

Born Of Water And The Spirit

"There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, 'Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.' Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God'" (John 3:1-5).

Many have drawn false conclusions concerning the statement made to Nicodemus in vs. 5. Some believe this is referring to a spiritual and physical birth in which we are born out of our mother's womb and then are spiritually renewed later in life. Some believe that this is referring to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. These are, however, false conclusions that support many false doctrines. We will now examine this statement to see what Jesus actually meant.

First of all, vs. 5 is an answer to Nicodemus' question, *"How can a man be born when he is old?"* Jesus is not talking about two separate births, physical and spiritual, because Nicodemus' question did not concern two births. It concerned one birth: the birth in which we are born again. Of course, this is a spiritual birth because one cannot enter the kingdom unless he is born of the water and of the Spirit; and the kingdom is spiritual (John 18:36).

Next, being *"born of the Spirit"* does not refer to Holy Spirit baptism. If it did, two baptisms would exist for the means of our salvation: baptism of the Holy Spirit and water baptism. According to Ephesians 4:5, there is only one baptism. So the question is, *"Which one is it?"* Holy Spirit baptism is only found in two places in the New Testament: Acts 2 and Acts 10. In either instance we will not find that individuals were saved by it; in fact, Cornelius and his household were saved after the Holy Spirit fell on them, and the means by which they were saved was water baptism (Acts 10:47). Water baptism is the only baptism that saves us today and adds us to the church (Acts 2:38, 47).

So what does it mean to be born of the water and the Spirit? There are two parallel passages that are critical in our study of John 3:5: Ephesians 5:25-26 and Titus 3:5. These two passages share the same meaning as John 3:5 but vary in word choice. Ephesians 5:25-26 says, *"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He*

might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word." Titus 3:5 says, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." Here are three passages. John 3:5 calls the birth as being "born of the water and of the Spirit." Ephesians 5:26 calls it the "washing of water with the word," and Titus 3:5 calls it the "washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit." All three share the same idea. Therefore the "water" refers to water baptism and the "Spirit" refers to the word of God according to Ephesians 5:26. This makes perfect sense because we must first hear the word of God to be saved (Romans 10:13-17). Obeying the word of God in baptism is the only way we can be renewed (Romans 6:3-4), and added to the kingdom or the church (Acts 2:47). And it is ultimately the only way to Heaven!

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