of God. The solution is progressive in the very same manner that death was progressive beginning in the spirit of man, then progressing to the soul and then to the body of man, and then finally, the glorification of the whole man in a new heaven and earth. Thus, the solution is reversing the consequences due to the fall of man in the Garden and restoring spiritual union between God and man and thus, restoring man’s relationship and fellowship with God. Such spiritual restoration is restoration to life, light, love and holiness. The legal basis for restoration to spiritual union with God is provided for in the Person and provisional redemptive work of Christ. The specific act that initially obtains spiritual restoration or union is described by many metaphors, but the most common metaphor known to most is the new birth. Just as physical life begins with biological union with our parents, so also, spiritual life begins by the union of the human spirit with the Spirit of God. This spiritual union with God through the Person and work of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit is

¹ Hence, this repudiates the atonement theory that God has removed all such condemnation and wrath toward all who are “in Adam” and there is no future condemnation for sin “according to their works.”

The New Birth

often described by the prepositional phrases “in Christ” or “in the Spirit.” This act of regeneration is spiritual union or becoming “in the Spirit.” The manifestation of being “in the Spirit” is progressive sanctification of the soul whereby the deliberative actions of the soul are manifested in words and deeds that are definitive of the “life of God.” Ultimately progressive sanctification concludes in the glorification of the whole man in the resurrection. Therefore, at the very source where death begins in man’s nature and then progresses unto eternal damnation, the solution also begins and progresses unto glorification.

C. The Synonyms for the initial act of Spiritual Restoration

The Biblical writers use a number of synonyms which are all interrelated to each other. Some of these are:

1. Birth – Jn. 3:3,5; 1 Pet. 1:1:3, 23, 1 Jn. 2:29; 4:9; Tit. 3:5
2. Creation – Eph. 2:10; 4:24; 2 Cor. 4:6; 5:17;
3. Writing on the heart – 2 Cor. 3:3-6
4. Washing – Tit. 3:5
5. Quickening – Eph. 2:1, 5
6. Circumcision of the heart – Col. 2:11
7. Translation – Col. 1:13
8. Called – Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:26-30
9. Revelation – Gal. 1:16; 2 Cor. 4:6; Mt. 16:17

The New Birth

10. Regeneration

11. Resurrection

All of these expressions refer to different aspects of the one and very same divine act by God – spiritual union. As previously stated, just as human “birth” has its origin in biological union with parents and is the means to bring us into the physical world so the new birth has its origin in spiritual union with God which brings us into the spiritual world.

Spiritual union with God is union with the life of God. What is the “life” of God? The life of God is eternal with regard to existence but moral with regard to character. God’s life consists in the moral character of His immutable and eternal spiritual essence which is given expression in his deliberative words and actions. It is what God IS by moral nature. The moral character of God’s life is described as “love” (God is love), and “light” (God is light), and “holiness” (God is holy). Love, light, and holiness, is the moral expression of the life of God, and are communicable attributes that God can, and did, impart to angels and men. These attributes are the moral image, or nature of God.

Continued spiritual union with God is what sustains man and angels in the moral image of God. This is vital to understand, as God’s Person is the ONLY source of these moral attributes and all other moral creatures are sustained in this moral image only by their continued spiritual union with God. Hence, continuation in this moral image is wholly dependent upon spiritual union with God. Initially, this union was conditioned upon their continued obedience to His will. Sin separated man and angels from spiritual union with

The New Birth

God, and thereby separated them from God's attributes of light, love and holiness which characterize the life of God. The fall into sin by man and Satan with a third of the angels separated them from spiritual union with God. Restoration to spiritual union between God and man is by a creative act of God that restores the moral image of God in man (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). This restoration of spiritual union between man and God is unconditional and eternal because it is based upon the substitutionary obedient life and penal death by the Son of God for all who have been given to Christ (Jn. 6:37-39; 17:2-3; Eph. 1:4). No such provision was made for fallen angels, nor for any human being who was never given to Christ by the Father (Jn. 6:64-65).

One of the metaphors of spiritual union that describes this moral transition from spiritual separation (death, darkness, depravity and enmity) to life (light, love, and holiness) is the Holy Spirit writing His law upon the heart (2 Cor. 3:3; Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 36:26). Just as God wrote his moral law upon tables of stone conveying it outwardly to man, just so, the act of spiritual union conveys the moral image of God inwardly to man instantly transforming the moral inclination of the heart.

Another metaphor taken from the temple is the ceremonial cleansing rituals where the external man is cleansed ceremonially from defilement ("washing"). God uses the language of this external ceremonial act metaphorically to describe the removal of the moral filth of sin in the spirit of man by man's spirit being brought into spiritual union with God. His empowered word ("washing of water by the word" – Eph. 5:26), as a creative word of command, internally cleanses the human spirit from the moral

The New Birth

defilement of sin (“washing of regeneration” – Tit. 3:5) by bringing it into spiritual union with God’s own moral nature, and thus, we are “renewed” in the moral image of God and made partakers of the divine moral nature.

Looking at this same act of spiritual union from the perspective of physical resurrection, just as the physically dead are raised to life by the effectual calling of God, so in regeneration, the dead spirit of man is raised to life by God’s effectual call that effectually brings the spirit into union with God, who is life.

The very same act is metaphorically referred to as circumcision. Just as the foreskin is removed in physical circumcision, manifesting the reproductive organ from whence human life springs, so the fleshly nature (death, darkness, depravity and enmity) is cut off in the realm of the human spirit by spiritual union with God whereby the spiritual life of God is manifested in the transformation of the moral inclination of the heart.

Another metaphor used to describe spiritual union with God’s attribute of light is effectual “calling” as characterized when God called light into existence within a dark world in Genesis 1:3 (2 Cor. 4:6). Likewise, the act of spiritual union with God as light is the immediate revelation of “the light of knowledge” or revelatory knowledge of God in the person of Jesus Christ. This effectual call occurs when God chooses to empower the preaching of the gospel as his creative word making it His word of command that reveals Christ within the darkened human heart (2 Cor. 4:6). This “light of knowledge” is direct and immediate revelatory understanding of the gospel truth in the heart.

The New Birth

This same act of God is called a “revelation” as spiritual union is manifested as a revelation of God within your heart in the Person of Christ as revealed in the empowered gospel (Mt. 16:16-17; Gal. 3:15-16) as His creative word of command (2 Cor. 4:6).

So, all of the above terms are interrelated with each other in describing that one and same supernatural act by God when we are brought back into spiritual union with God as light, love, holiness and life.

D. The Tripartite nature of man

Most orthodox theologians believe that man is at minimum a dichotomy (two parts) composed of (1) visible physical matter – the body (2) invisible spiritual matter – the spirit. However, the thesis of this book is that man is triune in nature. In addition to the body, the spiritual nature of man is divided into spirit and soul (Heb. 4:12; 1 Thes. 5:23). New birth has to do with the spirit of man whereas progressive sanctification has to do with the soul of man and glorification has to do with the body of man. The act of spiritual union occurs between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man, but is experienced by immediate revelation of Christ in the soul. That revelation comes in transforming power, power that transforms the moral inclination of the soul from evil to good. However, the transformation of moral inclination from evil to good does not enable the heart to do the good it is morally inclined to do (Rom. 7:18). Such power resides in the indwelling Person of the Holy Spirit alone (Rom. 8:9-27; Philip. 2:13).

The New Birth

Theologians and believers who reject the tripartite nature of man will experience difficulty in properly understanding how Biblical salvation is applied to man.

E. The Tripartite nature of Biblical Salvation

The solution (salvation) is designed to reverse the problem (death). The problem begins with the spirit of man, progressively manifests itself in the soul of man, culminates in this life in the body of man, and ultimately culminates in Gehenna as the “Second death.” Just so, the solution (salvation) begins with the spirit of man by new birth, progresses in the soul of man by sanctification but does not culminate in the body of man until the resurrection and glorification.

Correspondingly with this three-fold application is the fact that salvation is found in three tenses:

1. Past Tense “saved” – new birth of the spirit of man
2. Present Tense “being saved” – progressive sanctification of the soul/life of man.
3. Future Tense “shall be saved” – glorification of the body of man in the rapture/resurrection.

Now, with this summary finished, the following chapters will expand and defend this summary explanation.

The New Birth

Understanding the Problem

In this section of the book, the problem of death will be further investigated. We cannot understand the solution to the problem if we do not properly understand the depth of the problem. In the Bible, God is characterized as light, love and holiness, whereas, the scriptures characterize man in his fallen state in terms that are exact polar opposites to this life (dead), light (darkness), and love (past feelings) and righteousness (unclean).

*...when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us.....
Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. – Eph. 2:6; 4:18-19*

God is **life**, but *fallen* man is “*dead in sins*” or “*alienated from the life of God*”. God is **light**, but *fallen* man is in a “*darkened*” state. God is **righteous**, but *fallen* man is in a state that is “*given...over...to work all uncleanness.*” God is **love** but *fallen* man is “*past feeling.*”

So, *fallen* man is described in polar opposite terms to these four moral characteristics of God’s nature. Why? In this chapter the primary reasons will be given to answer that question. First, due to the fall, mankind exists in a state or condition of separation from God and thus, separated from the moral expression of His life (light, righteousness/holiness, and love) which has its source in God alone. This state or condition of separation from God is what the Bible calls “death.” The reversal of this condition is spiritual union with God, which is called “life.”

The New Birth

First, we must explore the Biblical meaning of death if we are going to understand the problem in order to sufficiently understand the solution to that problem. The thesis of this book is that “death” is “separation” from God and the solution is “union” with God. Death is a complex issue as it involves the idea of “separation” in various progressive stages and applications.

In this chapter it will be seen that initially, we are *spiritual* separated from God in our spirit, and then, we experience death progressively in our soul (which is manifest by words and actions) and then in our body through aging of the physical body which culminates at the end this life with *separation* between the material and immaterial aspects of human nature (*physical* death). After the resurrection at the coming of Christ death is separation of the whole man from God in a place called Gehenna which is called “the second death.” The Biblical understanding of death centers around the word “separation.”

I. Understanding Death

Man, and animals share in common biological life, and in many cases share a similar physical image that is subject to biological death. However, unlike animals man alone is created in the image of God but God has no biological or physical image. Unlike animals, man is created with the capacity to worship God and have a relationship with God:

God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. – Jn. 4:24

The New Birth

No one has ever witnessed animals praying, bowing down to images or worshipping. However, the history of mankind is characterized by such activities. Most of the known world worshipped visible tangible images. However, Jesus said God “*is spirit*” and true worship by man must occur “*in spirit*” which implies that man has more than a mere biological material nature but also has a spiritual nature or capacity for worship “*in spirit.*” Like animals, man is subject to physical death, but unlike animals, man is subject to spiritual death.

Paul described the unregenerate man as being “*without God*” (Eph. 2:13) which he further describes as being “*alienated from the life of God*” (Eph. 4:18). This alienation from the life of God is described previously by Paul as being “*dead in trespasses and sins*” (Eph. 2:1). So, this deadness, or alienation from the life of God cannot refer to their physical condition as they were very much physically alive both previous to, and after being “*quicken*ed.” Therefore, being quickened cannot refer to their physical nature. Neither does this alienation from the life of God mean the human spirit is non-existent or exists in a state of inactivity. Quite the contrary, it means the spirit of man is actively engaged in the spiritual warfare against God and shares the moral nature of another spiritual father (Jn. 6:44).

*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, **the spirit that now worketh in** the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling*

The New Birth

the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath even as others.

The human spirit is designed by God to enable man to interact with the spiritual world just as the body is designed for man to interact with the physical world and the soul is designed for man to interact with himself (self-awareness). The human spirit is the seat of your moral nature because it is where you interact with the spirit world. The moral nature of the spirit you interact with determines your moral character and the moral inclination of your heart. Satan interacts with the spirits of all fallen men. Hence, the moral nature of Satan defines their moral character and thereby Satan is their spiritual father (Jn. 8:44-45). It is this spiritual relationship that determines the moral inclination of your soul (heart, mind and will) and the souls' deliberations will be manifest through your body in words and actions.

Those born of Adam bear the fallen moral image of Adam, whereas those born of the Spirit bear the moral image of God (light, love and holiness).

Just as God “*worketh in*” saved people both to “*will and to do*” according to his pleasure (Philip. 2:13) so, Satan worketh in his children to will and to do his pleasure as his spiritual children are characterized as “*children of disobedience.*” The moral state of the human spirit is determined either by its spiritual relationship to God as Father or Satan as father (Jn. 8:44). The human spirit that is separated from God exists in a state/condition that is characterized by “sins and trespasses” (Eph. 2:1).

The New Birth

Isaiah attributes spiritual separation from God to be the cause of these same spiritual manifestations:

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. – Isa. 59:2

They have been separated from God by their iniquities. Paul says the same thing in Ephesians 4:18 when he says they have been “*alienated from the life of God.*” Sin separates man from God who is the only source of life (light, love and holiness). However, if spiritual separation exists between God and the human spirit, then, such separation not only prohibits the possibility of worship “*in spirit*”, but also provides the cause which prohibits such worship, as separation from God is separation from the source God’s life (light, love and holiness) which is essential in defining, and conducting true worship “*in spirit.*” This separated condition or “*dead*” condition is described in the very opposite characteristics that describe God’s moral nature:

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. – Eph. 4:17-19

Notice that Paul describes the unregenerate condition in opposite terms to the life, light, love and holiness which have their source in God:

The New Birth

1. God is light – “darkened”
2. God is life – “Alienated from the life of God”
3. God is love – “blindness of heart...past feeling”
4. God is holy – “given...over unto lasciviousness”

Spiritual separation from God is separation from the light, life, love and holiness of God, thus leaving man in a spiritual dead, dark, depraved and active state of enmity toward God while very much still physically alive. God said that Adam would die “*in the day*” he sinned against God by eating the forbidden tree. He did not physically die until 930 years of age. Therefore, it must be in some other than sense than physical death, that he died “*in the day*” he sinned. This state of death (separation) occurred first inside him when sin was conceived in his heart and then was manifested by his external transgression. It was further manifested by seeking to cover his shame and attempting to hide from God.

A Metaphorical death?

Today there is a movement among a very small minority of Baptists and other conservatives that attempts to define “death” and “life” according to cultic definitions (JW’s Seventh Day Adventists, etc.). They call their false doctrine “Conditional Mortality.” They deceptively claim that the Biblical definition of death is cessation of life, by which they mean complete cessation of all body and soul animation or conscious existence. This is the cultic doctrine of cessation of existence. This doctrine is based upon the use of death and life within the confines of biological life and is rejection of the tripartite nature of man.

They argue that “*dead*” in Ephesians 2:1 is only metaphorical (they really mean symbolic) rather than any kind of spiritual death. However, that kind of rationale would require the word “*quicken*ed” to be understood only as a metaphor as well, since it is used in direct

The New Birth

opposition to the word “*dead*”, and is described as the solution to reversing this “*dead*” state.

Moreover, this act of being “*quickened*” is further described parenthetically as being “*saved*” and that would mean that salvation is no more than a metaphorical salvation:

*Even when we were **dead** in sins, has **quickened** us together with Christ, (**by grace you are saved**;).....For by grace are ye **saved**.... – Eph. 2:5,8.*

Furthermore, this very same “*quickened...saved*” action is further described as a creative work by God:

*For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus** to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them. – Eph. 2:10.*

It should be obvious that being “*dead*” in trespasses and sins is not metaphorical any more than being quickened, saved, and created in Christ Jesus is metaphorical. To be “*quickened*” is to be made alive, and ultimately this life is obtained by a creative work that brings us into spiritual union (“*in Christ*”) with God. It is not creation, in the sense of bringing the essence of spirit into existence from non-existence, but the creative act of God whereby our existing spirit is brought into union with the Spirit of God or becoming “*in Christ*.” What is created is this union between our spirit and the Spirit of God that is manifested in a new moral condition by bringing the spirit into union with the moral life of God which is union with love, light, and holiness. Moreover, Ephesians 2:2-3 proves the human spirit’s prior active existence in defiance to God and in union with the kingdom of Satan. It is this transition from union with demonic spirits to union with the Spirit of God which the creative work of God or being created “*in Christ Jesus*.”

The New Birth

Moreover, just as the “dead” condition has been described in opposite terms to the life, light, love and holiness of God, so also, this newly created condition “in Christ” is described in terms of life, love, light and holiness.

*You hath he **quicken**ed* – Eph. 2:1,5 *And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and **true holiness**.* – Eph. 4:24 *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in **love**...* - Eph. 5:1-2 *For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as **children of light**:* - Eph. 5:8

Their body has not changed nor did they escape physical death. This change from death to life had to do with their immaterial nature (spirit) and its changed spiritual relationship with Satan (Eph. 2:2) to God by being created “in Christ.” Before they were “*without God*” and “*alienated from the life of God*” but now they are “*created in Christ Jesus*” or brought into spiritual union with God through the Spirit of Christ, or being “*created in righteousness and true holiness*.” Therefore, the state of their spirit being “*dead*” or “*alienated from the life of God*” and the “*darkened*” condition, and the “*hardness of heart*” and “*given unto...all uncleanness*” is reversed by being brought back into spiritual union with God.

So, spiritual separation from God is separation from the life, light, love and holiness of God leaving them in the spiritual state of death, darkness, depravity and enmity whereas spiritual union restores them to life, light, holiness and love. This is a moral transformation of the human spirit by the Spirit of God. This is removing Satanic control over and through the human spirit (“washing”) and establishing it under the dominion of the Holy Spirit (“renewing of regeneration”). This union between the Holy Spirit and our spirit is

The New Birth

renewing it in the moral image of God as spiritual union is union with the life, light, love and holiness of God.

Spiritual death precedes Physical Death

The Ephesians had been “*dead*” previous to being “*quicken*ed” and previous to their own physical death. It is this “*dead*” or separated spiritual condition that precedes and produces the separation of the immaterial nature of man from his material nature (physical death)² finalized in eternal separation of the whole man in Gehenna.

God told Adam that “*in the day*” (Gen. 2:17) he ate that death would occur and yet Adam lived 930 years before physical death occurred. Spiritual separation from God occurred “*in the day he ate*” which began the principle of corruption within the physical nature of man that ultimately concluded in his physical death at 930 years of age. Adam’s life was directly received from God’s own being and sustained through spiritual union with God but that spiritual union was conditioned upon obedience. Disobedience/sin spiritually separated Adam from God:

*But **your iniquities** have **separated between you and your God**, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. – Isa. 59:2*

Hence, Adam possessed conditional spiritual life (conditional spiritual union with God) prior to the fall. In the day he ate, death occurred or spiritual separation from God, thus being “*alienated*”

² This same “law of sin” continues to dwell in the physical body of the saints and is the cause of their physical death (Rom. 7:18-25).

The New Birth

from the life of God.” After he sinned and God drove him from the Garden, God prevented him from eating of the tree of life as that would have preserved the law of sin operating in his physical body for eternity. In children of God, physical death is designed to destroy in their physical body the indwelling law of sin or principle of corruption (1 Cor. 15:53-57).

So, the term “*death*” is a summary term that describes spiritual separation, followed by separation of the material from the immaterial nature of man in physical death and then ultimately separation of the whole man from God in Gehenna as the “*Second death*.”

Spiritual Existence beyond Physical Death

However, this quickened condition of spirit did not prevent the Ephesians from physical death. Yet, Jesus claims that at physical death of the saint there is an element of his nature that does not die:

*And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.
Believest thou this? – Jn. 11:26*

The aspect of human nature that “*liveth*” or has been “*quickened*” or “*born again*” or is in present possession of “*eternal life*” Jesus explicitly states is the “*spirit*” of man: (Jn. 3:6).

*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit **is spirit**. – Jn.3:6*

Indeed, Jesus denies that the spirit of man is destroyed at physical death and, indeed, remains undestroyed for millenniums after death until it is cast into the lake of fire.

The New Birth

*And fear not them which kill the body, but are **not able to kill the soul**: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. – Mt. 10:28*

At physical death, the soul is merely **separated from** the physical body. Hence, physical death is merely separation of the immaterial nature of man from the material nature of man. Absolute proof that the soul continues to exist after physical death is that Jesus continues to claim that even God does not “*destroy*” the soul until it is cast into Gehenna. When does God cast the soul into Gehenna? God does not cast anything into Gehenna until *after* the Second Advent, and even then not until *after* the Great White Throne Judgment:

And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. – Rev. 20:11-15

Therefore, the soul continues to exist and cannot be killed by man or destroyed by God between physical death of the body and the

The New Birth

resurrection and judgment of the whole person before the Second Death (which is being cast into Gehenna).³

Even then “*destroy*” (Gr. *apollumi*) does not mean cessation of existence as both the false prophet and the anti-christ are cast into Gehenna prior to the millennium and still existing in Gehenna when Satan is cast into Gehenna after the thousand years has expired (Rev. 19:20; 20:10).

The term translated “*destroy*” (Gr. *apollumi*) is used by the Lord three other times in this very same chapter, one time before and two times after Matthew 10:28 (Mt. 10:6, 39) and all three times it is used to describe a condition of existence:

*But go rather to the lost [Gr. *apollumi*] *sheep of the house of Israel.* – Mt. 10:6*

They were not being sent to a non-existent, or annihilated people. However, they could be sent to a people who exist in a separated condition or state that renders them useless for their designed purpose which was to bring glory to God. They existed in a spiritually separated state from God or a “*lost*” condition. God has purposed that such “*sheep*” come to Christ (Jn. 10:27-30) and exist in a saved condition, or a condition of spiritual “*life.*”

³ Those who believe in *soul sleeping*, claim it exists in an unconscious state. However, sleep is a very active state of the mind. It is merely conscious existence on another level. Paul claims that this conscious level of existence is in heaven, as “*to be*” absent from the body is “*to be*” present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8). He uses two Aorist infinitives that grammatically demand punctiliar completed simultaneous action with no time gap between absence from the body and presence with the Lord who is in heaven.

The New Birth

This agrees with the next two times the Greek term *apollumi* is used by Christ in this very same chapter after Matthew 10:28:

*He that findeth his life shall **lose** [apollumi] it: and he that **loseth** [apollumi] his life for my sake shall find it. – Mt. 10:39*

Again, Christ is using the Greek term *apollumi* to describe a certain condition of existence, rather than a contrast between existence and non-existence. Hence, “life” and “death” are two different states of existence rather than a contrast between existence and non-existence. What is Christ teaching in this text? He is saying that Christians can live their lives in such a manner as to “**find**” it presently, but “**lose**” it in regard to rewards (vv. 40-41) or they can live their lives in such a manner to “**lose**” it presently and yet “**find**” it in regard to future rewards. To understand *apollumi* to mean annihilation makes no sense whatsoever. The point is that a life *separated from* the revealed will of God or living a life that is not in keeping with God’s purpose will be “**lost**.” or rendered useless for the glory of God. However, even in that “**lost**” (Gr. *apolummi*) condition the soul is consciously active in producing a manifest life of sin (Eph. 2:2-3; 4:18-19).

Throughout the scriptures the Greek term *apollumi* refers to something that exists in a state or condition that is rendered useless for its designed purpose. For example, wineskins that have burst or ripped still exist, but with regard to their designed purpose they have been “**destroyed**” (*apollumi*) or rendered useless for the purpose to contain wine:

The New Birth

*And no man puts new wine into old bottles: else the new wine does **burst** [apollumi] the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred: but new wine must be put into new bottles. – Mark 2:22*

The wine skins cease only in the sense of fulfilling their intended design or function – to hold wine.

In Matthew 10:28 men kill other men because they want to destroy the evil design or function expressed by the soul through the body toward them in words and actions. They don't like how the soul expressed itself through the body toward them in words or deeds and so they kill the body in order to render the body useless as the vehicle for expressing those kind of soul expressions. However, the soul does not cease functioning at physical death. It is only separated from the body which renders the use of the body inoperable by the soul. The physical body is merely the vehicle of expression for the soul. When the body dies and is buried under the sod, it no longer can be used for soul expressions, such as love, hate, memory, etc “under the sun”:

For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun. – Eccles. 9:5-6

Instead, at physical death the spirit of man is separated from his body and returns to God in order for God to determine where it will continue to exist (heaven or hades) until judgment day:

The New Birth

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it. – Eccles. 12:7

Physical death is the separation of the soul from the body, but it is not the cessation of the soul.

Therefore, when God does not like the evil designs being purposely expressed by the soul, he can “*destroy*” (apollumi) or make those designs ineffectual by placing it in Hades at physical death and then permanently in Gehenna on the Great Day of Judgment at the end of the world where it cannot carry out its evil design or purposes. So, what man fails to do by killing the body, God accomplishes by putting the whole man, soul and body into Gehenna. Hence, the “*second death*” is not cessation of existence, but **eternal separation** from God and His people in a designated place that prevents lost unregenerate man from carrying out his evil purposes toward God and His elect, and where he suffers the just consequences.

Those who embrace “conditional mortality” often attempt to justify their view of cessation by confusing passages that deal with the destruction of the physical man at Armageddon where mankind is reduced to “ashes” with passages that deal with God’s eternal judgment in the lake of fire.

The story of Lazarus also confirms that death of the body is not cessation of the spirit of man. After the bodies were buried, Lazarus

The New Birth

was taken by the angels into paradise (Lk. 16) and the rich man was consciously present in hades.⁴

Paul describes the physical body of the believer as a house which at death is vacated by the believer who is present with the Lord in heaven at the precise point the house was vacated:

Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. – 2 Cor. 5:6-8⁵

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. – Philip. 1:21-24

The writer of Hebrews states clearly that presently in heaven there is a great cloud of witnesses looking on at our lives on earth (Heb. 12:1) and they are existing in heaven as bodiless justified spirits:

⁴ God is a spirit and yet he conveys himself in terms of a human body (right hand, eyes, etc.) or an animal body (feathers, wings, etc.) in order to convey himself in terms we can understand. Likewise, with bodiless spirits. Jesus simply expressed the blessings and torments of these bodiless spirits in terms we can understand.

⁵ “to be absent....to be present” represent Aorist infinitives or simultaneous punctiliar action. Hence, at the point of vacating the body Paul is present with the Lord in heaven – no time gap between departure and arrival.

The New Birth

To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, - Heb. 12:23

“Under the Sun” Perspective

The Old Testament prophets viewed death most of the time from the human perspective from “*under the sun.*” Conditional mortality advocates make a practice of proof texting from such “*under the sun*” contexts. Conditional mortality advocates fail to recognize the “under the sun” type of contexts are from the human perspective, and fail to understand that the body while existing “under the sun” simply serves as the vehicle for soul expressions. The human body while alive served as the vehicle for soul expressions but at physical death when the body was placed under the sod it ceases to be the vehicle to express soul characteristics (memory, love, hate, etc. – Eccles. 9:5).

However, the very same Biblical writers when addressing the immaterial nature of man at the time of physical death make a distinction between the destinations and consequences of the body versus the spirit of man.

*Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the **spirit** shall return unto God who gave it.. – Eccl. 12:7*

*Nevertheless **I am continually with thee**: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and **afterward receive me to glory**. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. – Psa. 73:23-25*

The New Birth

Confusing Biological with Spiritual death

Cultic Christianity wrongly uses texts that refer to the death of the material aspect of man or biological death and life to contradict clear and explicit passages which deny the immaterial aspect of man ceases to exist apart from the body. Biological death cannot be used to explain or characterize spiritual death as the Ephesians were “*dead*” as a moral condition of their spirit (Eph. 2:1-3; 4:17-19) and yet still biologically alive. Cultic Christianity fails to distinguish what Biblical writers clearly distinguish between biological and spiritual death.

Therefore, the “*quicken*ed” and “*dead*” state that Paul describes is not one of cessation of being versus existence of being, but rather two different conditions of existence by the human spirit due to its relationship to either Satan or God.

Moreover, Jesus is speaking to a physically alive Nicodemus and yet he said, that he must be born again and therefore, he was not speaking about a physical birth, but rather a spiritual birth?⁶ It is the “*spirit*” of man that is born again. Although he was physically “*old*” by his own confession (Jn. 3:4) yet his body was not physically dead. Therefore, the only possible “*dead*” thing needing to be quickened or born again is his “*spirit*.” The “*dead*” quality of the spirit is explained by Christ in John 3:18-19.

Therefore, this “*dead*” state is not an inactive state but a very active state of spiritual resistance toward God (Eph. 2:2-3; 4:17-19;

⁶ Many apply water to the body, or food and drink (communion) to the body, but it is not the body that is born of the Spirit. Many others believe new birth refers to the body and the resurrection. However, the quickening of the body is always viewed as a future event at the coming of Christ and is consistently called “*resurrection*” in the Scriptures rather than birth.

The New Birth

Jn. 3:18-19). The act of quickening produces an active spiritual condition conducive with God's moral character and His revealed will (Eph. 4:20-32).

This is why salvation must begin with the “*spirit*” of man (Jn. 3:6) because that is where damnation by death begins in man.

In our physical life time, death has three stages First, there is **spiritual** separation/as illustrated in Nicodemus and the Ephesians who were “*dead*” but yet existing in active resistance against God as manifest by the soul of man (Eph. 2:2-3; 4:17-19). Second, there is **soul** death or the separated state of our soul which operates contrary to the will of God. Third, there is **physical** death which is separation of the physical from the spiritual substance of man (Mt. 10:28). The body separated from the human spirit returns to dust while the separated spirit returns to God, who deals with it according to His word. Finally, and last, after our physical death there is **eternal** death which is the continuing state of separation of the whole resurrected lost man (spirit, soul and body) from God in a place called Gehenna.

Salvation is progressive. It begins with the quickening of our spirits. It continues in the progressive setting apart of our souls (thoughts, emotions, volition) manifested in our words and actions. It is consummated in the glorification of our bodies. So, born again people can still be described as being “dead” with regard to how they are living out their life in separation from God's revealed will. When writing Timothy, Paul describes the existing state of a young widow living in sin:

But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth. - 1
Tim. 5:6

Note she is still physically alive but described as “*dead*”. This “*dead*” state is due to her lifestyle described as living “*in pleasure.*”

The New Birth

She is both spiritually and physically alive but *experientially* “dead” with regard to the manifest life of God. In other words, she is not “walking in the Spirit” but walking after the flesh and the life being manifest is not the life of God. Christians can be “dead” in the sense of broken fellowship with God due to sin as in the case of the young widow.⁷

Death is compatible with physical existence and is therefore, not cessation of existence. However, her state of living “*in pleasure*” (sin) separated her from fellowshiping with God. The soul is to “put on” the inward man by the Holy Spirit in order to manifest the “life” of God. When the soul indulges in sin, the life of God is not being manifested in our soul but we are experientially separated from the life of God and thus, the soul is experientially “dead” or separated from the life of God.

II. Mankind’s relationship to Adam

“in Adam all die”

God is **life**, but *fallen* man is “*dead in sins*” or “*alienated from the life of God.*” God is **light**, but *fallen* man is in a “*darkened*” state. God is **righteous**, but *fallen* man is in a state that is “*given...over...to work all uncleanness.*” God is **love** but *fallen* man is “*past feeling.*”

⁷ Saved people can be separated from the “*fellowship*” (not relationship) with God due to sin. When we do not mortify the flesh, we walk after the flesh and that is a state of separation from God with regard to our fellowship or daily “*walk*” with God. Such might have been the case with this woman. This young widow presumably is a saved person. Hence, her soul is expressing itself in disobedience to God and thus her fellowship with God has been broken as she is living a lifestyle that is separated from Spiritual leadership.

The New Birth

Did God create man in this polar opposite condition? Is God responsible for this polar opposite condition?⁸

The answer is no. When God finished creation, He could look upon everything He made and proclaim it was “*very good*” (Gen. 1:31). The Bible says that God made man “*upright*” (Eccl. 3:29) meaning, God made man in His own moral image which is “*true holiness and righteousness*” (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). Creation came from God’s hands “*very good*” without sin, without sickness, dying, hate, war and greed. The Bible says it was man that directly brought all these things into this “*very good*” world created by God. Mankind is accountable for the present chaotic state of this world and all the evil and harmful consequences of sin.⁹ Paul says,

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: - Rom. 5:12

The transition from an “*upright*” condition to a morally lower sinful condition of man is what Theologians call *the fall of man*. This fall occurred when Adam sinned, and thus, his sin is what

⁸ God is the creator of free will and by its very nature free will includes contrary choice with regard to God’s revealed will. Hence, God is the author of sin only in the sense of creating the potential for sin and thus permissively decreeing sin through freedom of choice. However, the creation of free will came with personal accountability in the use of that freedom of choice. Man was fully instructed concerning the right and wrong choice by the placement of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and thus made fully accountable for his choice.

⁹ How often do we hear men blaming God for every evil that happens to them or their loved ones? The evil consequences in this world are the “*wages of sin*” and work according to the principle of “*whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.*” Man’s sin is the cause, not God.

The New Birth

theologians call the *original sin*. It is a fall from conditional spiritual union with God unto spiritual separation from God. It is a fall from conditional life, light, love and righteousness into the chaos of spiritual darkness, deadness, uncleanness, and enmity. There would be no need for the new birth if it were not for the fall of man. The fall of man must be understood properly in order to understand new birth properly.

When did All men sin?

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: - Rom. 5:12

Paul says that death “*passed upon all men, for (because) that all have sinned.*”

Are men exposed to death at the point when they commit a sin in their own life or does death precede any sinful action committed by men? This question can be answered decisively because infants are subject to death even in the womb of their mother before understanding or having done any good or evil. Therefore, death precedes any individualized act of sin. Hence, death was not passed upon all men due to their own individual sins but it was passed upon all men because they all existed and acted in Adam as one undivided human nature when he sinned.

The Whole Human Race existed in Adam as one indivisible human nature

The New Birth

No Bible believer can dispute that the entire race of mankind was created when Adam was created. The whole human nature existed and consisted in Adam when he was created and multiplied itself through man's reproductive processes. Man does not come from monkeys, but from Adam. Therefore, the whole race was created "*in Adam*" when he was created, just like the seed was created in all other living things when they were created:

And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. –

Gen. 1:11

All of mankind was created and existed seminally in Adam. All human potential existed in Adam when he was created. The whole human nature existed in one man and the whole human race acted as one man in the fall.

The Whole Human Race is Culpable with Adam

Paul plainly states that all mankind is held accountable for the singular action of Adam when he sinned as they directly receive the just consequences of that singular sin:

12 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.....

15 But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.

The New Birth

16 And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.

17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

18 Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.

19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

The whole human race received the consequences of this one action by this one man. This is repeated over and over again in the above passage:

By one man sin entered and death by sin, so death passed upon all men.... – v. 12

The offence of one many be dead – v. 15

By one that sinned – v. 16

For if by one man's offence death reigned by one – v. 17

By the offence of one judgment came upon all men – v. 18

By one man's disobedience many were made sinners – v.

19

The New Birth

All of mankind are sinners by nature at the time of birth and that is why they are subject to death in the womb before they knowingly and willingly commit any sin. Indeed, the reason they commit sins after birth is because they are sinners by nature from birth because “all have sinned” already prior to birth when they existed and acted in one man as one undivided human nature.

Therefore, the whole human race was created and actually existed in Adam and the whole human nature was tested by God in one representative person. The whole human race receives the just consequences of this action because the whole human race acted when Adam acted. That is why many be dead, and many be made sinners when only one man sinned.

All men are In Adam

Paul gathers all humanity into two possible classifying contrasts at the end of the world:

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.— 1 Cor. 15:22

When Adam was tested by God to see if he would be obedient to God, the whole human race existed and acted as one undivided human nature in Adam. Therefore, when Adam failed that test the whole human race failed, and death was “*passed upon all men*” because all were “*in Adam*” and therefore as a result of all failing that test in Adam - “*all in Adam die.*”

The New Birth

There could be no better condition for mankind to be tested, because Adam was unhindered by a fallen nature. There could have been no better environment/circumstances for man to be tested, as it was in a sinless world without sickness, troubles, hatred, war or sorrow. Adam existed in an absolute perfect environment – the Garden of Eden.

A Biblical Illustration

And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him. – Heb. 7:10-11

The idea of total humanity existing “*in Adam*” and acting together with Adam in the loins of Adam is supported by the same Biblical principle in regard to Levi paying tithes while still unborn in the loins of Abraham. Paul says that Levi paid tithes to Melchizedek when Abraham paid tithes. Hence, when Abraham acted, Levi acted together with him in one action. Likewise, all mankind existed as one undivided human nature in the loins of Adam, and when Adam acted, the whole human race acted with him in one action. When he sinned, the whole human race sinned with him. That is why the whole race is condemned with Adam, and why they receive the consequences of Adams disobedience even in the womb.

Another proof that all men acted in one man and “*be dead*” and “*were made sinners*” by that one sin, is in the fact that Paul did **not** say “*death shall pass upon all men when all men sin*” nor did he say, “*by the offences of many men, many men be dead and many be made sinners.*” However, that kind of wording would be necessary

The New Birth

if men only become sinners or suffer the consequences of sin (condemnation, judgment, death) due to their own individualized sins committed after physical birth.

Instead, he said, “*death passed upon all men, for all have sinned” and “*by the offence of one many be dead...many be made sinners.*”*

Again, this is why infants suffer the consequences of sin in the womb or die before they can individually discern right from wrong. All humans begin as infants in the womb, and the death of some infants in and out of the womb would be otherwise unjust unless they existed and acted as one indivisible human nature in Adam when he sinned, therefore “*all men have sinned*” before they become individualized by reproduction. By natural birth that fallen human nature becomes individualized. This is called the doctrine of Original Sin by theologians.

Universal Death is due to the Violation of Genesis 2:17

12 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:

The “*death*” that came into the world by the singular “*sin*” of one man is what “*passed upon all men*” due to one man - Adam violating Genesis 2:17.

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. – Gen. 2:17

The New Birth

God said he would die “*in the day*” he ate. However, he did not die physically until he was 930 years old. How are these two things reconciled? Death is **separation** and death begins with **spiritual** separation from God. He died spiritually at the very moment he sinned. Spiritual death initiates the indwelling principle of “*corruption*” (1 Cor. 15:53-55) or “*law of sin*” (Rom. 7:17, 20-21,23) that eventually evolved into the physical death (Rom. 7:24) of Adam 930 years later (Gen. 5:5). Physical death is the separation of the material from the immaterial substance of man.

Indeed, it is the violation of this singular law that is the only possible cause for universal death between Adam and Moses and is therefore the cause of universal death in mankind. The deaths of infants between Adam and Moses prove that the whole human race sinned when Adam sinned, as there is no other possible explanation for infants coming under this condemnation of sin (death). Paul proves this in verses 13-14:

13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law.

14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

Between Adam and Moses death reigned universally. However, universal death cannot be the consequence of violating the Law of Moses during that time, simply because death preceded Moses and the giving of the law by 4000 years. But some kind of universal law had to exist, and had to have been violated as sin by Biblical definition is the violation of law and death is the just condemnation for violating law. Paul says sin is not imputed where there is no law,

The New Birth

and where there is no sin there can be no condemnation (death). However, death reigned universally during that period and we have the Biblical genealogical records throughout the book of Genesis to prove that death (Gen. 5, 10-11, 25, 36, 37) was universal between Adam and Moses. Hence, some law other than the Mosaic law had to have been violated by mankind and that law is found in Genesis 2:17.

Death is not due to Violating Conscience

Neither can universal death be attributed to the violation of the law of conscience as some insist.¹⁰ Why? Because infants still die within and outside of the womb without the mental ability to discern and violate conscience. Therefore, the death of infants cannot be attributed to violation of conscience. The violation of conscience only provides a just basis for condemnation in the Day of Judgment (Rom. 2:14-15) as an individual.

Death is not part of original Creation

Some attempt to avoid this conclusion by claiming that death is not due to condemnation, but rather the natural result of God's

¹⁰ Some quote John 1:9 to prove that God provides spiritual light to every man coming into the world. However, this "light" by context is defined as "life" (v. 4) given them by God when coming into the world. The Word is the author of **physical** "light/life" as He is the creator (Jn. 1:1-3). The Word is the author of **spiritual** "light/life" by new birth (Jn. 1:13). He is also the author of the metaphorical "light" of conscience given every man as they come into the world.

The New Birth

original creation. However, Paul contradicts this view when he says:

*By one man sin entered into the world and death by sin...-
Rom. 5:12*

*For if through the offence of one many be dead, - Rom.
5:15*

The wages of sin is death... – Rom. 6:23

James says that death is the direct result of sin:

Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. – James 1:15

Isaiah traces death to sin:

.....the soul that sinneth, it shall die. – Ezek. 18:4

Finally, God told Adam that violation of his law would result in death “*in the day*” he sinned:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. – Gen. 2:17

So, death is not a part of God’s natural creation for man, but death is the direct wages, consequence, condemnation for violating the first law given to man by God in Genesis 2:17.

Death is not due to Post-birth willful sin

The New Birth

Infants in the womb or out of the womb experience death before they possess the ability to discern right from wrong and therefore they cannot sin “*after the similitude of Adam’s transgression*” unless they are regarded as one with Adam when he sinned:

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. –

Rom. 5:14

This text refers to those born between Adam and Moses (v. 13) who died but whose death was not attributed to having sinned “after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.”

What does Paul mean when he says “*even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression*.” What does Paul mean by “*similitude*” (lit. likeness) of Adam’s transgression? Paul tells us that the nature of Adam’s sin was different than Eve’s:

And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. – 1 Tim. 2:14

Eve’s transgression was different than that of Adam’s. Eve sinned due to being deceived by Satan but Adam did not sin because he had been deceived. He sinned intentionally with full knowledge that what he did was wrong. All procreated humans who come of age and are capable to consciously discern right from wrong, and sin after the similitude of Adam when they willingly and knowingly violate their conscience. That is the “*similitude*” (likeness) of Adam’s transgression – willful conscious sin.

The New Birth

There is no question that adults living between Adam and Moses could and did sin “*after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.*” Indeed, there are accounts of willful sin by many during this period.

However, Paul is not speaking about those who could sin willfully during this period, but about those who could not sin willfully and yet they were subject to death.

Eve was among those who did not sin after the similitude of Adam’s transgression but were deceived. Infants still in the womb or before having the ability to discern between right and wrong are among those whose death cannot be attributed to willful sin. Thus, they did not sin after the similitude of Adam’s transgression. Other humans suffered death who did not sin knowingly and willfully are those mentally impaired from birth or still mentally undeveloped from birth. Therefore, neither violation of conscience, nor willful sin by infants nor by other under developed human beings can explain justification for their death, as the only justification for death is violation of law, and yet death occurred over such during this period between Adam and Moses.

Therefore, the only possible solution for the explanation of universal death between Adam and Moses is that all mankind existed and acted in Adam when Adam “*sinned*” and violated Genesis 2:17. That is the only possible Law which could have been violated, whereby death “*passed*” upon all mankind, including those incapable of discerning right from wrong between Adam and Moses.

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:..... For if by one man’s offence death

The New Birth

reigned by one; Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation;For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, -
Rom. 5:12,17,18,19

Infants are born with a sinful nature:

Still others attempt to avoid the conclusion that the whole human race existed and acted in Adam when he sinned by denying that infants are born into this world with a sinful nature. They believe that God individually creates the immaterial part of man at the point of conception.¹¹ Therefore, the infant is created untainted by sin as God cannot create anything sinful. This view denies that the whole human is reproduced after its kind, but rather insists that only the material shell (body) is reproduced. However, everything else God created to reproduce after its own kind does not reproduce only part of itself. Moreover, the Scriptures indicate clearly that infants are born with a sin nature:

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. – Psa. 51:5

The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. – Psa. 58:3

¹¹ However, the body is equally said to be formed by God in the mother's womb. Therefore, should we deny some aspects of man are reproduced through natural generation? The truth is that the whole person, material and immaterial is passed down in natural generation, and God is involved in each individual birth by arranging the right sperm and egg to form each distinct individual DNA at the right moment in time.

The New Birth

All humans at birth can be called “*the wicked*” because they have violated Genesis 2:17 when they existed as one indivisible human nature in Adam. Therefore “*all in Adam die*” (1 Cor. 15:22).

Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.....Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. – Job 14:1,4

What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? - Job 15:14

How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman? - Job 25:4

God speaking of Israel’s origin in metaphorical terms of a birth says:

Yes, you heard not; yes, you knew not; yes, from that time that your ear was not opened: for I knew that you would deal very treacherously, and were called a transgressor from the womb. – Isa. 48:8

Moreover, no infant enters this world as a believer, but come into this world as unbelievers and under condemnation:

He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. – Jn. 3:18

After raising five children and having fifteen grandchildren and one great grandchild, I have never needed to teach any of them to do evil, as they do that naturally. Instead, the major task that parents have is to train them to be and do good, as that does not come

The New Birth

naturally. Every infant comes into this world with a nature that is prone to do evil without needing any example or training because they come into this world with a sinful or rebellious nature.

It is this original sin that **separated** man from God as the source of *spiritual* light, love and righteousness, and thus, man fell into a *spiritual* state of darkness, enmity and unrighteousness. That state is called “death” or separation from God.

Significantly, just as death begins within man and then proceeds to affect the thoughts, words and actions of the external man and his physical and eternal destiny, likewise, spiritual life begins within man and then proceeds to affect the thoughts, words and actions of the external man and his physical and eternal destiny. Just as death worked in and through man, so does life work in and through man. Just as death sets apart the spirit, then soul and body of man in a spiritual digression, so eternal life sets apart the spirit, then soul and body of man (1 Thes. 5:23) in a spiritual progressive sanctification.

Therefore “*all in Adam die*” (1 Cor. 15:22). However, not all who are “*in Adam*” are “*in Christ*” as all in Christ are made alive by another kind of birth that is not a natural birth. Indeed, all in Christ overcome death.¹² For those “*in Christ*” physical death is only removal from the body.

¹² All who are “*in Adam*” were created in Adam at the time Adam was created and fell in Adam when Adam sinned. The entire fallen image of Adam is passed down through procreation through the male. However, Christ was virgin born and not a partaker of the fallen nature which is passed through the male. Thus, Christ was without the indwelling law of sin. His humanity was like Adam prior to the Fall. With regard to his deity, Christ was never created, but is the eternal Son of

The New Birth

How Death is “Passed Upon” all Men

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth: And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters: And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: and he died. – Gen. 5:1-5

Before the fall, it is said that God created man in the likeness of God, after his own image. However, after the fall, Moses says that Adam “*begat a son in his own likeness, after his image*” which was a **fallen** likeness and image. The proof this is true, is that this

God. Moreover, all who are “*in Christ*” are “*created in Christ Jesus*” (Eph. 2:1,5 10) by new birth or re-creation (new birth). Hence, it is not until we are created in Christ by new birth do we receive in our own person the consequences of His obedience. Prior to being “*created in Christ*”, the elect are only purposed these consequences “*in him*” (Eph. 1:4) before the world began. However, God’s purposes do not obtain reality until God actually works out His purpose in time and space (Isa. 46:10-11). Therefore “*all in Adam*” does not equal “*all in Christ*” as in each case the “*all*” must first be created either in Adam or in Christ. Although “*all*” who are **created** “*in Christ*” were **procreated** in Adam, not “*all*” **procreated** in Adam are **created** “*in Christ*” or are born again. Indeed, Paul makes a point to distinguish all in Adam from all in Christ by stating those in Christ are only those who actually received the grace (Rom. 5:17) of regeneration.

The New Birth

genealogy and every one that follows in the Old Testament scriptures, all end with “*and he died*” as “*in Adam all die.*”

Another fact about all Old Testament genealogies is they never contain women but only the fathers of the children. Why? The answer is because the principle of death “*passed upon all men*” comes through the seed of the father and not the seed of the mother.

This is why Jesus was predicted to be born of the *seed of the woman* rather than the seed of the male:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. – Gen. 3:15

Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. – Isa. 7:14

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. – Mt. 1:23

It would be no “*sign*” to anyone for a young woman to bring forth a son, as that is what young women normally do. However, for a “*virgin*” to bring forth a son would truly be a miraculous “*sign*” totally unheard of in all of human history.

However, this was an essential sign, because Christ could not be conceived by the “*seed*” of the male because death is “*passed upon*” the human race through the male contribution to physical birth. Instead he was “*conceived of the Holy Ghost.*” Christ received the complete human nature from the “*seed of the woman*” and thus God

The New Birth

“*prepared a body*” (Heb. 10:5) free from the indwelling principle or law of sin “*passed upon*” all men from their original human father Adam. Hence, the Second Adam did not have the first Adam for his father and therefore death was not “*passed upon*” Christ at birth. He had no fallen nature. No man could take his life. He would have never died by natural causes. Instead, he freely gave his life to satisfy the penalty of sin in our behalf. Therefore, the Scriptures could say there was no “*sin in him*” and that he was “without sin” and therefore, he “*knew no sin.*”

This is why all the Old Testament sacrificial types of Christ must be free of spot and blemish which is symbolic of having no sin.

However, there is one genealogy provided in the New Testament totally unlike all previous genealogies. It is the genealogy of Christ. It is the only genealogy containing women. However, more significantly, it is the only genealogy that never ends with “*and he died.*” There is no death mentioned in his genealogy. Why? Did not all those listed in his genealogy physically die? Yes! However, all who are in his genealogy were born again believers in the coming Christ (Acts 10:43) and therefore, he that “*liveth and believeth in me shall never die, believeth thou this.*” Jesus said this long before Pentecost. All the Jewish genealogical records were lost in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70. Therefore, the only genealogy available to link anyone to the genealogies found in the Old Testament Scriptures is the genealogy of Christ. Isaiah says that Christ saw “*his seed*” although he never married and had physical children.

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. – Isa. 53:10

The New Birth

They are the “*seed*” according to the promise of Abraham which all true believers are:

*Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, **the same are the children of Abraham.*** – Gal. 3:7

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. – Gal. 4:18

Therefore, the only possible way for any modern Jew to trace themselves back to Abraham or Adam is through the genealogy of Christ. However, one must be “*born*” into his genealogy by new birth as that is the only way to be found “*in him.*” They must be born of “*the Spirit of Christ*” in order to be of “*his seed.*”

A Universal Truth

We are created “*in Christ Jesus*” or brought into spiritual union with God through the Spirit of Christ by new birth or divine quickening (Eph. 2:1,6,10).

Here is the true difference between the phrases “*in the flesh*” and “*in the Spirit*” as used by Paul. To be “*in the flesh*” refers to all who were born “*after the flesh*” through natural generation or natural procreation. To be “*in the Spirit*”, refers to all who are born “*after the Spirit*” through supernatural procreation by the Spirit of God:

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please 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. – Romans 8:8-9

Those who experience only natural birth are “*none of his*” because they are born into this world in a separated condition from God.

The New Birth

They come into this world in a “*darkened*” condition in a state of spiritual “*blindness*.” They come into this world “*alienated from the life of God*” or spiritually “*dead*.” By natural birth, they come into this world completely given over to “*all uncleanness*.” That is why Paul says all who are “*in the flesh cannot please God*” and such are “*none of his*.” They come into this world at “*enmity*” with God.

This is what Jesus was talking about when he told Nicodemus that he must be “*born again*” because “*that which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of Spirit is spirit*” (Jn. 3:6) and those in the flesh are children of darkness (Jn. 3:18-19). There is no third option.

There have only been two types of mankind that have ever lived upon planet earth before and after Pentecost:

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. – Gal. 4:28-29

Follow the argument of Paul. As it “*was*” then, “*even so it is now*.” There “*was*” such “*then*” who were “*born after the flesh*” and so is there “*now*.” There “*was*” such “*then*” who were born after the Spirit, “*even so it is now*.”

Paul argued that not all *physical born* Israelites are to be counted for the “*promised seed*” to Abraham, but only those double born Israelites (physical and spiritual born ones) are the true “*children of God*.” The “*children of the flesh*” are “*none of His*”:

The New Birth

*Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are **of Israel**:¹³ Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are **the children of the flesh**, these are not **the children of God**: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. – Rom. 9:6-8*

The Adamic fall demands that all human beings from Adam forward without exception are born spiritually separated from God, and therefore, “*death has passed upon all mankind.*” These are “*the children of the flesh*” and those “*in the flesh*” who “*walk in the flesh*” as “*these are not the children of God*” and are “*none of his.*” All who are born only “*after the flesh*” and thus “*in the flesh cannot please God.*”

Remember, the problem originates in the Garden of Eden “*in the day*” Adam sinned. There are only two kinds of human beings since the fall – (1) Spiritually dead/separation; (2) Spiritually alive/union. Death is “*passed*” from that point forward through the seed of the male to all children, male or female. The problem is universal and that problem is spiritual separation from God. Hence, the only

¹³ “*Not all Israel, which are of Israel*” cannot refer to an Israel made up of all the elect Jews and Gentiles, as that doctrine demands that all “of Israel” is “all Israel.” Paul is saying that not all natural born children of ethnic Israel are of the promised Israel from the seed of his own loins in contrast to other nations that will come from him. In all the Old Testament genealogies it is male to male. In the promise of a redeemer (Gen. 3:15) it is the “seed of the woman.” The incarnation by passed the male reproductive sperm thus producing a “virgin” birth of Christ.

The New Birth

possible solution to that problem is spiritual union with God. The only exception to this universal problem is the birth of Christ. The phrase “*the seed of the woman*” presumes a miraculous birth without the aid by any male. In every Biblical genealogical record with exception of one (Christ’s) it is the male that is always listed as the source of the seed. The seed of the woman does not pass on the indwelling principle of corruption, the law of death.¹⁴

Hence, the problem did not begin on Pentecost but in the Garden. That means every human being from Adam to Pentecost suffered physical death because they were spiritually separated from God. The solution also began in the Garden (restoration to spiritual union) rather than on Pentecost because apart from that sole and only solution man would continue to be without life, light, love and holiness. Pentecost has nothing to do with originating spiritual union except for among the Gentiles as the new mission field (Acts 1:8). The coming of the Spirit on Pentecost has nothing to do with spiritual union but with the new covenant administration in the institutional house of God (see my book “The Baptism in the Spirit”).

The New Birth

How Good is Good in God's Sight?

Most of Christendom along with the entire non-Christian world believes that all men either have innate potential to be and do good, or at least their fallen condition can be enabled by God to do good or desire to seek and please God. The vast majority of Christendom believe that the fallen nature is an active participant in the transition from an unregenerate to the regenerate state. This view dictates their methodology in evangelism that appeals to the unregenerate man to seek and come to Christ. That is, they believe the unregenerate heart is able or can be enabled to participate in gospel repentance and faith, as it is, without any change of its fallen nature, and so they believe Paul is referring to the unregenerated heart when he says “*with the heart man believeth*” (Rom. 10:9).

They do not believe that the natural man exists in a state of spiritual “*blindness*” or in a “*darkened*” state but believe either they exist in a twilight zone able to see, or their fallen heart can be enabled by God to see. They believe natural man is not “*given over...to all uncleanness*” but is either born into this world fully able to do good or can be enabled to do good. They believe natural man is not “*alienated from the life of God*” and spiritually “*dead*”, but just spiritually sick¹⁵ or in a comma and can be awakened or healed. They don't believe man is in a state of “*enmity*” against God, but believe the natural man “*can please God*” if he so chooses or can be enabled to please God.

This is what the vast majority of world religions believe, but is it true to the Word of God? Our approach will first be to establish the Biblical standard of “good” according to God's definition. Second, we will see if the Word of God supports the idea that “good” can

¹⁵ The Bible describes the state of man's fallen nature in the metaphorical terms of being “sick” but a sickness that envelopes the whole human body (Isa. 1:5-6) thus a metaphor for total depravity.

The New Birth

come forth from an evil heart or can an evil heart be enabled to participate in producing “good.” Last, we will look at the Biblical definition of works to see if the deliberations of the heart are inclusive in that Biblical definition.

God’s Standard to define “Good”

What is the standard to define good from evil? Someone has rightly said, “If you compare yourself with others you can do better. If you compare yourself with self you can do better. But if you compare yourself with God none are good, no, not one” So, the issue is “good compared to what or good by what standard”?

God has provided a standard to define good versus evil. That standard is called “the law of God.” It is a universal standard for Jews and Gentiles or all of mankind:

*What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved **both Jews and Gentiles**, that they are **all under sin**; As it is written, There is **none righteous, no, not one**: There is **none** that understands, there is **none** that seeks after God. They are **all** gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; **there is none that does good, no, not one**......Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are **under the law**: that **every mouth** may be stopped, and **all the world** may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall **no flesh** be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. – Rom. 3:9, 18-19*

Notice the universal inclusive language:

1. “*both Jews and Gentiles*”

The New Birth

2. *“they are all under sin”*
3. *“none righteous”*
4. *“none good”*
5. *“every mouth”*
6. *“all the world”*
7. *“no flesh”*

Even those who lived prior to Moses (Gentiles) and did not know *“the Law”* given to Israel, still had a conscience which Paul says does *“the work of the law”* (Rom. 2:15). What is the work of the Law? The work of the Law is to provide a standard that distinguishes between right and wrong and by so doing defines what is sin versus what is righteousness (*“for by the law is the knowledge of sin”* and *“sin is the transgression of the law.”*). That is precisely how the conscience operates;

“their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another)” –
Rom. 2:15.

From the earliest age, the conscience of children in all cultures are trained by their parents and society as to what is right and wrong. That is their standard of right and wrong which either accuses or excuses their thoughts and actions. Hence, God has created man with a conscience or a standard of right and wrong that does the work of the law.

The law of conscience operates or works in the same manner as any law, including the Law of Moses. It makes a distinction between what is right and what is wrong. Although the Law of Moses may define right and wrong differently than the law of conscience as found in tribesmen in deep dark Africa, however, both equally provide and define a standard of right and wrong.

The New Birth

For example, in deepest Africa the standard or law may be that you cannot worship the moon but you can worship the sun. It may be a law that says you cannot kill your family or tribe members but you can kill other tribes. Even though such people may have never been consciously exposed to the Law of God, they have been exposed to the law governing their own conscience and everyone of them have violated the law of their own conscience. On Judgement day they will be judged as sinners by violating the law of their own conscience.

However, why is it that even those never exposed to the Law of God violate the law of their own conscience? It proves they are born with a sin nature, or a nature that rebels against law of any kind. It proves they have already sinned in Adam and are thus born sinners by nature. Hence, when they violate their God given conscience they are manifesting they have already violated the Law of God.

Otherwise, Paul could never say “*both Jews and Gentiles...are all under sin.*” One must be first “*under law*” before they can be “*under sin*” because sin is the violation of Law (1 Jn. 2:6) and where there is no law there is no sin (Rom. 5:13). All humanity existed “*in Adam*” and when Adam violated God’s law in Genesis 2:17 all “*in Adam*” violated that Law when Adam violated the law. Thus, in Adam, the whole human race “*have sinned.*” Hence, all human beings when coming into the world by natural birth are already sinners by nature due to this race sin. When Gentiles who do not have the law of Moses, but violate the law administered by their own conscience, they manifest they are born with a sin nature which has already violated the Law of God “*in Adam.*” The human nature was corrupted in the race sin and therefore what is born out of that nature will violate any law they are placed under.

Therefore, when God looked down from heaven upon the “*children of men*” (not the children of God, not merely the Jew) or

The New Birth

those born “*after the flesh*” and therefore all who are “*in the flesh*” what did he find?

*The LORD looked down from heaven upon **the children of men**, to see **if there were any** that did understand, and seek God. They are **all** gone aside, they are **all** together become filthy: **there is none that doeth good, no, not one.** – Psa. 14:2-3*

God found none good or doing good, “*no, not one.*” Could God be wrong, or “let God be true and every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4)?

The Law of God

We understand how conscience works, but what is “the law of God”? The law of God as revealed unto men is the principle that defines the moral character of God as described when the Bible says “God is love” and “God is holy” and “God is light.” These three characterizations define the moral character of God and is the revelation of the law by which God’s moral nature operates. When these principles which define the law by which God’s moral nature operates are reveal unto man in written form that is called “the Law of God.” That moral law in principle is spelled out in ten commandments which provide man what is right and wrong with his relationship with God and men. The first table provides a standard of right and wrong to govern human relationship with God, while the second table provides the standard of right and wrong to govern human relationship with other humans. Christ reduces these two tables down to just two simple commandments:

And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with

The New Birth

all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. – Lk. 10:27

Paul further summarized the second principle in one word “love:

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. – Rom. 13:8-10

James can say if a man violates one point of the law he violates all points in the law.

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. – James 2:10-11

The only possible way that violation of one point is the violation of every point would be that every point in principle has the same ultimate moral standard. That same moral standard is “love” and “God is love.”

What is God’s Love?

However, this “love” is not a sloppy agape kind of love. This love has a priority inherent within it. Jesus said the first and greatest

The New Birth

commandment is to love God with your whole being while the second commandment is to love man as yourself. This means that true Biblical love prioritizes God above all others. This speaks to the motives behind all that you say and do. Paul spells out that priority this way:

And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. – Co. 3:17

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; - Col. 3:23

Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. – 1 Cor. 10:31

Hence, love defines the proper priority and motive which the law of God demands to be the goal for everything you say and do should be unto the glory of God. All men come short and failed this goal of the law:

*for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God
– Rom. 3:23*

Peter says it this way:

*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God;
if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which
God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified
through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion
for ever and ever. Amen. – 1 Pet. 4:11*

Not only does the love of God have an inherent priority that demands that the motive behind all you do glorifies God first, but the love of

The New Birth

God demands that whatever you do is without any moral defects but is perfect even as God is perfect, and therefore, God's law is holy Because God's moral nature is holy

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. - Mt. 5:20

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. – Mt. 5:48

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. – 1 Pet. 1:15-16

In the Sermon on the Mount, the verses between Matthew 5:20 and Matthew 5:48 define what keeping the law really means. God not only commands obedience externally to the letter of the Law but it must be obeyed internally in keeping with the moral principle of the law. For example, the mere external letter of the law “thou shalt not commit adultery” was interpreted by the scribes and pharisees to condemn merely the external physical act but Jesus demanded that true obedience to the Law of God required internal heart obedience that defined the proper motive and intent of the heart which would proceed any external applications. The law of adultery condemned even the “look” of intent regardless if the external act ever came about. In other words, obedience to that law begins in the heart as God looketh upon the heart. External violations all originate with internal violations of the heart, mind and will.

*But those things which proceed out of the mouth **come forth from the heart**; and they defile the man. For **out of the heart proceed evil** thoughts, murders, adulteries,*

The New Birth

fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: - Mt. 15:18-19

*But the LORD said to Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD sees not as man sees; **for man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.*** - 1Sam.16:7

*All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; **but the LORD weighs the spirits.*** – Prov. 16:2

*But, O LORD of hosts, that judge righteously, that **try the reins and the heart**, let me see your vengeance on them: for to you have I revealed my cause.* – Jer. 11:20

I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. – Jer. 17:10

*But, O LORD of hosts, that try the righteous, and **see the reins and the heart**, let me see your vengeance on them: for to you have I opened my cause.* – Jer. 20:12

*And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searches **the reins and hearts**: and I will give to every one of you according to your works.* – Rev. 2:23

Therefore, to escape the condemnation of the law one must have a heart that obeys the law in keeping with the intent and moral standard of the law. It is this combination of internal deliberation with the heart and mind joined with the external manifestation in words and deeds is what the bible defines as “works.” Good or bad works begins with the intent/motive and deliberations of the heart

The New Birth

which are only manifested by words and actions. The Bible teaches that no fallen man has a good heart and that is why God says, there is none good, no, not one, and that is why there is none that doeth righteousness. The proof that no fallen man has such a heart are the words of Paul:

*What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved **both Jews and Gentiles**, that they are **all under sin**; As it is written, There is **none righteous, no, not one**: There is **none** that understands, there is **none** that seeks after God. They are **all** gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; **there is none that does good, no, not one**.Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are **under the law**: that **every mouth** may be stopped, and **all the world** may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall **no flesh** be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. – Rom. 3:9, 18-19*

Because the heart is not righteous, man can do nothing righteous as it takes a righteous heart to do righteousness. Both Jesus and Paul told the most pious religious law keepers of their day that they did not keep the Law as they professed:

*Did not Moses give you the law, and yet **none of you keepeth the law**?.... – Jn. 7:19*

*And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which **ye could not be justified by the law of Moses**.
– Acts 13:39*

The New Birth

Therefore, those who believe that prior to the cross men were justified before God by keeping the Law are proven wrong.¹⁶ Indeed, as Paul says “*by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight.*”

Why is this true? Because the human heart is evil and operates under a different law – the law of sin (Rom. 7:18). Its motives are evil and that is why man’s deeds are evil. Obedience to the Law of God requires a morally perfect heart which operates with the priority to honor God first in all that we think, say and do. Furthermore, the law of God requires what we think, say and do to be holy or perfect even as God is perfect.

Man has an Evil Heart

However, this is not the moral condition of heart that God created in man. God created man “*upright in heart.*” Therefore, the *fall* of man

¹⁶ N.T. Wright and those who advocate what they call “the new perspective” deny that Israel during the New Testament period viewed the law as a means for moral justification before God. Rather, they claim that keeping the Law was merely for identification as the covenant people of God. They claim that in Romans and Galatians that the phrase “not of works” in connection with justification by faith simply meant one does not have to become a covenant keeping Jew in order to be justified before God. This view is wrong. Jesus made it clear that the works of the law was understood by Israel as a means to obtain life and thus ultimate moral justification before God by his discussion with the Lawyer and the rich young ruler. Indeed, Christ himself understood the law was a valid way to obtain moral justification before God by works if one was able to keep the Law as defined by God – sinless perfection (Mt. 5:20-48). The problem was not in the law but in the fallen nature of man – the flesh. Paul’s denial that justification is by works with regard to Abraham was prior to, thus outside and apart from any covenant relationship (Rom.4:1-11). Therefore, “works” was understood to refer to his own personal attempts (thoughts, words and actions) by Abraham to find a right standing before God.

The New Birth

was from this “*upright*” condition of heart to an evil heart. God described fallen man prior to the judgment of the flood by saying:

And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. – Gen. 6:5

After the flood, God said of fallen man:

And the LORD smelled a sweet smell; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. – Gen. 8:21

Notice, that God says the same moral condition of the human heart before the flood is the same condition after the flood “*from his youth*.” The Hebrew term “youth” is *na’awr* and is translated “childhood” in 1 Samuel 12:2 where Samuel claims to have walked before Israel from the time of his “childhood.” He was brought to the temple and given to Eli after he was weaned from his mother:

But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned, and then I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever. – 1 Sam. 1:22

David says of his own birth:

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. – Psa. 50:5

The New Birth

David speaking of fallen human beings as being prone toward evil as soon as they are born says:

The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. – Psa. 58:3

Other Biblical writers agree with this assessment of the moral condition of the human heart:

....therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. – Eccles. 8:11

This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event to all: yes, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead. – Eccles. 9:3

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? – Jer. 17:9

This is why man can only do evil because the evil condition of the heart dictates everything that comes forth from that heart:

But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: - Mt. 15:18-19

It is this internal moral condition that encompasses the moral intent and deliberations of the heart which is manifest in words and actions that is called “works.” The heart is evil which can only produce evil words and deeds in God’s sight as his law demands a heart that is

The New Birth

defined by the priority of love and holiness. This is why the new covenant salvation begins with giving man a new heart:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. – Ezek. 36:26-27

And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: That they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God. – Ezek. 11:19-20

Notice in both passages above, that God must first give man a new spirit and a new in my statutes, and keep my ordinances and do them.” Notice that it is the new spirit and new heart which is the “cause” for “you to walk in my statutes.

Also, notice the order given in what God gives first. He gives first a “new spirit” before giving a “new heart.” Why a “new spirit” first? Because the moral nature of man is determined by which spiritual father is in relationship with the human spirit.

*Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, **the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:** - Eph. 2:2*

*Ye are of **your father the devil**, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the*

The New Birth

beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. – Jn. 8:44

The new birth is the moral regeneration of the human spirit as Jesus tells Nicodemus “*what is born of flesh is flesh but what is born of Spirit is spirit*” (Jn. 3:6) and thus a metaphorical “*washing and renewing*” (Tit. 3:5) restoring the moral image of God as the Spirit of God is brought into spiritual union with the human spirit. When the human spirit is brought back into spiritual union with God that changes the moral inclination of the heart, thus morally transforming the human heart making it a “new heart.” Thus, regeneration the human spirit is the creation of a new spirit with regard to its moral character and change of relationship with Satan (Eph. 2:2; Jn. 8:44) to its union with God thus changing them from children of Satan to children of God by spiritual union with God (new birth). That moral transformation of the human spirit due to union with God transforms the human heart by changing its moral inclination from the love of darkness to the love of light. Hence, a “new spirit” is what produces a “new heart” as the new spirit is morally transformed which in turn changes the moral inclination of the human heart.

This same order describes salvation under the “new” covenant which is God through spiritual union putting his law “in their inward parts” (the spirit of man) which in turn God metamorphically writes His moral law upon the human heart:

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them

The New Birth

unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. – Jer. 31:33-34

This passage is quoted verbatim by the writer of the book of Hebrews describing the “new covenant.”

Heb. 8:6 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah:

9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

13 In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

This is precisely what Paul is referring to when he writes the Corinthians and says:

The New Birth

2 Cor. 3:3 *Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, **written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.***

4 *And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:*

5 *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;*

6 ¶ *Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.*

Profession apart from this supernatural internal work of God is nothing more than moral reformation. A prime example of moral reformation is the story of the rich young ruler.

When the rich young pious ruler came to Jesus, he placed himself on an equal ability to perform goodness with Christ by saying “**Good master, what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life**” that Christ responded, “**there is none good but one, and that is God.**” Then Christ pointed him to God’s standard to qualify what is “**good**” enough for eternal life or entrance into heaven, and the young man claimed to have kept the law all his life “**from my youth up.**” He kept it like the rest of the Jews – externally and improperly, and that is why Jesus continued to say “**if thou wilt be perfect**” (which is what keeping the Law actually demands) he was to go sell all that he had and come follow Christ. Remember the law of God is defined by the priority of love that demands a heart that prioritizes the glory of God as the motive for everything you say and do. In other words, the Law demands complete self-denial and total commitment to God with all your mind, heart, life and strength all the time. The rich young ruler demonstrated he neither understood or had kept the law by his refusal to obey Christ. Natural born man has already fallen, already failed, already “**come short of the glory of God**” and is

The New Birth

therefore already “*under the curse of the Law*” and that is why there is “*none good, no, not one*” by God’s standard of “*good.*”

That is why the apostle John said that any professed Christian is deceived if they think they are without sin, even if they are so much under the control of the Spirit of God to the extent that they are presently writing scriptures without error as John was when writing:

If we say, we are without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us – 1 Jn. 1:8

John includes himself (“*we*”) using the present tense (“*are*”) while writing under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

Man comes into this world “*condemned already*” (Jn. 3:18) because he is a sinner by nature due to the Adamic or race sin. Even during the period of his life between conception and before he has the ability to discern right from wrong he unwittingly manifests that fallen nature. Moreover, as soon as that infant comes of age and is confronted with any discernible standard of right and wrong, whether it is his conscience or in the written Law of God, he manifests that sinful nature by willfully violating every discernible law. That is why Paul can say “*there is none that doeth good, no, not one*” – Rom. 3:11

Therefore, a man may compare himself with others and be better than others. He may compare himself with himself and be better than what he was. However, the standard of good established by God is to be as good as God. When God looked down from heaven to see if there were any that measured up to his standard of good he could find no “*children of men*” good, no, not one.

The New Birth

*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:
- Mt. 15:19¹⁷*

Can an Evil Heart Participate in producing good?

Jesus likened the heart of men to a tree and its works to the fruit of trees and said that the fruit of a tree/heart reveals the condition of the tree/heart:

Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. – Matthew 12:33

He then applies it to his audience in the following way:

O generation of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. – Mt. 12:34-35

It is this heart condition of “*being evil*” that makes it totally unable to bring forth any good thing:

*A good tree **cannot** bring forth evil fruit, **neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit**. – Mt. 7:19*

¹⁷ Here is the proper definition of “works.” Works are inclusive of the thought, words and actions. Violation of the law began with “evil thoughts.” To merely “look” with lust upon a woman violated the seventh commandment. To merely pronounce the words “fool” unjustly toward someone violated the sixth commandment. Thus “works” is inclusive of thoughts, words and deeds.

The New Birth

We sin because we are sinners. We do not sin in order to become sinners. We are born into this world with a sinful nature as our hearts are inclined to sin by nature.

The total inability to respond to the things of God from birth to death of the wicked is described in metaphors by David:

The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely. – Psa. 58:3-5

Jeremiah says the same thing as Jesus about the complete inability of fallen man to do good said:

*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? **then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.*** – Jer. 13:23

The reason for this inability was due to the state of the fallen heart of man as described by Jeremiah:

*The heart **is** deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?* – Jer. 17:9

From birth, the fallen children of men have a heart that exists in an unchangeable calloused, hardened state of opposition to God and the things of God. This inward evil condition of the heart is then progressively manifested as it is confronted with God's law as definitive of God's love, light and holiness. The law of God as love demands the glory of God be prioritize as the heart motive. The law of God as holiness demands that our works from their internal origin with the motive and deliberations of the heart unto their external

The New Birth

manifestation in words and deeds be “perfect even as God is perfect.” The Law of God as “light” reveals the knowledge of sin. The Law of God is the revelation of the moral nature of God as God is love, God is light and God is holy. The hatred of the fallen heart for light is expressed by Jesus when he says:

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. – Jn. 3:19-20

Good hearts precede good desire and actions:

The difference between those “*born after the flesh*” and who are living “*in the flesh*” and those “*born after the Spirit*” and who are living “*in the Spirit*” is their heart. Their birth relationship determines the moral nature of their heart. The natural born man does not have a “*good*” heart, and therefore cannot please God.

O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!
– Deut. 5:29

Such a heart to even perceive, see and hear God must be given by God through new birth:

Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day. – Deut. 29:4

The New Birth

Good desires and actions originate with the new heart, not the old heart. God must give a new heart before a person will desire to do those things that please God:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.- Ezek. 36:26-27

There is no neutral heart that is neither good nor evil or in the process of obtaining a new heart:

*Either make¹⁸ the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, **being evil**, speak good things? for out of the abundance of **the heart** the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of **the heart** bringeth forth good things: and an **evil man** out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.*
– Mt. 12:33-35

Evil hearts cannot produce good. Hence, a good heart cannot come from an evil heart

Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot

¹⁸ “**Make**” Jesus is not claiming that unregenerate man can make his own heart good. He is calling them to “make” a decision concerning what kind of heart they have. They cannot have both a good and evil heart. Either it is one or the other. The fruit manifests which one it is.

The New Birth

bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. – Mt. 7:18-19

Therefore, there is no twilight zone between lost and saved where an evil heart can participate in obtaining a good heart. The evil heart neither “*seeketh*” after God nor participates with God in producing anything “*good*.” Jesus says it “*cannot*” bring forth good fruit.

Job said long ago, that there is none that can bring something good out of something evil:

Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one. – Job 14:4

This is why Jesus told Nicodemus that he “*must*” be born again by the Spirit of God (Jn. 3:3-6). He said that before he shared the gospel with him (Jn. 3:14-16). Even after he shared the gospel with him, he told him that those living in and loving a state of darkness will not come to the light (Jn. 3:19-20).

This is why God told Ezekiel that He must give his people a new heart before they would do anything good:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.– Ezek. 36:26-27

However, some will reply that such an evil heart can cooperate with the Spirit of God to obtain a good heart. However, the Scriptures clearly deny that the unregenerate or uncircumcised heart

The New Birth

will ever cooperate with the Spirit of God but “*always*” resists the Spirit:

Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. – Acts 7:51

Indeed, the unregenerate nature “*cannot*” cooperate with the Spirit of God because by its very nature it is in a state of war against God (Rom. 8:7).

The new birth transforms the moral nature of the human spirit. Spiritual union determines the moral condition of the spirit of man. If the human spirit is in spiritual union with Satan then his spirit is in an immoral condition that never will cooperate with God or obey God. That is why the spirit of man must be born again, meaning, must be brought into spiritual union with the Spirit of God.

The New Birth

The Biblical Definition of “works”

In the previous chapter it was established that Gods’ definition of “good” works are works that do not originate from fallen men. Good works are works that originate from a sinless source. Jesus Christ could do good works because He was a sinless source. His sinless works are the sole and only basis for our justification. Within regenerated men good works originate with the power of the indwelling Spirit of God from a sinless source (inward new man). This is the sole and only basis for our progressive sanctification.

However, what constitutes “works”? Many define “works” according to the Rabbinical definition during the days of Christ. They define “works” by external manifest actions. Some today define “works” and the phrase “without works” to means Jewishness and claim that Paul is saying we can be justified by faith without becoming a Jew. Both of these views are wrong! Jesus defined the violation of the Law of God in moral terms rather than in national or racial (Jewish) terms.

Jesus spent much of his time refuting the externalized definition of works. In the Sermon on the Mount, he contrasted the traditions of the Rabbinical authors (traditions of the elders) to the proper interpretation of the Moral Law. When speaking of the **oral** traditions of the elders he said, “*you have **heard** it said by them of old time.*” He did not say “*thus saith the Lord*” or “*It is written*” but rather you have “*heard*” referring to the *oral* traditions of the elders. In contrast, being God in the flesh, he said, “*but I say unto you*” which is synonymous with “*thus saith the Lord*” as he claimed to be Lord over all.

He defined “evil” works to begin with the internal determinate actions of the heart and mind regardless if such internal

The New Birth

determinative actions were ever manifested in words or physical deeds of the body. According to Jesus “lust” in the heart broke the law of adultery regardless if any kind of physical manifestation occurred or not. According to Jesus, evil words violated the law of murder regardless if any kind of physical actions accompanied those words or not. Evil works are characterized by the deliberative actions of the heart and mind which by definition is processed through the human will whereas bodily actions (words and deeds) may manifest evil “works” to men but are not necessary in God’s sight to render judgement upon a person as “evil” or “bad” because God looketh upon the heart regardless if that person is circumstantially permitted to carry out his “evil” desires through his bodily actions.

Later, Jesus speaking of the same invalid oral traditions that evil works began with the determine actions of the heart:

*“For out of the heart proceed **evil thoughts**, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:” – Mt. 15:19*

Evil thoughts are determinate thoughts that may visibly manifest themselves in evil actions such as “murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies” or may be circumstantially prevented from being visibly manifested through the body.

*And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually**. – Gen. 6:5*

Thus, the Biblical definition of works is characterized by the deliberative activity of the heart regardless if such deliberative motives and desires are ever manifested in bodily actions (mouth and deeds).

The New Birth

When Paul characterized salvation to be “by grace through faith” he further denied it was “of works” but rather a creative work by God – “*not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works....*”

The new birth is said to be an act of “*the will...of God*” and not the act of the “*will of man*” (Jn. 1:13; Jms. 1:17). Yet many teach the very reverse and claim the new birth is the direct results of the will of man. However, the Bible teaches that the human will is the deliberative agency by which the evil heart and mind manifests itself through the words and actions of the body.

Moreover, many theologians wrongly treat the human will when it comes to choosing Christ as either some kind of entity independent of mind or emotions or something other than what epitomizes the Biblical center and source of works.

The will has no separate existence from the mind and emotions of man. It is simply the agency of the heart and mind to express motive/intent and desires and determinations. The will has no independence from the heart and mind.

Indeed, both Greek terms used to translate “*will*” in the New Testament are descriptive of intellectual and emotional intent. The determinate action of the mind is represented by the Greek term *boulomai* (translated “*will*”) or the determinate intent of the mind. The emotional intent of the heart of man is represented by the Greek term *thelomai* (translated “*will*”).

Moreover, the determinate manifestations of the human heart is defined by the moral state of the human heart. If the moral state of the human heart is evil so is its fruit. If the moral state of the human heart is good so is its intent. If the moral state of the heart and mind are evil so are their manifestations through the agency of will in the

The New Birth

form of visible words and actions. Jesus states this simple truth as follows:

Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. – Mt. 12:33-35

Let's consider the above text carefully. Jesus said “*make the tree good, or else make the tree corrupt.*” First, he defines the “*tree*” as representing the human heart (“*of the heart.....of the heart*”) and its fruits representing its moral manifestations. Second, there is a cause and effect order. The fruit do not make the tree good or evil but it is the tree that determines whether the fruit is good or evil. It will bring forth that which corresponds to its moral condition “*out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.....out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things.....out of the evil treasure of the heart bringeth forth evil things.*” Therefore, the moral nature of the heart determines the moral nature of what comes forth from that heart not vice versa. Third, he is not suggesting that man can determine or “*make*” his own heart either “*good*” or “*corrupt*” but rather he is demanding there are only two possible contrasting alternatives. You cannot have it both ways, so “*make*” it one or the other.

Jesus is clearly teaching that the only things that can come forth out of the heart are those things that are consistent with the moral nature of the heart. Good things cannot come from an evil heart. Arminians teach the very opposite. They claim that saving faith can

The New Birth

come forth from an evil heart. Indeed, they claim that such faith is the basis for God changing the evil heart to a good heart. Jesus is explicitly denying that very idea, as faith is a “gift” of God (Philip. 1:29; Eph. 2:8) and is “of grace” (Rom. 4:15) and Jesus is both the author and the finisher of saving faith (Heb. 12:2) as saving faith is the work of God (Jn. 6:29). Hence, faith is not a product of the heart of fallen man.

Moreover, the agency of will is part and parcel with what the Bible defines as “works” as it is the mechanism that serves the deliberative processes of the human heart which the agency of will makes manifest in words and bodily actions. We are not saved by works. We are not born again by the “will of man” (Jn. 1:13). *“For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”* (Rom. 9:16).

Thus, “works” are inclusive of internal actions including intent, thought processes concluded by a deliberate act of the will whether or not they are carried out through the body functions such as the mouth (ungodly or godly words) or body (ungodly or godly actions).

This Biblical definition gives the proper understanding that we are saved by grace “without works” meaning without internal deliberative actions by the heart or external actions by the body.

Not only are we not initially saved by works (deliberative actions by the heart or external actions by the body) but we are not progressively sanctified that way either as Paul says, *“For it is God which worketh in you BOTH TO WILL and TO DO of His good pleasure”* as the ultimate cause for all our “good” works. (Philip. 2:13).

The New Birth

A believing heart is the effect of regeneration or the giving of a “new” heart. We already possess an evil and unbelieving heart by our first birth. What God give us by new birth is a new heart, whihis righteous and believing heart. It is this heart which is the only kind of heart that “believeth unto righteousness” meaning this is th only heart that has the proper intent and deliberative actions that can manifest righteous words and bodily actions. Saving faith cometh by hearing the gospel but this kind of hearing comes by the RHEMA (word of command) of God - Rom. 10:17. It does not come by the RHEMA of the preachers because all hear do not believe (Rom. 10:18). It comes by the CREATIVE word of God -

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” - 2 Cor. 4:6

“For our gospel came not to you in WORD ONLY but IN POWER and in demonstration of the Spirit and in assurance.....” - 1 Thes. 1:5.

This is how we know we are the elect of God (1 Thes. 1:4). In other words, salvation is by grace alone - undeserved and not due to the intent, thought processes and deliberative intent of the sinful heart - not of works.

The New Birth

Spiritual Separation from God is Opposition to God

Spiritual separation from God is separation from the life, light, love and righteousness of God. That is a state of active spiritual warfare against God. That active state of war against God is described by Paul:

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. – Eph. 2:2-3

They are by “*nature*” the children of wrath and therefore by practice the children of “*disobedience*.” There is a spiritual “*power*” of opposition to God at work “*in*” them, so that their actions are merely the fruits of the “*lusts of the flesh...desires of the flesh and of the mind*.”

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.- Rom. 8:7-8

Paul uses the present tense state of being verbs “*is*” and “*are*” to show this is a continuing state of being rather than a temporal completed action(s). This fallen condition or state of being is defined as “*enmity*.” The word “*enmity*” does not describe an action, but is a noun that describes a heart condition or attitude toward God. “*Enmity*” is a state of war. This is not descriptive of external actions of war but a mindset that exists in a state of war against God, and

The New Birth

that is why fallen man “**is**” not subject to the Law of God because he exists in a state of rebellion against God which is manifest by violating His law. It is not possible for such a state to be in submission to God (“*neither indeed can be*”), as that is contrary to this very existing condition, as they are polar opposites to each other. This is why those “*in the flesh*” or those in this lost condition cannot “*please God.*” This is why this condition is described as being under “*the law of sin.*”

Therefore, we are not sinners because we practice sin. We practice sin because we are sinners by our sinful nature or state of “*being evil*” (Mt. 12:34).

Therefore, since it is a spiritual condition of opposition against God and His law, it is by definition existing in a *sinful spiritual state*. The state of spiritual *separation* (death) is a state of active opposition against God.

The Fallen Nature is Evil

When Jesus rebuked the Scribes and Pharisees he said,

*O generation of vipers, how can ye, **being evil**, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an **evil man** out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.* – Mt. 12:24-25

He first described their spiritual condition as “*being evil*” rather than *doers* of evil. He attributed their doing evil to “*being*” evil. The bringing “*forth evil things*” originates with “*being evil.*” They did not sin in order to be evil, but they sinned because they are evil.

The New Birth

Jesus told his disciples that evil actions originate with an evil heart (Mt. 15:19). Therefore, fallen man practices evil because his heart is ‘*evil*’ by natural inclination, and that defines his moral state of “*being*.”

In the previous chapter it was shown that the natural born heart is void of right motive which is the glory of God in all that we think, say and do. Where this motive is missing evil exists. The root of an evil heart is that it operates by the wrong motive. The glory of God is never its root motive. Natural man may live and die for many causes (love of family, nation, honor, etc.) but the glory of God is never his root motive. Any other motive is evil as it robs God of His due glory. Therefore, fallen man is evil because his motives for everything he says and does are evil.

His motives are evil because his heart is inclined to evil. Fallen man loves darkness more than light.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that does evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. - Jn 3:19-20

The moral inclination of his heart is to love darkness and hate light. This moral inclination is a product of the fallen moral image which he received from Adam:

And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, and after his image; and called his name Seth: - Gen. 5:3

You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and

The New Birth

stayed not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. - Jn. 8:44

*In which in time past ye **walked** according to the course of this world, **according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:** Among whom also we all had our **manner of life in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.** - Eph. 2:2-3*

We come into this world with a heart that is inclined to evil because its moral image originates in spiritual union with Satan through the fall of man. Theologians call this total depravity as all the faculties of the heart are totally inclined to evil. However, just because all our faculties are inclined to evil does not mean that every man has reached his full evil potential.

The Fallen Nature Progresses in Evil

When humans come into this world they are gradually exposed to various degrees of light. It is their interaction with light which manifests their moral nature is inclined to evil.

The first authority they are confronted with is their parents and as soon as they are able to express themselves, a war of wills begin between the infant and its parents that never ceases until they are able to remove themselves out from under the direct authority of their parents. During this stage of life they are dependent upon their parents for everything at first until at last they claim complete independency. During this stage of growth they are exposed to moral rules derived by traditions, religion and/or social order that

The New Birth

are imposed upon them. These things form the moral basis for development of their conscience.

In societies and/or families where the Law of God is not taught, the traditions, religion and/or social order train the conscience to discern right from wrong. The conscience thus trained does the same work as the Law of God performs, which is to provide a standard of right and wrong:

*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law to themselves: **Which show the work of the law** written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) - Rom. 2:14-15*

Notice Paul does not say the law of God is written in their heart, but “*which show the WORK of the law written in their hearts.*” What is the “*work*” of the Law? The work of the law is to reveal the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:21) and thus provide a standard of right and wrong. When every human reaches an age where they are able to understand right from wrong due to the instruction of conscience, they will violate that standard manifesting their evil nature.

Throughout life, they will be confronted with light in different areas of their life and in different degrees. As they are confronted with light they will rebel against that light so that their conscience becomes more and more hardened. The manifestations of this hardening process may be hatred, jealousy, lying, divorce, killing, drug abuse, sexual perversion, jail, false religion, and war, etc.

An analogy that might help understand this hardening process is damp clay exposed to sunlight. The greater degree of exposure to sunlight the greater degree of hardening will occur. The more moral light that sinners are exposed to the more hardening will occur. The

The New Birth

more clearly they understand the light the greater degree of hardening will occur.

The nation of Israel had been exposed to light through its prophets and the result is that they killed the prophets and rejected the truth. However, when Christ came as the ultimate prophet manifesting the ultimate light, the hardening process increased in comparison to the light revealed.

36 While you have light, believe in the light, that you may be the children of light. These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.

37 ¶ But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:

38 That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

*39 Therefore **they could not believe**, because that Esaias said again,*

*40 He has blinded their eyes, and **hardened their heart**; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.*

- Jn. 12:36-40

How does God blind their eyes and harden their hearts? He simply exposes them to more light and the blinding and hardening process is the natural consequence. What is true of Israel as a nation is true of every fallen human being.

The New Birth

Separation from light is Opposition to Light

The unregenerate condition is a state of spiritual darkness and blindness, but it is not a passive state or condition, but an active state of opposition to the light:

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. – Jn. 3:19-20

The *heart* of man involves his intellectual, volitional and emotional make up or the self-conscious person, but under the dominion of his affections. Thus, under the dominion of the affections it is called “*the heart*” of man. This emphasis on the affections is seen in the words “*loved*” and “*hateth*” as a spiritual state of opposition to the light. Both the intellect and will are involved but it is the affections that dominate. His affections are engaged in opposition to the light as Jesus says he “*loved darkness rather than light....hateth the light*” His will is engaged in opposition to the light as Jesus said, “*neither cometh to the light.*” This is the “*enmity*” state of mind or intellect described by Paul in Romans 8:7. His inability to come to the light is due to his active opposition to the light due to a sinful condition of his heart.

Remember, this active opposition to light can be religiously and/or morally manifested as “*angels of light*” – false or hypocritical religious life.

Of course, Christ is the personification of this light, as he is the light of the world. However, the metaphor “*light*” finds its meaning in the contrast to darkness. John said that light consists of all that “*reveals*” sin. In the text the fallen man will not come to the light

The New Birth

because his evil works will be revealed as evil. In relation to the unregenerate condition the absence of light is the presence of darkness. Light is a metaphor of knowledge and understanding, or the ability to perceive and understand. The absence of light in the lost condition is the inability to perceive, see or understand experientially the Person of God. Look at Paul's description of the unregenerate state again and notice how the metaphor of darkness and blindness is applied:

..... Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:– Eph. 4:18

Spiritual separation is not only complete spiritual opposition to God and the things of God, but it is the complete absence of any **experiential** reference or knowledge of God.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. – 1 Cor. 2:14

The fallen unregenerate condition of man is unable to discern the things of God because he has no experiential spiritual framework to make sense of them. His spiritual framework is one of opposition to God and the things of God.

For example, when a person puts together a puzzle, they usually begin with corner pieces and pieces that all have straight edges in order to provide a framework to fit all the other pieces of the puzzle. They need a framework to fit all the other puzzle pieces. The fallen man has no corner or straight edged pieces to fit any of the spiritual things of God into his framework of thinking. He can discern the color and size (the meaning of words and their contextual

The New Birth

relationships) of the pieces, but he has no experiential spiritual framework (experiential knowledge and relationship with God) to put the pieces together to form the correct picture.

Separation from Righteousness is Opposition to Righteousness:

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. – Rom. 8:7

It is this state of “*enmity*” or war or opposition against God that produces total inability to be “*subject to the law of God.*” It is this enmity or condition of the unregenerate state of man that is the cause of inability to please God by obedience to the things of God “*neither indeed can be...cannot please God.*”

Therefore, total inability in the things of God is not due to spiritual inability, but rather due to spiritual ability that is in opposition (“*is enmity against God*”) to the things of God. Fallen man cannot, because man will not, due to his spiritual condition of enmity against God. Therefore, his spiritual nature must be changed before he can become willing to come to God through Christ, as Jesus says,

No man can come unto me except the Father draw him...
- Jn. 6:40

He did not say “no Jew can” but “*no man can.*” He did not say “some men” can’t but “*no man can.*” This is an explicit and clear assertion of universal inability to come to Christ by any man. If that were not so, then there would be no reason for the exception clause that follows “*except the Father draw.*”

The New Birth

However, this universal inability is due to the universal enmity against God. He cannot come to God through Christ because He will not come, and he will not come because he is in a state of war against God. Therefore, spiritual separation from God is spiritual opposition to God, and that is the fallen condition which is “*enmity against God.*”

Remember, spiritual separation from God is separation from light, life, righteousness, and love which have their source in God. Therefore, the resultant condition of separation from life, light, righteousness, and love is a state of spiritual darkness, deadness, uncleanness, and enmity. That condition is a state of opposition toward God and is therefore a state of sin.

Separation from love is opposition to love

*And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men **loved** darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that does evil **hates the light**, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.- Jn. 3:19-20*

From birth the human is at war with all who oppose his will. Enmity is not merely the absence of love but it is an active state of war. He is in a struggle to secure his own will, his own desires and laws, courts, jails, divorce and battles between nations testify of this war of wills.

Ultimately sin is defiance against the ultimate authority, which is God and His laws.

The New Birth

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. – Rom. 8:7-8

This is why Jesus told Nicodemus that man must be born again or he cannot see or enter the kingdom of God.

Separation from life is opposition to God

This condition or nature of evil is in opposition to life found in God, as Jesus says:

And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. – Jn. 5:40

Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. – Acts 7:51

Spiritual death is a state of active opposition to God. It is therefore not a spiritually inactive state of existence, as it is very active in “*being evil*” and producing evil works.

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the

The New Birth

flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. – Eph. 2:1-3

That state of opposition by definition is sin. Therefore, we are sinners by nature and in active opposition to the life of God.

The New Birth

Understanding the Solution

In previous chapters we have looked at the problem and its consequences. It has been shown that the root cause of the problem is spiritual separation from God, which is separation from life, love, light and holiness.

- A. **God is Life** – Jn. 1:4 *“in him was life”* Jn. 14:6 *“I am the...life”*
- B. **God is Light** - 1Jo 1:5 *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*
- C. **God is righteous** – *“There is none righteous but one and that is God.”* - Mt. 19:17
- D. **God is love** – *“And we have known and believed the love that God has to us. God is love; and he that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him.”* - 1 Jn. 4:16

The consequence from being spiritually separated from God due to sin is the exact opposite characteristics which describe the spiritually “dead in trespasses and sins”:

Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. – Eph. 4:18-19

- A. **God is Life**, but fallen man is *“alienated from the life of God”* and thus *“dead”* spiritually.

The New Birth

B. God is Light, but fallen man is in a “*darkened*” state.

C. God is Righteous, but fallen man is
“*given...over...unto...all uncleanness.*”

D. God is love, but fallen man is – “*past feeling*”

Therefore, the fallen condition of man is a state of spiritual separation from God which is characterized by spiritual death (absence of life), darkness (absence of light), depravity (absence of holiness), and enmity (absence of love).

In addressing this contrast between those spiritually separated from God and those in spiritual union with God the Apostle Paul contrasts them as “in Adam” versus those “in Christ.” All fallen men are “in Adam” by creation and birth, likewise all redeemed men are “in Christ” by creation (Eph. 2:10) and birth (Jn. 3:3-6). The former is a physical union whereas the latter is a spiritual union.

Significantly, there is no third option between being “in Adam” versus being “in Christ.” In Adam there is condemnation unto judgement whereas in Christ there is justification unto life and there is no third option. These two opposing positions are also contrasted in the following ways with absolutely no third option: (1) “in the flesh” versus “in the Spirit”; (2) Lost versus Saved; (3) Family of Satan versus Family of God; (4) kingdom of darkness versus Kingdom of Light; (5) Unregenerate versus regenerate; (6) Without the Spirit versus indwelt by the Spirit; (7) Condemned versus justified; (8) Wicked versus Righteous; (9) Unforgiven versus forgiven; (10) Non elect versus Elect; (11) Carnal/natural man versus spiritual; etc.

The New Birth

Moreover, there can be no spiritual union between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man apart from permanent indwelling by the Holy Spirit simply because the human spirit resides within the physical body. If there is a union between the human spirit and the Spirit of God it must be within the human body. It must be permanent indwelling because spiritual separation is the condition of spiritual death, darkness, depravity and unholiness. This is why the provision of salvation is based upon the “everlasting covenant” rather than any covenant occurring in time. Spiritual union was a reality between Genesis and Matthew as Paul makes this very clear when he says:

*Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, **are** the children of promise. But **as then** he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, **even so it is now**.* – Gal. 4:28-29

Every human living between Genesis and Matthew had the very same problem we have and there is no other solution to that problem but spiritual union. Without spiritual union there is no progressive sanctification because power to live the new life does not come from the new inward man but from the indwelling Holy Spirit as Paul found out in Romans 7:14-25.

Moreover, Paul makes it very clear that any human being without the indwelling Spirit of God is “*none of his*” (Rom. 8:9) simply because any saving relationship with God begins with spiritual union with God. Therefore, all human beings are either “*in Adam*” or “*in Christ*” as there is no possible third option. The prepositional phrase “*in Christ*” is descriptive of spiritual union with God through Christ, as Christ is God (the Son) in the flesh.

The New Birth

Spiritual Union

What other Biblical synonyms are used in describing it? How does it occur? How does it relate to other aspects of salvation? How does it relate to the covenants of the Bible? How does it relate to Pentecost and the baptism in the Spirit? How does it relate to the church as the body of Christ?

These are all very important questions that this chapter and the following chapters will attempt to answer.

Other Biblical Synonyms:

There are various synonyms used throughout the scriptures that describe various aspects of spiritual union as the work of God. Such synonyms describe how spiritual union is initiated, what it does and its immediate consequences. The following is a repetition of the list found at the beginning of the book in the introduction and they are:

1. Creation – Eph. 2:10; 4:24; 2 Cor. 4:6; 5:17;
2. Called – Rom. 8:30; 1 Cor. 1:26-30
3. Writing on the heart – 2 Cor. 3:3-6
4. Revelation – Gal. 1:16; 2 Cor. 4:6; Mt. 16:17
5. Washing and Renewing – Tit. 3:5
6. Circumcision of the heart – Col. 2:11

The New Birth

7. Quickening – Eph. 2:1, 5

8. Born again – Jn. 3:3,5; 1 Pet. 1:1:3, 23, 1 Jn. 2:29; 4:9; Tit. 3:5

9. Regeneration

10. Translation – Col. 1:13

11. Resurrection

This study will take a more detailed look at the first six synonyms in this list and give a shorter summary discussion of the final five.

A. Creation

Spiritual union is a creative act by God. Paul explicitly says, “*for we are God’s workmanship **created in Christ Jesus**...*” (Eph. 2:10a). No creature can create anything. This restricts it solely to the power of God. How does God create? He simply wills something into existence by merely speaking.

For example, John explicitly states that we are not born of the flesh or of the will of man but “of God” (Jn. 1:13). James says “of his own will begat he us.”

Paul explicitly likens it to God speaking light into existence in Genesis 1:3 when he says,

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of

The New Birth

the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. – 2 Cor. 4:6

God effectually called light into existence. This brings us to the second synonym that describes spiritual union as the product of an effectual call.

B. Called

Rom. 8:28 *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them **who are the called** according to his purpose. 29 ¶ For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. 30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, **them he also called: and whom he called**, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. 31 ¶ What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*

Paul is giving reasons why all things work for the good for the people of God. The first reason he gives is that they “***are the called according to his purpose.***” The purpose he has in view is God’s purpose of salvation. Foreknowledge is based upon “his purpose” not vica versa. He foreknows all aspects of salvation because he purposed all aspects and therefore works “all things” to align with “his purpose.” Hence, our salvation is not an accident! Our salvation is not of our own doing as “he” is the active doer in every aspect of

The New Birth

that purpose. The “whom” in every verse of this passage is describing “the called.”

These are not preacher called but whom “he called.” When we preach the gospel we call on all who are in the range of our voice to repent and believe the gospel but all never do respond and many times none respond. But all that “he called” have been foreknown, predestinated, justified and glorified because they are only those who are “*the called according to his purpose.*” Just a few verses later he identifies them as “the elect” (Rom. 8:35). All of these are God’s elect in Christ before the foundation of the world and thus are “the called according to his purpose” which purpose is empowered effectually to save them:

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. – 1 Thes. 1:4-5

Paul tells the Thessalonians how they can know they are the “elect” of God “*knowing...your election of God*”. They can know they are the elect because the gospel did not come as merely man’s words. It came as an effectual call, that is “*not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance*” so that it transforms them to be like those who preached the gospel to them “*as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.*”

These are they who are effectually “*called out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of his dear Son.*”

The New Birth

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. – 1 Cor. 1:26-31

Notice this kind of calling is limited (“*not many...not many*”) and its effectual conclusion is being placed “*in Christ Jesus.*” Spiritual union is the creative work of God by which we are brought into spiritual union with God ‘*in Christ Jesus.*”

Hence, they are the result of a creative act of God by which he speaks into existence by the effectual call. This is precisely what he is teaching in Romans 10:17-18 where he says:

*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing **by the word** of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. – Rom. 10:17-18*

The Greek term translated “word” in verse 17 is *Rhema* – the word of command. Faith comes by hearing, but ability to hear comes by the command of God. In contrast to the singular “word” of God that

The New Birth

comes with power to give a hearing hear is the plural “words” of preachers that have no power that never produce a hearing ear even though they preach the gospel “*into all the earth, and...unto the ends of the world.*” This is the difference between the effectual and general call of the gospel. The general call is the mamma, papa and preacher call that yields no obedience. However, the effectual call is when God commands the light to shine which power is not due to the human evangelist who can only bring it to the outer ear:

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. – 2 Cor. 4:6-7

This command effectually removes the darkness of unbelief in the heart and produces a new heart that is enlightened with the “*light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” In other words, it produces a believing heart as the metaphorical light that God commands to shine in the darkened heart of unbelief is the metaphorical light revealed in the gospel that God uses as His creative word and empowers as his effectual call.

This is why Christ is the “author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2). This is why faith is a “gift” of God as it is created by God in the heart through the effectual call. Hence, the effectual call writes the law of God upon the heart giving it a willing disposition to obey the will of God. This brings us to our next synonym for spiritual union which is writing God’s Law upon the heart:

The New Birth

C. Writing God's Law upon the heart

Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. – 2 Cor. 3:3-6

The apostle uses the analogy of how scripture is produced by God through men. God simply uses men as his instruments to write down his own words on parchment. The instrument is so much under the complete control of the Spirit of God that the instrument can claim no credit in what has been written. It is not the words of any human or that originates with any human mind but is the Word of God as though God himself wrote it down on the parchment. Paul is claiming that is precisely how God uses gospel preachers in the salvation of his elect, “*Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us.*” However, this writing of an epistle does not occur outwardly and with the use of ink, but inwardly “*with the Spirit of the Living God*” not on external tables of stone, “*but in fleshy tables of the heart.*” In other words, the gospel message is so empowered and controlled by the Spirit of God that the human instruments can claim no credit “*not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us able ministers of the New*

The New Birth

Testament.” The consequence of this empowered ministry is not an external conformation to the “letter” of the law but rather an internal moral transformation of the heart that it is willingly submissive to the will of God as revealed in the command of the gospel which is preached. Writing his law upon the heart conveys the idea that the moral nature of the heart has been transformed to be in harmony with God’s moral law.

Jeremiah describes this inward transformation by God in the very same manner as a work of God:

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. – Jer. 31:33-34

Jeremiah denies this is the product of men as this is work performed “*in their inward parts...in their hearts.*” Moreover, this is an effectual work of God in all he does this work, “*from the least of them unto the greatest of them.*” This is the effectual work of God whereby he transforms the disobedient heart into an obedient willing heart. This very passage is quoted in Hebrews 8:10-13 and referred to in 2 Corinthians 3:3-6 as the “new” covenant. With regard to spiritual union it is coming in union with God as “light” and

The New Birth

“holiness” as the spirit of man is “*created in true righteousness and holiness*” restoring the moral image of God.

This brings us to the next synonym which is “*Revelation*”

D. Revelation

*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined **in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge** of the glory of God **in the face of Jesus Christ**. – 2 Cor. 4:6*

Spiritual union with God is spiritual union with light. Light is used in scripture as a metaphor for revelation, understanding, knowledge, and even life (Jn. 1:4). Jesus is called “the light” of the world because he is the incarnate revelation of the invisible God. In that sense, “the word” is a synonym with the metaphor light as both “the word” and “the light” are metaphors of revelation.

In first Corinthians chapter three, Paul used the analogy of inspiration of scriptures with regard to how God empowers the gospel to write the law of God upon the heart, meaning the gospel is empowered to transform the moral condition of the heart. In chapter four and in the text above, Paul changes the analogy to that of the created act of God in Genesis 1:3 where God effectually called light into existence removing the darkness. This analogy conveys the idea that the empowered gospel not only transforms the moral condition of the heart, but it is God’s creative word that removes the darkened state of unbelief in the heart creating a heart that believes

The New Birth

in Christ as he is revealed in the gospel. It is this revelatory knowledge of God in the person of Jesus Christ as revealed in the gospel that Jesus says “is eternal life.”

*As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And **this is life eternal**, that they might **know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ**, whom thou hast sent. – Jn. 17:3*

The writer of Hebrews defines faith as “the substance” of things hoped for, meaning, the basis that gives hope. This creative act of God within the darkened heart by the empowered word of the gospel is the creation of that “substance” or “the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” It is the revelation of Christ as presented in the gospel that is the “substance” of saving faith and hope of salvation.

Jesus asks his disciples whom do they think he is and Peter responds thou art the Christ the son of the living God. Jesus denies this profession of faith was communicated to him “by flesh and blood” but was direct revelation within his heart by the Father.

*He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: **for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.** – Mt. 16:15-17*

Paul when describing his new birth experience on the road to Damascus compares it to his first physical birth and the effectual

The New Birth

call that revealed Christ within him. He had no part in his first birth as he was effectually called forth by God and he says that is precisely the nature of his second birth

*But **when it pleased God**, who separated me from my mother's womb, and **called me by his grace**, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: - Gal.1:15-16*

Spiritual union is the restoration of light – metaphorical light or revelatory light. The metaphorical “light of knowledge” that God effectually calls into existence by his “command” is the revelatory knowledge of who Christ is as revealed in the gospel. This light is the spiritual life of men (Jn. 1:4) as Jesus says:

As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. – Jn. 17:3

He gives eternal life “to as many as thou hast given me” (the elect) and the nature of this eternal life is the revelatory experiential knowledge of the true God and Jesus Christ which comes by divine fiat or the command of God within the human heart at the point of spiritual union.

The empowered Gospel produces a believing heart which provides “assurance” of the certainty of salvation:

For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much

The New Birth

assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. – 1 Thes. 1:5

*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.** – 1 Pet. 1:23-25*

When God empowers the gospel, it transforms the rebellious resistant heart into a submissive willing heart that obeys the gospel, and this is the creative command of God that removes the darkness of unbelief by the revelatory experiential knowledge of God “in the face of Jesus Christ” producing personal “assurance” of salvation so that one can say “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded....”

This revelatory knowledge that is created by God within the heart is in connection with the preaching of the gospel which provides both the “substance” and “hope” of saving faith (Heb. 11:1). It is with this kind of transformed heart that man “beleveth unto righteousness” (Rom.. 10:8).

E. The Washing of Regeneration

Not by works of rignhteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; - Tit. 3:5

The New Birth

The metaphors of writing the law of God upon the heart and removing the darkness in the human heart by light by an effectual call, metaphorically describes the transformation of an unbelieving and unwilling heart into a believing and willing heart. This transformation from the former state to the latter state is here metaphorically described as a “washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.” The “washing” is the removal aspect whereby death, darkness, depravity and enmity are replaced by life, light, love and holiness due to spiritual union. What is metaphorically washed away from the heart is the unbelieving resistant character of the fallen heart characterized by darkness, depravity and enmity. What is renewed in the heart by spiritual union is a believing willing disposition characterized by light, love and holiness.

The first half of Titus 3:5 clearly demonstrates that Paul is dealing with the issue of how we have been “*saved*” as a completed action in the past. He uses two aorist tense verbs that refer to a past completed action (“*have done*” and “*saved*.”). He first asserts a denial. We were not saved by “*works of righteousness which we have done*.” Baptism is a righteous work, as even Jesus characterized his own baptism as an act of “*righteousness*” (Mt. 3:15). The initial act of being “*saved*” cannot be traced back to us or anything we did that God would regard as righteous. Instead it is traced to what God did (“*he saved us*”) “*according to his mercy*” rather than our works.

The second half of Titus 3:5 explains the means by which God saved us – “*by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost*.” Both the washing and renewing are the descriptive work by

The New Birth

the Holy Spirit of how we were “*saved*” by his mercy. This renewing work is further described by Paul to the Colossians:

And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: - Col. 3:10

This is a creative act by the Spirit of God that has to do with the “*new man*” or what Paul elsewhere calls the “*inward man*” (Rom. 7:22). Specifically, it is a creative act that obtains renewal in “*knowledge*.” Remember, that Paul likens the new birth to the effectually calling of light out of darkness in Genesis 1:2-3, except it is the metaphorical “*light of knowledge*” that is imparted “*in our hearts*” by the creative act of God (2 Cor. 4:6). That revelation **is** eternal life (Jn. 17:3) and is the very substance and hope of saving faith, as it makes the heart see Jesus Christ (“in the face of Jesus Christ” – 2 Cor. 4:6). Therefore, this is revelatory “*knowledge*” as a creative act of the Spirit of God that effectually calls us out of spiritual darkness into the light of the kingdom of His Son. Paul tells the Colossians that this is revelatory knowledge that renews us “*after the image of God*” which he has just told them is an “*invisible*” image (Col. 1:15). Paul describes this image that is renewed within us by this revelatory knowledge as a creative act of God to the Ephesians:

And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. – Eph. 4:24

Again, this is a creative act by the Spirit of God. It is the renewal of the invisible “image of God” or restoring man to the spiritual likeness “*after God*.” This likeness is what was lost in the fall of man.

The New Birth

He fell from an “*upright in heart*” condition through spiritual separation from light, life, love and holiness found solely in union with God. This renewal in the invisible image of God is restoration of “*righteousness and true holiness*” through spiritual union with the Spirit of God.

Therefore, the removal of the negative aspects of the fall through spiritual separation or the removal of spiritual darkness, deadness and uncleanness, is conveyed by the metaphor of “washing.” The restoral of spiritual light, life and righteousness is described under the metaphor of “*renewing*”. Paul is merely describing the internal work of the new birth by the Holy Spirit by use of a negative (washing) and positive (renewing) metaphor. This brings us to our next synonym for spiritual union and that is “circumcision” of the heart.

F. Circumcision of the heart

Physical circumcision was the cutting off of the foreskin upon the male reproductive organ. Physical birth/life was the product of the male reproductive organ. Hence, the cutting off of the foreskin was a type of reproductive birth/ life without the fleshly nature, thus the new birth. This is a negative metaphorical expression that refers to taking away the enmity toward God and the things of God. Man in his spiritually separated state from God is separated from the love, life, light and holiness of God and he is therefore spiritually dead, deprived, darkened and at enmity with God and the things of God. Circumcision of the flesh, is the metaphorical removal of these negatives (dead, deprived, darkened state of enmity).

The New Birth

When this physical type is applied to the “heart” it conveys the idea of a heart that is not governed by the fleshly nature. God often commanded Israel to “*circumcise their hearts*” which is parallel with the New Testament command to “*crucify the flesh*” or to stop walking after the flesh but walk after the Spirit or to “*put off the old man*” and “*put on the new man*” which is created after the image of God.

Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff necked.- Deut. 10:16

Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, you men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.
– Jer.4:4

However, when it is God doing the circumcision of the heart, it refers to the act of new birth whereby the fleshly nature is removed and a new heart is given that delights in doing the will of God:

And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, to love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, that you may live. – Deut. 30:6

In whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: - Col. 2:11

Just as physical circumcision typified spiritual circumcision or circumcision of the heart in the Old Testament so the physical act of

The New Birth

baptism typifies spiritual union with Christ in death, burial and resurrection:

Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; - Col. 2:11-12

G. The Final five Synonyms

Spiritual union with God is spiritual union with God's life, and thus, "quickenings" conveys that truth. Being "born" into the kingdom of God, metaphorically conveys how spiritual union brings us into a new spiritual world, as our physical birth brought us into this present physical world. The synonyms of regeneration and resurrection describe the positive consequence from being brought out of spiritual death to life. The synonym "translated" describes the instantaneous removal from the realm of spiritual darkness to the realm of spiritual light.

The New Birth

The New Birth Reveals God in the Heart

And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. – Jn. 17:3

Previously, we dealt in a summary fashion that spiritual union is a revelatory work of God. Now, we will examine this idea much more thoroughly. The unregenerate state is a condition of complete absence of light. We are not speaking of natural light or literal light, as given off by the Sun or a light bulb. We are speaking of metaphorical light, or the “*light of knowledge.*” Nor are we speaking of ordinary knowledge generated through exercise of the mind, or by instruction coming from human sources, but we are talking about revelatory knowledge that originates directly from God.

For example, when Jesus asked “*who am I*” Peter responded:

Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God – Mt. 16:16

How did Peter come to this conclusion about Christ? Did he arrive at this conclusion through the teaching of Jesus or by applying the scriptures to Jesus? Not according to Jesus. Here is how Jesus explains Peter’s response:

Blessed art thou Simon bar Jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father in heaven –
Matthew 16:17.

This “*light of knowledge*” of the Person of Jesus Christ came by direct revelation from God. Paul told the Corinthians that the unregenerate man is blinded so that he cannot see the light of the

The New Birth

gospel (2 Cor. 4:2-3). His solution to this blinded state toward the gospel was a creative act in comparison to the creation of light in Genesis.

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

– 2 Cor. 4:6

In Genesis 1:3 God merely spoke light into existence. He said “*let there be light and there was light.*” God effectually called light into existence out of darkness. This was a creative act of God by effectual calling. Paul is claiming that the “*light of knowledge*” or the knowledge of Jesus Christ in the heart does not come through ordinary means, but is the direct creative act of God by effectual calling or a divine revelation from God. He is saying that by an act of creation God makes the blind heart see “*the face of Jesus Christ*” as revealed in the gospel (2 Cor. 4:5,7). He is saying that God enabled the heart by a creative act to know “*the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” Jesus says this revelatory knowledge “*is eternal life*”

And this is eternal life that they may know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. – Jn. 17:3

Therefore, Paul is saying that the “light of knowledge” which is effectually called into existence within the human heart by God’s command removes the darkness of unbelief by revealing Jesus Christ as presented in the gospel (2 Cor. 4:5,7). This knowledge is both the “substance” and “hope” of saving faith (Heb. 11:1) which removes the darkness of an unbelieving heart and transforms it into

The New Birth

a believing heart which is eternal life. He is describing how a “new” believing heart is created by God. This is the act of being called out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son. This is being translated into the kingdom of light. This is the creation of a believing heart. This is a heart “*created in Christ.*”

Paul ought to know as he claims that his own initial salvation was due to the very same divine revelation from God in his own heart:

*But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is **not after man**. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, **but by the revelation of Jesus Christ**.....But **when it pleased God**, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, **To reveal his Son in me**, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not **with flesh and blood**:..... – Gal. 1:12-13,15-16*

There are three things mentioned by Paul that did not originate with him or come to him through natural means; (1) His gospel; (2) natural birth; (3) Christ in him or his salvation calling.

Hence, the phrase “*flesh and blood*” is synonymous with “*not after men*” or “*of men*” nor “*was I taught it*” by men. It did not come from the natural man or natural means. His gospel came by direct “*revelation*” by Jesus Christ and his new birth came by direct revelation of Christ in him by God’s command or effectual calling.

Look at the analogy he makes between his natural birth and his new birth. Just as God separated Paul from the womb of his mother at the time it pleased God, so did God reveal Christ in Paul or “*called him by his grace*” when it pleased God. Paul had no part to play in

The New Birth

either birth. This revelation of Christ in him is attributed to being “*called by his grace*.” This is the same divine calling defined as the effectual call by God’s command in 2 Corinthians 4:6 – “*For **God who commanded** the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God **in the face of Jesus Christ***.” God gave Paul a heart that could see Christ. When you look into the “*face of Jesus Christ*” you are seeing him. The effectual call reveals Christ in the heart so that you see him. That seeing ability or believing heart is the result of divine creation. This is the knowledge that “*is*” eternal life (Jn. 17:3) and is the substance, as well as, the hope of saving faith (Heb. 11:1). Hence, there is no such thing as a regenerated unbeliever as taught by Hardshells. There is no such thing as a gap between regeneration and conversion. Regeneration is a created act by God whereby Christ is seen as revealed in the gospel (note 2 Cor. 4:7 immediately follows this creative act).

This is precisely how salvation under the new covenant is explained in Ezekiel and later in the book of Hebrews:

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

*And I will put my spirit within you, and **cause** you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. – Ezek. 36:26-27*

It is the act of giving this new heart by God which reveals God within man:

The New Birth

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. – Jer. 31:33-34

Therefore, effectual calling is regeneration/new birth. It is the act of God dispelling spiritual darkness, death and uncleanness from the human heart, thus providing a new heart. It is the revealing of God in the heart. This is the believing heart that manifests righteousness and the source of profession of salvation with the mouth (Rom. 10:8-12).

Paul says there are those who are “*the called according to his purpose*” whom God “*foreknew*” according to his purpose, he also predestinated the same to be conformed to the image of His son, and those he predestinated, he “*called*” and those he “*called*” them he also justified and glorified (Rom. 8:28-30). This was not a general or ordinary call through men preaching the gospel because **all** that were predestinated were “*called*” and **all** who were “*called*” were justified and glorified. He is explicitly speaking of his “*elect*” (Rom. 8:32). This is an effectual calling of the elect that precedes both justification and glorification.

Paul tells the Thessalonians that they can know their election of God because the gospel came to them more than “*in word only*” or more than merely an outward general call:

The New Birth

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: – 1 Thes. 1:4-6

He is not instructing them how they can know the preachers were the elect of God,¹⁹ but how they can know they are the elect of God. They can know their election because the gospel came to them “not in word only, but also” or **in addition to** the “*word*” it also came “*in power, and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance*” so that it transformed them into the same “*manner of men*” who preached the gospel unto them. When Paul preached to them the Gospel they heard the “*word*” but in addition to hearing it with the outer ear, God energized that gospel with His creative power making it an effectual call that transformed their hearts from unbelief to belief and thus “assurance” of salvation.

To the Corinthians, Paul says that their calling was according to election so that God would receive all the glory rather than

¹⁹ Those who oppose this interpretation insist that Paul is speaking of the preacher of the gospel rather than just the gospel. However, the context will not support that view. Take note that Paul's intent is to convey unto them how the Thessalonians can know they are the elect (v. 4). One's election is not known by how a preacher comes to them, but how the gospel comes to them “in power, and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance” so that it transforms them into the same manner of men who preached the gospel unto them.

The New Birth

themselves or those human instruments God used to preach the gospel unto them:

For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. – 1 Cor. 1:26-31

Notice that the phrase “*not many are called*” is further described in positive terms “*God hath chosen*” identifying the “*called*” as the “*chosen*” just as the “*called*” were identified as the “*elect*” in Romans 8:29, 32. They were “*chosen to salvation*” (2 Thes. 2:13) rather than chosen as a consequence of salvation.

Notice that “*not many are called*” but that is not true when the general call of the gospel goes forth unto men because all are being called to repent and believe within the voice of that preacher. Paul is not speaking about vocational calling as the context is about gospel salvation that effectually brings a person “*in Christ*.” He is denying that any aspect of being put “*in Christ*” can be attributed to anyone but God - “*But OF HIM are ye in Christ, who of God IS MADE UNTO US...*”

This is the effectual calling described by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:6 where he used the Genesis 1:3 analogy “*For God who commanded*

The New Birth

the light to shine out of darkness” to help us understand that “*the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” that was revealed “*in our hearts*” was a creative act by God.

This is a Creative Act of God

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of man, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. – 2 Cor. 4:6

Paul had told the Corinthians “*But of God are ye in Christ Jesus*” (1 Cor. 1:30) and when describing the divine act of quickening to the Ephesians (Eph. 2:1, 6) he demands they were “*created in Christ Jesus*” by the quickening work of God:

*For we are **his workmanship created in Christ Jesus** unto good works... - Eph. 2:10*

To be “*in Christ Jesus*” is to be saved, as no lost person can be “*in Christ.*” Moreover, there is no salvation **outside** of Christ for anyone at anytime because God has made no provision for salvation **outside** of Christ. Paul had been teaching the Ephesians about the quickening work of God (Eph. 2:1) and described this quickening work as the saving work of God by grace (Eph. 2:6,8) as opposed to works (Eph. 2:9) but rather was “*His workmanship*” which is impossible for men to do as it is a work of creation – “*created in Christ Jesus.*”

To “*quicken*” means *to make alive*. Remember, that the fallen unregenerate condition is a state of spiritual separation from God as light, life and righteousness as described in Ephesians 4:18-19, and therefore the regenerate condition is the reversal of separation from

The New Birth

God. Instead of spiritual *separation*, it is spiritual *union* with God, which is spiritual union with light, life, and righteousness. To be “*in Christ*” is synonymous in Scripture to be “*in the Spirit*” which is spiritual union with God through Christ.

New Birth is by the Will of God

Of his own will, begat he us by the Word of truth – James 1:18

Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. – Jn. 1:13

The imparted revelation “*in our hearts*” whereby the heart is enabled to see “*the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” is a creative act of God by divine command (“*when it pleased God*”). All creative acts by God are exclusively performed by the power of God’s will. No creature has the will power to create anything, and therefore they have no capability to participate in creating anything. Hence, the believing or seeing heart is the creative work of God:

This is the work of God that ye believe on him – Jn. 6:29

For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus.... – Eph. 2:10a

If any unregenerate chooses to receive or come to Christ (Jn. 1:12) it is because God first chose them and by His own will quickened them (Jn. 1:13) by creating a seeing or believing heart in Christ by divine revelation “*of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” in that heart. Thus, producing a believing heart:

The New Birth

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. – Jn. 15:16

Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. – Psa. 110:3

It is all a matter of cause and effect. The quickening work of God is the creative act of spiritual union with God. The creative word that effects that divine union is the gospel energized by God as the divine revelation of “*the light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” in our hearts. Thus, the entire action by God is the effectual call or the creative word producing the “*light of knowledge of the glory in the face of Jesus Christ*” within the previously darkened heart. This creative light is the creation of the “substance” as well as the “hope” of saving faith thus, producing a seeing or believing heart. Hence, gospel faith is the result of the regenerate work of God in our hearts. There is no such thing as an unregenerate believer in Christ, any more than there is such a thing as a regenerate unbeliever in Christ. Regeneration is the cause while conversion is the immediate consequence and they are inseparable from each other in a direct immediate cause and effect relationship.

This is the New Covenant Work of God

Therefore, the unregenerate state does not possess a heart that will or can believe:

The New Birth

O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

– Deut. 5:29

Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day. – Deut. 29:4

A believing heart is what God gives all His Covenant People:

*For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. **A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.*** – Ezek. 36:24-27

This heart God gives by a creative command that imparts direct revelation of Christ in the heart so that none of the covenant children need to be taught who is God but all know him by direct revelation:

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest

The New Birth

of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. - Jer. 31:33-34

This is the “new” covenant with the nation of Israel that will bring salvation to the whole nation yet in the future (Rom. 11:25-28). However, it is also the same salvation for all of God’s elect in all ages according to the “blood of the everlasting covenant.”

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. – Heb. 8:10-13

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. – Heb. 10:16-18

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, - Heb. 13:20

This is what Jesus was referring to in John 6:45 where he defined “draw” to be God’s work of teaching “all” his covenant people the knowledge of God:

The New Birth

It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. – Jn. 6:45

And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children. – Isa. 54:13

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. – Jer. 31:33-34

This is why no man can come to Christ by faith (Jn. 6:44), unless the Father provide direct revelation of Jesus Christ by the creative command of God in the heart, or the revelation of the “*light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*”

The New Birth

Gospel Faith is the Work of God

....no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. – 1 Cor. 12:3

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. – Jn. 6:44

Lost people are incapable of making a saving profession of Christ apart from the Holy Spirit. Much of modern evangelism functions on the assumption that all human beings have inherent ability to come to Christ by faith. They claim all humans have faith and they use it every day. They exercise faith when they sit down on a chair believing it will hold their weight. They exercise faith in friends and family to do what they promise. They exercise faith in government to protect their rights. They exercise faith in many of the things they do every day. Therefore, they assume they are also equally capable of coming to Christ by faith. They argue, why else preach the gospel unless it is assumed that man has ability to respond to it? These are persuasive arguments.

However, natural faith is only possible where there is willingness to exercise faith in such things. It is equally true that people choose not to exercise faith in many things every day. Many do not choose to place their trust in government, politicians or in certain other people and things simply because they are not willing to do so.

Willingness is always determined by how a person thinks or how a person feels toward a certain person or thing. If we don't like someone or something, or have reason to be suspicious of someone

The New Birth

or something, we will never be inclined to place our trust in that something or someone until our mind and/or feelings are positively disposed toward that someone or something. Therefore, the ability to trust is determined by the inward disposition of thought and feelings toward someone or something.

The position of natural faith assumes that nothing affects the natural inclination of fallen men toward God, and therefore fallen man has no dispositional problems with God which would prevent willing trust in the gospel or God. However, if the fallen nature is naturally disposed against God, then that would prevent willingness to trust or submit to either God or the gospel.

There is sufficient Biblical evidence to demonstrate that fallen man is naturally disposed against God (Jn. 3:19-20; Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14). The emotional (Jn. 3:19-20) and intellectual (Rom. 8:7; 1 Cor. 2:14) dispositions of fallen man are in opposition to God, so that he will not come to Christ by faith (Jn. 6:40). Indeed, the Scriptures demand that this internal opposition to God is irreversible by man but can only be changed by a supernatural work of God.

This must be the case with all fallen men or why else would Christ say, “*No man can come to me*” (Jn. 6:44)? Christ did not say “some” men cannot come to me, but “*no man*” can. That is at minimum, an assertion of universal unwillingness to come to Christ. It is this unwillingness that is the root of man’s inability to come to Christ. He said no man “*can*.” The Greek term translated “*can*” is *dunamis* or the common Greek term translated “power” or ability. Jesus is saying in the clearest possible language that “*no man IS ABLE to come to me*.” If that were not true, then why would the exception

The New Birth

clause immediately follow - “*except the Father draw him*”? This exception clause demands that only a supernatural work of God can change that natural inability to come to Christ by faith. Therefore, this proves that natural faith is not sufficient for men to come to Christ or else there would be no exception clause at all.

In response to those who ask, why preach the gospel if men are not inherently able to come to Christ by faith, the answer is that the gospel is God’s chosen means (2 Thes. 2:13) to change that inward disposition against God to a willingness to come to Christ by faith (1 Thes. 1:4-5) and that is why we are to preach the gospel.

Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. – Jn. 6:29

Notice the contrast between the plural “*works*” they had asked and claimed they could “*do*” versus the singular “*work*” that only God can do. They envisioned obtaining eternal life by their works, whereas, Jesus claimed that eternal life was a gift obtained by faith which is “*the work of God.*” Paul also taught this in Ephesians 2:8-10:

For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it²⁰ is a gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works..... - Eph. 2:8-10a

²⁰ “It” – refers to the whole phrase “*for by grace are ye saved through faith*” as the completed act (perfect tense participle) of salvation includes “*through faith*” as a singular completed action. Furthermore, he denies that “this” salvation through faith originates “out of you” (Gr. *exs*). Hence, faith is inclusive in this “*gift of God.*”

The New Birth

However, just as they rejected that eternal life was a gift (vv. 27-28) and insisted they can do the works of God, they also reject that believing in Christ is the work of God, but insist they are capable of believing in him based solely upon proper visible miraculous evidence to support their faith.

30 They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?

It must be remembered that these are the very ones who already saw Him miraculously feed 5000, and yet they remained in unbelief. This proves that mere exposure to miracles is not sufficient to bring them to faith in Christ. Indeed, Jesus told another crowd that asked for the very same thing, that only an unbelieving and rebellious people seek after miracles for the purpose to believe:

Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: - Mt. 12:38-39

Outward miracles, signs and wonders do not change inward problems of the heart (Rom. 8:7). Only God can change the inward obstacles that prevent lost people from coming to Christ by faith. He had told them that believing in him was the work of God (Jn. 6:29), but they told him they were inherently able to believe in him if he just supplied sufficient evidence to warrant their faith (Jn. 6:30). Christ denied this was true and said:

The New Birth

But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. – Jn. 6:36

They had seen him do miracles and more miracles would not be sufficient to change their inward resistance to believe in him. Only the work of God would predispose fallen men to come to Christ by faith, and so he contrasts their unbelieving response (v. 36) to the response by “*all*” the Father gives to the Son. The giving work of the Father is followed by the drawing work of the Father, both of which result in “*all*” given and drawn, coming to Christ by faith, thus proving that believing in him is “the work of God.”

36 But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not. 37 All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;... that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. 40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life:.....44 No man can come to me except the Father draw him, and him will I raise up in the last day....45...Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

Therefore, the only fallen men who come to Christ by Faith are those whom the Father gives to Christ. This giving work by the Father never fails to bring “*all*” to Christ that the Father gives to Christ (“*of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing*”).

However, it is in this dispute over faith as a natural inherent ability of man versus the product of God’s effectual work that the transition between literal food and metaphorical food takes place:

The New Birth

27 Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.....30 They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work? 31 Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat. 32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. 34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. 35 And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

They sought him for literal food to sustain their literal physical life. Christ is a master teacher and he takes the literal and uses it metaphorically to teach a spiritual lesson. Just as they had physically come to him in order to partake of literal food in order to sustain their physical lives, they ought to have come to him by faith in order to partake of metaphorical food for eternal life.

Jesus then tells them that he is the bread that the Father has sent down from heaven that the world might have life:

***32 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.
33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.***

The New Birth

34 Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.

What was their response to this? They acknowledge him as “*Lord*” and then request “*evermore give us this bread.*” Most modern day evangelists would claim that was a true profession of faith in Christ. However, here is how Christ responded:

36 But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not.

Later in the text, He says the very same thing concerning those who claimed to be his “*disciples*” (vv. 63-66) who had not only publicly professed faith in him, but had submitted to baptism and were following him.

64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

Christ attributes the very same reason for the unbelief of “some” of his own disciples as he does this audience. True saving faith is the work of God and God had not done this work in regard to them (vv. 36-39; 64-65).

65 And he said, Therefore said I to you, that no man can come to me, except it were given to him of my Father.

The word “therefore” points to the reason for their unbelief in the previous verse. However, it also points to the previous reference in verse 44. Remaining in the condition of unbelief is due to the fact that ability to come to Christ by faith was never given unto them by

The New Birth

the Father. Here Jesus more fully explains what it means to be drawn, having heard and been taught by the Father really means. It means that the ability to believe had not been “*given to*” them by the Father. In verse 44 Jesus uses the word “draw” but in verse 65 he replaces it with the words “given to” as faith is the “gift of God” (Eph. 2:8) as well as “the work of God” making Him to be both the “*author*” and its “*finisher*” (Heb. 12:2) of our faith.

However, let us return to the transition language between literal and metaphorical food. Take note of the language Jesus uses in verse 35 where the same transition between literal and metaphorical food first introduced in verse 27 is again introduced with regard to the literal manna God provided in the wilderness to the Person of Christ:

And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. – v. 35

The phrases “*cometh to me*” and “*believeth on me*” are parallel expressions²¹ of the very same thing – **coming to him by faith**. Thus partaking of him by faith satisfies all spiritual “*hunger*” and “*thirst*.”

Obviously, he was not **literal** bread. Thus, he is speaking of himself as **metaphorical** bread, and as such, he is not referring to **literally** partaking of him by the mouth, but partaking of him

²¹ Both equally obtain complete satisfaction “*never hunger....never thirst*”. The absence of this in his audience is interpreted by the words “believe not” in verse 36. Therefore, the words “cometh to me” and “believeth on me” are parallel expressions of the same thing – coming to him by faith.

The New Birth

metaphorically by faith. He is not teaching cannibalism of his physical body.

If this doesn't make it sufficiently clear that he is not teaching cannibalism of his body and blood, he again makes this same transition in John 6:47-51 but this time from metaphor to literal so that there should be no confusion as to what he means by partaking of his flesh and blood:

*47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, **He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.***

48 I am that bread of life.

49 Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.

50 This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

*51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: **if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.***

Therefore, he explicitly and clearly tells them that obtaining eternal life is by believing on him and then he proceeds to relate it to them again in metaphorical terms of partaking of Christ as metaphorical bread (vv. 48-51). Thus, “*he that believeth on me shall have eternal life*” is the same thing metaphorically as “*if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever.*”

He would give his life on the cross to satisfy God's demand for righteousness and wrath in the place of the sinner (2 Cor. 5:21), thus securing eternal life for all who received His substitutionary atonement by faith. Just as one would partake of food and drink

The New Birth

which would become inseparably part of them to sustain physical life, so also those who partook of Christ by faith, He would be “*in*” them by regeneration, and they would be “*in*” him by positional justification through faith.

If this was not sufficiently clear, He then later tells them that his physical flesh will be removed to heaven after his resurrection, completely out of their reach (v. 62), making it impossible to literally eat his flesh and drink his blood. Moreover, he further explains that it is the Spirit that gives life (“*quickeneth*”), but not the “*flesh*” of which they thought he wanted them to physically digest. The flesh “*profiteth nothing.*” The instrumental means by which the Holy Spirit uses to quicken them is his “*words*” not his physical “*flesh.*”

63 It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

Yet, like the Roman Catholics, the Jews, as well as “some” of his own disciples failed to understand he was speaking metaphorically. The root problem was not in his “*words*” but in their state of unbelief:

64 But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

65 And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

66 From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.

The New Birth

Jesus attributes their inability to understand and believe his words due to the fact that the work of God had never been performed in them – *“therefore I said unto you, that **no man can** come unto me, **except it were given unto him of my Father.**”*

However, Peter understood that Jesus was not calling upon them to literally cannibalize His flesh and blood, but that eternal life was partaken through faith in His gospel words:

67 Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

*68 Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? **thou hast the words of eternal life.***

*69 **And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.***

Jesus used many such metaphors about himself. He said *“**I am the door**”* and that only by entrance through him could one obtain eternal life. However, he was not speaking **literally**, or suggesting anyone must **literally** walk through His body as a literal door to obtain eternal life. These are all **metaphorical** statements which mean he represents characteristics found in these literal things. He simply **represented** a “door” in the sense of the only access to eternal life by coming to Him in faith for eternal life – *“**I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh to the Father but by me**”* (Jn. 14:6). He said *“**I am the vine**”* but he did not mean he was to be understood as a **literal** vine. He said, *“**I am the light**”* but not a **literal** light.

When he did speak of the bread and wine used in the Supper and said *“**This is my body**”* and *“**this is my blood**”* he was speaking **metaphorically**, as He was still in his body, and the blood was still

The New Birth

pumping throughout his body when he said this. He is simply conveying to them that the literal bread and wine represent my body and represent my blood, as the Supper is performed “*in remembrance of him*” rather than in recreating his real literal presence in bread and wine.

Therefore, partaking of Him by faith is metaphorically represented by partaking of the Lord’s Supper. Eating and drinking are metaphors for partaking of Christ by faith.

A. Universal in Scope – Jn. 6:44

There are no infant children of Adam that enter this world as believers. That is generally recognized by all, or else there would be no reason to give the Great Commission.

However, the issue is not that they come into the world as unbelievers, but the issue is do unbelievers have the inherent natural ability to come to Christ by faith?

Jesus answers this question in the negative – “*no man can come to me...*” He did not say *some* men cannot come to me, but “*no man can.*” The English term “*can*” is used to translate the Greek term *dunamis* which is commonly translated “*power*” or “*able*”. No man has the power or is able to come to Christ by faith. If they had such inherent ability there would be no reason for the exception clause “*except the Father draw him.*” This exception clause loudly denies that any unbeliever has inherent ability to come to Christ by faith by themselves. Therefore, it is false that all men have inherent ability to come to Christ by faith. The phrase, “*no man can come to me*”

The New Birth

asserts in the clearest possible terms the fact of universal inability to believe in Christ, and therefore there is a universal vacuum of faith.

B. Universal in Nature – Rom. 8:7-9

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please 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.* – Rom. 8:7-9

Paul provides only two possible classifications for all mankind. You are either “*in the flesh*” or “*in the Spirit*” as there is no third category according to Paul (Rom. 8:8-9). If you are not “*in the Spirit*” you are “*in the flesh*” and therefore, “*none of his*” according to Paul. Therefore, to be classified as “*in the flesh*” is to be classified as “*none of his*.”

Those “*in the flesh*” have a fallen condition previously described in verse 7 that provides the basis for why fallen man is incapable of coming to Christ by faith and the reason for saying those “*in the flesh cannot please God*.”

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. – Rom. 8:7-8

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. – Heb. 11:6

The New Birth

This is why Paul formerly declared

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. – Rom. 3:10-11

This is why Jesus described the lost man in the following words:

*And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men **loved** darkness **rather than** light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil **hateth** the light, **neither cometh** to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.* – Jn. 3:19-20

The fallen human nature of man is in an **intellectual** state of unbelief even as it comes into this world. It is **emotionally** in love with darkness and hates light. **Volitionally** it “*neither cometh to the light*” and therefore, “*there is none that seeketh after God.*” Seeking after God is the act of the will. No lost person is willing to seek after God.²²

Thus, the lost carnal mindset is irreversibly fixed (“*not subject...neither indeed can be*” – Rom. 8:7b) in a state of “**enmity against God**” (Rom. 8:7a) or in a state of war against God. In Romans 8:7 the word “can” translates the Greek term *dunamis* which is commonly translated “power” or “able.” Thus, the fallen nature has no ability to come to Christ by faith. This inability is not due to the lack of the power of volitional choice, but due to enmity

²² Those involved in false religions think they are seeking God, when in fact they are in rebellion against God. Being religious is not seeking God. Seeking God means coming to God by faith in the true gospel of Christ (Heb. 11:6).

The New Birth

against God that directs the will against God and the things of God (1 Cor. 2:14).

Thus, the fallen nature makes it impossible for man to come to Christ by faith. Jesus said “*no man can come to me*” (Jn. 6:44a). No kind of persuasion can bring a lost man to come to Christ by faith:

The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely. – Psa. 58:3-5

All come into this world “*in the flesh*” or in a lost unbelieving resistant condition. Hence, inability to come to Christ by faith is universal in scope.

This is why coming to Christ in genuine saving faith is “*the work of God*” (Jn. 6:29); a creative quickening work of God (Eph. 2:1,5,10) which only occurs in those “given” (Jn. 6:37-39) by the Father to the Son and drawn by the Father to the Son (Jn. 6:44-65). Apart from this supernatural work of God, the lost man will “*always resist the Holy Spirit*” by rejecting the preaching of the gospel through the prophets and preachers of God (Acts 7:51).

C. Universal in Ethnicity – Jn. 12:32

This passage is often jerked out of context and used to contradict John 6:37-65 or used to reinterpret John 6:37-65.

The New Birth

However, several contextual factors must be kept in view if this text is to be properly interpreted.

First, the primary bulk of teaching on this subject occurs previously in John 6 rather than in John 12.

Second, John 6:64-65 clearly denies that all human beings without exception are drawn.

Third, the preceding context in John 12:32 is about “Greeks” wishing to come and see Jesus (Jn. 12:20-24). John 12:32 is part of the response to his disciples who brought him this request. Gentiles were considered unclean by the orthodox Jew and by the Mosaic Law who are not to be fellowshipped with (Acts 10:28). To be placed under discipline is to be treated as though you were a gentile (Mt.18:17).

Fourth, in view of all the preceding contextual factors the words “draw all men” can be legitimately translated and understood to mean “draw all men without distinction of race/class/gender” instead of “all men without exception.” The words “all men” in the Greek text are found in the anarthrous construct. The anarthrous construct may legitimately be understood to mean “all classes or kinds of men.”

D. “Saved through faith” - Ephesians 2:8

Eph. 2:1 ¶ And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are

The New Birth

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

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Those who believe that saving faith is not a gift of God, but inherent in man's nature, and those who believe regeneration is obtained because of faith rather than regeneration the cause of faith interprets Ephesians 2:8 to support their views.

However, a careful based contextual interpretation does not support either view.

E. Is Faith a gift of God?

If faith is a gift of God then it is not inherent in man's nature and is not universal but must be given to man by God. Those who argue it is not a gift of God interpret Ephesians 2:8 and the words "and that not of yourselves: it is a gift of God" to have reference to "saved" but not to "faith." Their reasoning is that in the Greek text, as in the English text the term "it" is neuter but "faith" is feminine. Hence, they conclude "it" cannot refer to "faith." However, this conclusion is based on improper and poor Biblical hermeneutics. The truth is that "saved" is not found in the neuter gender either, and so according to this logic "it" cannot refer to "saved" either. The truth is that "it" refers to the whole phrase "saved by grace through faith." The whole thing is the "not of yourselves: it is a gift of God." However, the stress of the text would fall on the words "through faith" as this is the only thing added since verse 5 when Paul first

The New Birth

says “by grace ye are saved.” However, in verse 8 the prepositional phrase “through faith” is added and so does this addition make it of man or of works? It is this additional phrase that Paul is making clear does not change his previous “by grace” are ye saved in verse 5.

Other scriptures confirm that salvation is “by faith” so that it can be “of grace” (Rom. 4:16). The writer of Hebrews says explicitly that Jesus is both the “author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2) which denies that saving faith is inherit in man’s nature. Paul also tells the congregation at Philippi that the ability to believe has been given them as much as the privilege to suffer for his name has been given them (Philip. 1:29). Paul tells the congregation at Corinth that no man can even confess Jesus as Lord except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3). More importantly, Jesus says that “*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.*” (Jn. 6:44).

In context, the idea of coming to Christ is coming to him by faith (Jn. 6:35) and is equivalent to “believeth.” Jesus uses the Greek term *dunamis* translated “can” and means “ability” or “power” and is the word that “dynamite” is derived from.

Therefore, saving faith is not “*of yourselves*” but “*it is a gift of God.*” Indeed, it is expressly listed as a “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 3:22).

F. Is Faith the cause of Regeneration?

Some admit that faith is a gift of God but argue that regeneration is the result of faith. In other words, one must believe in the gospel in order to be born again. We believe this theory is based upon a misunderstanding of what regeneration is and ignorance of the contextual data in Ephesians 2:1-10.

The New Birth

First, in this context the words “*quicken*ed.....*sav*ed.....*creat*ed in *Christ Jesus*’ are all synonymous expressions of regeneration or new birth. They are all past tense verbs and all refer to the very same thing but from different perspectives. For example, “quicken” is first introduced in verse 1 being contrasted to “dead.” Second, it is then mentioned again where it is parenthetically defined as being “saved” and then this term is repeated in verse 8. Paul denies this “saved” is of “yourselves” or “of works” (vv. 8-9) but is defined to be the work of God in verse 10, the kind of work that only God can do (“created in Christ Jesus) thus removing any doubt it is not “of yourselves” or “of works.” All of these verbs are found in the active voice denying this action is due to a cooperative process between God and man but all of God.

Second, the word “saved” in verse 8 is a translation of two different verbs in the Greek text. These two verbs form what grammarians call a periphrastic construct. The first verb is a perfect tense verb while the second is a present tense finite verb. How does this grammatical structure impact the question of whether or not regeneration is the result of faith or faith is the result of regeneration? The perfect tense verb demands that the action of “saved” is a completed action and continues as a completed state right up to the time Paul pens these words. The present tense verb aspect of this construction demands this completed state of action of being “saved” continues from the standpoint of writing. In other words, Paul is telling the Ephesians they had been saved, remained saved and would continue in that saved state indefinitely. This means that the prepositional phrase “through faith” grammatically had to be inclusive of that completed action of being saved since being “saved” was “through faith.” Remember, in context the word “saved” is synonymous with the word “quicken” and being “created in Christ.” In other words, being quickened, or saved, or created in Christ is inseparable from faith as faith is inclusive in that completed action.

The New Birth

So, grammatically faith and regeneration are inseparable in that completed action but which is logically the cause and which is the consequence in that action? We have previously answered that question under the topic of drawing by the Father. In defining what it means to draw, we see it refers to the regenerative power of God that produces a believing heart. Coming or believing in Christ is explicitly stated to be the consequence of drawing (regenerative power).

This is further illustrated by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:6 where the “created” aspect of Ephesians 2:10 is further explained:

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Paul explicitly and clearly alludes to Genesis 1:3 to illustrate how God liberates the human heart from the power of darkness or state of unbelief under the power of Satan through the gospel (2 Cor. 4:3-7). The gospel preacher can only reach the outer ear of those in bondage to Satan in the darkness of unbelief. However, Paul illustrates how the gospel becomes the power of God unto salvation by comparing it to Genesis 1:3. In Genesis 1:3 God speaks light into existence by an effectual call. Paul argues, likewise, when God liberates the human heart from the darkness of unbelief and captivity by Satan He does so by empowering the gospel truth it as His creative word of command that produces metaphorical light of experiential knowledge of God “in the face of Jesus Christ” or in the revelation of Christ as declared in the gospel.

This is precisely what Paul tells the congregation at Thessalonica and how they can know if they are one of God’s elect by the very way the gospel came to them as an empowered word demonstrating the power of the Spirit that produces assurance of salvation:

The New Birth

1 Thes. 1:4 **Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. 5 For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;**

In other words, the gospel “in word only” saves no one. It must be empowered by God as His word of command which produces metaphorical “light of knowledge” within the human heart. This “light of knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ” is saving faith as this is the “substance” of faith (Heb. 11:1) that gives “hope” or a confident expectation of salvation. Saving faith is inseparable from this revelation as this revelation is the empowerment of the gospel by God as His creative word in the heart, producing a believing heart.

Paul tells the congregation at Rome that faith cometh by hearing but hearing comes by the RHEMA or word of command by God (Rom. 10:17) but not by the RHEMA of men who preach the gospel (Rom. 10:18). When the gospel is empowered by God it becomes his RHEMA or word of command that creates a believing heart and it this believing heart from which a confession with the mouth (Rom. 10:8-9).

This is precisely what Jesus attributes the confession of faith by Peter in Matthew 16:16-17. He tells him that his confession came by revelation not from men or “flesh and blood” but it was derived from His Father in heaven.

This is precisely what Paul tells the congregations in Galatia when he says:

Gal. 1:15 *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To reveal his Son in me,...*

The New Birth

Paul directly compare God's part in natural birth to God's part in new birth. The timing is completely of God and the birth is all of God as no human plays any part in producing life. The words "to reveal his Son in me" or confession of faith in Christ refer to precisely the revelation Jesus tells Peter did not originate with men. Repentance and faith are inseparable from new birth but is our experience of that creative work of God rather than the cause of it. They are simultaneous in time as the empowered word is a revelation that produces a believing heart but this new birth is the logical cause while conversion is the logical consequence:

John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Notice that the world (gentiles) knew him not (v. 10) and his own (Jews) received him not (v 11). Hence, total rejection by the whole world (vv. 10-11). How then does anyone explain those who do receive him since there is universal rejection (v. 12)? The answer is not to be found in man's will but in God's will through new birth (v. 13). Verses 10-11 claim universal rejection "but" verse 12 states that if anyone does receive them it is because God gave them "power" to become the sons of God and these are those who believe on his name. How do such believers come out of universal rejection? They are transformed from rejectors of him to receiving him due to the "power" of God by new birth (v. 13). They receive him (believe in him) not to due to their will but due to God's will revealed in His power of new birth.

The New Birth

So, we preach the gospel depending on the Holy Spirit to empower it and change unbelieving hearts to believing hearts by new birth.

The New Birth

Faith Cometh by Hearing

*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the **word** [rhema – word of command] of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes truly, their sound went into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world. – Rom. 10:17-18*

Usually, Romans 10:17 is simply jerked out of its context and quoted as a proof text to support the false narrative that faith is the cause of the new birth. Yes, that is a false narrative as verse 18 demonstrates. In verse 18, the preaching of the gospel by men alone or “*their words*” (general call) did not produce, or bring about “*hearing*” and therefore did not bring about faith within anyone who heard “*their words*” (the preachers of the gospel).

Note the difference between the singular “*the word of God*” versus the plural “*their words*.” Faith cometh by hearing, but the hearing that produces faith comes by “*the word of God*” rather than by “*their words*.” The Greek term translated “word” is *rhema* which can be understood as a command or a word of command. The gospel command in the words of human preachers come only to the outer ear of their listeners. However, the singular word of God that produces hearing comes God’s word of command (effectual calling) within the hearts of men that makes the heart see:

*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
– 2 Cor. 4:6*

The New Birth

Paul's analogy is clear. In Genesis 1:2-3 darkness was upon the face of the deep and Genesis 1:3 states “*And God said, let there be light and there was light.*” This was no suggestion but an effectual word of command that effectually called light into existence. The light produced was not in response to darkness meeting certain conditions. Darkness did not enter into any cooperative or conditional terms that produced light. Light was produced by the sovereign effectual command of God.

Arminians go to one extreme and hardshells go to the other extreme. The Arminian claims the new birth is conditioned upon faith in the gospel, while hardshells claim the new birth can occur without gospel preaching. **Both are wrong.**

God has chosen both the means and the end without contradiction between either. In Romans 10:14-16, God has ordained and chosen the preaching of the gospel. However, that instrumentality only brings the gospel to the outer ear of man as Romans 10:18 so clearly demonstrates. If the gospel comes only to the outer ear there is no internal hearing, and thus no faith is produced.

Let's consider this in more detail. Paul says that “*hearing*” comes “*by the Word of God.*” He cannot possibly be speaking about *physical* hearing as that does not come “*by the Word of God*” but comes by natural birth. He is speaking about the receptivity of the heart to God and the things of God. God said concerning those who had physical ears to hear and physical eyes to see:

Yet the LORD has not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, to this day. – Deut. 29:4

The New Birth

They did have physical ears that could audibly hear and they had physical eyes that could visually see. However, they did not have a perceptive heart to God and the things of God. In other words, they were spiritually dead to the things of God. Their lack of **spiritual** perceptivity to God and the things of God is described in **physical** terms of perception or “*eyes to see, and ears to hear.*” Yet, it is clear he is not speaking of the physical body and its functions but spiritual functions of the heart “*an heart to perceive.*”

The writer of Hebrews speaking of the very same generation and of the very same problem states it this way:

For to us was the gospel preached, as well as to them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. – Heb. 4:2

In other words, God did not give them a heart to believe. It is the creative power of God that mixes the gospel with faith. Previous to the statement in Deuteronomy 29:4 God had said at the time he gave them the Ten Commandments:

O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!
– Deut. 5:29

However, natural birth does not supply such a heart. Moses concluded by stating “*the Lord has not given you an heart to perceive...*” (Deut. 29:4)

Yet, when God described the New Covenant he described it as the act of God giving such a heart:

The New Birth

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them. – Ezek. 36:26-27

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, said the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, said the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.- Jer. 31:34

The writer of Hebrews quotes this very passage in describing the “new” covenant:

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, said the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. –Heb 8:10-11

It is the effectual call (the command by God) as a creative act that mixes faith with the gospel in the human heart. The gospel is delivered to the external ear by men, but it is the Spirit of God that takes it from the human ear to the heart of men and empowers it as

The New Birth

a creative act that calls (creative command) light into existence within the darkened heart.

Knowing, brothers beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as you know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And you became followers of us, ... - 1 Thes. 1:4-6a

Notice that Paul is providing them with a way to know they are God's elect (v. 4). That is his intent. This knowledge of their election is assured by the way the gospel came to them. He does not deny it came to them "*in word*" as he is the one who preached it unto them. However, he denies it came "*in word only.*" It came as an effectual word of command because it came "*in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.*" The consequence of this effectual call was that they "*became followers of us.*" In other words, it changed their very moral nature from being God haters to followers of those who loved God. Paul distinguishes between the general gospel call that comes to the external ear by means of human instrumentality from the gospel that comes to the internal heart of man by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Faith is described as seeing. Moses told the Israelites that had been bitten by poisonous snakes to just "look" at the brazen serpent and they would be instantly healed. Jesus used this analogy for faith in the gospel (Jn. 3:15). Saving faith in Christ is ability to see him as Savior. That is what God produces in the heart of the elect by a creative act – a seeing heart. Seeing equals believing and therefore, a seeing heart is a believing heart.

The New Birth

Therefore, this effectual command that produces this revelatory light within the darkened heart of the sinner is the creation of saving faith in the gospel.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. – Heb. 11:1

The light of revelation produced by the direct command of God in the heart of the lost sinner provides both the “substance” and “hope” of saving faith. It is the revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ as presented in the gospel that is created in the heart by the direct command and power of God. The truth of the Gospel as revealed by God in the human heart is the “substance” of saving faith. The promise of the gospel as revealed by God in the human heart is the “hope” of saving faith. Therefore, creation of that “*light of knowledge*” removes the darkness of unbelief as that “*light of knowledge*” is both the “substance” and “hope” of saving faith being created in the heart and thus the act whereby God mixes faith in the gospel within the heart (Heb. 4:2).

Therefore, saving faith is the creative work of God in the human heart as a pure act of grace (Rom. 4:16; Jn. 6:29) which Jesus identifies as revelatory knowledge that He says “*is eternal life*” (Jn. 17:3).

The new birth is bringing the human spirit of man into spiritual union with God by the act of God’s command. The truth of the gospel is God’s creative word of command that speaks (calls) a new enlightened heart into existence.

The New Birth

*Of his own will **begat he us with the word of truth**, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures. – James 1:18*

***Being born again**, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, **by the word of God**, which lives and stays for ever..... But the word of the Lord endures for ever. And this is the word which **by the gospel is preached to you**. - 1 Pet. 1:23-25*

Hence, the power is not found in the human preaching the gospel nor in the gospel itself but in the effectual application by the Spirit to the heart.

*So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is **the power of God** to salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. – Rom. 1:15-17*

The “power” is not found in the gospel but in God as Paul says it is the “*power of God*.” Paul uses the genitive of source that defines the source of power to be found in God rather than in the gospel itself or in the preacher.

Neither does Paul use a conditional clause that would make believing the condition for the power of God to save. Indeed, the Greek grammar demonstrates the very reverse. Paul uses the Greek preposition *eis* (“to”) with the accusative case translated “saves.” This construction declares this power effectually terminates in salvation, whereas the phrase “*everyone that believeth*” is the

The New Birth

manifestation of that power within both Jews and Gentiles alike. Paul preaches the gospel in dependence upon the Holy Spirit to make it effectual in the hearts of those he addresses.

For example, Paul had been preaching the gospel faithfully at Corinth with absolutely no results and was ready to give up when Christ came to him by revelation and said:

*Then spoke the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not your peace: For I am with you, and no man shall set on you to hurt you: for **I have much people in this city.** – Acts 18:9-10*

These are not yet saved people. These are those people that God would empower the gospel within their hearts producing saving faith or as Paul previously explained:

*And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and **as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.** – Acts 13:48*

Paul does not say “as many as believed were ordained to eternal life” but “*as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.*”

The effectual call is clearly taught throughout scripture and some of the more obvious passages are:

Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. – Rom.8:30

In this context, “*whom.....them he also*” is not only repetitive but demands effectual application to the very same group. In other

The New Birth

words, if you are part of “*whom*” you are also part of “*them he also.*” Thus, all who are predestinated are also called, and all who are called are also justified, and all who are justified are also glorified, and these are contextually identified as “*the elect*” (Rom. 8:32). “*Called*” in this passage is an effectual calling that concludes in glorification of all who are called. “*Called*” here describes the new birth that precedes being “*justified.*”

The New Birth

Does Elective Faith make God Unjust?

*(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? **Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.** – Rom. 9:11-14*

Whether or not you believe that Paul is speaking about election to salvation in the above passage, you must agree that what he says aptly describes the position taken in this book about elective faith or effectual calling. Many would react negatively to effectual calling according to elective grace because in their minds it is unfair to choose some and not choose all equally, as in their minds that would make God a respecter of persons.

However, do you remember the first chapter in this book where it was established that all mankind existed as one indivisible human nature in one man – Adam – and when Adam sinned the whole human nature (with all of its potential divisions which ultimately separate into the children of Adam) sinned when Adam sinned as all were actually “in Adam” and that is why “in Adam ALL die”?

Do you remember the words of Jesus in John 3:18 that man comes into this world condemned already in a state of unbelief? Do you remember the words of John the Baptist in that very same chapter where he says that the “*wrath of God abideth*” on all unbelievers (Jn. 3:36)?

Therefore, can you agree that all human beings are already under the condemnation and wrath of God and serve under the sentence of

The New Birth

death even as they come into the world as individuals? If so, then cannot the potter do what he wills with the condemned fallen mass of humanity, as all equally deserve justice and none deserve salvation? Isn't this the analogy Paul makes with the Potter and the clay?

*Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the **vessels of wrath** fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the **vessels of mercy**, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but **also of the Gentiles?** – Rom. 9:20-24*

To claim he is simply speaking about Israel as a nation is directly contradicted by the phrase “*also of the Gentiles*” and the reference to Pharaoh.

The subject preceding this text is that God will “*have mercy upon whom he will have mercy*” (Rom. 9:16, 18). The very meaning of “*mercy*” has to do with those who are already justly condemned. The “*same lump*” represents the justly condemned fallen race of mankind. Mercy only has meaning in relationship with those already justly condemned. Mercy is not receiving what one justly deserves. If the “*same lump*” represents unfallen humanity then neither mercy nor justice would apply as they would be without sin and thus without condemnation. So, the lump does not represent unfallen mankind, but fallen mankind.

The New Birth

Paul is saying, since all humanity is already “*fitted for wrath*” according to just condemnation. Therefore, cannot God do what he wills with those already justly condemned? If he chooses to go ahead and justly allow some to freely choose to go right on their way to hell, while choosing to have mercy upon others is that not His right, as long as justice is satisfied in both cases? In the case of the “*vessels of wrath*” justice is served. In the case of the “*vessels of mercy*” justice is satisfied completely by Christ. Mercy is applied only to those “*vessels of mercy...whom he hath called*” effectually to salvation consisting of both Jews and Gentiles. Isn't this precisely how Paul describes the preaching of the gospel as a separator between these two classes of fallen mankind?

For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? – 2 Cor. 2:15-16

Do you remember that the condition of spiritual separation from God is a condition of spiritual opposition towards God? To exist in a state of separation from the light, life, righteousness, and love of God is a state of rebellion and resistance to God and that is why none in that state will ever freely choose come unto Christ for eternal life. Is it unjust if God simply allows them to freely choose to continue in their rebellion and justly condemns them? Is it not his right then to “harden whom he wills” as much as his right to “have mercy upon whom” he wills?

The truth is that nothing prevents the greatest sinner from repenting of their sins and coming to Christ by faith except their own willful choice to resist and rebel against the gospel. So their condemnation is just and right.

The New Birth

The truth is that nothing explains the salvation of any justly condemned rebellious and resisting child of Adam, but the mercy of God by effectually calling them out of the kingdom of darkness into the light of His dear Son (Col. 1:13). That is the meaning of “*saved by grace*” (Eph. 2:6). That is the meaning of “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;*” (Tit. 3:5). Therefore, the real question is not why he saved some and not others, but why He chose to save any? The only Biblical answer provided for that question is given by Paul:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. – Eph. 1:4-12

If all men were guiltless, you may have a point, however, all men are justly condemned “*already*” (Jn. 3:18) and **already** under the “*wrath of God*” (Jn. 3:36) and every single one of them exist in a

The New Birth

state that is at “*enmity with God, and not subject to the Law of God, and neither indeed can be*” (Rom. 8:7).

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy..... Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. – Rom. 9:16,18

Try witnessing to the lost and see the response you get? Apart from the power of God accompanying the gospel, you will get reviled, mocked and ridiculed and possibly killed as that is precisely the response that Jesus received by the condemned.

When the gospel truth is presented apart from the power of God, it stirs up the evil heart of man in resistance and hardening to the truth. That is how God hardened Pharaoh, and hardens the non-elect. He simply exposes them to the light of truth. This is how Paul responded to truth before he was saved by the power of God:

*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, **I had not known sin, but by the law:** for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. **But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence.** For without the law sin was dead. For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me.* – Rom. 7:7-11

The purpose of the Law is to reveal the knowledge of Sin (v. 7). The law reveals sin by defining what it is (v. 8). However, the evil heart reacts to the law by manifesting their enmity toward God by willful violation of the law (v.9). Before the Law did its work in

The New Birth

Paul, Paul regarded himself a keeper of the law and therefore justified as a candidate for “life” by the Law. However, after the law stirred up his evil heart to commit sin, he realized he came under the condemnation of the Law to eternal death (v. 10). The Law deceived Paul as a lost person, because it said do this and live, and Paul thought he could keep the law and obtain eternal life, but in attempting to do so, the Law only pointed out where he failed and thus condemned him to death rather than justified him for life (v. 11). Exposure to the law stirs up the evil nature and hardens the lost man in his rebellion and sin.

So whenever the gospel is preached there will always be one of two reactions, but the preacher is always victorious:

*Now thanks be unto God, which **always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?** – 2 Cor. 2:14-16*

The New Birth

The Tripartite Nature of Man

A major reason why most theologians do not properly grasp the new birth is their rejection of the Biblical doctrine of the tripartite nature of man. Although, all agree that man is divided into two basic parts (material and immaterial) the Bible explicitly divides the immaterial part of man into spirit and soul.

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

– Heb.4:12

Paul explicitly states that the Word of God distinguishes between the “*soul and spirit*” equally as much as the Word of God distinguishes between bone marrow and bone joints or between heart motives (intents) and heart thoughts. If the reader does not recognize such a distinction it will affect the correct understanding of the nature of man and the kind of salvation designed to save the whole man. Biblical salvation is designed to ultimately sanctify (set apart) the whole man, spirit, soul and body unto the Lord:

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. – 1 Thes.

5:23

Notice “*you wholly*” consists of three different aspects “*spirit, and soul and body*.” Moreover, scriptures harmonize with tripartite view of man as salvation is expressed in three tenses (past tense “*saved*”,

The New Birth

present tense “*save*”, and future tense “*shall be saved*”). These three different tenses of salvation are designed for these three different aspects of the human nature. Glorification of the body is the future tense of salvation (“*shall be saved*”). Progressive sanctification deals with spiritual maturity or how the soul characteristically puts on the inward man daily (“*save*”). The completed action of salvation (“*saved*”) refers to the complete glorification of the spirit which is the object of new birth (Jn. 3:6).

The Tabernacle and temple are types of the born-again child of God. There are three divisions in the Tabernacle/Temple. The outer court is visible to all and represents the body. The holy place is concealed to the external world and is where all the daily work occurs which represents the soul. The holy of holies is set apart for the indwelling presence of God and represents the spirit of the saved man.

The tabernacle/temple is set apart for worship and fellowship with God. Of all creatures living on earth, only man was made to have fellowship with and worship God and only man was made in the image of God and only man was created to operate in three different spheres. God gave him a physical body so that he could function in the physical sphere. God gave him a soul that he would be self-conscious. God gave him a spirit so that he could worship and fellowship in the spiritual sphere. Jesus clearly says that God is “*spirit and they that worship God must worship in spirit*” (Jn. 4:24). God is a spirit by nature, and therefore, man’s nature had to include the capacity to worship “*in spirit.*”

The New Birth

Therefore, the immaterial nature of man is not the same as with animals but more comparatively on a level with God and angels. God and angels are self-conscious spirits. God uses the term “*soul*” to describe his own state of consciousness (Isa. 1:14; 42:1; Jer. 5:9, 29; 6:8; 9:9; etc.). Moreover, the spiritual nature of God and angels may exist within or without a physical body. The incarnation is an example of Divinity dwelling in a body. That same capacity for existing apart from a physical body has been imparted to man’s immaterial nature (Heb. 12:23) as man’s immaterial nature was directly imparted from God’s own Being.

Man was the only living creature on earth whose immaterial nature was directly imparted from God. God told the seas to bring forth the fowls of the air and fishes. God told the earth to bring forth land animals. However, only of man God said “*Let us make man*” and only man is it said that God directly “*breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.*”

God does not have literal lungs and so the word “*breathed*” is merely metaphorical for imparting “*breath*” (Heb. *nephesh* “spirit”) of “*life*” (lit. Hebrew “lives” plural, biological life, spiritual life, and soul life). The human spirit, angels and God all share the same “*spirit*” essence imparted to them from God. This spirit essence is eternal as far as its substantive nature. This spirit nature is the conduit by which it possible for God to communicate His moral attributes to man and angels through spiritual union. However, this union was conditioned upon their moral obedience to His revealed will. Both man and non-elect angels sinned and by sin were spiritual separated from God and thus separated from the life (light, love, holiness) of God resulting in spiritual death/separation.

The New Birth

Therefore, the immaterial substance of man is entirely different than the immaterial substance of all other earthly creatures. Man shares in common an immaterial substance with animals that is spirit in substance and self-conscious (soul) but the spirit of man comes directly from God which is eternal in nature with regard to its substance as it is in angels. However, the immaterial nature of animals does not come from the eternal Spirit of God. Animals are brought forth from temporal substances (earth, water). Hence, when animals die their spirits return to their source (earth, water) as well as their bodies, whereas, the human spirit goes “upward” to God where it is dealt with accordingly (Eccl. 12:7; Eccl.12:31; Lk. 16) as to its eternal destiny.

Moreover, God made man “*upright*” or according to a moral standard shared by God and angels (prior to their fall). God created man in spiritual union with His own spirit. In that spiritual union, man shared the moral image of God thus making man “*upright*” in spirit. God’s moral image is characterized by “*light*” “*love*” and “*holiness*.” These three moral attributes are what constitutes spiritual condition of “*life*.” Separation from these moral attributes is spiritual death to man or angel. Separation from “*light*” brings darkness. Separation from love brings “*enmity*.” Separation from holiness brings depravity. The Bible says “*God is light*” and “*God is love*” and “*God is holy*” and God is the fountain or source of life. When man sinned, he fell from that “*upright*” moral condition because sin separated his spirit from the Spirit of God.

Spiritual death and spiritual life are not descriptive of cessation or continuance of the spirit nature, but cessation or termination of spiritual union with God which is manifest in a change of the moral

The New Birth

condition of that eternal spirit. For example, fallen angels do not cease to exist when they fell into sin, their spirit nature was not terminated at the point of sin, but rather, sin altered the moral condition of their spirit nature because sin separated them from God. To be “*without God*” does not mean to be without existence or that the spirit nature of man ceases to exist but rather ceases to exist in a moral condition like unto God and thus ceases to exist in a right relationship with God. Instead of existing in a condition of light, it exists in darkness. Instead of existing in a condition of love it exists in a condition of enmity. Instead of existing in a condition of holiness, it exists in a condition of depravity. Spiritual death (separation from union with God) brings forth death in all of its fullness (soul separation from God, body separation from the soul; eternal separation of spirit, soul and body in Gehenna).

When the spirit of man is separated from God (meaning separated from holiness, light, and holiness) it changes its moral condition to enmity, darkness and depravity which constitutes spiritual deadness. The human spirit is the seat of morality and its moral condition is what determines the moral inclination of the heart of man. Its moral condition is determined by its union with either Satan or the Spirit of God. The redeemed man’s spirit exists in spiritual union with the Spirit of God and therefore exists in a state of “true holiness and righteousness” as the seat of moral inclination of the soul. The unregenerate man’s spirit is in union with Satan and exists in a moral state of death and therefore is the seat of moral inclination of the soul depravity, darkness and enmity. Although the redeemed man has the inclination to do what is good (Rom. 7:18) it does not have the power to do what is good (Rom. 7:15-20). The Holy Spirit is in union with the regenerate spirit of man and enablement of the soul

The New Birth

to do good comes by subjugating the human soul to the regenerated inward man by the power of the Holy Spirit. putting on the regenerate by the Holy Spirit.

What was “*created in true holiness and righteousness*” was not the human soul as the human soul continues to fluctuate between good and evil (Rom. 7:14-25). What was created in true holiness and righteousness was the “spirit” of man. When the soul is subjugated to the spirit or when it is “put on” in the soul, then the soul is enabled to convey its righteous inclination.

Just as death has four stages (spiritual, soulish, physical, eternal) so does the solution to death. At the point when the spirit of man is brought into union with the Spirit of God, the life of God is imparted to the human spirit. Progressively, as the soul is empowered to “put on” the life (love, light, holiness) of the spirit in the inward deliberations of the soul that life is made manifest in words and deeds. Spiritual maturity joined with God’s purpose determines how characteristic the redeemed man is enabled to manifest the life of God. That progressive manifestation is how one redeems the time (Eph. 5:17) saving it in the form of rewards in heaven. Salvation of the body occurs at the resurrection and glorification of the body. The eternal consequence is abiding on a new earth forever.

Soul death in both the lost and saved is the same. When the deliberations of the soul operate “in the flesh” it produces a life of sin. The lost person always operates “in the flesh.” However, the saved person can operate either “in the flesh” or “in the spirit.” If we “walk in the Spirit we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.”

The New Birth

Regeneration and Gospel Repentance

And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. – Lk. 24:47

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: - Acts 17:30

These two texts should forever repudiate the “Free Grace” teaching that gospel repentance is restricted to the gentiles and is not preached “*among all nations*” including lost gentiles in Athens.

However, the “Free Grace” doctrine is not the only heresy that pervert’s gospel repentance. Repentance must first be properly understood before its relationship to regeneration can be addressed. Many believe that John the Baptist preached another gospel and administered another baptism different than the only gospel of salvation given under heaven among men, and the only baptism ordained by God among men simply because John’s baptism is called a “*baptism of repentance*.”

It is called the “*baptism of repentance*” because John required “fruits of repentance” before administering baptism (Mt. 3:6-8). He required faith in the coming Christ before he would baptize anyone (Acts 19:5). Indeed, the gospel he preached is the same gospel we preach as it is recorded for us by the apostle John:

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believed not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him – Jn. 3:36

The New Birth

This is the very same gospel preached by Jesus in John 3:15-16:

That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. – Jn. 3:15-16

This is “*the gospel of the kingdom*” that both Jesus and John preached. It is the call to repent toward God and submit to the spiritual rule of Christ in your heart. Paul calls this one of the fundamentals of the faith:

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, - Heb. 6:1

This was the same gospel preached unto the Israelites by Moses under the Old Covenant administration, who rejected it, as well as to the Jews under the New Testament Covenant administration:

For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it – Heb. 4:2

This is the very same gospel preached from the fall of man by all the prophets in progressive revelation until its fulfillment in the coming of Christ:

To him give all the prophets witness that whosoever believeth in his name shall receive remission of sins – Acts 10:43

The New Birth

This is the very same gospel commissioned by Christ in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 and preached throughout the book of Acts to Jews and Gentiles alike:

1. To the Samaritans:

*But when they believed Philip **preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God**, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.* – Acts 8:12

2. To the Gentile Ephesians Church

*And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone **preaching the kingdom of God**, shall see my face no more.* – Acts 20:25

3. To all in Rome:

***Preaching the kingdom of God**, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.* – Acts 28:31

And as we have seen repentance was an inseparable part of that preaching to Gentiles and Jews alike (Lk. 24:47; Acts 17:30).

However, what is repentance and how is it related to regeneration?

The New Birth

A. What is Repentance?

Gospel repentance is not “penance.” Penance is doing a good work to demonstrate you are sorry for your sin. However, the Biblical doctrine of gospel repentance is an internal change of mind. The Greek term translated “repent” means “change of mind.” Gospel repentance has to do with the change of the intellect, will and affections in regard to Jesus Christ as presented in the gospel.

1. In regard to the intellect it is a change from unbelief in Christ unto belief in Christ.

2. In regard to the affections it is a change from hating the light (“the light of the world”) of the gospel unto love for the light of the gospel. It is a change from loving darkness to loving light and hating darkness.

3. In regard to the will, it is change from resistance and rebellion against the gospel to submission and yielding to the gospel.

Therefore, repentance is a change of direction. With regard to the gospel or gospel repentance it is the change of mind from unbelief in Christ to belief and change of the affections from hating the light as presented in the gospel to loving gospel light, and it is the change of the will from resisting Christ to submitting to him in keeping with the gospel commands.

The New Birth

B. How is Repentance related to Regeneration

Repentance is the experience of the intellect, affections and will, changing in regard to the gospel. However, regeneration is the power producing that change.

*Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned;
renew our days as of old.* – Lam. 5:21

If God is turning us, then, we are experiencing turning. Regeneration is being brought into spiritual union with God by the creative command of God. That creative command produces a new heart or a believing heart by removing the darkness of unbelief, by altering the moral inclination of the heart from the love of sin to the love of righteousness. God is doing the changing (quicken) but the experience of being changed is called gospel repentance. Hence, repentance and faith are the immediate fruits of regeneration just as the old Baptists Confessions of faith teach.

C. How does conviction relate to Repentance

We read, and hear of many experiences of conviction of sin that lasted in some cases for years without actual gospel conversion. Isn't conviction of sin part of repentance? If so, then how could repentance be inseparable from regeneration which is an instantaneous act of creation by God?

There are natural processes of conviction that occur prior to gospel repentance. For example, the conscience can convict a person of sin and bother them for a long time without ever leading to salvation

The New Birth

and even cause them to commit suicide (e.g. Judas). The word of God can be used by the natural power of the conscience to bring a person under natural conviction over a long period of time without ever ending in salvation. Paul contrasts this natural power of conviction with Biblical repentance when he said:

*For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: **but the sorrow of the world worketh death.***
– 2 Cor. 7:10

Judas is an example of prolonged natural conviction or “sorrow of the world” that ended in suicide. However, not all natural conviction ends in suicide. Some ends in searing the conscience (1 Tim. 4:2-3). However, it is this natural sorrow that precedes Biblical repentance. It was the natural power of conviction that Jesus told Saul on the road to Damascus that it was “*hard for him to kick against the pricks*” but it was not gospel repentance until Christ revealed himself in Paul which effectually wrought salvation – “*repentance to salvation not to be repented of.*” Remember, Paul described his actual salvation experience as the act of God revealing “Christ in me” (Gal. 1:15-16). Natural conviction or repentance is agonizing and does not produce peace within. There is no transition from unbelief to belief under natural conviction – only internal misery without relief. If left in that state, either insanity, suicide or searing of the conscience will occur. It is regeneration that concludes gospel repentance which brings instant change from unbelief to belief in the gospel and peace with God.

The New Birth

The Evidences of New Birth

A. The internal evidences

The internal experience of new birth is that the gospel comes “*in power, and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance*” thoroughly transforming the inward person (1 Thes. 1:4-5). They are a new creature and all things are new (2 Cor. 5:17). They have a new relationship with God through Christ. They are no longer unbelievers in the gospel but believers. They are no longer in love with sin but bothered by sin. They no longer want to displease God but want to please him. They are no longer at “enmity against God” but like the things that God likes and hates the things that God hates.

Their mind has been changed from unbelief to belief in the gospel. Their emotions have been changed from loving sin to loving light. Their will has been changed from being inclined to resistance and rebellion to submission and yielding.

In other words, their internal state of deadness, darkness, depravity and enmity due to spiritual separation from God has been changed to life, light, holiness and love for God and the things of God.

B. The external evidences

The new birth removes the “*law of sin*” or the principle of corruption and enmity against God out of the domain of the spirit of man into the outer domain of the body of man (Rom. 7:14-25). This indwelling “*law of sin*” in regard to our bodies is not removed from

The New Birth

us until we depart from the body for heaven and/or the redemption of the body at the Lord's return (1 Cor. 15:52-57).

In the meantime, between regeneration and entrance into heaven there is a spiritual battle between our newly created spirit wherein the Spirit of God dwells and the "*law of sin*" in our bodies (Rom. 7:15-25). Whenever we attempt to live according to our own strength, the indwelling "*law of sin*" always wins and prevents the righteousness found in our inner man from being manifested in our words and actions (realm of the body).

Therefore, the scriptures command every child of God to be "*filled*" (Eph. 4:18) with the Spirit or to "*walk*" in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25) if we want to experience victory over indwelling sin and glorify God in our lives, thus redeeming the time (Eph. 5:16).

This means we must consciously recognize we "*can do nothing*" without Christ (Jn. 15:5) but fail. We must consciously "mortify" the law of sin in the flesh by recognizing our weakness (2 Cor. 12:5-7) and yielding (Rom. 6:10-12) to the power of the indwelling Spirit alone to overcome the "*law of sin*" or of "*the flesh.*" Once we have acknowledged our weakness and yielded to the power of the indwelling Spirit then we are to step out in faith trusting the Spirit of Christ to work out the righteousness found in our inner new man. In so doing, we "*put on*" (Eph. 4:20-24; Col. 3:8-10) the new man in our minds, affections and outer life and God is glorified, thus bringing every thought in to obedience to Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).

Being able to do this on a consistent basis is a process that is never finished in this life. It is one of trial and error and progressive growth. No one is capable of living without sin (1 Jn. 1:8-10).

The New Birth

However, the difference between the true child of God and the false professor is not sin, but their attitude toward sin and consequences for sinning. The true child of God sins more than they want to and when they become persistent in sin the Lord chastens them (Heb. 12:5-10).

C. Lordship and Grace Salvation argument

The Lordship versus Grace Debate is quite complicated. However, there is no such thing as salvation apart from gospel repentance. Gospel repentance is entirely an INWARD response to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the mind of the sinner changing from unbelief to belief in the gospel. It is the heart of the sinner changing from hatred of God to love for God. It is the will of the sinner changing from resistance and rejection of the gospel to acceptance and submission to the gospel. These three things constitute gospel repentance.

Moreover, gospel repentance is to be preached to all nations according to the Great Commission:

And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. – Lk. 24:47

Luke is writing to a Gentile whose name is “*Theophilus*” (Lk. 1:3). This is part of the great Commission to the Gentiles (“all nations”).

Moreover, on Mars Hill, in Athens, directly speaking to Gentiles Paul said,

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: – Acts 17:30

The New Birth

The argument that gospel repentance is not found in the gospel of John simply because the term “*repent*” or “*repentance*” is not found is a false argument. It is false because gospel repentance is inseparable from the command to “*believe*” in the gospel. None come into this world as believers but under condemnation because they are not believers (Jn. 3:18). Believing in the gospel requires a change of mind from unbelief to belief or it cannot occur among unbelievers. Belief in the gospel requires a change from hatred of God (light) or no unbeliever will come to Christ in faith (Jn. 3:19-20). This inner change is “*wrought*” by God (Jn. 3:21) and is described throughout the epistles of Paul as “*repentance unto salvation*” or “*unto life*” (2 Cor. 7:10; Acts 11:17).

Moreover, this is the essence of receiving Christ as Lord. However, this does not mean that all true Christians manifest external righteousness in their life equally or more characteristically than sin characterizes their life. Here is the flaw of “Lordship salvation” that demands perseverance in good works.

The truth is, there are saints side by side, as different as Abraham is to Lot, and both are equally saved, but not equal in external manifestation in good works. Indeed, the Biblical record of Lot’s life is one of characteristic failures and with little to no external evidence of salvation. However, one thing that is externally characteristic of the “Lot” type of Christians is external chastening accompanied by internal conflict. Peter says that Lot’s “*righteous heart was vexed.*”

True believers do not all persevere equally in good works but manifest great differences due to spiritual growth and the measure

The New Birth

of God's grace and faith given to each to accomplish God's purpose for their individual lives (Rom. 12:3,7). They do not all characteristically persevere in external good works, and all who do not persevere externally in good works do persevere externally in chastening by God (Heb. 12:5-10) and internally by vexation of heart or in an internal miserable condition (2 Pet. 2:11). It is possible to be saved and yet receive no rewards in heaven (1 Cor. 3:15). There are some that must be pulled out of the fire (Jude 17) who are like Lot and end up like Lot dying in sin (drunken and in incest). These are the most miserable people on earth. In contrast the lost man glories in such things. These miserable believers suffer much "loss" (1 Cor. 3:15). Not only do they suffer the loss of future rewards, but the loss of present joy, assurance, blessings and peace of mind. It is this "loss" that distinguishes them from the lost not their sins.

The saved persevere in saving faith (1 Jn. 2:19) but they do not always persevere in external good works.

Hence, both "Lordship" and "free grace" advocates are wrong, as both go to extreme positions, neither of which the Bible supports. The "Lordship" advocates ultimately deny salvation is by grace, but rather ultimately by works. The "Free Grace" advocates deny the true Biblical nature of saving faith and deny any change of mind, heart or will toward sin.

The New Birth

Regeneration, Justification and Sanctification

Obviously, if faith is the logical consequence and conclusion of regeneration, then justification is the consequence of repentant faith (gospel conversion). Thus, the logical order would be regeneration, repentant faith, and justification. All of these together are included in the term “*saved*” as a past tense completed action. They are all inseparable from each other but in a logical order.

However, they are not identical with each other. Regeneration has to do with the supernatural change of your spiritual state from darkness to light, from deadness to life and from uncleanness to righteousness or true holiness. Repentant faith is your experience of that change and has to do with perceiving, seeing and understanding Christ as your Savior (Rom. 3:24-26; 4:22-25) so that your mind is changed from the state of unbelief to belief, and your affections are changed from hatred of Christ as light to love for Christ as light, and your will is changed from resistance to the gospel to submission to the gospel. Justification has to do with reversing your legal position before God from unrighteousness to righteousness, and from condemnation under sin to remission of sins (Rom. 4:6-8) by imputing your sins to Christ and by imputing his righteousness to you (2 Cor. 5:21). Hence, our sins are expiated based upon the death of Christ for our sins, while the righteousness of Christ propitiates or satisfies God’s demand of righteousness from us.

Regeneration has to do with the condition of the spirit in the physical *person* of the saved. Justification has to do with the legal *position* of the saved before the Law of God in heaven. Regeneration is a *birth* term, whereas, justification is a *legal* or *forensic* term used

The New Birth

in courts. Regeneration is the act of God that “*creates righteousness and true holiness*” within you, thus *making* your spirit righteous. Justification is a legal act of God outside your person that *declares* you are righteous before God. Regeneration *imparts* the righteousness of God to your spirit, whereas justification *imputes* the righteousness of God to your person. Regeneration is what God does in our person at the point of our initial salvation, whereas, justification is based upon what God did for us in the Person and works of Christ while he was on earth.

Regeneration is a completed action in connection with initial justification by faith at the beginning of our Christian life. In contrast, sanctification is a progressive action that begins experientially at the point of new birth but is never completed until glorification in the resurrection of our body. The degree of righteousness implemented in and through us differs from Christian to Christian and is never perfected until glorification of the body when the indwelling principle of sin/corruption is removed. We are rewarded in heaven according to the degree of power manifested in good works performed in our lives while on earth.

However, justification is based upon the static unchangeable righteousness provided in the Person and life of Christ which satisfies the static unchangeable standard of the sinless righteousness demanded by God’s Law. That is why variant degrees of progressive imparted righteousness through sanctification can never justify any sinner because sanctified righteousness differs from saint to saint and is always progressive and never completed in this life. However, the righteousness necessary to justify sinners is

The New Birth

the static unchangeable righteousness of a sinless God found only in the Person and works of Jesus Christ.

Hence, the bottom-line difference between justification and sanctification is that justification has to do with the works performed in the body of Christ when he lived on earth, while sanctification has to do with the works performed in and through our bodies while we live on earth. The former works by Christ obtain our entrance into heaven, while the latter works by us obtain only rewards and positions in heaven.

Regeneration is the cause of progressive sanctification in and through our lives while on earth, as it is the progressive working out of the righteousness worked into our new man by the creative act of God. Regeneration is what makes us a child of God whereas sanctification is our process of spiritual growth as a child of God. Regeneration is the creative act of God that restores our spiritual union with God, as light, life and righteousness, thus producing a new creation within us or the new *“inward man”* created in *“righteousness and true holiness.”* The moral condition of the spirit of man determines the ruling inclination or disposition of the soul. Hence, regeneration of the spirit inclines the soul to desire after righteousness and to do what pleases God (Rom. 7:15-18, 19-21). However, the power to implement that desire in our life comes from the indwelling Spirit of God (Rom. 7:18; 8:9-13). This regenerate nature is the source of that righteous desire while being filled with the Spirit is the source of power to implement that righteous desire.

The New Birth

Life by new birth versus life by justification

Many will reason that faith cannot be the product of regeneration because many scriptures declare eternal life is the consequence rather than the cause of faith (Jn. 3:16; 5:24; etc.).

However, the failure here is to understand the difference between imparted life (new birth) versus imputed life (justification) or the difference between being a child by birth versus being a son by adoption, or the difference between spiritual versus legal life.

With regard to the law of God all mankind have been “condemned” unto “death” and are criminals in God’s sight and/or “enemies” of God. This is their legal status or condition before God. In the act of justification all three of these characteristics are legally changed. Instead of being “condemned” they are justified. Instead of the penalty of “death” they are rewarded “eternal life” due to Christ’s merit in their place. Instead of “enemies” they are now adopted “sons.” Eternal life is merited by Christ’s obedience to the law in our behalf. All of these things are ours by legal imputation.

However, regeneration is not a legal act by God but a creative act whereby eternal life is imparted by being brought into spiritual union with God rather than legally imparted. We are “born” into God’s family or birthed into his family as children (teknia) whereas justification is the basis for adoption as sons (huios).

Hence, the proper logical order is that God uses the gospel as His creative word to not only bring us into spiritual union with Himself (life) but to create faith within us by the “light of knowledge” implanted in our hearts making us children (teknia) of God by new birth. At the very same time faith is created within us we are justified before God by that faith. In that act of justification our condemnation is legally reversed to a right status with God and our

The New Birth

penalty is reversed to “eternal life” based upon Christ’s righteousness and our legal status as “enemies” is changed to the legal status of sons (huios). Therefore, imparted life by new birth logically precedes imputed life by justification as birth logically precedes adoption.

The New Birth

The New Birth and Romans 7:14-25

Many deny Romans 7:14-25 applies to the regenerated man primarily because of Romans 7:14:

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. – Rom. 7:14

However, this conclusion is drawn because of at least three interpretational failures on the part of those who object this passage refers to the born-again Paul.

First, the whole man has not been born again. The flesh or body of Paul was not born of the Spirit and the principle of “corruption” or the law of sin still remains in his body and will not be removed in this life, but is only removed by glorification at the resurrection or translation of the body (1 Cor. 15:51-57).

Second, the entire following context makes it clear he is referring to his body:

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. – v. 18

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. – vv. 23-25

The New Birth

Therefore, his body is what is being described as evil, needing to be delivered from sin and in which the law of sin or the principle of corruption operates.

Third, the man who is “*in the flesh*” or without the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:8-9) is dominated by enmity against the Law of God and will not subject himself to the Law of God. However, the man in Romans 7:21-25 not only “*would do good*” but “*delights in the law of God*” and does presently “*serve the law of God*.”

...when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. – Rom. 7:21-22,25

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please 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. – Rom. 8:7-9

Hence, the man in Romans 7:14-25 is the saved man who is attempting to serve God in his own power, instead of the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9-27).

Moreover, notice the triune nature of man in this passage. We have the “I...I myself” of self consciousness or the soul of man, which expresses volition “*to will is present with me....I would do*” as well as affections “*I delight in the law of God*” and intellect “*I myself....with the mind*.” Moreover, we have his physical body or

The New Birth

flesh “*my members...the body...with the flesh.*” Then we have the redeemed spirit of man “*after the inward man.*” It is the redeemed spirit that controls the governing moral inclination of the soul. That is why the soul or self-conscious “*I*” delights in the Law of God, and “*would do good.*” Although, the spirit of man determines the moral inclination of the soul/heart/mind/will it does not possess the power to implement that inclination into actions. Paul discovers this natural inability of the regenerate spirit to live out the Christian life even though the soul is inclined to do so. It is the Spirit of God that created the spirit of man in righteousness and true holiness, and called him out of darkness into light and removed the uncleanness from his spirit that must also empower the inclination of the spirit in the heart of man.

Therefore, the key to walking in the Spirit is that the soul or seat of self-consciousness not merely delighting in the law of God after the inward regenerated spirit of man, but also yielding to the regenerating power of the Spirit by faith mortifying or putting to death the law of indwelling sin by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God (Rom. 6:11-13; 8:9-13).

Paul tells the Galatians the very same truth:

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. – Gal. 5:16-17

They already “*live in the Spirit*” but they are called upon to “*walk in the Spirit*” (v. 16) because if they do not they learn the same lesson Paul learned in Romans 7:14-25 and that is “*For the flesh listeth*

The New Birth

*against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to the other: **so ye cannot do the things ye would.***

Living in the Spirit is not the same as walking in the Spirit as Paul addresses those living in the Spirit to also walk in the Spirit:

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit – Gal. 5:25

These commands are not addressed to the lost but to the saved in the churches of Galatia. Moreover, Paul commands the saved person to “*put on the new man*” and to “*put off the old man*” (Eph. 4:

*The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore **cast off** the works of darkness, and let us **put on** the armor of light. ...But **put you on** the Lord Jesus Christ, and **make not** provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. – Rom. 13:12, 14*

*That **ye put off** concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And **be renewed** in the spirit of your mind; And that **ye put on** the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. Wherefore **putting away** lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.. – Eph. 4:22-25*

***Put on** the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. – Eph. 6:11*

*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*

The New Birth

put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.....And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. - Col. 3:8-10, 12,14

Those who reject this interpretation claim this was done at salvation once and for all because all the verbs are found in the Aorist tense – completed action.

However, to “*put on*” the new man is to put on his fruit in your life, just as putting off the old man is to put off “*his deeds*” or “works” out of your life. Moreover, the new man was created by God at the beginning of your salvation and is therefore not something you can “*put on*” nor are you able to “*put off*” the old man at the point of regeneration as that too is the creative act of God. In regard to the Aorist tense verbs they also can mean a *punctiliar* or point action. When we “*put on*” the new man by yielding to the indwelling Spirit of God, we at the same point in time “*put off*” the old man and his deeds. It is a *punctiliar* action. Finally, this is found in the imperative mode and is a command to Christians, as the lost man is “*at enmity with God and is not subject to the law of God and neither indeed can be. So they that are in flesh cannot please God.*”

The New Birth

The New Birth before Pentecost

Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

– Acts 7:51

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. – Gal. 4:28-29

Remember, the problem of sin did not begin on Pentecost but with Adam in the book of Genesis. That is the problem of all who are “in Adam” since the fall. That problem is spiritual separation from God which means they are spiritually separated from the life, light, love and holiness found only in God. That is what is meant by being “*born after the flesh*” and thereby being “*in the flesh*.” None who are “*in the flesh*” can please God, because that is a condition of spiritual death, darkness, depravity and enmity with God. Indeed, all the characteristics of this fallen condition used by New Testament writers are drawn from the Old Testament Scriptures.

The only possible solution to this fallen spiritual state of separation is spiritual union. That is the only possible solution both then and now. It is bringing the fallen man back into spiritual union with God as light, life, love and holiness.

The Old Testament Scriptures described the new birth as “*circumcision in heart*” and the unregenerated condition as “*uncircumcised in heart*.” In the Old Testament, the circumcised in

The New Birth

heart were called “the righteous” whereas, the uncircumcised in heart were called “the wicked.”

Prior to Pentecost at the very beginning of his ministry Christ rebuked Nicodemus for being a master teacher over Israel but ignorant of the new birth:

*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. **Marvel not** that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, **Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?** – Jn. 3:6-11*

Of course, if the new birth was strictly a Pentecost phenomenon, then, Christ could never have rebuked him for being ignorant of the new birth, because it would be non-existent until Pentecost. However, Ezekiel was not ignorant of the new birth:

*In that ye have brought into my sanctuary strangers, **uncircumcised in heart, AND uncircumcised in flesh**, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it, even my house, when ye offer my bread, the fat and the blood, and they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations. – Ezek. 44:7*

God was rebuking Israel for bringing the Gentile into His house not merely because he was “**uncircumcised in flesh**” but in addition he was “**uncircumcised in heart**.”

The New Birth

Circumcision in the flesh of an eight-day old infant was the introductory rite into the physical family of Jacob and into the visible kingdom of Israel. However, both circumcision of an physical infant in an physical Israel under the old covenant were both types of new birth and entrance into the family and kingdom of God under the everlasting covenant. Even under the old covenant this truth is conveyed as circumcision of the heart.

Circumcision of the heart is carried over into the New Testament as a symbol of the new birth or “the circumcision of Christ” (Col. 2:11) or the “new creature” (Gal. 6:15).

Abraham was a new creature “in Christ” 430 years prior to the Law of Moses before he was circumcised in the flesh by faith in the gospel of promise (Gal. 3:6-8).

*And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God **in Christ**, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. – Gal. 3:17*

There is no salvation outside of Christ for any fallen child of Adam at any time. All who are saved are “chosen in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4) and “created in him” by the work of God (Eph. 2:10), and Abraham is the pattern for “all who are of faith” regardless of when they live before or after Abraham lived (Rom. 4:11-12, 16; Gal. 3:6-7).

When Jesus told Nicodemus “except a man be born again” he did not use the future tense as though it was something to be expected some day in the future at Pentecost. When Jesus applied it personally to Nicodemus he used the Aorist passive tense verb indicating it is a punctiliar completed action now necessary for anyone to enter or see the kingdom of God:

The New Birth

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. –
Jn. 3:7

The passive voice proves it was not something he could do for or to himself. Indeed, no man could do this creative act of God but God by his own sovereign power (Jn. 1:13). Hence, being “born of water” has nothing to do with baptism as that is something you can obtain for yourself through actions of men. Nicodemus thought he must go back into his mother’s womb or back into that sack of water. However, Jesus demanded a birth beyond natural birth. The natural birth came via water (“born of water”) but the supernatural birth came by the internal work of the Spirit:

What is born of flesh is flesh, but what is born of Spirit is spirit – Jn. 3:6

In the Old Testament ceremonial cleansing with water is an outward symbol of the internal work of regeneration by the Spirit of God. Therefore, baptism saves only in providing the “figure” of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:21) or the gospel which is empowered by God in regeneration of the spirit of man (1 Thes. 1:5; 2 Cor. 4:6; Jam. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23, 25).

Regeneration of Pre-Pentecost saints is referred to as “*circumcised in heart*” or “*upright in heart*” or “*the righteous*” or the “*perfect.*” Regeneration is the spirit of man being brought back into spiritual union with God as a creative act by God and thus “created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). It is the absolute glorification of the spirit of man as union with God attains nothing less than absolute glorification as the spirit of man is in union with God. It is this union of the human spirit with God’s Spirit

The New Birth

that restores the moral “image of God” thus making us partakers of the moral “nature of God.” Hence, spiritual union with God defines our moral nature and changes the moral inclination of the human heart so that it desires to be and do good. This is seen in the internal struggle of the self-conscious (soul) of Paul with the law of sin that works through his physical unglorified body as his will is inclined to do good but he finds no power in himself to enable his will to overpower the law of indwelling sin:

17 Now then it is no more I [soul] that do it, but sin [law of sin] that dwelleth in me [my flesh]. 18 For I [soul] know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I [soul] find not. 19 For the good that I [soul] would I [soul] do not: but the evil which I [soul] would not, that I (soul) do. 20 Now if I [soul] do that I [soul] would not, it is no more I [soul] that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me (my flesh). 21 I find then a law, that, when I [soul] would do good, evil is present with me [my flesh]. 22 For I [soul] delight in the law of God after the inward man [spirit]: 23 But I [soul] see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. 24 O wretched man that I [soul] am! who shall deliver me [soul] from the body of this death? 25 I [soul] thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

I have inserted in brackets the different aspects of human nature that are involved in this struggle between the law of sin and the law

The New Birth

of God. This is describing the regenerate Paul who learns by experience that neither he or the regenerated spirit have power to overcome the law of indwelling sin but that overcoming power is found only in the indwelling Spirit of God (Rom. 8:9-27). Significantly, this is the struggle for all saints from Genesis to Revelation. Apart from the indwelling Spirit of God and His power there is no progressive sanctification possible. The key to victory is “*that as you have received the Lord Jesus Christ so walk ye in him*” (Col. 2:6). We received him by the power of God manifested by faith in Christ, and we must walk by the power of God manifested by faith in Christ. All those listed in Hebrews chapter 11 walked “by faith” manifesting that it was the power of the indwelling Spirit producing that faith as it is the Spirit of Christ that is “the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2).

There are only two types of humans living on earth from the fall of man to the present. (1) Those who are “*in the flesh*” because they are “*born after the flesh*” and therefore “*what is born of the flesh is flesh*” and all who are “*in the flesh*” cannot please God because they are “*none of His.*” – Rom. 8:8-9; (2) Those who are “*in the Spirit*” because they are “*born after the Spirit*” and therefore, “*what is born of Spirit is spirit*” and if one is not “*in the flesh*” it is because they have the Spirit of God indwelling them (Rom. 8:9).

So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please 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. – Rom. 8:8-9

The New Birth

There has only been two types of mankind since the fall (1) those “in Adam” thus “born of the flesh” and “in the flesh” who “walk after the flesh” and (2) those “in Christ” thus “born of the Spirit” and “in the Spirit” who “walk after the Spirit” (when walking by faith).

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. – Gal. 4:28-29

Paul asserts this same contrast existed previous to Pentecost as after Pentecost. He says that we are “now” even as Isaac “was” the same children of Promise. He says “as then” those “born after the flesh” persecute those “born after the Spirit” and “even so it is NOW.” But this is true even before Isaac as it is Abraham that is set forth as the example of justification by faith (Rom. 4:11-12; Gal. 3:6-7).

The Holy Spirit still continues to “come upon” the people of God as empowerment for service (Acts 1:8; 2:17; 8:16) but the Old Testament saints were individual and permanently indwelt by the Spirit of God as the only other option is spiritual separation from God or the state of total spiritual depravity, death, darkness and enmity.

All previous covenants established by God on earth were simply progressive revelations of the everlasting covenant. Pentecost has nothing to do with a new kind of salvation but rather it is the public affirmation of the same salvation but to a new covenant people – the gentles/world, and by a new administrative covenant institution – the New Testament Congregation.

The New Birth

Indwelling before Pentecost

And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is? - Gen. 41:38

For I am full of matter, the spirit within me constraineth me. - Job 32:18

But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it. - Num. 14:28

And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; - Num. 27:18

But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god, and in whom is the Spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, saying, - Dan. 4:8

O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.- Dan. 4:9

This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make

The New Birth

*known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able; for **the spirit** of the holy gods is in thee. – Dan. 4:18*

*There is a man in thy kingdom, **in whom is the Spirit** of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers; - Dan. 5:11*

*I have even heard of thee, that **the spirit** of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee. – Dan. 5:14*

*Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time **the Spirit of Christ which was in** them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. – 1 Pet. 1:10-11*

***Now** we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But **as then** he that **was** born after the flesh persecuted him that **was** born after the Spirit, **even so it is now**. – Gal. 4:28-29*

*So, then, they that are in the flesh cannot please 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. – Rom. 8:8-9*

The New Birth

The Spirit came upon individuals (lost and saved) then, and also in the New Testament for the purpose of empowerment (not indwelling). In the New Testament the Spirit came upon the lost Sadducean High Priest Caiaphas, and used him to prophesy about Christ (Jn. 11:49-52). The Spirit came upon King Saul for empowerment in the office of king over Israel and then left him in that capacity of enablement. David, did not want the Lord to take away this same capacity of enablement from him.

Pentecost has nothing to do with the individual indwelling by the Spirit of God. Rather, Pentecost has to do with the corporate or institutional indwelling in the new “*house of God*.” There is a clear difference between individual and institutional indwelling as Paul makes this distinction clear to the church at Corinth. Addressing the congregational body of Christ located at Corinth, Paul says:

According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon...Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? – 1 Cor. 3:10,16

In the preceding context (1 Cor. 3:5-10) he had been explaining how God used different ministers to build up the membership in the congregation at Corinth as God’s “house” or God’s “building” at Corinth. Notice, he says “ye” not “we” as he was not a member of this “temple of God” at Corinth. The Spirit of God indwelt this corporate temple as an institutional house of God at Corinth.

The New Birth

However, addressing the individual believer in this temple at Corinth Paul says:

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. – 1 Cor. 6:18-20

So, both the corporate institutional body located at Corinth is a metaphorical “temple of God” as well as, the individual physical body of the member. It is this institutional body located in Jerusalem that was immersed and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The individual members already were indwelt by the Spirit at the point of gospel conversion.

The baptism in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost was one aspect of the promise of the Spirit with regard to establishing a new covenant administration within the professing kingdom. When God established the Old Covenant administration with Israel it included several facets.

1. New “house of God” with an appointed builder and appointed ministry and ordinances.
2. New body of Scriptures with prophets, and revelatory gifts confirmed by prophetic signs and wonders.
3. New People of God
4. New Mission

The New Birth

5. Baptism in the shekinah glory to publicly accredit it and indwell it as God's new institutional house of God for public worship and administrator of the "keys of the kingdom."

Likewise, when Christ established a new covenant administration within his kingdom on earth it included these very same facets:

1. New "house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15) with an appointed ministry (1 Tim. 3:1-13) and ordinances.
2. A New body of Scriptures with prophets and revelatory gifts confirmed by miraculous signs and wonders.
3. New People of God – Jews and Gentiles
4. New Mission – preaching to the Gentiles
5. Baptism in the shekinah glory to publicly accredit it and indwell it as God's new institutional house of God for public worship and authorized administrator of the "keys of the kingdom."

The baptism in the shekinah glory occurred one time at the beginning of each new house of God upon its completion.

1. The Tabernacle – Ex. 40:35
2. The Temple – 2 Chron. 7:1-3
3. The Church – Acts 2:1-3

There was no change in the gospel (Heb. 4:2; Acts 10:43; Acts 26:22-23) or the way of salvation (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12) as the pattern for salvation "in Christ" had been established in the life of Abraham (Gal. 3:17 "in Christ") for "all who are of faith" - (Rom. 4:11, 16, 22-25; Gal. 3:6-8). Including regeneration (Gal. 4:28-29) and indwelling by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:8-9).

The New Birth

The Old Covenant was established prior to the First Advent of Christ and was designed to anticipate that advent. The New Covenant was established by Christ in his earthly ministry and was designed to fulfill the anticipatory character of the Old Covenant, and anticipate the Second Advent. The New Covenant was superior and replaced the Old Covenant Administration (Heb. 8-10). However, both covenants were earthly administrative covenants (Heb. 9:1) that publicly declared the “*blood of the everlasting covenant*” (Heb. 13:20) among men. The “everlasting covenant” is the direct heavenly administration of salvation to all of God’s elect in all generations under the Triune God. This heavenly “everlasting covenant” consisted of the Triune Persons of the Godhead symbolized by the Old Testament fathers of Israel (Deut. 7:7-8) or the persons of Abraham (the Father) Isaac (the Son) and Jacob (The Spirit). Therefore, God often presented himself as “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” The Old Covenant with Israel was established on the basis of the covenant made with these fathers of Israel (Deut. 9:5) which symbolized basis of the everlasting covenant with the Triune Persons of the Godhead for the salvation of all the elect in all ages.

The Old Covenant administered the gospel of Christ symbolically through its sacrificial and ceremonial system. The Ten Commandments and their civil application administered the holiness of God. The tabernacle and Temple, with their qualified ministry and ordinances, were the earthly administrative center of this covenant administration of the gospel of Christ and holiness of God among the covenant people. The Law was never designed to save or convey life to anyone (Gal. 3:21) but serve as a “school master” to instruct the covenant people at that point in time in the

The New Birth

nature of sin (Rom. 3:20) and lead them to faith in Christ for personal and individual salvation by gospel as presented in the ceremonial system (Gal. 3:22-24; Heb. 4:2).

The New Covenant administers the gospel of Christ and the holiness of God more directly than the Old Covenant. However, as with the Old Covenant, the New Covenant is provided with an earthly administrative “*house of God*” (Heb. 9:1 “*and...also*” 1 Tim. 3:15) with a qualified ministry (1 Tim. 3:1-13) and ordinances wherein the gospel is declared through preaching and teaching directly by its ministry and symbolically declared through its ordinances.

However, both the Old and New Covenants were temporal administrations that reflected the great “everlasting covenant” which is yet to find its complete fulfillment in the new heavens and earth. God is the author of all three covenants, and God is not the author of confusion. This everlasting covenant (Heb. 12:20) is spelled out clearly in such passages as Ephesians 1:4-13 and Romans 8:27-39 and both Old and New Covenant saints will ultimately be made “perfect” under the everlasting covenant in the new heaven and earth (Heb. 11:13-16, 39-40). So, the New Covenant does not preach any other Gospel than what was preached under the Old Covenant or since the foundation of the world (Acts 10:43; 26:22-23; Heb. 4:2) but both preach “the blood of the everlasting covenant” from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8). The sacrificial lamb on the altar since Genesis has been the outward symbol of a person already righteous in God’s sight by faith in the gospel of the everlasting covenant:

The New Birth

*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, **by which he obtained witness that he was righteous**, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. – Heb. 11:4*

*Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an **everlasting covenant**, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow. – 2 Sam. 23:5*

*Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an **everlasting covenant** with you, **even the sure mercies of David**. – Isa. 55:3*

*And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you **the sure mercies** of David. – Acts 13:34*

*And I will make an **everlasting covenant** with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. – Jer. 32:40*

*Nevertheless I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an **everlasting covenant**. – Eze. 16:60*

*Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an **everlasting covenant** with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. – Ezek. 37:26*

The New Birth

*Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the **everlasting covenant**, - Heb. 13:20*

The same gospel proclaiming the same good news of the “everlasting covenant” or God’s provision of salvation has been preached since the foundation of the world (Lk. 24:Acts 10:43; 26:22-23; Heb. 4:2; Rom. 10:16; etc.).

*And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, **which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.** Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, **Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:** - Lk. 24:44-46*

***To him give all the prophets witness,** that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. – Acts 10:43*

***For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them:** but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. – Heb. 4:2*

*Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, **saying none other things** than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: **That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead,** and*

The New Birth

should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles. – Acts 26:22-23

*But they have not all **obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?** – Rom. 10:16*

*Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. **Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:** yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. **But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.** – Isa. 53:1-5*

The essence of the gospel of the everlasting covenant has been preached since Genesis from the very first prophet (Abel – Acts 10:43; Heb. 11:4) as manifested in the substitutionary altar sacrifice of spotless lamb. This essential gospel has been progressively developed by revelatory details until Christ came and fulfilled it in his own substitutionary Person and work. “The Beginning of the gospel” (Mk. 1:1) in the sense of its actual fulfillment in the Person and work of Jesus Christ began with the announcement of the final Old Testament prophets John the Baptist. Now this completed gospel revelation is preached until He comes again.

The New Birth

So, the gospel is the same from Genesis to Revelation. The Savior is the same (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12). The problem of spiritual separation due to the Adamic sin is the same (Rom. 5:12). The solution to that problem is the same – spiritual union “in Christ” (Rom. 5:17-19).

The Spirit came “*upon*” both lost and saved people in the Old Testament to empower them to serve in a particular office or function just as He does in the New Testament for power (“upon” – Mt. 3:16; 12:18; Lk. 1:35; 2:25,40; Acts 1:8; 2:17; 8:16; 19:6).

The baptism in the Spirit was only promised to already water baptized believers in Christ (Mt. 3:11) in a restricted location in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4-5) at a restricted time “*not many days hence.*”

It was only repeated one other time at the house of Cornelius, and only then because the Jews would not administer baptism to Gentiles and accept them into the institutional house of God without them being publicly accredited, as were the Jews. Significantly, the nearest reference point that Peter could point to for the baptism in the Spirit at the house of Cornelius was not with the thousands of individuals saved between Pentecost and the house of Cornelius, but the nearest reference point for this event was “at the beginning” or Pentecost (Acts 11:15).

This proves it was neither a post-salvation *individual* experience as claimed by Pentecostals or an *individual* salvational action concurrent with regeneration as claimed by Protestants.

Long after Pentecost and the house of Cornelius, Paul wrote the Ephesians church and said there was now only “one baptism” (Eph. 4:6) and that is the baptism administered in the Great Commission

The New Birth

by men (“ye”) to other men (“them”) until the end of the world (Mt. 28:19-20) – water baptism.

For a more detailed and fuller explanation of the Baptism in the Spirit see my book entitled **The Baptism in the Spirit** published by Grace Printing Ministries, Florence, Kentucky.

Salvation has always been the same from the fall of man to the present day. Abraham is set forth as the pattern of salvation for “all who are of faith” as a believer in the gospel (Gal. 3:6-8) and justified by faith in remission of sins and imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ (Rom. 4:5-8) as promised by God “in Christ” (Gal. 3:17).

The baptism in the Spirit places no one “*in Christ*” or in spiritual union with Christ, as that is the work of regeneration by the Spirit. Indeed, the baptism in the Spirit is the immersion of the institutional house of God “in the Spirit” not “in Christ.”

Neither Romans 6:4-6 or 1 Corinthians 12:13 refer to the baptism in the Spirit.

Romans 6:4-6

One passage that is applied by some to the baptism in the Spirit is Romans 6:4-6. In Romans 6 Paul addresses the objection that if justification is all of grace without works, and if grace more abounds where sin abounded (Rom. 5:22) then would not such a doctrine lead to a life of sin, as it would promote sin that grace may more abound?

His quick response is “*God forbid*”. His extended response takes up Romans 6-8. However, his immediate solution is to point them

The New Birth

to their own water baptism that brings together both their legal relationship to sin by justification (legally “*dead to sin*”) and their relationship to sin by regeneration (“*raised to newness of life*”) both of which are clearly presented in the symbolic act of baptism, and both of which are the truth of the gospel.

In water baptism, they publicly identified with the whole truth of the gospel which involves both justification and regeneration. Therefore, there is no such person who is justified by grace without works, who is not also regenerated by the Spirit. The objection is only possible if one could be justified but not regenerated as justification only imputes righteousness to our account but regeneration imparts righteousness to our person through the outworking power of the indwelling Spirit of God. But their baptism declares both their position in Christ and the resurrection power of Christ thus repudiating the supposed objection altogether. This new resurrection life imparted to the inward man by regeneration is not merely free from the power of sin, but it is totally antithetical to sin because it is created in “*righteousness and true holiness*” (Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10). Hence, the true believer is “*dead to sin*” both judicially by justification and regeneratively by new birth. Both truths are visualized and identified with in water baptism, as both aspects are inseparable from the truth of the gospel.

However, our whole person is not comprehensively and absolutely “*dead to sin*” because our whole person has not been regenerated or glorified. Thus, after providing the illustration of baptism, Paul exhorts true believers to “*reckon*” themselves as dead to sin and not to “*yield*” to sin over your bodies:

*Likewise **reckon** ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Let not** sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither **yield** ye your members*

The New Birth

as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. – Rom. 6:11-13

Unlike the unregenerate (Rom. 8:7-8) we have both a righteous desire and power within us to overcome the indwelling “*law of sin*” in our bodies (Rom. 6:12; 7:18-25). However, like the unregenerate we have the “*law of sin*” abiding in connection with our unglorified humanity (the body) thus causing an internal conflict which we cannot win (Rom. 7:14-25) except by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God desire without dependency upon the indwelling power of the Spirit (Rom. 8:9-27).

Romans 6:4-6 refers to the two basic truths of the gospel that water baptism provides a visible “*likeness*” of, and publicly identifies us with. Baptism puts on display the truth we have died to sin with Christ by faith – justification - and by that very same faith we have been “*raised to newness of life*” - regeneration.

1 Corinthians 12:13

Probably the most popular passage applied to the baptism in the Spirit is 1 Corinthians 12:13. Proper understanding of this text requires a broader context.

John 4:1 says that Jesus baptized more disciples than John. However, John explains that Jesus himself did not administer water baptism, but baptized through his disciples. The point is that the disciples baptized under his direction and authority, and therefore Jesus received the credit as the administrator of water baptism.

The New Birth

Jesus promised that “*another comforter*” would replace him (The Holy Spirit) and therefore if Christ is attributed as being the administrator of water baptism simply because his disciples administered it under his leadership and authority, then would not the same be attributed to “another comforter” that took His place over the same disciples? The overall context of the book of first Corinthians will demonstrate this is the meaning of 1 Corinthians 12:13.

For example, long after Pentecost, the Corinthian congregation became divided over the human administrators of water baptism (1 Cor. 1:12-16). Paul resolves this issue by teaching that all human administrators work as “one” under the direction of the Holy Spirit:

Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. – 1 Cor. 3:8-9

Therefore, just as Christ was accredited with administering water baptism by his disciples, so also, the Holy Spirit is accredited with administering water baptism through His ministers.

The same kind of division existed between these members over manifest differences with regard to spiritual gifts. Paul also addressed this issue early on when he said:

For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it? – 1 Cor. 4:7

The New Birth

Therefore, the Holy Spirit is to receive the credit, not merely for their salvation (1 Cor. 1:17-2:14); but also for their **water** baptism (1 Cor. 3:5-7) and different spiritual gifts:

Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. – 1 Cor. 3:5-7

This is specifically applied to the particular congregational body of water baptized believers at Corinth (1 Cor. 3:10-16). Paul claims that the Holy Spirit used him as the “*master builder*” to lay the foundation of “*God’s building*” which is the “*temple of the Spirit*” at Corinth, but the actual builder is the Holy Spirit under whose leadership water baptism was administered. The Holy Spirit built that congregation through his servants, as the congregation was “*God’s husbandry, ye are God’s building....ye are the temple of the Holy Spirit....ye are the body of Christ and members in particular*” (1 Cor. 3:9, 16; 12:27).

This resolved the division over the various human instruments in bringing salvation, baptism and constitution of the congregation at Corinth.

Therefore, when dealing with the same problem of division, but in regard to differences in spiritual gifted members in the same congregational body at Corinth, he again applies this same principle. He states the general principle by saying:

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or

The New Birth

free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. – 1
Cor. 12:13

Remember, the historical context of Pauline epistles are churches of like faith and order constituted under his ministry. Thus, all of his readers (including himself “*we*”) share certain things in common with regard to water baptism and church membership.

Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit they had all been baptized in water into the membership of one body in number (the one where their membership resides) and one body in kind (the same kind found at Ephesus as at Jerusalem (v. 27; Acts 2:40) regardless of the differences between them (Jews or Gentiles....bond or free). It was under the leadership of the same Holy Spirit each member was placed in the body (v. 18 and this included lost members - 1 Cor. 11:19) in order to fulfill different functions in that body with different gifts according to His will. It is this variation of placement (v. 18) and gifting by the Spirit (vv. 20-26) is what they were made to “*drink*” or partake of by that one and same Spirit when added by water baptism in regard to the constitutional work of the Spirit in the body of Christ at Corinth (v. 27). Hence, whether it is different spiritual gifts or different administrators of water baptism, there is no basis for division among them, as the same Holy Spirit is to be credited with both. Verses 12-26 is abstract teaching that is applicable to each and every church and each and every member in such a church. However, verse 27 is where this abstract teaching is applied in concrete form to the church body existing at Corinth.

Baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit are completely different with regard to the administrator, the subject and the element. In the administrative order in water baptism, the Holy Spirit can be the administrator and the congregational “*body of Christ*” can be the element. Not so, with the baptism in the Spirit. In the baptism in the Spirit, it is Christ that is the administrator (“He shall baptize you

The New Birth

with [Gr. en – “in”] the Spirit” – Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16) the plural water baptized “you” is the subject and the element is the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12:13 the Spirit is the administrator, water baptized believers are the subjects and the church body is the element. This proves that 1 Corinthians 12:13 does not refer to baptism in the Spirit but rather baptism in water under the administration of the Spirit.

The New Birth

The New Dispensation of the Spirit

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. – Lk. 24:49

The “*promise of my Father*” refers to the special dispensation of the Spirit that would be ushered in on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:4-5).

However, the Holy Spirit had already been upon earth from the time He moved upon the face of the deep in Genesis 1:2. The Holy Spirit had been regenerating, indwelling, sanctifying, filling, sealing and saving mankind from sin since the fall of man in the garden.

However, the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father and by the Son to accomplish three new things upon earth:

1. To empower a new Salvation Mission – Acts 1:8
2. To publicly accredit and indwell New Covenant Administrative House of God – Heb. 9:1
3. To provide a new body of Scriptures– Jn. 14:16

A. To Empower a New Salvation Mission

The coming of the Holy Spirit in regard to a new salvation mission was not about **how** the Holy Spirit would save anyone, but rather about **who** the Holy Spirit would now begin to save.

The New Birth

Prior to the day of Pentecost, the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit had primarily been restricted within the boundaries of Judaism. Even the ministry of Christ had been restricted within the boundaries of Judaism:

These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: - Mt. 10:5

However, the Old Testament Prophets had prophesied of a special dispensation of salvation that would occur among the Gentiles:

Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles..... And in his name shall the Gentiles trust. – Mt. 12:18, 21

For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. – Acts 13:47

This was something never before imagined by the Jewish people that God would empower the gospel among the Gentile nations:

And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God..... When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life. – Acts 11:1,18

The very thought of the Holy Spirit working salvation among the Gentiles was so repugnant to the Jewish mind that it took divine

The New Birth

intervention for the Jewish church at Jerusalem to even preach the gospel to gentiles (Acts 8-11). God had to move Peter to go to preach to the gentile house of Cornelius by repeating a vision three times (Acts 10:1-7). When Peter arrived at the house of the gentiles among his first words were these:

And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. – Acts 10:28

However, even the thrice repeated vision was still insufficient for the Jewish believers to receive these Gentiles into equal membership into the church at Jerusalem, as God had to repeat the baptism in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost upon the Gentiles thereby divinely accrediting them to be equal to Jewish believers:

While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? – Acts 10:44-47

When Peter returned to the congregation at Jerusalem, he was called to give an account for receiving them into the membership of the congregation through baptism:

The New Birth

And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. – Acts 11:1-3

Peter started from the beginning with the vision he received from God at Joppa and the baptism in the Spirit performed upon the Gentiles:

And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God? – Acts 11:15-17

This new dispensation of the Spirit among the Gentiles was in lieu of the fact that Israel had rejected their Messiah and now God was going to temporarily turn His redemptive program from the nation of Israel unto the Gentile nations to call out a people unto himself and then return to save Israel (Rom. 11).

Hence, the Holy Spirit did not come to save anyone differently than before, but rather to save a different kind of people than before. Prior to Pentecost, salvation was limited to primarily one ethnic group of people – the Jews. After Pentecost, salvation was expanded to all nations, classes and genders or to the whole world. When the Jewish writers spoke of “*all men*” and “*the whole world*”, they were

The New Birth

referring to all mankind without distinction of race, class or gender, rather than all mankind without exception.

B. To publicly affirm and indwell a New Covenant Administrative House of God within the professing kingdom of God

*Then verily the first covenant had **also** ordinances of divine service, **and** a worldly²³ sanctuary. – Heb. 9:1*

Take note of the words “*also....and*” in Hebrews 9:1. Paul’s point is that the New Covenant administration “*also*” has ordinances (baptism and the Lord’s Supper) “*and*” a “*worldly sanctuary*” or a designated “*house of God*” existing in this world (1 Tim. 3:15). In both covenants this institutional house of God was characterized by three specific attributes:

1. Qualified Ministry – 1 Tim. 3:1-13
2. Qualified ordinances – (Mt. 26:12-30; 28:19)
3. Qualified building pattern as the House of God – (Mt. 16:16-18; 18:15-20; 28:19-20; Acts 2:41-42).

Moreover, with each new house of God (Tabernacle, Temple, Congregation) there was a designated builder, a divine pattern for building and a day of divine accreditation or baptism in the shikinah

²³ “worldly” in the sense it existed on earth in contrast to its antitype in heaven after which it was patterned.

The New Birth

glory (Ex. 40:35; 2 Chron. 7:3; Acts 2:1-3) where the Holy Spirit took up residence within this *institutional* house of God.

There was also a progressive change in the nature with each new house of God from the previous house. The first (tabernacle) was made of *skins*. The second (temple) was made of *stone*. The third (congregation) was made of baptized believers in their own *skin*, but assembled together as metaphorical spiritual *stones* as a “*building*” or “*house*” of God (1 Pet .2:5; 1 Tim. 3:15) which offered up “*acceptable*” sacrifices.

Significantly, the baptism in the Spirit was an **institutional** baptism and indwelling rather than an **individual** baptism and indwelling. The difference is distinguished by Paul in the letter to the Corinthians between the singular temple of the Holy Spirit consisting of all the members at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 3:16 in contrast to the individual member as a singular temple of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 6:19:

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? – 1 Cor. 3;16

What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? – 1 Cor. 6:19

It is the **institutional** temple of God that was promised the indwelling Spirit as a singular body of plural water baptized believers:

The New Birth

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: - Mt. 3:11

It was this singular congregational body of water baptized believers which habitually assembled with Christ from the baptism of John that Christ promised the baptism in the Spirit on the day of Pentecost:

*And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. **For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.**
– Acts 1:4-5*

Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection. – Acts 1:21-22

This is the same singular congregation of water baptized believers that continued to regularly assemble together at Jerusalem and was assembled and waiting in Acts 2:1

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. – Acts 2:1

The New Birth

This is the same assembly that all 3,000 saved on Pentecost were “*added unto*” (Acts 2:41, 47).

Gospel repentance and water baptism was the conditions set forth to partake of this promise of the Spirit (Acts 2:38-40)²⁴ manifested in supernatural gifts of the Spirit.

Moreover, this baptism in the Spirit was restricted in both time and geographic location by Christ in Acts 1:4-5. The time was restricted to “*not many days hence*” and the location was restricted to Jerusalem:

And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. – Acts 1:4-5

However, there were multitudes of baptized believers living everywhere prior to the ascension (1 Cor. 15:6). So this baptism in the Spirit was not universal among believers on the day of Pentecost, but restricted to merely 120 (Acts 1:12) in the in a specific location in Jerusalem. What occurred in this specific time and location was the one time public divine accreditation that characterized all former

²⁴ “*gift of the Holy Spirit*” – He is referring to what they had both seen and heard and enquired about (vv. 6-11). Peter had told them in response that what they had seen and heard was predicted by Joel to be sign gifts or what confirmed Jesus to be the Christ (v. 22) and which would be given to their sons and daughters (vv. 39-40). He is not referring to the Person of the Holy Spirit but to the “gift” or outpouring of sign gifts by the Holy Spirit.

The New Birth

houses of God after their completion (Ex. 40:35-36; 2 Chron. 7:1-3).²⁵

It is repeated once in relationship to Gentile believers in Acts 10 because the Jews would not administer water baptism and receive them into the church institution (Acts 10:45-48). It was only this divine accreditation by God that silenced the Jewish church members at Jerusalem (Acts 11:1-17).

When Peter related to them the baptism in the Spirit that occurred at the house of Cornelius, the nearest reference point he could provide the church with for what happened there was “*with us at the beginning*” or on the day of Pentecost (Acts 11:15-16). However, thousands had been saved and added to the congregation at Jerusalem between Pentecost and the house of Cornelius, but Peter never said what happened at the house of Cornelius was what had been happening “*since the beginning*” but rather only “*at the beginning*” proving this was not an individual baptism being repeated since Pentecost, but a onetime historic baptism that had not occurred since Pentecost.

Therefore, this is an **institutional** indwelling and baptism in the Spirit and distinct and separate from the **individual** indwelling and water baptism of all believers (Rom. 8:8-9).²⁶

²⁵ If this was the baptism of believers into a universal invisible body of Christ, then it would not have made any difference where they were and would have included all believers everywhere – but it did not. This shows it was an institutional baptism.

²⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:13 is a summarization of 1 Corinthians 3:5-16 in regard to their dissension over the differences of water baptismal administrators 1 Cor.

The New Birth

In Hebrews 8-9 Paul is contrasting the Old Covenant administration with the New Covenant administration. There are many differences.

However, one thing that is not different is that both covenants have earthly public houses of God, a qualified ministry and ordinances that declare the same “*everlasting covenant*” and neither administers it directly to the hearts of the elect.

The difference is that the “*old covenant*” was designed to challenge Israel to attempt self-administration in order to instruct them in their inability to do so (Deut. 5:29; 29:4; Jn. 7:19; Mt. 19:16-19; Lk. 10:25-28; Gal. 3:10-12), while declaring through the sacrificial and ceremonial laws the truth that only God could actually apply it to their hearts and thus lead them to faith in Christ. In contrast, the new covenant administration is more direct in declaring it cannot be self-administered, but only can be administered by the Triune God to the heart and life purely by grace without works. The Old was designed to demonstrate this truth through empirical evidence as a “*schoolmaster*” while the new covenant administration was to declare it plainly.

Moreover, the Old Covenant was primarily ethnic and national in character, whereas, the New Covenant is universal in ethnicity, gender and class. The “*middle wall of partition*” that separated

1:13-14). All human administrators of water baptism serve together as “one” under the direct leadership of the Spirit in building the church at Corinth. The same is true in regard to differences as gifted members in the congregation. It is under the power and leadership of the same Spirit that members are led to be water baptized into the congregational body at Corinth (1 Cor. 12:27) as well as gifted for service in that body.

The New Birth

Gentile believers from Jewish believers in the Old Covenant public “*house of God*” is abolished by Christ in the New Covenant public “*house of God*.” In the new public house of worship, the women are not separated from the men, neither are the ministry separated from other members in regard to public worship (Eph. 2:12-21). They all worship as one congregational body together in one place as “*an*” holy temple (Eph. 2:21) at Ephesus, or wherever the congregational body meets together for public worship.

Furthermore, the Old Covenant as a national and ethnic covenant served to provide an **external type** of the elect and their salvation under the “*everlasting covenant*.” The nation as a whole represented in type the totality of the elect of God in all ages. It typified their salvation from beginning to end by external types. For example, the Jew was to be circumcised on the eighth day of their life which typified the new birth of the elect. Without external circumcision no other aspect of the Old Covenant administration was available for them to partake, but they were cast out of the nation. The new covenant administration requires internal spiritual circumcision of the heart in order to partake of the public house of God and all of its ordinances and to be recognized as a true child of God.

All the sacrifices provided **external** types of the complete substitutionary redemptive work and person of Christ. The moral law applied to the civil and ceremonial laws provided an external type of the holiness of God and the progressive work of sanctification in the elect of God, and thus serve as “ensamples” or examples of the faith. So the “old” covenant served to provide the

The New Birth

world and Israel with an external type of the truths of the true children of God under the “everlasting covenant.”

The “*old*” covenant was an administration that began with the outward ceremonial profession of the everlasting covenant designed to bring them into a spiritually reality of that truth. It was a covenant made with a chosen *ethnic* people in their *natural* condition in order to teach them the true nature of sin through the external application of the Law of God, and as a schoolmaster lead them to personal salvation through the gospel truths pictured in the external types, sacrifices and ceremonial ordinances designed to reveal truths of “*the everlasting covenant*.” There was a spiritual “elect” among the ethnic “elect” nation of Israel (Rom. 9:6) that embraced the truth of the gospel revealed in the Old Covenant ceremonial types (Heb. 11).

Both the “old” and “new” were earthly dispensational administrations of the truth of the everlasting covenant. The Old Covenant dispensation begins at Mount Sinai and ends at Mount Calvary. The New Covenant dispensation begins at Mount Calvary and ends with the return of Christ on Mount of Olives. The “*everlasting*” covenant begins in eternity past and never ends in eternity future. The “*everlasting covenant*” is based upon Christ being the “*same yesterday, today and forever*” (Heb. 13:8) as the lamb “*slain from the foundation of the world*” (Rev. 13:8) and “*the blood of the everlasting covenant*” is proclaimed in the “*everlasting gospel*” (Rev. 14:8) that was preached by “*all the prophets*” (Acts 10:43: Heb. 4:2) beginning with the first prophet Abel to the last prophet prophets on the face of the earth.

The everlasting covenant has been the one and only way of procuring salvation for all of God’s elect from Genesis to

The New Birth

Revelation. It is the “everlasting covenant” promised in Genesis 3:15 in the “*seed of the woman*” and repeated to Abraham as the promised gospel “*seed*” (Gal. 3:8), and it was all the hope of salvation for David, Isaiah and saints in all ages:

*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between **thy seed** and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.* – Gen. 3:15

*And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an **everlasting covenant**, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.*
– Gen. 17:7

*And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, **preached** before **the gospel unto Abraham**, saying, **In thee** shall all nations be blessed..... Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to **thy seed, which is Christ**. And this I say, that **the covenant**, that was confirmed before of God **in Christ**, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.* – Gal. 3:8, 16-17

*Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an **everlasting covenant**, ordered in all things, and sure: for **this is all my salvation**, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.* – 2 Sam. 23:5

The New Birth

*Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an **everlasting covenant** with you, even **the sure mercies of David**.* – Isa. 55:3

*And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you **the sure mercies of David**.* – Acts 13:34

*To him give **all the prophets witness**, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*
– Acts 10:43

The gospel of salvation has always been the same from Genesis to Revelation, and so has the way of salvation and how the Holy Spirit regenerates, indwells, seals, sanctifies and saves the elect because it is “*the blood of the everlasting covenant*.”

Prior to the cross, all the elect looked forward by faith to the coming of Christ, and after the cross all the elect look back by faith to the completion of the cross.

In the “*everlasting covenant*” or the eternal purpose of redemption, the Second Person of the Godhead entered a covenant commitment with the Father and the Holy Spirit to satisfy the holiness of God against sin through the provision of a sinless life that fulfilled the righteous demands of God’s Law and that life is represented in the shedding of His blood.

Hence, the writer of Hebrews could rightly say that “*the gospel*” or “*the blood*” of the everlasting covenant was preached under the “*old*” covenant to them, as well as, under the “*new*” covenant to us:

The New Birth

For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. – Heb. 4:2

The “old” Covenant anticipated the cross in all of its sacrifices and ceremonial ordinances which were administered through the “*house of God.*” The “*new*” Covenant is based upon the completion of the cross and anticipates the second coming of Christ in all of its ordinances administered through the “*house of God.*”

However, the Old Covenant administration of the “*everlasting covenant*” was inferior to the New Covenant administration of the “*everlasting Covenant.*”

The “old” Covenant administration of the ordinances were designed to typify and anticipate the first coming of Christ, whereas the “*new*” Covenant administrative ordinances were designed to typify and anticipate the Second Coming of Christ. Hence, the fulfillment of the Old Testament types by the coming and redemptive work of Christ rendered it invalid as an administration.

In God’s sight, the coming of Christ climaxing in his death, burial and resurrection abolished the public and personal administration (Col. 2:16-18). In the sight of men its public and personal administration was abolished with the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70. The period between the resurrection of Christ and the destruction of the temple was a transition period from the Old to the New in regard to public administration. It was also the time of public testing of the nation of Israel to receive Jesus as their promised Christ.

The “*new*” is “*better*” in every respect than the “*old.*” It has a better high Priest, a better sacrifice, a better Sabbath day observance,

The New Birth

a better “*house of God*,” better ministry, and better ordinances, but the same gospel (Heb. 4:2) of “*the blood of the everlasting covenant*” of salvation (Heb. 13:20). Both have the same origin – God – and God is not the author of confusion.

C. To Provide a New Body of Scriptures

*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into **all truth**: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you **things to come**. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. – Jn. 16:13-14*

*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me **through their word**; - Jn. 17:20*

The New Testament scriptures were written by the Apostles and prophets. The vast majority of the New Testament scriptures were written by apostles. The few remaining books were written by those under the ministry of an apostle. For example, Luke wrote under the ministry of Paul, while Mark wrote under the ministries of Peter and Paul.

The completing of the Biblical canon was predicted by Isaiah to be completed under the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ:

*Bind up the testimony, seal the law **among my disciples**. And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given me **are for signs***

The New Birth

and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion. – Isa. 8:16-18

The apostolic office was established by Christ to be his authorized witnesses of his resurrection, but also they were given special sign gifts (2 Cor. 12:12) to impart to the churches by the laying on of their hands to provide temporal revelation until they completed the Biblical Canon with the New Testament scriptures.

1. Miracles, Signs and Wonders – 2 Cor. 12:12

In some sense “miracles, signs and wonders” were unique to the apostolic office alone, or else such could not be definitive signs of a true apostle:

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. – 2 Cor. 12:12

They were unique to the apostolic office because it was through the apostolic laying on of hands that miracles were communicated to others and that such gifts were imparted to others.

In Acts 2-6:5 the only ones performing miracles, signs and wonders were the apostles.

And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. – Acts 2:43

The New Birth

And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. – Acts 4:33

And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. – Acts 5:12

When the apostles laid hands upon the seven in Acts 6, then we read of these seven performing miracles signs and wonders (Steven and Philip in particular – Acts 6:6-8:13).

Simon the Sorcerer wanted to purchase this apostolic ability to convey spiritual gifts through the laying on of their hands:

*(For as yet he was **fallen upon** none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.*
– Acts 8:16-19

These were already baptized believers in Christ. This is not referring to the indwelling presence of the Spirit, but the outward manifest sign gifts of the Spirit (“*fallen upon*”). The effects of apostolic laying on of hands was something Simon could visible see (“*when Simon saw*”).

The New Birth

The same outward manifestations of the Spirit can be clearly seen as the evidence of Paul laying his hands upon baptized believers to impart such manifest sign gifts:

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. – Acts 19:6

Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.
– 2 Tim. 1:6

In Romans 12 there are no sign gifts listed. Paul writes to them as the apostle to the Gentiles, wishing to see them so that he might impart spiritual sign gifts to them through the laying on of his hands:

For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; - Rom. 1:11

The apostles were given the ability not merely to lay their hands upon people and heal them, but the unique ability to lay their hands upon baptized believers in order to impart to them spiritual gifts. This unique ability set their office apart and provided miraculous confirmation of their special calling to establish the churches in the truth and provide for the churches a Biblical foundation of New Testament scriptures, thus completing the Biblical canon of scriptures as predicted in the Old Testament and by Christ.

The New Birth

2. Realization of their Prophetic Mission:

Did the Apostles realize they were furnishing and completing the Scriptures? Did they understand that the Holy Spirit was using them to write inspired scriptures with the ultimate aim of binding it up and sealing it among themselves?

Peter certainly viewed the writings of Paul as inspired scriptures as he explicitly compared Paul's writings to "*other scriptures.*"

*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also **other scriptures** unto their own destruction - 2 Pet. 3:15-16*

Paul certainly understood he was writing inspired scriptures as he told the church at Thessalonica:

*For this cause also thank we God with ceasing, because, when ye **received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.** - 1 Thes. 2:13*

In the conference at the Jerusalem church in which all the apostles participated, James said,

*For it seemed good **to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things** - Acts 15:28*

The Apostle John when speaking of all of the apostles who

The New Birth

personally saw Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 1:1-3) said:

We are of God, he that knoweth God heareth us, he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. - 1 Jn. 4; 6

John as the last living apostle fully realized their predicted responsibility of finalizing a written testimony of Jesus Christ and sealing it:

Who bare record of the Word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. - Rev. 1:2

He then finished the last book of the scriptures with a seal (Rev. 22:18-19).

Twenty-two of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were written by apostles. Three of the five not written by apostles were written by those directly under the direction of apostles (Mark, Luke, and Acts). The remaining two were written by the Lord's brothers (James, Jude). All were written by "*my disciples*" (Isa. 8:16) or those alive during the Lord's own earthly ministry.

The whole New Testament canon was completed by the "*apostles and prophets*" and their finished work is the "*foundation*" (Eph. 2:20) upon which the institutional church is built and why it is "*the pillar and the ground of the truth*" (1 Tim. 3:15).

When the apostles died, so did the ability to convey these special revelatory sign gifts and when the last baptized believers died upon whom apostolic hands were laid to convey such ability so did these unique apostolic gifts.

The New Birth

3. When that which is Perfect is come – 1 Cor. 13

1 Corinthians 13 is one of the most misunderstood scriptures in the New Testament. It cannot be properly interpreted and understood if it is not interpreted within its immediate and historical context.

This epistle was not written to compliment them on their spiritual maturity or their proper exercise of spiritual gifts. This letter was written to rebuke and correct them on many different matters including their understanding and use of spiritual gifts:

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? – 1 Cor. 3:1-3

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.- 1 Cor. 12:1

Spiritual gifts do not indicate spiritual maturity. In the immediate context, the Corinthians were boasting in certain **revelatory and sign** gifts as evidence of superior spirituality. Therefore, such gifts were given preeminence above others in the congregational service. The chief revelatory gift receiving this special attention was the gift of tongues.

Paul corrects their general understanding of spiritual gifts in chapter twelve. Spiritual gifts are dispensed according to the will of the Spirit rather than the choice or desire of the believer (1 Cor. 12:7-11). God equips each member in the congregational body with the

The New Birth

gift that He believes serves the best for the edification of the whole institutional body (1 Cor. 12:12-27). The gift of tongues ranks last in importance within the order of importance within the institutional church (1 Cor. 12:28) for many reasons that Paul will expound upon. In addition, it is not God's will that all gifts are available for every member (1 Cor. 12:29-30). Self-edification was the way those who possessed the more manifest and showy gifts but Paul would show them a better way – the way of love which seeks the edification of others at the expense of self – thus, the way of self-denial for the betterment of others.

The evidence of spiritual maturity is love (ch. 13). Love is also the superior way to seek and use spiritual gifts. Without love as the guiding principle in seeking and using spiritual gifts, no matter how great the gift may be, it is worthless (1 Cor. 13:1-4). Paul then characterizes love as the essence of the “fruit” of the Spirit (1 Cor. 13:5-8a; Gal. 5:21-22) and therefore, the character of true spirituality.

1 Cor. 13:8 ¶ *Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*

9 *For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.*

10 *But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*

11 *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.*

12 *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*

13 *And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

The New Birth

LOVE IS:

1. **ESSENTIAL** - 1 Cor. 13:1-3 because without it, **nothing** is of value.

2. **SPIRITUAL** - 1 Cor. 3:4-7 - The characteristics of love is the same characteristics given to describe the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). The Corinthians had all the spiritual gifts but were **not spiritual** (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

3. **SUPERIOR** - 1 Cor. 3:8 - **Love never fails**, but in contrast to love, revelatory and sign gifts do fail. Love is greater than either faith or hope because when that which is hoped for is realized, and what is received by faith is realized then there is no need for faith and hope but love **never** fails but continues.

4. **ABIDING** - 1 Cor. 13:9-13 – Paul contrasts “now” versus “then.” “Now” is the time for these revelatory and sign gifts to flourish but their purpose is temporary when something arrives that will complete them. That is the meaning of Paul’s words “in part” versus “that which is perfect.” The meaning of “perfect” is defined by its contrast “in part.” Something “in part” is incomplete whereas “perfect” refers to something that is complete. “Now” refers to the present time when Paul lived and wrote – the apostolic age. During this time there was no completed revelation and so in the meantime temporary and limited revelatory gifts were provided with sign gifts that verified the prophetic source. When the New Testament completed the whole body of scriptural revelation, then those incomplete revelatory gifts and their sign gifts would cease. Paul illustrates his literal teaching by three axioms (self-evident truths). The first axiom in verse 9 is that anything “in part” is incomplete but that which is “perfect” completes it. The second axiom is in verse 10. Childhood and childish speaking ceases with maturity. Verse 11 inferior revelation is replaced with superior revelation.

The New Birth

Exegetical Thoughts

The contrast presented here is the complete and permanent abiding character of love in direct contrast to three particular things that will vanish away, cease to exist.

Paul selects “tongues...knowledge...and prophecies” to contrast with the abiding complete character of love.

The cessation of these things is indicated by the terms “fail.....cease...vanish away. The grammatical voice used in reference to these things indicates how they will cease. The middle voice is used with tongues and translated “they shall cease.” The middle voice tells us how they will cease. They will cease of themselves. Nothing outside of this gift will cause it to cease. Tongues has a divine purpose (Isa. 28:13-15; 1 Cor. 14:19-22) and when that purpose is fulfilled it simply ceases.

In contrast to tongues, both knowledge and prophecy and the terms describing their cessation are found in the passive voice. The passive voice demands that something outside of themselves will cause their cessation. The point is unlike these things, love will never cease.

In verse 9 tongues is dropped altogether and only knowledge and prophecies are continued. The inference is that tongues ceases of itself prior to either knowledge or prophecies being caused by something to cease. Both are described as “in part.” Anything “in part” is not yet completed or it would not be described as “in part.”

Verses 10-12 describe how and when these “in part” things will cease or be caused to vanish away. Significantly, Paul provides three axioms (self-evident truths) that describe when and what causes these “in part” things to cease.

The New Birth

In verse 10 the first axiom is anything that is “in part” will cease to be “in part” when it is completed (perfect). The term “perfect” is to be understood as “complete” as that is the only possible alternative to anything described as “in part.” It is a self-evident truth that anything incomplete (“in part”) ceases to be incomplete when it is completed.

In verse 11 the second axiom is anything that is immature ceases to be immature when it is matured. This is a self-evident truth (axiom).

In verse 12 the third axiom is anything that is an inferior means of revelation (mirror darkly) is replaced by a superior means of revelation (“face to face”).

All three axioms describe a developmental process of something “now” (at the time of writing) which must be brought from “in part” or incomplete or from an immature/inferior state to a complete, mature revelation.

What is it that accomplishes this process and brings these “in part” and immature and inferior things to a state of complete, mature and superior means of revelation?

Some believe it is the coming of Christ. Others believe it is the perfect state. Still others believe it is mature love. Finally, many believe it is the completion of the Biblical Canon of Scripture in the final production of the New Testament Scriptures.

In order to provide a correct contextual answer there are three contextual facts that must be recognized.

(1) Whatever it may be causes knowledge to cease.

The New Birth

(2) Whatever it may be is a thing and not a person as the neuter gender is used to describe it (“perfect” Gr. neuter gender).

(3) Whatever it may be is a developmental process of something presently “in part” immature and imprecise that is brought to completion, maturity and precise revelation.

For example, neither the coming of Christ, or the future perfect state or love causes knowledge to cease, if “knowledge” is understood as mere intake of intellectual data. Those things increase knowledge rather than causing it to vanish away or cease.

However, if “knowledge” is understood as supernatural direct revelation from God to men through such means as visions, dreams as part of the prophetic revelatory process then a finished completed written revelation will cause that to cease. If “prophecies” refer to the product of revelatory gifts, then a completed finished written revelation will cause it to cease, as these are the very things that characterize the prophetic gift.

Moreover, neither the coming of Christ nor the future perfect state are present or in a developmental process. Indeed, this present earth is destroyed before the future state can occur. Verse 11 and the axiom of maturing is a developmental process. These “in part” revelatory things were present and in process when Paul wrote (“now”) and continued to be in process until the Biblical canon was completed, matured as a final precise written revelation.

Finally, the third axiom demands that Paul is referring to the present inferior means of revelation. The very term “mirror” is a means of revelation. The term “darkly” shows the present “in part” means of revelation is inferior and in need of a more superior and completed revelation. Indeed, only select members had these revelatory gifts, which made other members dependent upon them. Furthermore, they had to be tested to make sure the revelation came from the Spirit of God (1 Jn. 4:1; 1 Cor. 14:29). Last, they provided

The New Birth

only “in part” or partial revelations and could never give a clear and full revelation for church doctrine, policy and practice. However, the finished Old Testament Scriptures had predicted the completion of the New Testament or “testimony” of Jesus (Isa. 8:16-20). Such a completed clear and precise revelation would cause such “in part” revelatory means that “now” existed in the apostolic age to cease “then” when the Biblical canon of revelation was completed.

However, that time was not “now.” Moreover, the super apostles and foes of Paul had challenged the authenticity of his apostolic office, (1 Cor. 4; 2 Cor. 12) and continued to do so everywhere he travelled. Thus, they challenged his prophetic office to speak and write authoritatively by inspiration from God. This is why Paul took the principle of love, which is already complete in and of itself and expanded on its axiomatic characteristics in order to use it, as the basis to correct and instruct them in the proper use of spiritual gifts (14:1). In so doing, he established his prophetic office (1 Cor. 14:37-38) and at the same time advanced the completion of the Biblical canon of Scripture.

However, “*now*” in lieu of no completed written revelation concerning the proper use of spiritual gifts in the assembly, love provides a mature principle to guide them in this matter. Love is complete and is greater than faith or hope because it is inclusive of both (“*believeth all things*” “*hopeth all things*”). Hence, love provides a mature principle to define the proper use of spiritual gifts “*now*” (14:1) that none could dispute until “*in part*” revelatory gifts are done away by a more direct completed revelation – the finished word of God.

Near the end of his ministry when facing death, when most of the New Testament revelation had been written and confirmed by

The New Birth

miracles, signs and wonders to be the prophetic word of God he anticipated the near completion of the Biblical canon and said:

*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be **perfect**, throughly furnished unto all good works.* 2 Tim. 3:16-17

Isaiah anticipated the sealing up and binding of the Old (the law) and New (the testimony) Testament Scriptures and said in view of its completion:

*To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to **THIS WORD**, it is because there is no light in them.* – Isa. 8:20

Isaiah said this in direct response to those who would speak in unknown tongues and see visions and claim additional revelation (Isa. 8:19).

"face to face" - 1 Cor. 13:12

Face to face revelation is superior to looking into a brass mirror. Indeed, this is exactly the meaning of the phrase "*face to face*" in the Old Testament. It refers to a more direct and clearer revelation OF WORDS than received by prophets through visions and dreams which revelatory vehicles of expression are described as "*dark*" means of revelation ("*darkly*" 1 Cor. 13:12):

Numb. 12:6 *And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a **VISION**, and will speak unto him in a*

The New Birth

DREAM.

7 My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.

*8 With him will I speak mouth to mouth, **EVEN APPARENTLY**, and not in **DARK SPEECHES**; and the similitude of the **LORD** shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?*

Dreams and visions as vehicles of expressing revelation are called "*dark speeches*." Whereas, God spoke to Moses "*mouth to mouth*" which is by definition "*face to face*" although God never allowed Moses to literally look upon His face. "*Face to face*" meant that God's words were communicated more direct and apparent to Moses than to prophets through revelatory vehicles of expression. Likewise, in 1 Cor. 13:8-13 when that which is "*perfect*" or the completed written revelation of God's word occurs, "then" the imperfect means of revelation (prophecy, knowledge) will cease as we have something better, clearer and more enduring than looking into a "brass mirror."

Why Does Paul select "*knowledge, tongues and prophecies*" in 1 Cor. 13:8? Because these three are representative of the rest of revelatory and sign gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10.

The "*sign*" gifts cease when what they signify has occurred. The revelatory gifts are "in part" and cease when what they provide in "part" is replaced by what is finished, perfected, completed, and matured. What is "in part" versus "perfect" speaks of the same thing – **revelation**. The completed written revelation is **more direct** revelation to each child of God than the **indirect** revelatory gifts which is like a "glass **darkly**" in contrast to the more direct and completed/perfected/matured finished written revelation.

The New Birth

Summary

One aspect of the promise of the Spirit was to empower the apostles and prophets in order to confirm and complete the Biblical canon.

However, another aspect of this promise was to usher in a new dispensation of the Spirit's administration of the everlasting covenant. This "new" dispensation included a new institutional public "house of God" with a new qualified public ministry and new qualified public ordinances.

Furthermore, this new dispensation of the Spirit would not change how the elect were saved but would change what kind of elect would be saved – the gentiles/world (Rom. 11:11-25). This temporal new administration of the "everlasting covenant" would endure until the return of Christ from heaven when he would turn back to the nation of Israel and redeem the whole nation at His return (Rom. 11:25-28).

Therefore, salvation has always been according to "*the blood of the everlasting covenant*" directly applied to the elect by God through the preaching of the same gospel in all generations between Genesis and Revelation (Acts 10:43; Heb. 4:2). However, this everlasting covenant as manifested in earthly covenants differend in the nature of their administration. Some covenants emphasized different aspects of the everlasting covenant. The "new" covenant is the final and most comprehensive and superior administration of the everlasting covenant.

The New Birth

The Church and Spiritual Union

Both the Roman Catholic and the Reformed Roman Catholic (Protestantism) view of the church confuse the nature of the church with spiritual union with God through Christ. This confuses ecclesiology (study of the church) with soteriology (study of salvation). Both the Roman and Reformed ecclesiology deny there is any salvation outside of their concept of the church. The reason both deny there is any distinction between membership in the church and spiritual union with Christ is because they literalize what is clearly a metaphorical expression “the body of Christ which is the church.” They define “the body of Christ” to be a spiritual reality that is accessed by the baptism in the Spirit. They define spiritual union or “in Christ” to be this church body.

There are multiple problems with this confusion between salvation and the church. The first problem is their view must literalize what is designed to be metaphorical with regard to the church. It should be obvious that the church is not the literal physical body of Christ. It is the metaphorical body of Christ. What is the intent of a metaphor? The word “metaphor” means to “cross over” or “bring over.” The metaphor is when something understood in its most literal sense which can be described by literal characteristics is used to transfer one or more of those characteristics to another noun. The sign that a metaphor is intended by a writer is that they use linking verbs (is, are, was, be, etc.) and directly claim one thing “is” another thing. For example, “we ARE the sheep of his pasture.” The intent of a metaphor in this example, is that “we” represent “sheep” in keeping with some kind of literal characteristic(s) found in sheep that can be applied to us. The linking verb can be interpreted to mean

The New Birth

“represent” and then you have the true idea behind the purpose of a metaphor.

Now, lets look at a clear metaphorical use of “the body of Christ” in 1 Corinthians 12:13 – “now YE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST and MEMBERS in particular.”

Notice that Paul did not use the pronoun “we” but excluded himself from this metaphor by saying “ye” or the church members at Corinth. Second, take the linking verb “are” and replace it with “represent” and you have the true intent of Paul “now ye REPRESENT the body of Christ and MEMBERS in particular.” There are two metaphors being applied to the church at Corinth. First, they are a representative body of Christ. Second individually they are representative “members” of such a metaphorical body. How would a local visible church body be representative of the “body of Christ.” The literal body of Christ is local, visible, and consists of various bodily members assembled and working together. This has been the abstract teaching of Paul preceding this concrete application (1 Cor. 12:11-26). Hence, they represent the literal physical body of Christ in Corinth as they are individual members assembled to work together in unity. When the abstract institutional use is applied to “the church” and its metaphors then the church institution is the metaphorical body of Christ in any given locality as it represents his ministry in any given locality by members who are working together as an assembly preaching the same gospel he preached, administering the same baptism he administered and teaching and observing the same faith and practice he commanded. So, the first problem of the Roman and Reformed

The New Birth

view is they misinterpret and confuse what is designed to be understood metaphorical by making it literal.

The second mistake they make is that the church of Christ as defined and described by Paul and other disciples had no existence prior to the public ministry of Christ. How do we know that for certain? Because Paul tells us clearly that the first gifted officers that are set in this church are apostles followed secondarily by prophets (1 Cor. 12:28). We know this is the precise order because Ephesians 2:20 and Ephesians 3:5 make it clear that these apostles and prophets were New Testament rather than Old Testament prophets. It is these apostles and prophets that form the “foundation” of the church (Eph. 2:20). No church can exist prior to its foundation and first additions. Hence, the kind of church Paul describes has no Old Testament existence. Why is that a problem? It is a problem because that the sin problem (spiritual separation from God) occurred and has existed in every child of Adam since Genesis whereas the Roman and Reformed view has spiritual union inseparably connected with the New Testament church and spiritual union with God in Christ confined to being a member of the body of Christ which is the church. This would assign all living prior to the formation of the church to the state of spiritual separation – dead, deprived, dark and enmity.

The third mistake is that the baptism in the Spirit is time and geographically located long after the fall. In Acts 1:4-5 Jesus restricts both the time and location of the baptism in the Spirit “wait in Jerusalem....not many days hence.” The saving work of the Spirit is not geographically restricted. The baptism in the Spirit has to do with something that is both time and geographically restricted

The New Birth

(church institution). The mechanism for entrance into their concept of spiritual union (body union) denies anyone prior to Pentecost could enter into spiritual union with God in Christ. Hence, they would not only be in spiritual separation from God but outside of Christ. However, there is no salvation of any kind outside of Christ at any time.

What this means is the Roman Catholic and Reformed concepts of both the church and the baptism are false or else one must assign all pre-Pentecost human beings to eternal damnation as they exist in spiritual separation from God, thus spiritually dead, in darkness, depraved and at enmity with God.

The New Birth

The Seven different uses of “In Christ” and what it Means

There are seven distinct ways that one is “*in Christ*” and they fall under two primary divisions: Salvation and Service, cause and Consequences

A. Your Salvation Union with Christ (Causal)

1. In Christ by Divine choice – Purposed salvation union – Eph. 1:4 *According as he hath chosen us **in him** before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:* - Before you existed and therefore invisible to your present state.

2. In Christ by Representation – Representative salvation union – 1Co 15:22 *For as in Adam all die, even so **in Christ** shall all be made alive.* Before you existed and invisible to you.

3. In Christ by Regeneration – Spiritual salvation union – Eph. 2:10 *“For we are his workmanship created in **Christ Jesus** unto good works....”* Christ in you” by the Holy Spirit internal and invisible (Jn. 3:8)

4. In Christ by Justification through faith – Legal or Positional salvation union – *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:* - Rom. 4:22-5:1 – in heaven and invisible to you.

The New Birth

B. Your Service Union with Christ (consequential)

1. In Christ by baptism – pictorial or symbolic service union – Gal. 3:27; I Pet. 3:21 - *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* – External and visible

2. In Christ by church membership – Metaphorical union or Representative service union – I Cor. 12:27 – “*ye are the body of Christ and members in particular*” (you represent Him by membership in his church body) – External and visible

3. In Christ by Practice – experiential service union - “*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him:*” – Col. 2:6 – External visible – manifest “walk”

The primary problem with the idea that the baptism in the Spirit places all believers into spiritual union with Christ or in the so-called universal invisible mystical body of Christ is that it perverts the Biblical doctrine of regeneration/new birth.

The Baptism in the Spirit is a date fixed occurrence (Acts 1:4-5). Previous to Acts 2:1 the baptism in the Spirit is always referred to as a yet future prophetic fulfillment. However, spiritual union with God through Christ is inseparable from regeneration, quickening, or new birth. Spiritual death by definition is spiritual separation from God (Isa. 59:2; Eph. 4:18). Regeneration is bringing the sinner back into spiritual union with God. There is no salvation outside of Christ for anyone at any time (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12; 10:43; Heb. 4:2). Yet, the Reformed Catholic doctrine of the baptism in the Spirit prohibits the new birth from occurring prior to Pentecost, leaving all pre-Pentecost people of God spiritually separated from God, thus spiritually dead. Thus, the Reformed doctrine of the church perverts essential fundamental salvational truths.

The New Birth

The New Birth and the Modern Invitational System

*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but to us which are saved **it is the power of God.** - Rom.1:16*

Nowhere does the Bible state that the invitation or an invitation system is the power of God to salvation. Nowhere can we find the manipulative invitational methods being used in Scripture. No New Testament preacher of the gospel ever tells his audience, “now with every head bowed, and no one looking around.....” Nowhere can we find manipulative music being played softly in the background and repetitive lines of prolonged singing pressuring people to make a decision before you allow them to leave the building. All of this is designed for one thing, and that is to produce a psychological atmosphere to produce decisions. That very intent, usurps the power and position of the Holy Spirit.

Moreover, no sermon recorded in scripture ever gives an invitation at its close, but the whole sermon or the preaching of the gospel is the invitation. There are recorded sermons in Scripture and yet no “bow your heads, close your eyes” no soft music being played in the background, no repetitive and extended lines of music pressuring people to make a decision. That technique usurps the gospel, usurps the person and power of the Holy Spirit and is nothing but psychological manipulative evangelism.

Furthermore, every invitation found in scripture is addressed only to those who are already thirsty, hungry, and burdened with sin. Nowhere does scripture ever provide an invitation simply to make a decision for Christ. No invitation or invitation system is ever used

The New Birth

to persuade anyone to come to Christ for salvation as it is not the invitation or invitational technique that is the power of God to salvation, but it is the preaching of the gospel.

The modern invitational system is nothing less than psychological manipulation to produce decisions. It is filling churches with unregenerate people who simply were talked into making a decision, or to walk an isle or to repeat magical words.

What is even more tragic, and even damning is that it is taking advantage of innocent children which can be easily manipulated into making professions because they either want to please the adults or feel accepted. The vast majority of these professions are manifested to be false professions as they grow into their teens when actual moral decisions are being made that demonstrate they are still unregenerate. Children evangelism is for the most part simply another form of sacramental paedo-baptism and confirmation. Of course God can save young children and does save many, but the evidence of a transformed person is not seen until usually their early teenage years when they are actually confronted with moral decisions that demonstrate obedience to God and parents (authorities).

However, it is the church growth techniques that dominate American churches in this age. Preachers are being taught that preachers like Noah are failures as evangelists, are ignorant and untaught in proper church growth techniques or else he would have had converts after preaching the gospel for over 100 years. Hence, numerical growth is the new definition of a church's spirituality and obedience to the gospel.

The New Birth

God is able to save without your pressure tactics, psychological manipulative tactics and personality power over the audience. It is the “*preaching of the cross*” that God uses to save not your unbiblical invitational system. If God has not used the gospel to save them, your invitational system will only produce false professions.

Is it scriptural to call sinners to repentance and faith? Yes! However, it is unbiblical to use psychological manipulative techniques to achieve that end as you are actively usurping the both the power and office of the Holy Spirit. What you are producing is decisions instead of salvation and tragically making them a “twofold child of hell” because you have convinced them they are saved when they are not.

The New Birth

The Biblical Metaphors of Light/Darkness and Seeing/Hearing

Biblical writes use the following terms as metaphors of a contrasting spiritual conditions or states:

Darkness/light

Seeing/blindness

Hearing/deafness

Of course, the metaphor of darkness is the contrast to light as seeing is the contrast to blindness and hearing is the contrast to being deaf. If you understand the meaning of one metaphor then the opposite metaphor has the opposite meaning.

Our starting point in this study should be with the most obvious application of the metaphors of light and darkness. The most obvious application of the metaphor “darkness” is associated with Satan and his kingdom just as the most obvious application of the metaphor “light” is associated with Christ and His kingdom. The “kingdom” refers to the person of the king, his rule and his realm (area and citizens). The kingdom of “darkness” is a metaphorical description of the moral nature and defective condition of Satan’s person, rule and realm. Significantly, this moral defect that characterizes the rule and realm of Satan stems from the defective moral condition of Satan’s personage. The kingdom of “darkness” is the characterization of evil, deception and death (separation from God).²⁷ Because the person of Satan is evil, deceptive and death (separated from God) then so is his rule and realm. This is true of

²⁷ Death as a verb refers to actions that separate them from God. Even children of God can be separated from fellowship with God by their sinful actions. Paul refers to the young widows as being “dead” while they are yet living due to their actions.

The New Birth

evil, deception and death as both nouns (descriptive of conditions) and verbs (descriptive of actions). Thus, evil, deception and death characterize Satan's person, rule and realm (citizens).

In direct contrast the kingdom of "light" is characterization of righteousness, truth and life considered as both nouns (descriptive of conditions) and verbs (descriptive of actions).

Citizens in Satan's kingdom "sit in darkness" or exist in a state or condition of metaphorical blindness. They may have physical eyes to see, but do not have spiritual eyes to see with regard to metaphorical light (righteousness, truth and life). Therefore, seeing but do not see. Imagine you were sitting in a room with no windows, no lights but pure absolute darkness. You have eyes to see but cannot see due to the state or condition of darkness. However, moral darkness is an internal condition rather than an external one as in our illustration. Evil, deception and death define the internal spiritual/moral condition of those under the power of Satan.

Not only are they spiritually blind but they are spiritually deaf having ears to hear but cannot hear. Metaphorical hearing in the Bible has to do with proper response to what is heard. In other words, those under the rule of evil, deception and death have no heart ability to respond in obedience to God but are in opposition to His Spirit and His Word. It is their moral condition that is in opposition to God due to their moral nature which produces actions of opposition. They are "children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2-3) due to their spiritual relationship with Satan. Their moral "image" is derived from Satan who is their ultimate spiritual "father" with regard to their moral image (Jn. 8:44-45).

In contrast, those under the rule of righteousness, truth and life have both eyes to see and ears to hear because light dwells within them by new birth (2 Cor. 4:6).

How is saving "faith" related to these metaphors? Paul says that faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). There can be no saving faith apart from "substance of things hoped for." That substance consists of proper

The New Birth

information as contained in the gospel and proper understanding of that information coupled with proper application of that information. A “vain faith” is a faith based upon improper information that only produces a two-fold more child of hell or a lost person who believes they are saved due to false information (“another gospel”) given them to rest their hope upon. Hence, saving faith must have the proper information.

However, the proper information is meaningless unless you understand it. Paul tells the Corinthians that those within the kingdom of darkness are prevented from understanding the proper information:

*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: **In whom** the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. – 2 Cor. 4:3-4*

This work of Satan “in” them is further described by Paul to the Ephesians:

*Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now **worketh in** the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. – Eph. 2:2-3*

Paul is not teaching that Satan is omnipresent at work within every one of his citizens. His work is more indirect as the spiritual father of their moral image. They are “by nature” his children. This nature consists of “the lusts” and “desires of our flesh and mind.” This “nature” is the result of his work in the garden in the fall of man in

The New Birth

Adam. Hence, their blindness to the gospel (understanding and obeying the right information) is due to their own internal moral condition. Repentance toward God is not consistent with their moral nature or moral drive as it is contrary to the – “lusts of the flesh...desires of the flesh and of the mind.” In essence, he is saying their will is the expression of the law of sin that defines their nature as “children of disobedience.” They exist in a state of willful opposition to God and his revealed will:

*Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, **neither indeed can be.** So then they that are in the flesh **cannot** please God. – Rom. 8:7-8*

*Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye **do** **always** resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. – Acts 7:51*

These verses must be carefully considered. In Romans 8:7 Paul describes the carnal mind or the mind of those “in the flesh” in the state of “enmity” (active warfare) against God. That is given as the reason they will never choose to be “subject to the law of God” nor is it possible for those “in the flesh” to choose submission to God. The words “not...neither indeed can” refer to inability and deny the doctrine of ability for alternative choice or free will. The freedom of their will is confined to the boundaries of their moral nature or to the “*lusts of the flesh....desires of the flesh and of the mind*” under the law of sin.

Acts 7:51 is even more explanatory. He did not say that they sometimes resist but that they “*always*” resist. This continuing state of resistance is due to their “uncircumcised” moral nature. Their heart has no ability to submit to the Holy Spirit because it exists in a moral state of opposition toward God. To be “uncircumcised in

The New Birth

heart and ears” is to be “in the flesh”²⁸ or in the unregenerate state and all who are in that condition “cannot please God.” Paul tells the Hebrews that the first step in pleasing God is to “believe” (Heb. 11:6) in God. The kind of faith he is referring to is illustrated and defined by the following context and examples (Heb. 11:7-41). Those “in the flesh cannot please God” because they cannot exercise saving faith due to law of sin governing over their nature.

Therefore, how does saving faith come to the unregenerate? Paul tells the Romans:

But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world. – Rom. 10:16-18

Notice, I have quoted Romans 10:17 within its immediate context as this makes a complete difference in how it is interpreted. Most commentators jerk it out of context and simply use it as a proof text to support the dogma of free alternative choice. However, the context is dealing with the problem that not all who hear the gospel receive it. That is the subject matter of verses 16 and 18 which surround verse 17. Paul is arguing that faith does not come merely by hearing the gospel with the external human ear. Isaiah clearly states this to be the case in verse 16 when he asks “*who hath believed our report.*” Paul asks in verse 18 “*have they not all heard?*” He immediately answers this question in the affirmative “*yes, verily their SOUND went into all the earth, and their WORDS unto the ends of the world.*” Yet, they do not believe and that is his point.

²⁸ To be “in the flesh” comes by first being “born of the flesh” and those “born of the flesh” walk “according to the flesh.” To be “in the Spirit” comes by being born of the Spirit” and those “in the Spirit” will “walk in the Spirit.”

The New Birth

How is this problem then addressed by “*so, then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God*” since, verses 16 and 18 prove that merely hearing with the physical ear is insufficient to conclude with faith? The key is understanding the three contrasts in these three verses.

In verses 16 and 18 those who proclaim the gospel are men (“*our*” and “*their*”) while in verse 17 it is “*God*.” Remember, Jesus told Peter that his confession of faith was not a product of human revelation to his ear but was a revealed to him by God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. – Mt. 16:17

Remember, Paul told the same Galatians that the gospel was not revealed to him by men but by God:

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.

For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. – Gal. 1:11-12

On the road to Damascus Paul was personally confronted by Christ.

Remember, Paul told the Galatians that Christ personified as “*Scripture*” (“*the word was God*” – Jn. 1:1) who preached the gospel to Abraham who is the father of all who believe (Gal. 3:8).

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. – Gal. 3:8

So, the first distinction is between man and God as preachers of the gospel. The second distinction has to do with the word “word” in

The New Birth

verses 17-18. It is not the common term *logos* but the Greek term *rhema* translated “word” in these verses. The term “logos” refers to revelation being communicated through speech. However, the term *rhema* is used for the word of command.²⁹ When human preachers commanded people to repent and believe in the gospel they took no heed, however, when God makes it His command, they respond in repentance and faith.

Paul tells the Thessalonians;

*Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. **For our gospel came not unto you in word only**, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: - 1 Thes. 1:4-6*

Paul is explicitly telling the Thessalonians they can know they are the elect of God by the way the gospel came to them. The gospel did not come in “word only” as preached by men. It did come by way of men but in addition to men preaching it to them, it was God that made it come to them “in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance” so that the final outcome was to changing them into the same “manner of men” who preached the gospel to them – saved persons.

Moreover, this empowered command was a creative command by God. It is this word of command by God that frees a person from the power of Satan and inability to repent and believe:

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

The New Birth

4 *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.*

5 *For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.*

6 *For **God, who commanded** the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

7 *But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of **the power may be of God, and not of us.***

Note the precise analogy given by Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:6 is to the creation of light out of darkness in Genesis 1:2-3. Paul is explicitly saying that just as God spoke light into existence in this world, so he spoke metaphorical light of knowledge of God into existence within the darkened heart. This was not generic knowledge of God, but specific knowledge “*in the face of Jesus Christ*” or a revelation of God through the person of Christ as revealed in the gospel (2 Cor. 4:2-7).

It is that precise revealed knowledge of God with reference to Christ in the gospel that is eternal life:

As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. – Jn. 17:2-3

Compare these verses to 1 Thessalonians 1:4-5. In both cases the elective choice of God precedes this divine revelation. To the Thessalonians he tells them they can know their election by the way the gospel came to them not in word only but in power, in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance. In John 17:2-3 Jesus tells the Father

The New Birth

that he gave eternal life “*to as many as thou hast given him*” rather than to many as believed. Instead, he claims that eternal life is due to elective choice and divine revelation of this certain knowledge. The Greek term translated “*know*” is *epiginosko* or experiential knowledge. This is the same revelatory knowledge that Jesus told Peter he received from God that is responsible for his confession of faith in Christ (Mt. 16:16-17). This is the same revelatory knowledge that Paul claims that Christ revealed to him that could not come from human beings (Gal. 1:12-13). This is the same revelatory knowledge Paul says was due to a creative act of God whereby he effectually called it into existence within the darkened heart (2 Cor. 4:6). This was the “power of God” that Paul denied any human preacher could lay claim to by their preaching (2 Cor. 4:7).

This creative act or command by God that produces the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ is the “substance” of saving faith and is eternal life. This is what theologians rightly refer to as the “effectual call” of God.

The New Birth

Appendix I The Image of God?

Man did not come from God's hands in a ruined condition, but was created in "*the image of God*" who is the source of light, life and goodness. When God finished with all of His creation, including the creation of man, he looked upon all the work of his hands and pronounced it "*very good*" – Gen. 1:31. God did not create a world with sin, misery, sickness, war and dying. God did not create man as evil, but created him morally "*upright*" (Eccl. 12:7) and in his own moral likeness and image.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. – Gen. 1:27

In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. - Gen. 5:1,2

God has no *physical* image or likeness because God is "*a spirit*" (Jn. 4:24) and "*a spirit hath not flesh and bones*" (Lk.). Paul says that Jesus was in the "*image of the invisible God*" (Col. 1:15). Indeed, the sin of idolatry was the attempt to make a *physical* material likeness of the "*invisible God*" especially in the material **physical** likeness of man:

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that

The New Birth

*are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:....Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And **changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man**, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.* – Rom. 1:20, 22-23

Note that Paul says the visible creation provides evidence of the “**invisible things of God**” and that idolatry was changing this glory of God into *visible* images that made God look like a man or animals. Paul is saying that the “*image*” of God is not a *visible* image that looks like *visible* man, but is an “*invisible*” image or likeness of God or a spiritual image or likeness of God.

Furthermore, all animal life received physical bodies and some bear a *physical likeness* or resemblance to man, but only man is said to be made in the “*image*” of God which again shows the likeness is not *physical*, but must be *spiritual*.

Even today, the term “*image*” often refers to something other than a *physical* or material likeness. There are companies that exist for the very purpose to improve your public “*image*.” They are not trying to improve your *physical* looks, but trying to restore the public perception of your moral and business image.

It is this moral and *spiritual* image that the new birth restores to man:

*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in **knowledge after the image of him that created him**: - Col.*

3:10

The New Birth

And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. – Eph. 4:24

According to these verses, there is a “*new man*” within the child of God which is after the image of God “*created in righteousness and true holiness*.” The fact that it is created within man again shows that the “*image of God*” is spiritual instead of materialistic in form.

1. A Spiritual Moral Image

Paul this inward new man is created and “*renewed in knowledge after the image*” of God.

And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: - Col. 3:10

What does Paul mean to be “*renewed in knowledge after*” the image of God. The Greek term translated “*after*” is the term *kata* which means “according to” or “in keeping with” or in harmony with something. This “*knowledge*” is a creative act of God within man that is *according to* or *in keeping with* or *in harmony with* the “*image of God*.”

The Greek term translated “*knowledge*” is *epiginosko* and means *intimate experiential knowledge* or knowledge gained through *intimate experience* with someone or something. Therefore, this is not knowledge gained through book reading or obtained in

The New Birth

connection with “*flesh and blood*.” This is *revelatory* knowledge obtained by a direct experience with God.

For example, how did Peter come to know Jesus Christ and who He really is? Jesus explains that Peter’s knowledge of Christ as presented in his profession did not come by “*flesh and blood*” means:

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

– Mt. 16:15-17

Jesus is saying that Peter’s confession of faith was directly due to divine revelation from the Father or revelatory knowledge that is direct, intimate and personal.

Paul says the very same thing about his own obtained knowledge of Christ:

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.....But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: - Gal. 1:11-12,15-16

The New Birth

Notice that the phrase “*not after man*” is synonymous with “*not with flesh and blood.*” Paul is asserting that he was not only taught the gospel by divine revelation, but that his initial knowledge of Jesus Christ was by divine revelation. Indeed, he claims that God revealed His Son “*in me*” prior to being called to preach the gospel.

More importantly, he compares his physical birth whereby he was revealed into the physical world from his mother’s womb to his spiritual birth whereby Christ was revealed within him – both equally acts of God – “*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace to reveal his Son in me.*” His point is that this revelation of Christ “*in*” him was on the same order as God effectually calling him forth from his mother’s womb, thus revealing him to the world. Likewise, God effectually called into existence **within** Paul this intimate personal experiential revelatory knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Paul likens this internal revelation of Christ in the heart of man at regeneration to be a creative act of God by an effectual call:

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

– 2 Cor. 4:6

With the former verse (Gal. 1:12-16) the analogy was with human birth where God effectually revealed Christ in Paul, just as God effectually revealed Paul in his mother’s womb. However, in this text (2 Cor. 4:6) the analogy is with the creation of light out of darkness in Genesis 1:2-3 where by God effectually called light into existence. This creation of light by an effectual call is the cause for

The New Birth

the metaphorical “*light of the knowledge of God*” to shine “*in our hearts.*” Again the Greek term *epiginosko* is used to translate “*knowledge*” in this text. This intimate experiential **revelatory** knowledge of God was due to a creative act by an effectual call. The words “let there be light” did not come in **word only** but “*in power, and in the Holy Spirit*” effectually creating light out of darkness. The content of the effectual call that creates this intimate experiential knowledge of God in the heart of the unregenerate man is the gospel (2 Cor. 4:5). In other words, God empowers the gospel so that it comes to his elect as a creative word of command that effectually creates this internal revelatory knowledge of Christ in the heart.

Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: 1 Thes. 1:4-6

Paul informs the Thessalonians’ that they can know their election of God (v. 4). How is that so? Paul tells them that the gospel does not come to God’s elect in “*word only*” or just external audible syllables. Rather it comes as an internal transforming creative revelatory word in “*power*” and “*in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance.*” It comes with internal transforming power that turns them into the same “*manner of men*” who delivered the gospel to them so that they “*became followers*” of them.

The New Birth

The preacher brings the gospel to the external ear of people, but it is God that transform it into a creative word of power “*in our hearts*” (2 Cor. 4:6) that transforms them.

Paul describes this joint work of the preacher and the Holy Spirit in this revelatory transforming power:

Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward:

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. 2 Cor. 3:2-6

Paul uses the analogy of inspiration behind the production of scriptures to show the transforming power of the effectual call. The idea of “*inspiration*” is God breathed words. The Bible is so much the Word of God that it is like God directly breathed it out on the pages as though no instrumental use of men were present. This is the analogy behind preaching the gospel to the elect. God writes the moral law upon the heart of men giving spiritual life, as though there is no instrumental use of men.

Take special note that this ministry makes a moral transformation in the heart of man. What was written formerly on stones (Ten

The New Birth

Commandments) is now written in “*fleshly tables of the heart.*” That is a metaphorical way of saying that God gives a “new heart” which has a moral taste bud for the things of God.

Paul’s words in 2 Corinthians 4:6 also infer that such a new moral nature is implanted by this effectual call that creates this metaphorical “*light of knowledge*” within the heart. This is intimate experiential knowledge gained by direct creative revelation of “*the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” Remember, that sin is defined as “*coming short of the glory of God*” (Rom. 6:23). The opposite of sin is righteousness, and righteousness is God’s glory. That righteousness necessary to be justified before God is revealed in Christ or “*the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*” In other words, what is created within the heart of the unregenerated man is an intimate experiential revelatory knowledge of “*the righteousness and true holiness of God*” (Eph. 4:24) in the person and works of Jesus Christ as declared in the gospel. It is God that reveals the truth of the gospel within the human heart by an intimate personal experiential revelation of the gospel that effectually calls man out of spiritual darkness into the moral light and spiritual life of God. This is why Jesus says this kind of revealed knowledge “*is eternal life.*”

And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. – Jn. 17:3

Again, it is the Greek word *epiginosko* translated “*know*” in John 17:3. Therefore, this experiential intimate sense of knowing God is eternal life and that is what is meant when Paul says that man is “*renewed in the knowledge after the image of him that created him.*” It is God revealing His glory (righteousness and true holiness)

The New Birth

by personal revelation of Jesus Christ as declared in the gospel within your heart transforming you into a new creation after the image of God.

The unregenerated man is void of this intimate personal revelatory knowledge of God and incapable of understanding it:

*Having the **understanding darkened**, being alienated from the life of God through **the ignorance** that is in them, because of the **blindness of their heart**: - Eph. 4:18*

Even the saved man, operating apart from the new supernatural inward man, but under the control of indwelling sin, just like the “*natural man*” or lost man (Rom. 7:18-25) cannot receive the things of God.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. – 1 Cor. 2:14

The saved man **can** operate under the law of sin, and when he does it is the “*carnal mind*” set controlling his life which is enmity against God. But the saved man does not have to operate that way because he has another option because of a new inward man whom he can “put on.” However, the lost man has no such new inward man but always **does** operate under the law of sin by nature and is “*in the flesh*” and never can “*please God*.”

Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So

The New Birth

then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. – Rom. 8:7

Therefore, being renewed in the knowledge after the “*image*” of God is a condition created by God within His elect that effectually reveals Christ in their heart, giving them seeing eyes, hearing ears and a believing heart.

On the very day and at the very time God gave the Ten Commandments to Israel, he said the following words:

*O that there were such an heart **in them**, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!*
– Deut. 29:4

These are the same people the writer of Hebrews said that erred “*in their heart*” where the gospel was not mixed with faith “*in them*” that heard it:

*Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do **alway err in their heart**; and **they have not known my ways**. So I swore in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.) Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you **an evil heart of unbelief**, in departing from the living God.....For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, **not being mixed with faith in them** that heard it – Heb. 3:10-12; 4:1*

The New Birth

What God stated on that day he gave them the Ten Commandments at the beginning of the book of Deuteronomy was reaffirmed at the close of the book of Deuteronomy:

Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day. – Deut. 29:4

Remember, the book of Deuteronomy covers a period of thirty-eight years and nine months. Hence, at the beginning God says they do not have such a heart in them, and at the close Moses claims that God had not yet given such a heart so they would be able “*to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear*”.

In other words, they had not yet had a heart transforming revelation of God’s glory (righteousness and holiness) or brought into spiritual union with God’s light, life or righteousness “*in the face of Jesus Christ.*” When you look into “*the face*” of someone you are getting a personal close up look at them. It is the creative act of new birth that reveals Christ in the hearts of God’s elect so they are seeing him as declared in the gospel. Seeing him as declared in the gospel is saving faith. This is the creation of saving faith within the heart by God. This is the moral transformation of the heart from the heart “of flesh” to a righteous heart by God (2 Cor. 3:3) bringing the elect into union with God as light, life and righteousness.

2. A Ruling Image

In addition to this *moral likeness* with God, man shared another likeness with God:

The New Birth

*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them **have dominion over** the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. – Gen. 1:26*

Part of God’s “*image*” is that he is a King who rules over things. Man was not only made in God’s *moral* image but in a *ruling image*. However, in the fall into sin, man became ruled over by the dominion of sin through which he yielded his rule over this world voluntarily unto Satan who is now the “*god*” and ruler over this world. This demonic rule over man and this world is a system of rebellion against God. Indeed, even the term “*world*” is used in scripture to describe a system of thought, values and principles that are in opposition to God’s revealed will as expressed in Scripture. Thus, born again persons are instructed by Biblical writes not to love the world, and although we are in the world we are not of the world or of that system of rebellion.

Moreover, the position of rule among human beings is given to the male instead of the female as Paul says concerning the male:

*For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as **he is the image and glory of God:** but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. – 1 Cor. 11:7-8*

Paul has been referring to the position of authority or chain of authority established by God (1 Cor. 11:3). In this chain of authority Christ is the “*image of the invisible God*” and under the authority of the Father, while man is also made in the

The New Birth

“*image of God*” and the woman is under the authority of the man. Therefore, the term “*image*” refers to the position of authority.³⁰

3. A Triune Image

Finally, man was created in the image of a *Triune* God. Man is a triune being of spirit, soul and body (1 Thes. 5:23; Heb. 4:12). The fall into sin corrupted the whole man, spirit, soul and body and brought the whole man under the dominion of sin. The new birth is the first step in restoring the “*spirit*” of man to its original spiritual image. Once the spirit of man is restored to the image of righteousness and true holiness, then that moral image is to be embraced by the soul “put on” in the external life by the power of the indwelling, thus progressively setting apart the whole spirit, soul and man unto righteousness. The glorification of the body at the resurrection is the final restoration of man from the effects of the fall into the sinless image of God.

When man is completely restored to the sinless image of God, in spirit, soul and body, so he will be restored to the positional image of God as heirs and joint heirs with Christ in ruling over a new world (Rom. 8:22-25; Rev. 22:1-2).

³⁰ This position of authority is not designed by God to be male chauvinism but a loving caring protecting leading position that establishes order in the home in keeping with the Christ’s leadership over the church.

The New Birth

4. Immaterial Spiritual Image

The immaterial essence of God is described by both terms “*soul*” and “*spirit*” which are attributed to God who exists without a physical or material body.

God is spirit...- John 4:24

The Spirit of God –

My soul – Lev. 26:11, 30; Isa. 1:14; 42:1; Jer. 5:9, 29, etc.

This is illustrated in the case of God the Son, who previously existed outside of a physical body prior to the incarnation (Jn. 1:1-3, 14). His spiritual substance can exist outside and independent from a physical body.

This is not true of animal life or common biological life. When an animal physically dies it ceases to exist. However, when a human being physically dies he does not cease to exist, but his immaterial nature (spirit and soul) is made in the “*image of God*” so that he can exist without a physical body.

*And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.
Believest thou this?* – Jn. 11:26

The physical body does die and every human body that has ever lived has physically died as the grave yards testify. However, the immaterial nature of man that is alive (“*what is born of Spirit is spirit*”) and believes (the soul) in Christ “*shall never die.*”

The New Birth

Paul explicitly states that at the death of his physical body that he departs that body and goes to be present with the Lord and the Lord is not in the grave but in heaven:

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

– Philip. 1:21-24

The choice Paul is considering is remaining “*in the flesh...abide in the flesh*” or departing the physical body and being with Christ “*to depart, and to be with Christ.*”

Jesus denies that killing the body can kill the “*soul*” of man (Mt. 10:28). Hence, the term *soul* cannot be understood to mean physical “*life*” or “*blood*” as physical death destroys both. Neither can it be destroyed until **after** the Great White Judgement throne in the lake of Fire, so it continues to exist between physical death and the Lake of fire. In addition the term “*destroy*” never means *annihilate into nothing* as the very same term is translated “*lost*” twice in the very same chapter (Mt. 10:6, 40) in addition to “*destroy*” (Mt. 10:28). The term literally is composed of two words that mean “*to loose* [Gr. *luo*] *away from* [Gr. *apo*]” or to *separate*. It is used to convey the idea of destroying the serviceable purpose of something. For example, in Matthew 28:6 the “*lost* [apollumi] *sheep of the house of Israel*” in their present unregenerate condition their serviceable purpose for the glory of God is destroyed. For example, the life must be “*lost*” in Matthew 28:40 in order for it to be saved. That is, in order for

The New Birth

your life to be saved for the glory of God, all self-service must be destroyed, and that requires dying to self. The same Greek term is translated “*perish*” in Matthew 9:17 to describe what occurs to a wine bottle that rips under the pressure of fermentation. The wine bottle is not annihilated into nothing, but the rip destroys its serviceable purpose.

In regard to **biological life**, the terms *ruwach* (Hebrew) and *pneuma* (Greek) can mean “*breath*” and the terms *nephesh* (Hebrew) and *psueche* (Greek) can mean “*life*” or “*blood*” as the “*life*” of the flesh is “*in the blood*” or the blood serves to provide all the nutriment for the physical life of the flesh.

However, in regard to **spiritual life** the terms *ruwach* (Hebrew) *pneuma* (Greek) refer to the spiritual immaterial substance of man or “*spirit*” and the terms *nephesh* (Hebrew) and *psueche* (Greek) or “*soul*” are both applied to God who has neither “*breath*” or “*blood*” or a physical “*life*.” Man is made in God’s image and has an immaterial “*spirit*” and “*soul*” that continues to exist apart from any kind of physical body. However, animals cease to exist when their physical biological life ceases. In regard to man’s immaterial “*spirit*” and “*soul*” death is not cessation of existence, but rather two different forms of immaterial existence. The immaterial nature of man continues to exist after physical death of the body either in a state of spiritual separation from God (death) or in a state of spiritual union with God (life).

Some quote Ecclesiastes 9:5 and similar passages that seem to appear to mean that man ceases to exist at physical death. However, that interpretation is a failure to understand the overall context of

The New Birth

Ecclesiastes who is viewing life from “*under the sun*” and from a human point of observation. The physical body serves as the vehicle of expression for the soul “*under the sun*”, for expressing its anger, love, sorrow, memories and etc. When the physical body is removed from out from “*under the sun*” and placed under the sod, it no longer serves as a vehicle of the soul to express these things in this life. However, the same writer declares that at physical death the physical body of man returns to dust but the spirit of man returns to God:

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. – Eccles. 12:7

In direct contrast to animals, the spirit of animals goes downward with their physical body to dust but the spirit of man goes upward to God:

Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? – Eccl. 3:21

Therefore, the “*image*” of God in which man was created was a *rational, moral, positional, triune, and immaterial* image, rather than any kind of physical material image.

However, in this book we are dealing only with the restoration of the human *spirit* of man to God’s moral image by new birth. The work of restoring the moral image of God to the *soul* of man is called progressive sanctification. Progressive sanctification is the progressive action of the soul (intellect, affections and will) putting on the moral nature of the regenerated *spirit* in the life (words,

The New Birth

actions of the body) of man and will not be finished until man leaves the physical body for heaven.

The transformation of the human *body* to the moral image of God is called glorification. Glorification is when God removes the indwelling law/principle of sin/corruption from the human body and unites it with the spirit and soul of man already completely transformed into the moral image of God. At that point, the whole man, spirit, soul and body is completely sanctified or transformed into the moral image of God. Complete sanctification of the spirit, soul and body is the ultimate goal of salvation:

*And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. – 1
Thes. 5:23*

The New Birth

Conclusion

Due to the fall of man, all humans, regardless when they live or where they live, are either in the kingdom of darkness or the kingdom of light. The very nature of the fall is separation from God as light, life and righteousness. The only possible solution for spiritual separation from light, life and righteousness is union with light, life and righteousness and that is the elementary truth of regeneration.

There is no third class of humans who are neither in the kingdom of darkness or in the kingdom of light but in a twilight zone. There is no third class of humans who are neither children of Satan nor children of God but are something neutral between both. There is no third class of humans who are neither unregenerate nor regenerate, but semi-generate. There is no third class of humans who are neither lost nor saved, but temporarily misplaced.

There is no salvation provided by God for anyone at anytime that is outside of Christ. There is no other gospel than the gospel preached from the Garden of Eden to the end of Revelation. Man's problem has been the same from the fall of man to the end of time, and therefore, the solution is the same. The problem is spiritual separation from God, as light, life and righteousness, and the only solution is union with God as light, life and righteousness.

There is no such thing as spiritual union without Spiritual indwelling, as the union occurs inside of man and therefore if there is spiritual union inside of man then that is only possible by the Spirit

The New Birth

remaining inside of man or else the union between the human spirit and the Spirit of God ceases to be.

There is no such thing as a regenerate unbeliever or a unregenerate believer, any more than there is such a thing as a repentant unbeliever or an unrepentant believer. These are inseparable graces, so where one is, so is the other, and where one is not, so is not the other.

Abraham a pre-Mosaic man, a pre-Pentecost man is the pattern for “all who are of faith” regardless when they lived, and he was “in Christ” by faith (Gal. 3:8, 17). His sins were remitted and the righteousness of Christ was the object of his faith (Rom. 3:25-26; 4:22-25), and it is that kind of faith for which righteousness is imputed to him.

There is no such thing as sacramental grace for salvation, as Abraham was justified, with full remission of sins and full imputation of Christ’s righteousness, and already in Christ, prior to observing any divine ordinance, while still in “uncircumcision” (Rom. 4:6-11).

There is no such thing as justification of the godly by progressive justification, as Abraham was justified by faith without works as “the ungodly” (Rom. 4:5).

The same way of salvation (Jn. 14:6) before Pentecost is the same way after Pentecost (Acts 4:12), just as the same gospel before Pentecost (Acts 10:43) is the same gospel after Pentecost (Acts 26:22-23; Heb. 4:2). The same Savior before Pentecost (Jn. 14:6) is the same Savior after Pentecost (Acts 4:12). The same justification

The New Birth

by faith, or remission of sins, and imputation of righteousness, before Pentecost (Rom. 4:5-11), is the same after Pentecost.

So, likewise, the same regeneration of man prior to Pentecost is the same after Pentecost (Gal. 4:28-29; Ezek. 44:7, Col. 1:11).

The New Birth
