

TWICE DEAD AND THE NEW BIRTH

John 3:7 μη θαυμασθης οτι ειπον σοι δει υμας γεννηθηναι ανωθεν

Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

Although “Ye must be born again” has become the major theme of modern evangelism it should be of great interest to the serious Bible student that the greatest evangelist, Paul, never once mentions it. In fact not one of the New Testament writers is led of the Holy Spirit to preach that “ye must be born again.”

Our Lord used very precise language so that Nicodemus as well as all who read, could not miss the meaning. One cannot “born” himself, one cannot choose to be born, one has nothing to do with his birth, one cannot choose his parents, one cannot choose the time of his birth, one does not even know he has been born until he has been born. Everyone knows that in birth the child is the passive recipient of life.

These are wonderful truths of grace. Our spiritual birth is entirely of the Father by His grace and His grace alone. The Pelagian teaching of synergistic birth is a heresy that was soundly rejected by all the reformers.

Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Various interpretations:

1. “water” is the natural birth
“spirit” is the spiritual birth initiated by personal faith

It would not be necessary to suggest that one could not enter the kingdom of God unless he had been born physically. In addition, this would be the only place in the Word where water was used of the physical birth. This would also destroy the grace of God.

2. “water” is baptism
“spirit” is the Holy Spirit

This would make water baptism necessary for redemption. Any student of the Scriptures knows that this is false.

3. "water" and "spirit" are two words which mean the same thing

Of the three this is the most reasonable. It would be nice if one of the words were articulated and the other not. Since neither is articulated the Granville Sharp rule does not apply here making it unlikely that this is a parallel construction.

Consider another:

The Lord is talking about two births. Not one physical and the other spiritual. It goes without saying that a man must be born in order to be a man. He is talking about two spiritual births, both by God (birth can not be initiated by the one born).

Speaking of "water" and "wind" he used these words to represent the Word and the Spirit.

One by the Word (water) -

Water is used to represent the Word-

Joh 4:10 Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.

Joh 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Eph 5:26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word,

and one by the Spirit -

Wind is used to represent the Spirit -

Joh 3:5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and [of] the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

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

Joh 3:8 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.

Ga 4:29 But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him [that was born] after the Spirit, even so [it is] now. (AV)

When the Lord said -

John 3:3

απεκριθη ιησους και ειπεν αυτω αμην αμην λεγω σοι εαν μη τις γεννηθ
η ανωθεν ου δυναται ιδειν την βασιλειαν του θεου

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.)

He used the word ανωθεν which could mean “again” or “from above”. Like many words, the meaning is determined by the context. For example, the Holy Spirit uses it in John 3:31 and James 1:17 as “from above” .

Joh 3:31 He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.

Jas 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

He also uses it in Gal 4:9 as “again”.

Ga 4:9 But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedren, an intellect of his day, familiar with the language, apparently understood the Lord to say “again” that is “a second time” .

Joh 3:4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

The Lord made it very clear that He was not talking about fleshly birth

but spiritual birth.

It is possible that the Lord was introducing us here to the truth of two spiritual births rather than one physical and one spiritual. This doctrine is more fully revealed in Romans 5.

The first one - -

Ro 5:12 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:

It goes without saying that one must have been alive in order to die. Thus if death passed upon all men because of Adam's sin, then all must have been alive in Adam before the fall, in the same way that death passed upon all men in Adam because of the fall.

We then have a spiritual life in Adam followed by a spiritual death because of Adam's sin.

That is -- Life, then Death. This is the first death.

Heb 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:

Although many believe this means physical death, Enoch and Elijah would appear to be exceptions on the one side and Lazarus, who died twice, on the other. It is more logical to conclude that this is death in Adam by God's decree, and the judgement that follows either falls on Christ, or on the sinner.

If God had not removed the condemnation that passed upon all men because of Adam's sin individual sin would be of no consequence. The Scriptures clearly reveal that Adam's condemnation on all men was removed by Christ for all, this is the "unlimited" aspect of redemption.

For example -

Ro 5:18 Therefore as by the offence of the one [judgment came] upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of the one [the free gift came] upon all men unto justification of life.

Joh 1:9 [That] was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

Joh 1:29 ¶ The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

Joh 3:17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

Joh 6:33 For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.

Heb 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Note: Life in Adam followed by death due to Adam's sin followed by life because of Christ's death, he tasted death for every man. If this tasting of death is redemption, then all men are redeemed and none go to hell. It is in fact the removal of Adam's transgression for all.

Re 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

Book of spiritual living, all who are made alive from Adam's condemnation, are written in, then those who are not born again are blotted out.

Ro 7:9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

Paul was alive in Adam, died because of Adam's sin was made alive because Christ tasted death for every man and then died due to his own sin. Life - death - life - death. If God had not removed the condemnation of Adam's sin Paul could not have said that he was alive apart from the law at one time. Thus we have one spiritual birth and two spiritual deaths. Paul is now in need of a second spiritual birth

Ro 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous.

Here both of the words “many” are articulated. A clear grammatical indication that a definite group is in view, and the same group in both cases. This is the “limited” aspect of Christ’s redemption. They are now not only “uncondemned” but “made righteous”.

This is the second spiritual birth

2Co 2:15 For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

2Co 2:16 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?

Note: Death to death - Life to life, two deaths and two lives, both spiritual.

1Ti 4:10 For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

Note again: The work of Christ applies to all men, and in a special way to those that believe. For all- the removal of Adam’s condemnation, and for His own- made righteous.

1Pe 1:3 ¶ Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Clearly the Holy Spirit informs us that we have been “regenerated”, born twice (agin), both times by God.

1Pe 2:25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

Note that we have “returned” to our Shepard. We were there before. Made alive (first birth) after Adam’s condemnation, died in our sin, and now returned to Him by the new (second) birth.

Jude 1:12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds [they are] without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

“Twice dead” cannot mean “really dead” or both spiritually dead and physically dead (they are physically alive). They died the first time in Adam made alive in Christ and then they died because of their own sin. Both deaths are spiritual. They have not been born again. Another reference to the removal of Adam’s transgression is -

II Peter 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

The ultimate end of, or the reality of, the second death for those who have not been “born again”, that is, those who died in Adam and then died in their own sin, twice dead, is eternal separation from God.

Re 20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.