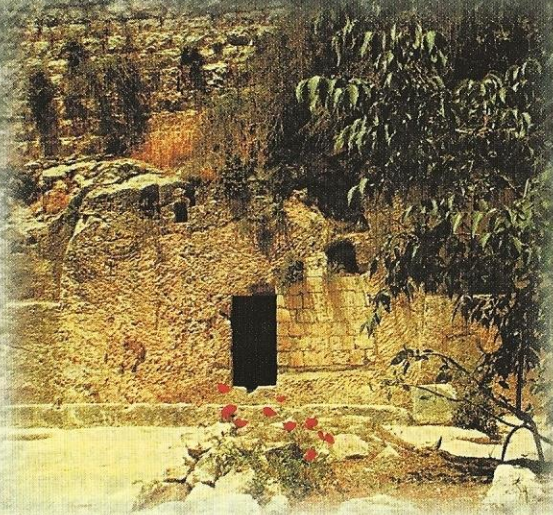


# Christ's Death — *and your* — Salvation



*A simple and clear explanation of the  
most quoted verse in the Bible;*

*“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”*

*(John 3:16)*

## **I F salvation is worth having, it is worth seeking!**

This booklet discusses the reason why Jesus had to die. The principles of his sacrifice flow throughout the Bible, and provide the means by which God offers salvation to all people. The article will open up this wonderful subject and reveal the grand and important message of the Bible. The matter herein is not exhaustive, but forms the basis for further study in this absorbing and personal theme. A correct understanding of the sacrifice of Christ is vital to personal salvation. We seek your thoughtful consideration of that which is advanced, and invite you to write to the editor for further information, or clarification, of any aspect of the subject. When you have finished with the booklet, please hand it on to a friend. If you desire further copies for distribution, we shall be pleased to supply them. Unfortunately, the subject of Jesus' sacrifice is ignored by some, forgotten by others, and abused by those who should know better. Church teaching is astray upon this clear Bible subject, as it is in other areas of Bible teaching. But a proper, consistent and thoughtful consideration of sacrifice and all it involves, will provide you with the key to Bible understanding, and set you upon the pathway to reconciliation and harmony with God.

## **HERALD OF THE COMING AGE**

*A Christadelphian Publication*

**DECLARING THE TRUTH OF THE SCRIPTURES REVEALED FOR THE SALVATION OF THOSE  
WHO ARE PREPARED TO EXAMINE THE CLAIMS OF GOD'S WORD;  
AND PRESENTING THE GLORIOUS MESSAGE OF THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS CHRIST  
AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF GOD'S ETERNAL KINGDOM ON EARTH.**

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# Christ's Death *and* Your Salvation

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## Are You Indifferent to Salvation?

Most people are indifferent to what they cannot understand. This includes Salvation, for most have been brought up in an environment of Bible ignorance, or have forgotten its pure teachings.

In their minds, the Bible is related to church-going, paid clergy, an immortal devil, hell-fire torment, and vague ideas of bliss somewhere above the clouds.

They do not have a proper understanding of Christ's Sacrifice, nor a true appreciation of "salvation," and therefore are indifferent to both.

What a tragedy! Their "ignorance alienates them from the life of God" (Ephesians 4:18), so that they have no hope and are "without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). A sound understanding of Bible truth, and particularly Christ's sacrifice (called the atonement), projects mankind along the way of hope and salvation, and provides the answer to the most vital need of every individual, now and in the future. It shows what man is, what he can become, and the means whereby this can be attained. It provides the solution to the problems that face humanity, and reveals the purpose of God with mankind and the earth.

***"As Moses  
lifted up the  
serpent in  
the  
wilderness,  
even so  
must the  
Son of man  
be lifted up;  
That  
whosoever  
believeth in  
him should  
not perish,  
but have  
eternal life"***  
— John 3:14-15.

Above all, the Bible shows us how we can achieve victory over the power of death, and attain to life eternal by a resurrection from the grave at Christ's coming.

We invite the reader to lay aside his indifference, and perhaps prejudice, to the words "atonement" and "salvation," and consider what we have to say herein.

### **In the Shadow of Doubt**

Many who hear the name of Christ mentioned, prefer to stand back in the shadows and not be seen. They fear that the crowd may point and say: "This fellow is one of them — he is a follower of Jesus!"

The Bible intentionally illustrates this situation by providing an actual example. Meet Nicodemus, the man in the shadow of doubt, and learn how Christ drew him to the light of truth.

Nicodemus (see John ch. 3) was an orthodox Jew in the time of Jesus Christ. He adhered to the religion of the Pharisees, and was a member of the most prominent Jewish council of his day. Early in the ministry of Jesus, Nicodemus sought him out that he might learn more of him. He had heard of the miracles he performed, and was confident that Jesus was a man with a divine mission. But he was not sure; so he came by night (John 3:2). He did not wish to be seen. He did not desire to have to explain to his friends, or religious associates, why he was interested in Jesus of Nazareth, whom so many of the leaders despised.

### **Nicodemus is taught the Truth**

The Lord Jesus explained many things to this Jew. Among other matters, he emphasised the need for a spiritual begetting or re-birth from above, before a person could "see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, margin), and a re-birth by baptism and by spirit before he could "enter into the kingdom of God" (v. 5).

A person must first "see" or "perceive" the things of the Kingdom of God, before he can qualify for baptism (or birth of water), and he must be baptised, if he desires a change of nature from his present mortality to one of immortality (a birth of

spirit — cp. 1Corinthians 15:46-52) at Christ's return.

Thus conception leading to this "new birth" is brought about by a knowledge of the Truth, which is described as "the seed of the Word of God" in a believer (1Peter 1:23-25, see also Luke 8:11). This knowledge creates a new mode of thinking in a person, which manifests its outworking in a changed moral life. Thus, by the sanctifying influence of divine Truth (see John 17:17), a foundation is laid for the bestowal of life eternal (spirit nature) at Christ's coming.

This new way of life requires the denial of the ungodly ways of flesh. Jesus told Nicodemus that the way to eternal life is to apply the lesson learned by the children of Israel when they wandered in the wilderness: **"For as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life"** (John 3:14-15).

**What is this "Serpent in the Wilderness?"**

You may reply: "I know nothing of the wilderness wanderings of the children of Israel! Does salvation depend on all that?"

It does! The Lord found it needful to draw the attention of Nicodemus to the incident in order to lead him to salvation. It can help us in the same direction.

We will briefly outline the relevant points of the wilderness wanderings of Israel.

Many hundreds of years before Christ was born, a young Jew named Joseph, became Prime Minister of Egypt, and saved the nation from famine. Later, his father, Jacob (re-named Israel), brought the remaining eleven sons and their families into Egypt to settle there. After the death of Joseph, however, the Egyptians systematically enslaved the Jews. Oppression was severe when Moses was born some years later. Eighty years later, Moses led the descendants of Israel out of Egypt and oppression, after that nation had suffered severe plagues from God.

The Jews were saved from the last terrible plague of death, through the Passover Lamb they offered; they were “baptised into Moses” (1Corinthians 10:1-2) when they passed safely through the waters of the Red Sea; they were educated and given a form of divine worship at Sinai where the Law of Moses was delivered to them. Then, for forty years, they wandered in the wilderness, until the rebels were purged out, and they were allowed to enter the promised Land, ultimately named “the land of Israel.”

At one stage of the journey, the people became so discouraged by the harshness of the way, that they “spoke against Moses” and expressed their doubts as to whether they would ever enter the Land of Promise (Numbers 21:4-9).

In punishment, God “sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died” (v. 6). Why serpents?

Because it was a serpent that had introduced sin and brought death to the first human pair (Genesis 3), and the complaining attitude of the Israelites in the wilderness was serpentine and rebellious to the divine laws in its characteristic.

The close proximity of death in their midst had impressed the people with their need of God. In fear (Numbers 21:7) they humbly asked Moses to intercede with God on their behalf that He might save them. Moses made this a matter of prayer. The merciful reply of God was: **“Make thee a fiery serpent of brass, and set it upon a pole; and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live”** (v. 8).

Moses did as he was instructed. He made a “serpent of brass and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived” (v. 9).

### **How Could the Serpent Save?**

Why should God forgive because of a serpent of brass? Because in Scripture, both the serpent, and brass, are used as symbols of sinful flesh, and in this case the believer saw the



serpent rendered powerless, and inactive, with no venom in its fangs, with the brass purified by having passed through the fire, and polished by friction. The serpent hung lifeless, impaled on a pole or a stake (the word "cross" in the N. T. is translated from a Greek word signifying "stake"), symbolic of sacrifice. Upon the condition of the believer understanding the symbol, acknowledging his sins and pleading for forgiveness, God, in mercy, was pleased to grant this unto him. The serpent on the pole taught that flesh must be crucified, and it was this serpent to which Jesus made reference in his conversation with Nicodemus. In this enactment God was shown to be both righteous, by requiring the death of that which is evil; and merciful, by providing the means by which He can forgive and save.

Now carefully note the principle involved in this incident which Christ used to illustrate his mission to Nicodemus.

### **How Can Jesus Save?**

Death is as much a reality to us today as it was to those Israelites in the wilderness; and we, too, need God's help if we would live. Moreover, God has provided a way.

Jesus told Nicodemus, that as the serpent was lifted up, so also must he be, that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:14-15).

What does this mean?

Let us first state the principle, and then supply the proof. All mankind, without exception, is under sentence of death because of inherited mortality. As well as that, through weakness of the flesh, all people sin, and the sentence of death is justified.

There is only one man who has never sinned: the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet he died, and by divine appointment (Acts 2:23). Was his death justified? It was, because the righteousness that he exhibited in life, came not from flesh, but in spite of it; not from obedience to its will, but by "crucifying" (denying) it in order to perform the will of God (John 5:19).

From whence did Jesus derive the strength to accomplish

such sinlessness and perfect obedience unto God, that which no other person has done?

He received it from God who dwelt in him by His spirit (2Corinthians 5:19). He was “born from above” (Luke 1:32-35), was anointed with Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34), and was thus strengthened to conquer the flesh (Psalm 80:17; Isaiah 11:2-5, see also John 14:10).

This, of course, was not sufficient in itself. The denial of the flesh had to be accompanied with a desire in Jesus to perform the will of God (Hebrews 10:7-10), and to declare that God was righteous in all that He decreed (Romans 3:25-26).

Therefore, without minimising Jesus’ own efforts in this grand victory over flesh, Scripture emphasises that it was only possible by the joint labours of the Father and the Son. Jesus put no confidence in the flesh (John 6:63), and drew heavily upon the resources that the Father placed at his disposal (John 5:30; 16:32).

At the end of a life of perfect obedience, his flesh was crucified and publicly exhibited on the pole (or cross) as a final demonstration that “the flesh profiteth nothing.” It was set forth that all might see and ponder, and recognise that victory is only possible by following this example (see Galatians 5:24).

Jesus’ nature was the same as our own. He came in death-doomed sin’s flesh. But, triumphing over it, even unto the death of the cross, he was raised to life eternal and led the way for others to do likewise “in him” through the forgiveness of their sins.

### **God: Both Just and Merciful**

In proclaiming the doctrine of the atonement, Paul taught that God is revealed therein as both “just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:26).

We respectfully suggest, that the common doctrine of the atonement, which sets forth Jesus as a substitute sacrifice, does not reveal God as just. This teaching asserts that Jesus died *instead* of others; that he paid a debt of death that they had incurred but to which he was not associated.



Does this set forth God as just? It does not! Would anybody suggest that a Government was just if it put to death an innocent man instead of a guilty one? By no means! There would be an outcry against any authority that did such a thing!

Jesus did not die *instead* of others; he died as a *representative* of humanity, as one who was involved in the common destiny of mortality, along with every other person, and who, therefore, was in need of redemption from that death-doomed state as much as anybody else (see Philippians 2:8-11).

His righteousness ensured that redemption, and revealed God as just.

But God is just in every way — you consider the facts:

### **God's Wisdom in Creation**

God was just in placing man under law (Genesis 2:16-17), for it is right that man should recognise the wisdom and supremacy of his Creator by obedience.

Was God just in so punishing Adam, that the effect of the punishment rested upon his posterity? Certainly, for that was the inevitable consequence of a physical state of mortality. But God is also shown to be merciful as well as just in that He made provision for mankind to escape from it.

Was God just in punishing sin with death? Certainly, for otherwise sin would have triumphed. Was God just in so demanding the death of a righteous man, even Jesus? He was, for Jesus Christ, son of Adam (Luke 3:23, 38) was of the same flesh and blood nature (Hebrews 2:14), and, as such, under the same sentence of death (Romans 5:12; Hebrews 5:7). Therefore, the righteousness he manifested came from denying the flesh, not obeying it. Moreover, God also raised him from the dead, because His justness would not allow that one manifesting complete righteousness "should be holden of death" forever (Acts 2:24).

In every way, therefore, God is shown to be just. It is comforting to recognise this, for it shows that virtue will never go unrewarded. But God is more than just; He is also merciful. "He knows that we are dust;" He realises that flesh is weak and

prone to sin, and that unless we are divinely strengthened, we must inevitably succumb to it. Therefore, having illustrated this principle in the sacrifice of His only begotten Son, He is prepared to offer forgiveness of sins to those acknowledging it and seeking forgiveness through the Lamb He provided as a cover for sin.

The doctrine of the atonement reveals God as just and merciful. The Lord Jesus Christ is His provision of a way of salvation for all mankind (Acts 4:12).

### **Is God Responsible for the Weakness of Flesh?**

Many people blame God for the sins of humanity. They recognise that sin stems from the flesh, as Jesus truly taught (Mark 7:21-23), and therefore excuse them as only natural. They place the responsibility of sin on God, claiming that He made flesh as it is.

The Bible is careful to show that man brought this condition upon himself. It teaches: "God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Ecclesiastes 7:29). Man was made "very good," but he succumbed to temptation, and brought upon himself the fruit of sin: a nature that strives against its Maker (Romans 7:18-19), and inevitably terminates in death (Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12; 6:23).

To understand this, we must go back to the epoch of creation. Very few people today know how the human race started. Education urges our thinking in a wrong direction by propounding the false theory of evolution, which is little more than an attempt to evade responsibility toward God by dispensing with Him.

In the record of man's beginning is found the explanation of the terrible fact and problems of sin and death that afflict us.

Man originated about six thousand years ago by a specific act of creation by God. He made them man and woman, and provided for all their needs.

The Bible clearly states that death is in the world because of man's disobedience, his sin: **"By one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin"** (Romans 5:12).

When man was made, he had a physical constitution termed “very good” (Genesis 1:31). Man was not dying, he was not under sentence of death; he was not immortal, because he had been made of the dust of the ground, and a dust-constitution is not designed to exist for ever. Adam was in a unique condition. Whether he would become a dying or an immortal being depended upon what his response would be to God’s law.

### **God’s Law Given to Adam**

He was forbidden to partake of the fruit of a particular tree in the garden in which he dwelt (Genesis 2:17).

What would happen if he disobeyed? Death, which, until then, was only a possibility, would become a certainty.

**“... thou shalt surely die!”** (Genesis 2:17).

What did Adam do?

**“... and he did eat”** (Genesis 3:6).

Paul shows in Romans 5, that through Adam’s offence, “many be dead” (v. 15); “death reigned” (v. 17); “judgment came upon all men to condemnation” (v. 18).

We conclude therefore, that God is not responsible for the weakness of flesh, but that man brought this upon himself by his disobedience, so that “sin hath reigned unto death” (Romans 5:21).

But the mercy of God has provided in the Lord Jesus Christ, an atonement whereby we can escape the consequences of sin.

We must understand that death is a reality, a state of unconsciousness in which all conscious existence ceases (Psalm 6:5; Ecclesiastes 9:10). There is no such thing as an immortal soul in man (see Ezekiel 18:4); nowhere does the Bible teach that man possesses any such thing. It reveals that man’s only hope is in a physical resurrection, apart from which the dead have perished (1Corinthians 15:16-18).

### **Why Man Sins**

Theology has invented an immortal devil that tempts man to sin, but the Bible knows nothing of such teaching. It speaks of a “law of sin and death” that is found “in our members” (our nature, Romans 7:23). In every one, apart from the Lord Jesus



this law has its inevitable outworking in active transgression and death.

It is like an incurable disease with which all are inevitably afflicted.

Consider David, King of Israel, a “man after God’s own heart.” He was forced to lament: **“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”** (Psalm 51:5).

In these expressions he described the fallen state of human nature as the result of sin and death. No matter how high the ideals, how hard or sincere the strivings, man walks a path marred by sin and finishing in death.

Paul declared: **“For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing”** (Romans 7:18 — not even an immortal soul!)

He continued: **“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord”** (Romans 7:24-25).

Jesus gained the victory, for he conquered the flesh. He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). He was born of a woman in order that he might have the same nature as those he came to save. But whereas in their case this nature leads them to sin — to murder, commit adultery, strive unlawfully, manifest hatred, and so forth, it did not do so in his case, because with God’s strength he suppressed sin.

Paul taught: **“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil”** (Hebrews 2:14).

Here we learn two things: [1] Christ came to destroy the devil; and, [2] The devil is that which had the power of death.

Both statements teach that the devil is sin. Hebrews 9:26 declares that Christ came to “put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” whilst 1Corinthians 15:56 declares that the “sting of

death is sin." The devil, or sin, was rendered powerless by the death and resurrection of Jesus. [Write to the address on the back cover for a free booklet; *How to Combat Your Deadly Enemy: The Bible Devil Defined*].

### **The Serpent Sting of Sin**

What is sin?

Primarily it is transgression of divine law (1John 3:4), so that sin is disobedience.

Paul likened sin to a king which reigns (Romans 5:21). The territory over which this king reigns is human nature, flesh and blood. There, sin, as a law in one's members, reigns as absolute monarch. Hence, Jesus describes those ruled by sin, as "Ye serpents" (Matthew 23:33). These enemies were "serpents" because they were ruled by the same rebellion against God's Law as was expressed by the serpent in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:4-5). In such people sin reigns as king.

But the word "sin" is also used to personify that from whence transgression stems: the flesh with its affections and lusts. In that sense, it is used in the following passages:

**"He hath made him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin"** (2Corinthians 5:21 — Jesus was made of our nature, but he was not made a transgressor of law).

**"By one man's disobedience many were made sinners"** (Romans 5:19 — they were born into a constitution of sin in that they inherited the consequences of transgression — but they were not made transgressors)!

**"Sin dwelleth in me"** (Romans 7:17 — Paul was speaking of the lusts of the flesh, not actual transgression).

**"He died unto sin once"** (Romans 6:10 — Christ put to death the desires of the flesh that ran counter to God, and physically died on the cross, but not to actual transgression which he never committed).

As Jesus literally "died unto sin" in that he was put to death on the cross, his followers must figuratively do so also, in order to be accounted as "dead to sin" (Romans 6:2), and are exhorted to "reckon" themselves as such (v. 11). So Jesus tells his

followers to “deny themselves and take up their cross, and follow him” (Matthew 16:24).

They are therefore to act as though the flesh has no dominion over them.

### **How Can We Die Unto Sin?**

It is obvious that Jesus saved himself from endless death — that was the first result of his sacrifice. When he expired, the Father in heaven had before Him the record of a perfect life of obedience on the part of His Son. In justice, He raised him from the dead, so that the Lord Jesus, by the shedding of his own blood, obtained eternal redemption (Hebrews 1:3; 7:26-28; 9:12; 13:20).

Jesus, as a representative man, who bore in his nature the same flesh-promptings as all other men but conquered them (1Peter 2:21-24), was in need of redemption from that nature (not from actual sin, for he never committed any) as is all mankind. He obtained this by his own offering. This is the clear teaching of Hebrews 13:20. Hebrews 9:12 states that by his offering he “obtained eternal redemption.” The “for us” of the A.V. should be, as it is in the R.V. and all other versions. It being the case that the Lord Jesus had to seek his own redemption, how can it possibly be true that he is God?

But what of us? How can salvation be extended to us? Since we do not render perfect obedience unto God, does that mean we are without hope?

No, for the grace or mercy of God, comes to our aid. God is prepared to forgive the sins of those who acknowledge the principles of the atonement, and having been brought into a relationship “in Christ,” plead forgiveness of their sins.

Like the children of Israel in the wilderness, we have to do something toward our salvation. They had to gaze in faith upon the serpent of brass; we have to be baptised “into Christ” after belief of the gospel of the Kingdom to come. This is styled by Paul as “obeying from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you” (Romans 6:17).

Like the children of Israel, we must recognise that we are



sinning, death-doomed creatures.

Like the children of Israel, we must gaze upon that one displayed before us on the stake, and apply the lessons of his life.

How do we do that?

By the very means that Jesus explained to Nicodemus. Firstly, by being "begotten from above," that we might "see" or perceive. We do that by absorbing the message of salvation. Peter declares that those who do are "begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1Peter 1:23). Thus Jesus told his disciples: "Ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).

### **The Gospel: God's Power Unto Salvation**

It is absolutely essential for us to grasp an understanding of God's purpose as revealed in the Bible if we are to experience that "new birth" of which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus.

This revelation will show that God is One, not three; that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the perfect man, not God the Son; that he is to return to this earth to accomplish His purpose in it. It will demonstrate the helpless, hopeless state of mortal man, the true nature and extent of sin, the inevitability and finality of death, the need of a physical resurrection to attain unto the life of God.

It will show us the need to seek God's forgiveness, and will reveal that baptism is the means to that end. The Lord Jesus sent his disciples forth with the commission:

**"Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel; he that believeth and is baptised shall be saved"** (Mark 16:15-16).

This is the "birth of water," to which Jesus made reference to Nicodemus.

### **Baptism: The Figure of Death to Sin**

In itself, immersion in water accomplishes nothing; but in its significance baptism performs a lot. It is the means that God has provided for the forgiveness of sins. So Peter taught the people to whom he had first preached the gospel:

**“Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins”** (Acts 2:38).

Why is baptism appointed as the means whereby this will be done?

Because, as a rite, the person undergoing baptism publicly acknowledges the principles exhibited in the crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus; it is tantamount to gazing intelligently and in faith at the serpent on the cross.

For a person to be properly baptised, he must be baptised “into the death” of the Lord Jesus (Romans 6:3). He acknowledges that he has figuratively “died” to the old way of life in which the flesh dominated (see Romans 6:6); he has been buried in water, so that his past sins have been covered over, or washed away; and, as did Jesus, he has been raised to newness of life in Christ (Romans 6:4).

As the believer strives to overcome, he may continue to sin in lesser measure, but now he has an advocate (the Lord Jesus Christ) with his Father, and can turn to Him with every confidence that humble confession of sins will be followed by forgiveness for Christ’s sake.

Figuratively, though not literally, he has “crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Galatians 5:24), and baptism is the token of that.

Like the sheep following the shepherd, he is led by the Lord through the valley of death, to the glory beyond (Psalm 23). And the glory leads him to the “birth of the Spirit” (John 3:5).

### **Born of the Spirit**

When Jesus was brought again from the dead, his heavenly Father bestowed upon him divine nature. This describes a physical body energised by God’s spirit rather than by blood, and the Lord attained to this through “the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). So Paul taught that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1Corinthians 15:50), but flesh energised by the spirit can do so. He showed that the physical body, brought from the grave, must be subjected to change: **“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual**

**body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body” (1Corinthians 15:44).**

**“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed... for this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (vv. 51-53).**

That is what Jesus meant when he said to Nicodemus: **“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”**

Birth of water relates to baptism; birth of spirit relates to the change of nature when Christ's return.

Both are necessary before a person can enter the Kingdom of God.

Birth is preceded by conception and quickening. In relation to baptism, the conception takes place when a person's attention is directed to Truth. Quickenings follows when his understanding is deepened. Birth finally takes place when he “obeys from the heart the form of doctrine delivered him” by being baptised.

In turn, baptism initiates the process that will lead to the birth of the Spirit at Christ's return. It can be likened to a conception, whilst the quickening relates to the moral development that follows when a person learns to “walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16), or in accordance with the teaching of Christ (John 6:63), the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17), or the Truth (1John 5:6); all of which are styled “Spirit” in Scripture because they constitute the revelation given man through the outpouring of God's Spirit (2Peter 1:21).

The steps to salvation, therefore are (1) KNOWLEDGE; (2) BAPTISM; (3) A TRANSFORMED LIFE; (4) A CHANGED NATURE.

Peter wrote:

**“Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2Peter 1:4).**

The possession of divine nature, or a change from mortality to immortality, constitutes the “birth of the Spirit” which will



ensure entrance into the Kingdom of God.

### **Nicodemus' Conversion**

Nicodemus never forgot the teaching of the Lord relating to the serpent in the wilderness. At first he could not understand it, but he pondered the matter deeply, and at last the Truth dawned upon him as a blinding light, revealing what he should do.

As a member of the Jewish Council, he had first hand knowledge of the utter illegality of the Lord's trial, and the false charges pressed against him. With Joseph of Arimathea, he opposed the wickedness of the Jewish Council, but in vain. The Lord was condemned by a group of fleshly-minded men, and given over to death. Moreover, the death they demanded, was not the normal Jewish death for blasphemy, which was by stoning, but the Gentile death of crucifixion.

He saw the Lord impaled upon the cross; he witnessed the death of this one whom he realised had appeared with a divine mission of mercy, and at last, he appreciated the significance of the statement that had been earlier made to him: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of man be lifted up; That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14-15).

He now comprehended the significance of the Lord's mission to Israel and the world. His doubts were swept aside, and turning from his Jewish companions, he identified himself completely with the Lord (John 19:39-40). It had been difficult for him to come to an understanding of these things; he had to struggle against the prejudices of his beliefs, but at last he had broken through to Truth, and had embraced and confessed an attitude of mind that will ensure for him entrance into the Kingdom of God at Christ's return.

The struggle had been well worthwhile. Are you prepared to follow his example? We urge you to "save yourself from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40) by seeking the way to salvation shown in the life and death of Jesus Christ.

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