**The New Birth of Water and The Spirit**

Based on [John 3:1-17](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Jn3.1-17)

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Nicodemus the Pharisee came to Jesus at night, because he knew Jesus is from God and he desired to learn from him. They have a dialogue that centers on the kingdom of God and the new birth required to enter it. Our first birth is no spiritual benefit. We are not born into the kingdom of God from our mother’s womb, but from the womb of Christ’s bride, the church. It is a new, spiritual birth from above that is necessary to enter the kingdom of God, and that comes by water and the spirit, word and sacrament, baptism into Christ.

Our having been born into the world is the first gift God. This is our birth in to his kingdom of Creation. God is the Lord of all things, in the beginning he created all things and set them in order. The Psalmist says, “**The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom rules over all**” (103:19). And everyone born into this world is born under this aspect of God’s kingdom.

All people can appreciate the gifts of creation without necessarily acknowledging the giver. However, God made great promises to Abraham and his descendants that are only given to all people through him.

Abraham was born of flesh, as is everyone who is born in creation, and are born under the curse of sin. “**In sin did my mother conceive me**” (Psalm 51:5). It’s natural for us to think that God chose Abraham because of something he saw in him, something good, something worthy, something that would make him a good father of nations. No. At the time of his call, Abraham (or Abram) was a lost and condemned sinner, born only of the flesh having no righteousness of his own. Then God called him, and in the calling Abraham received the Spirit of God and believed, and his belief was credited to him as righteousness.

There are two kingdoms that belong to God. The kingdom of power, which one enters into by birth; and the kingdom of grace which one enters into by baptism. Jesus says, “**Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God**.” Now that Jesus has come, he instituted the sacrament of holy Baptism, which gives access to the kingdom of God. Baptism calls you out of darkness; baptism is God’s call to enter his kingdom; baptism is the new birth of water and spirit and to those who receive it, heaven is unlocked and opened to them.

Someone might say, how can plain water open the kingdom of heaven? Baptism is not just plain water, **but it is the word of God in and with the water that opens heaven and gives the spirit**. Without God’s word, it is plain water and no baptism. But with the word of God it is a baptism, a life-giving water rich in grace, and a new birth of the Holy Spirit.

The teaching that baptism gives “new birth” has caused no small amount of controversy among Christians. Most Christians will agree that baptism is commanded by God and Christians should seek it and receive it. However most Protestant Christians today reject (sometimes vehemently), that Baptism can actually cause a new birth, a “regeneration” of the person for God. They say that the new birth happens, not when water is applied to a person in the triune name, but rather when one accepts Jesus Christ into their heart as their personal Lord and savior. Once they do that, they are reborn, regenerated, “born again” Christians who get baptized as the first act of obedience to God’s law.

This is not a harmless disagreement in doctrine. It is a doctrine of demons designed to rob you of the comfort you have in your baptism and the assurance of your acceptance into the kingdom of God. To teach that baptism does not give a new birth is a rejection of Christ and His plain words.

(1) First, the scriptures teach openly that baptism regenerates and saves. Jesus says, “**Unless you are born of water and spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again**.’” Had Jesus meant to teach that we are born again without water baptism, he would have said, “**Unless you are born of *The Spirit*, you cannot enter the kingdom of God**”, but he includes water in the definition of this new birth. “**Born of water and spirit**” he says. To remove the “water” of baptism from the rebirth of the Spirit is to censor Christ himself…to silence His own command. That’s not something you have a right to do to your personal Lord and Saviour.

(2) Second, the very idea of being “born again” teaches against one’s deciding to do so. It is a second “*birth*.” Did you decide to be born the first time? Before God formed you your mother’s womb, did he ask your consent to do so, did you decide to come into the world?

For a week, my wife Nicole was overdue in giving birth to our new baby Noelle. We joked several times last week about how we wished the baby would “hurry up,” but of course we were just being cute. Our baby didn’t chose to be conceived, and she didn’t consent to being born. And when God, through His miracle of child birth says to the mother’s womb “it’s time,” it’s time. It is God who works the miracle of childbirth, and decides when the baby will be born.

Why then, do you suppose Jesus would describe seeing and entering the kingdom of God as a birth? Because it is not something you choose, it is something God chooses. **Mothers with unwanted pregnancies can certainly *decide* to stop the birth of their child, we call it an abortion and it is murder, because god gives life and only God can rightfully end it.** A church that would refuse to baptize her babies *because they don’t yet have a voice to speak for themselves* is spiritual abortion, refusing to give birth to those children already conceived in the Word of God. God said to his disciples, “go and baptize all nations,” all people, and He put no age restriction it. He did not limit baptism to those with a certain level of cognitive or speaking ability. If that were the case, the mentally handicapped could not be baptized either.

Once parents were bringing their little children to Jesus that he might touch them. But his disciples, who thought Jesus could do nothing for little children sent them away. Jesus rebuked his disciples and said, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and do not forbid them, for of such is the kingdom of god. “Unless one is born of water and spirit, he cannot enter *the kingdom of God.*” And Jesus says, *let the little children come for the kingdom of God belongs to them.* Why would anyone teach as though there were an minimum age requirement to enter the kingdom of god in Baptim, when Jesus says, “**Unless you turn and become like little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of God**” (Matt. 18:3).

(3) Third, someone might say, if they can’t speak or reason they can’t yet believe; but that is nowhere taught in scripture. Nowhere. Therefore, who are we to tell God in whom He can and can’t create faith? “**The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes**.” But Jesus knows. When his disciples were on a boat amidst a storm the wind was howling and the waves were crashing and Jesus got up rebuked the wind and said to the water, “**Peace, be still, and the wind ceased, and there was great calm**.” Jesus spoke, and the crying winds and the crashing sea calmed. The wind and the sea didn’t decide to obey. His Word stopped the irrational rebellion of wind and waves; certainly His Word can overcome the irrational rebellion of a child’s heart.

And Scripture, God’s own Word, does teach that God can and does create faith in infants and even unborn babies. David says to God in Psalm 22, “**Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother’s breast.**” David, as a nursing infant trusted God; to trust in God is faith. And Luke records that, upon hearing the greeting of Mary who was pregnant with Jesus, John the Baptist leaped for joy in his mother’s womb. ***The unborn baby had joy in his heart for the Gospel***! If an unborn baby can leap for joy at the news of Jesus, if God can teach a nursing infant to trust him; who is anyone to say that children are too young to receive baptism. And Jesus quotes the Psalm which says, “**From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise**” (Matthew 21:16).

In conclusion, the scriptures teach the need for a new birth in order to enter the kingdom of God. (1) Jesus says this new birth comes by water and the Spirit, which is Holy Baptism. (2) By calling this a new birth, Jesus indicates this is not done by the will of man, but by the working of God. And finally, (3) this grace and new birth given in baptism is to be applied to all people, and especially little children whom Christ is eager to bless, and to whom the kingdom of God rightfully belongs.