

December 27, 2020

Viewpoint from the Valley Grove Church Of Christ

Entrance Into The Kingdom Of God

By Mickey Galloway

Citizenship in the greatest kingdom of all, the spiritual kingdom of the Lord, is a wonderful privilege. But how do we attain this marvelous citizenship? We must do God's will. (Matthew 5:20; 7:21-23) No other kingdom is entered in this manner.

Galatians 4:21-31 contrasts physical Israel (those who were covenant people because they were Abraham's flesh) with spiritual Israel (those who are covenant people spiritually because they walk by faith as Abraham did). (Romans 2:28; 4:12,16; 9:1-8; Galatians 3:26-29) Under the first covenant, Israelites were physically born into the kingdom and taught later. (Hebrews 8:6-12) But under the new covenant, people are taught first, and when they believe and obey the gospel, they are spiritually born into God's spiritual kingdom. (John 6:44,45)

Nicodemus (John 3:1-5) was a Jew who had, simply because he was born a Jew physically, all the advantages that accompanied citizenship in the kingdom of Israel. Jesus immediately showed that under the new covenant, in His kingdom, physical birth meant nothing. Jesus declared, "Except one be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3) Nicodemus was thinking of physical birth when he asked, "How can a man be born when he is old?" (John 3:4) Jesus explains that a man must be born spiritually in order to become part of the spiritual kingdom. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (John 3:5)

When Jesus said "Born of water and Spirit," he spoke of only one — not two — births. He applies this new birth to man. Jesus is not explaining a baby's fleshly birth. There is one birth, but two elements are necessary for entrance into God's kingdom.

We are begotten by the Spirit. In physical birth, when man plants his seed in woman, a child is begotten. But what seed is planted for one to be "born again"? Jesus said, "the seed is the word of God." (Luke 8:11) Peter stated,

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“Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth.” (1 Peter 1:23) Paul preached the gospel to the Corinthians and then wrote, “I have begotten you through the gospel.” (1 Corinthians 4:15) This word came as “men spake from God being moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Peter 1:21) Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would come upon the apostles: “. . . He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you . . . He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” (John 14:26; 16:13) The word of God came to us when the Holy Spirit directed the apostles and other inspired men what to say and what to write. On Pentecost they “spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:2-4) Paul again wrote, “which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Spirit teacheth.” (1 Corinthians 2:13) For this reason, Paul later wrote: “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” (2 Timothy 3:16) One is begotten by the Spirit only as he submits to the teaching of the Spirit-inspired word, which is the seed of the kingdom.

We are brought forth by water. Jesus plainly stated: “Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5) Water is also involved in the new birth. The word born literally means brought forth. Just as a child is begotten by a man and brought forth by a woman, in the spiritual realm we are begotten by the Spirit and brought forth by water. The apostle Paul describes the conversion process this way: “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:3,4) When does the new life begin? The apostle declares it to be the moment when we are baptized into Christ. That is exactly what Jesus taught Nicodemus in John 3:5. When a person is “born of water and Spirit,” he becomes a new creature; this occurs when the person is baptized into Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

In the great commission, the Lord told the apostles: “. . . go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:15,16) This is exactly what Jesus told Nicodemus: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5) It is also why Peter wrote: “There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 3:21) When one is truly led by the Spirit (Romans 8:14) by

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hearing and believing the gospel and being baptized into Christ, he is “born of the water and the Spirit.” He also has “newness of life,” and he is a “new creature” in Christ’s kingdom. Not only is he begotten, he is also brought forth.

This is consistent with every conversion example in the book of Acts. In each case, water joined with the word of the Spirit to effect the new birth. This is the only means of entering Christ’s kingdom. Have you been “born of water and the Spirit” as Jesus taught? Trust in the Lord, and do his will. Then you will be in the Lord’s spiritual kingdom and have the “newness of life” that results from being “born again.”

Tomorrow

By Keith Greer

He was going to be all a moral man should be — tomorrow.

No one would be kinder or braver than he — tomorrow.

He planned to write letters to those who needed encouragement — tomorrow.

He was going to be a faithful and diligent worker for the Lord — tomorrow.

He was going to pray regularly and fervently, starting — tomorrow.

He knew a brother who needed some help. He wanted to go by and

give him a hand — tomorrow.

He knew he needed to study his Bible more, to begin to prepare to teach his neighbor — tomorrow.

In his life, there were things that were not right. He was going to straighten them out — tomorrow.

He needed to patch some things up with his brethren. He was going to take care of it — tomorrow.

The preacher called to come by for a visit. He was going to call back and set up a time — tomorrow.

The people at church would never believe how much he’d changed. Wouldn’t they be proud — tomorrow.

The world would never believe the person he was going to become — the greatest and best worker the Lord’s church had ever seen. He’d have more time to give to others, and he’d live more for the other person than for himself. Sadly, the man died before “tomorrow” ever came. All he left behind was a mountain of things he intended to do. He quickly faded from the world’s view and was soon forgotten. What a sad story. If only he had lived until “tomorrow,” all his plans would have been accomplished.

Did you learn anything from this little story? Could it have been about you? Maybe you’re reading this and planning to get things together. Good intentions are meaningless unless we follow through! Graveyards are full of people who did not intend to be

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there so soon. What do these people have in common? They all left many things undone; time ran out. Dear reader, do not be careless and fall into the devil's "tomorrow" trap. Time is a precious gift from God. All we have is today — yesterday is gone; and tomorrow may never come.

If you do not live to see tomorrow, what will you leave undone? Sadly, we'll all leave things undone, but we mustn't allow one of those things to be our relationship with God!



If you have been foolish in exalting yourself, Or if you have devised evil, *put your* hand on *your* mouth. For *as* the churning of milk produces butter, And wringing the nose produces blood, So the forcing of wrath produces strife. — *Proverbs 30:32-33*

Study Your Bible

Visitors — We pray that you benefit spiritually from our worship together and hope to see you again.

December Birthdays:

The 8th Melton Yarbrough; 14th Jacob Hisaw; 16th Doug Morgan; 20th Ian, Landon, & Kevin Collins; 23rd Ricky Thomas; 24th Robin McCartney; 29th Gail Justice; 30th Alicia Threadgill

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Sunday

Bible Study . . . 9:30 A.M.
Worship 10:30 A.M.
Worship 5:00 P.M.

Wednesday

Bible Study . . . 7:00 P.M.

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