

FOUNDATIONS FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH

Lesson FOUR THE NEW CREATION — BORN OF GOD

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I. INTRODUCTION

Jesus came to relate man, who was lost in sin, back to the Father God. He did this by shedding His own blood for our forgiveness and justification, thus making it possible for us to be born into God's family. *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become **children of God**, even to those who believe on His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, **but (born) of God**"* (John 1:12,13).

Any man who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour is a reborn man, born again out of death into life. The result of the new birth is a miraculous new creation, a creature made in the very image of God in holiness, purity, and love.

This is the purpose behind the new birth: to take a sinful, "old creature," alienated to God, and to recreate him into a righteous, "new creature," alive to God and able to serve God out of his heart, as Adam did before he fell.

II. THE NEW BIRTH

Jesus said to Nicodemus, *"You must be born again"* (John 3:7). This wasn't given as an option — it was a requirement. When Jesus said this, He wasn't referring to a physical occurrence, as Nicodemus thought (John 3:4). He was speaking of a spiritual occurrence, which would get men into the Kingdom of God. Nicodemus was an aged and respected ruler of the Jews, and yet this position was of no avail to him spiritually. In God's eyes, it makes no difference how important a person is or what a person owns, he has the same need as Nicodemus — **He must be born again!**

In John chapter 3, Jesus spoke of two births. One makes all men carnal and lost in sin, while the other makes men alive to God. *"That which is **born of the flesh is flesh**, and that which is **born of the Spirit is spirit**"* (John 3:6).

As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1:12,13

"Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"

John 3:7

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

John 3:4

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

John 3:6

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When Adam had lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.

Genesis 5:3

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

I Corinthians 15:22

The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

I John 3:8

The devil has sinned from the beginning.

I John 3:8

You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies."

John 8:44

By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

I John 3:10

"That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

Mark 7:20-23

A. BORN OF THE FLESH

Every person alive has been born of the flesh, and so has been ushered into the Adamic race by virtue of his physical birth. As such, each person is born in Adam's likeness and image (Genesis 5:3). This is the *first* birth to which Jesus refers when He says, "You must be born *again*." This physical birth places all men "in Adam," and thus under the curse of spiritual death (I Corinthians 15:22). Because of this **corrupted inward condition**, all men must be born *again* before they can enter God's kingdom.

1. The father of sin

The sinful nature which is in men who are not born again is in reality the nature of the devil. "... *the devil has sinned from the beginning*" (I John 3:8). Jesus told the Pharisees, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him" (John 8:44). The apostle John calls those who don't obey God "*children of the devil*" (I John 3:10).

2. In Adam vs. in Christ

When Adam sinned, he ceased to be a child of God (as he was created to be) and became a child of the devil because of the sinful nature which came into him. This inward condition was passed on to all of Adam's descendants (except Jesus), so that all men are born under the authority of darkness — Satan's dominion. There is no neutrality with God; one is either a child of God or a child of the devil — there is no middle ground! If any man is *in Adam* and not in Christ, then he is still an old creature, ruled and dominated by an inner nature under Satan's dominion.

3. The condition of the heart

Man's inward condition cannot be changed by any amount of good works or acts of righteousness. The Jews of Jesus' day were under the delusion that their acts of piety and rituals of washings kept them spiritually pure. Jesus said that what comes out of a man's heart (i.e. his innermost being) is what defiles him (Mark 7:20-23).

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No matter how much you may polish up a rotten apple and make it look good on the outside, it is still rotten on the inside. This is how God views men who are not born again, but who try to do good works (Matthew 23:27). The inner wickedness is the result of a physical birth into the Adamic race (first birth); acts of righteousness won't change that condition any more than polishing the outside of a rotten apple will make the inside of the apple fresh and new.

B. BORN OF THE SPIRIT

When a man is **born of the Spirit**, it is his *second* birth (rebirth). Rebirth is simply the removal of the old, corrupted nature and its replacement with a *new nature* (Colossians 3:9,10). Anyone who has been born of the Spirit (i.e. born again) has "***passed out of death into life***" (John 5:24); he has been *delivered* from the authority of darkness and *translated* into the kingdom of God's Son (the Kingdom of God) (Colossians 1:13, Acts 26:18).

Rebirth does for man what all the false religions of the world can never do. These religions give numerous pious rules for conduct, but they can do *nothing* about a man's inward condition (Colossians 2:23). It is this inward condition that keeps men out of God's kingdom (Ephesians 2:3). Men are lost today not because of what they do, but because of what they *are!* (What they do is a result of what they are).

1. Hearts of stone and flesh

God promised the transformation of the new birth in the Old Testament. "*Moreover, I will give you a **new heart** and put a **new spirit** within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a **heart of flesh***" (Ezekiel 36:26). The "heart of stone" is the old nature; the new heart ("heart of flesh") and the new spirit are the new nature which come into a man when he is born again.

Israel habitually sinned and went away from God because they had hearts of stone (Jeremiah 5:23; 7:24). God knew that the only thing that would change their conduct would be to change their hearts (Ezekiel 11:19,20). This inward change is what occurs at the new birth. Instead of a stony heart which fights God, we have been given a new heart and spirit which are alive to God and desire to do His will.

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."

Matthew 23:27

Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.

Colossians 3:9,10

For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.

Colossians 1:13

"I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me."

Acts 26:18

Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Ephesians 2:3

"Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward."

Jeremiah 7:24

"And I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God."

Ezekiel 11:19,20

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For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.

Colossians 2:9,10

You have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God.

I Peter 1:23

In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.

James 1:18

"All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls away, but the word of the Lord abides forever."

I Peter 1:24,25

We do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

II Corinthians 4:16

See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are.

I John 3:1

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

I Peter 1:3

2. Instant and complete transformation

Being born again is not a gradual process by which we work up to a certain level of development. The new birth is an instantaneous work of the Holy Spirit that occurs the moment we believe. As we have said, there is no middle ground with God. You are either "in death" or "in life"; you are either a child of the devil or a child of God. There is no such thing as a child of the devil *developing* into a child of God. You are either one or the other — you can't be halfway in between. *That INNER transformation is complete the moment that you believe.* The moment you are born again, you are perfectly delivered from Satan's authority, completely translated into God's kingdom, fully a child of God (Colossians 2:9,10).

3. Incorruptible and imperishable seed

Not only is the work which the Holy Spirit accomplishes at the new birth instantaneous, but its results are **eternal**. "*For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God*" (I Peter 1:23). We were brought forth (i.e. born again) by the Word of Truth (James 1:18), and that Word of God abides forever (I Peter 1:24,25).

The new heart which comes into the one who is born again is incorruptible and imperishable because the seed that brought that new heart forth is the Word of God. That which is born of the flesh (of perishable seed) will fade and pass away (I Peter 1:24), but that which is born of the Spirit (by imperishable seed) will never pass away, but will abide forever (II Corinthians 4:16).

C. BORN INTO GOD'S FAMILY

When a person is born again, he is born into the family of God, and God becomes his Father. "*See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God; and such we are*" (I John 3:1). We are children of Adam by our first birth, but we are *children of God* by our second birth, because *God* has caused us to be born again (I Peter 1:3).

God, before the foundations of the world, had wanted a family, children who would love and serve Him out of a sincere heart. This is why He created Adam; Adam before the fall

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was a child of God. But when Adam fell, spiritual death passed on all men, and man could no longer be a child of God, because he was no longer like God in his heart.

But when a man is born again, his stony heart is replaced with a *new heart*. This new heart, which is a result of the working of God's Spirit, is in the likeness of God and "... *has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth*" (Ephesians 4:24).

1. Born in His likeness — Love

One can see from simple observation that children bear the physical and emotional characteristics of their parents. The same is true of those who have been born of God. The children of God bear the characteristics of their Father in Heaven, because their inner natures are like God.

God's supreme attribute is Love. The Bible says, "*God is Love*" (I John 4:16). This is also the main spiritual attribute of His children. "*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is Love*" (I John 4:7,8).

Loving one another is not what causes a person to be born again; believing on the Lord Jesus Christ brings about that change. But, anyone who has been born again manifests this attribute of Love, because God is Love, and His children will show forth the same characteristic. "*We know that we have passed out of death into life* (i.e. been born again), *because we love the brethren*" (I John 3:14).

2. We are children of God

The privileged position of the New Covenant saint far exceeds that of the Old Covenant saint (Matthew 11:11); the New Covenant saint is a child of God, whereas the Old Covenant saint was a servant only. God has called us into a family relationship with Himself and placed His Spirit within us so that we can say, "*Abba! Father!*" (Romans 8:15). *Abba* is an Aramaic word meaning "father" and is used by little children when they speak to their fathers (in other words, *Abba* = Daddy).

Put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Ephesians 4:24

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

I John 4:16

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

I John 4:7,8

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.

I John 3:14

"Among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

Matthew 11:11

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "*Abba! Father!*"

Romans 8:15

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And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"
Galatians 4:6

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.

Romans 8:29

"He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."

John 5:24

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.

John 3:14

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

John 3:16

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life."

John 6:47

The first man, Adam, became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.

I Corinthians 15:45

For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light we see light.

Psalms 36:9

"For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."

Jeremiah 2:13

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.

Psalms 42:2

In this way the Spirit of God in us is constantly reminding us that we are God's children. "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Galatians 4:6). Because we are born of God, we have Jesus as our elder brother; He is called the "first-born among many brethren" (Romans 8:29), and we are among those brethren.

III. RECEIVING ETERNAL LIFE

In John 5:24 Jesus describes the transformation of the new birth as "passing out of death into life" (see also I John 3:14). When we were born again, we were born out of death and into life. The death we were born out of is spiritual death — the result of Adam's separation from God, who is the source of all life. The life which we were born into is the Life of God, or Eternal Life.

God sent His Son into the world to give us Eternal Life (John 3:16). We received that Life by believing and accepting Jesus as our Saviour (John 6:47). The moment we believed, God imparted His Life to our inner man, recreating us and causing us to be born again from death unto Life. Even as Adam became alive when God breathed into him the breath of Life, so we too became spiritually alive when God breathed into us His Eternal Life (I Corinthians 15:45).

A. WHAT IS ETERNAL LIFE?

God is the source of all life (Psalm 36:9; Jeremiah 2:13). He is called "the Living God" (Psalm 42:2; I Timothy 3:15) because He existed before anything else existed, and He was alive before anything had life. As the Living God, eternal and self-existent, God has *absolute* Life in Himself (John 5:26), and thus He is the source of all Life.

Eternal Life (the Life of God) is the **nature of God**. "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). When we became partakers of God's nature (II Peter 1:4), we became partakers of Eternal Life.

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I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

I Timothy 3:15

“For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself.”

John 5:26

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

John 1:4

For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

II Peter 1:4

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"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous ones into eternal life."
Matthew 25:41,46

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.
I John 5:13

He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.
I John 5:12

"The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly."
John 10:10

Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest, and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. Immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." And all those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?"
Acts 9:1,2,20,21

1. Eternal life vs. "endless existence"

Eternal Life mustn't be confused with "endless existence." All men have endless existence, even those who don't believe on the Lord Jesus. Those who don't believe do not have eternal life, but they will *exist for eternity* separated from God (Matthew 25:41,46).

The word "eternal" doesn't refer to the quantity or duration of the Life we have received, but rather to the *quality* of that Life. Eternal Life is the nature of "the Living God." The *result* of having that nature is that we spend eternity in union with God, the source of Life.

2. When eternal life begins

When thinking of Eternal Life, some people suppose that it begins when they get to heaven. They believe that Eternal Life commences only after they have passed through "the Pearly Gates."

But the Bible says that those who believe have this Eternal Life **now**. "*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son, in order that you may know that you have eternal life*" (I John 5:13). Eternal Life is imparted to us the moment we believe and accept the Lord Jesus as our Saviour. "*He who has the Son has Life!*" (I John 5:12).

B. WHY JESUS CAME

"*The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly*" (John 10:10). God didn't send Jesus into this world to start a new religion, or to establish a new code of ethics. Jesus came from the Father to give man life, the life he had lost through Adam's fall.

New religions and codes of ethics have never done anything to deliver men from bondage, because they can't do anything to change a man on the inside. Only Christianity imparts to man a supernatural element — the Life of God. *When a man receives the Life of God, it changes him*; it alters his conduct and personality. When he believed, Paul was transformed from a violent persecutor of the church into an earnest Christian; God's Life came into him (Acts 9:1,2,20,21). No sinner is so lost that the Life of God won't bring about a change. No case is incurable.

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Receiving Eternal Life is the most miraculous event that can ever take place in any man's life. When God imparts His own nature to man, He is giving birth to a new creation.

IV. NEW CREATURES IN CHRIST

When a man is in Adam, he is dead (i.e. his spirit is dead to God, because in Adam all die [I Corinthians 15:22]). But when a man turns to the Lord and is born again, he is *in Christ*. Paul said that he recognized *all* believers as being in Christ and not in the flesh (i.e. in Adam) (II Corinthians 5:16).

"Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (II Corinthians 5:17). Any born-again believer is a new creature; his spirit, or inner man, has been recreated, and the old nature that he received from Adam at birth has been done away with.

The term "new creature" refers to the result of the radical transformation that takes place when a man is reborn. This transformation occurs in a man's spirit. A man's body is not born again (it will be redeemed when Jesus returns [Romans 8:23]); neither is his mind born again (it must be renewed [Romans 12:2]). No, it is a man's spirit that is transformed instantaneously by the power and the Life of God. The *inner man* becomes a new creature the moment a person believes.

A. NEW CREATION = NEW NATURE

Adam's sin resulted in mankind receiving a sinful nature. This is the nature which drives men to sin and causes them to obey the impulses of Satan. This is the nature which makes men, "*children of wrath*" (Ephesians 2:3). The effect of the new birth is that this sinful nature is done away with and is replaced with a new nature.

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

I Corinthians 15:22

Therefore from now on we recognize no man according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.

II Corinthians 5:16

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

II Corinthians 5:17

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

Romans 8:23

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2

Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

Ephesians 2:3

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Our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.

Romans 6:6

In reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Ephesians 4:22-24

He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

II Peter 1:4

For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.

Colossians 2:9,10

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

II Corinthians 5:17

So completely new is this thing which God works in us, that the scriptures say we are "*new creatures*." We are *not* old creatures whom God has "fixed-up" enough to stand in His presence. God didn't "fix-up" our old nature; He *destroyed* it on the cross (Romans 6:6). He then put within us a new nature. This nature is not corrupted by sin, but is moved at the impulse of God's Spirit.

1. Created in His image

This new nature within us is nothing like the old nature. The old nature is corrupted and driven by sin. The new nature is created just like God, in all righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24). When we receive this new nature, it means that we have become partakers of God's divine nature (II Peter 1:4). Thus, all the holy and righteous attributes of God are resident within us in the new creature (the new man).

We are children of our Father God, because God has caused us to be inwardly recreated in His very image; our spirits are endowed with all of His righteousness and holy characteristics. traits.

2. Complete re-creation

The work of our inward recreation is *complete* (Colossians 2:9,10). God has already done all that He'll ever need to do within us to make us new creatures. Paul does *not* say that believers are "becoming" new creatures, but rather that they already *are* new creatures. If a person is not a new creature, then he is not in Christ, nor is he a child of God. Only new creatures can claim the privilege of being called "sons of God." Thus, anyone who is born again is *now* a new creature. This is a present-tense *reality*, not a future-tense expectation.

B. THE DUAL-NATURE FALLACY

In speaking of the birth and incoming of the new nature (new man), it is equally important to understand the death and removal of the old nature (old man). If any man is in Christ, *old things* (i.e. the old man) have passed away and new things (i.e. the new man) have come (II Corinthians 5:17). The scriptures show clearly that the coming of the "new" is made possible by the passing away of the "old."

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No man can have two natures at the same time. As we have already said, one is either a child of God or a child of the devil; there is no middle ground (Matthew 12:30). Since the old nature makes a man a child of the devil, and the new nature makes him a child of God, it is obvious that the old nature and the new nature *cannot* coexist in any one person. These two natures are mutually exclusive.

Unfortunately, some are of the mistaken impression that the new birth implants a new nature within us without removing the old. Thus, the new man and the old man are thought to exist side by side within us. This type of teaching readily acknowledges the new creature in Christ but does not understand that the old nature has been put to death and removed through Christ's work on the cross.

1. Paul's "wretched state"

One passage of scripture often used to support this "dual-nature" idea is found in Romans 7:14-24. Here Paul speaks of his state *before* regeneration, stating that he was sold into the slavery of sin. He speaks of the inner battle within a Jew who desires to keep the commandments of God, but cannot because of the sin which reigns in his mortal body.

It is believed that this describes the inner struggle between the "two natures" that supposedly dwell in all believers. People who believe this erroneously identify themselves with Paul's cry, "*Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of death?*" (Romans 7:24).

2. The reborn man's freedom from sin

That Paul is *not* speaking here of himself as a born-again believer is evident from Romans chapter 6 in which he says that any believer is free from the power of sin through Christ's death on the cross (Read Romans 6). The body of sin to which Paul refers in chapter 7 is the old man *before* it has been removed and replaced with a new nature. A "*reborn*" person no longer has an old nature within him (Romans 6:6).

"He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters."

Matthew 12:30

For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?

Romans 7:14-24

Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.

Romans 6:6

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“God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

John 4:24

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

II Corinthians 4:16

Let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.

I Peter 3:4

May the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I Thessalonians 5:23

The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

II Corinthians 3:18

We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ.

Ephesians 4:14,15

C. INSTANT MATURITY?

Man is a triune being, made up of spirit, soul, and body. A man's spirit is that which contacts and responds to God (John 4:24); it is sometimes called the “inner man” (II Corinthians 4:16) or “the hidden person of the heart” (I Peter 3:4). The soul includes a man's mind and emotions. Both of these entities (spirit and soul) reside in a body. Although the term “soul” is sometimes used to include both spirit and soul (distinguishing them from the body), the scripture clearly makes a distinction between them (I Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12). They are not one and the same.

When a man is born again, it is his *spirit which becomes a new creature, undergoing an instantaneous change. This is not a process.* The transformation of the spirit occurs the moment a man believes that Jesus is Lord. The same cannot be said, however, about the mind and the body. As we have already said, a man's mind doesn't get born again, and neither does his body. The mind of a believer must be renewed, and his body brought under control.

1. The need to conform

Paul calls upon each of us to be “transformed by the renewing of your minds” (Romans 12:2). He speaks of this transformation occurring as we gaze at the new creature we have become on the inside (II Corinthians 3:18). In Ephesians Paul refers to this **outward transformation in conformity to the inward man** as “growing up in Him” (Ephesians 4:14,15).

It is important for us to realize that being a new creature in Christ (which is what we are) does not mean “instant maturity” in our outward walk. It does mean that **all the power and potential for that walk has already been placed within us by the new birth.** We don't need to beg God to make us new; He's already done that. We need to begin walking in the light of what God has already accomplished within us.

2. The need to control

No matter how mature a Christian gets in his walk, he will always have to control the appetites of his body. The mighty apostle Paul (hardly one you would call immature) said that he buffeted his body and kept it under control (I Corinthians

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9:27). The body (sometimes referred to as the flesh) must be controlled, and *can* be controlled when a believer allows his recreated inner man to dominate his body.

V. GOD'S INDWELLING PRESENCE

Not until righteousness has been established within us and we have been recreated (born again) can God fulfill His heart's desire to fellowship with us and indwell us through the person of the Holy Spirit. The culmination of righteousness and the new birth is the Father and the Son coming into believers and remaining (abiding) in them (John 14:23).

The Holy Spirit cannot cohabit with sin. So man had to be inwardly reborn, made a new creature. The Holy Spirit could then come and dwell within us. "*Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God . . .*" (I Corinthians 6:19). With God's Spirit indwelling us, we can have sweet fellowship with God and with His Son, as Jesus promised: "*. . . I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with me*" (Revelation 3:20).

A. GOD'S SPIRIT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Under the Old Covenant God's Spirit did *not* indwell men as He does in the New Covenant. This would have been impossible, since sin had not yet been removed. God anointed Old Testament believers by having His Spirit "*come upon*" them (Judges 3:10; 6:34; I Samuel 16:13). In this way God's chosen men were anointed and empowered for service as God's Spirit "*came upon them.*"

1. Where God's anointing was

Not all Old Testament believers had the privilege of having God's Spirit come upon them. This was usually reserved for the King (or Judge), the Prophet and the Priest (I Samuel 10:6; II Chronicles 15:1; Exodus 28:1,41). These were specific men out of the nation of Israel, whom God chose to accomplish His will. The Priests were taken out of only one tribe of the twelve (the tribe of Levi), and then only one family of that tribe could minister as High Priest before the Lord

I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

I Corinthians 9:27

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him."

John 14:23

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

I Corinthians 6:19

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me."

Revelation 3:20

Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.

I Samuel 16:13

"Then the Spirit of the Lord will come upon you mightily, and you shall prophesy with them and be changed into another man."

I Samuel 10:6

Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Obed.

II Chronicles 15:1

"Then bring near to yourself Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the sons of Israel, to minister as priest to Me. You shall anoint them and ordain them and consecrate them, that they may serve Me as priests.

Exodus 28:1,41

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"You shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord your God chooses."
Deuteronomy 17:15

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."
Jeremiah 1:5

"And you shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the testimony which I shall give to you. And there I will meet with you; and from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, I will speak to you about all that I will give you in commandment for the sons of Israel."
Exodus 25:21,22

When the whole congregation of the sons of Israel assembled themselves at Shiloh, and set up the tent of meeting there; and the land was subdued before them.
Joshua 18:1

This man would go up from his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice to the Lord of hosts in Shiloh.
I Samuel 1:3

For the Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. "This is My resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it."
Psalms 132:13,14

"Will God indeed dwell with mankind on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee."
II Chronicles 6:18

When Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the Lord's house.
II Chronicles 7:1,2

(i.e. the house of Aaron). The King was a man of God's own choosing (*Deuteronomy 17:15*), and only descendants of that king's family could claim the privilege of God's anointing. Prophets were chosen by God as He saw fit and were anointed to proclaim God's message to His people (*Jeremiah 1:5*).

Thus, only on this specific group of people (i.e. King, Prophet, and Priest) did the Spirit of God rest. Not every believer under the Old Covenant could claim this privilege.

2. Where God's presence was

When God told Moses to build the Ark of the Covenant, He said that that would be the place where He would manifest His presence to the people (*Exodus 25:21,22*). Throughout all the travels of the children of Israel, the Ark of the Covenant was identified with the presence of God. Where the Ark was, there God was.

When the Israelites took possession of the promised land, they set up the Ark and the tabernacle of worship in a place called Shiloh (*Joshua 18:1*). It was to Shiloh that men came if they wanted to hear from God or to do their service of worship (*I Samuel 1:3*), because this was where God's presence was in manifestation.

When David moved the Ark to the city of Jerusalem, the presence of God moved with it. God declares that Jerusalem is His city, chosen by Him as His habitation (*Psalms 132:13,14*). This is not to say that God needs a building in which to dwell. Solomon himself said, as he dedicated the temple, "Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee" (*II Chronicles 6:18*). But, God chose to show forth the glory of His presence in that place, that is in the temple of Jerusalem (*II Chronicles 7:1,2*).

The presence of God's Spirit was not totally isolated from the people. But, in order for them to participate in spiritual worship, they would have to come from wherever they were to the temple in Jerusalem. That was where God chose to manifest the presence of His Spirit.

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B. THE PROMISE OF GOD

From what we have just read, we can see that the Spirit of God was not upon all men; it rested upon only a few. What's more, the children of Israel had to come to where the Ark was to worship God. But, God had better things in store for us! *"And it will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; even on the male and female servants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days"* (Joel 2:28,29). No longer will the Spirit of God be reserved for a special few; God will pour out His Spirit on **all flesh** (even slaves will be candidates for God's Spirit).

In this outpouring, however, the Spirit will not be *upon* people, but *within* them. *"And I will put My Spirit within you"* (Ezekiel 36:27). Jesus said to His disciples before His death and resurrection that the Spirit that was then *with* them would soon be *in* them (John 14:17). This was profoundly illustrated upon Jesus' death, when the temple veil, which separated the people from the presence of God within the Holy of Holies, was ripped from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51), thus signifying that God's Spirit was no longer in a building, but was residing in men.

C. GOD'S SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Unlike the Old Covenant, the New Covenant gives to *every believer* (not just a few) the indwelling presence of God's Spirit. Any man who is born again (a new creature) has God's Spirit living inside him. It is the Spirit of God who assures us of our redemption. *"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God"* (Romans 8:16). In fact, if a man does not have the Spirit of God dwelling inside, he is not saved: *"But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him"* (Romans 8:9).

Every born again believer has God's Spirit residing inside him. When a man is justified before God by the blood of Jesus and becomes a new creature, then God can come and live inside him. We don't need to go to Jerusalem to worship God and experience His presence. We can now worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:20-23), because our bodies are now the temple of the Holy Spirit.

"And it will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days."
Joel 2:28,29

"I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."
Ezekiel 36:27

"The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you."
John 14:17

And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook.
Matthew 27:51

You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.
Romans 8:9

"Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers."
John 4:20-23

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"Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

Matthew 11:11

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

John 3:6

It is important for believers to understand that there is a vast difference between Old Covenant saints and New Covenant saints. Men under the Old Covenant had God's Spirit "come upon" them. This is very different from having the Spirit living *within*. What sets us apart from the men of the Old Covenant is that we have been made *new creatures*. Only in a new creature, holy and blameless before God, could God's *Holy Spirit* come to dwell.

This is why Jesus said that even though John the Baptist was the greatest prophet in the Old Covenant (Greater than Moses, Elijah, Elisha, etc.), the *least* in the Kingdom of Heaven was greater than he was (Matthew 11:11).

VI. SUMMARY — THE SUPERNATURAL, RADICAL, NEW BIRTH

The New Birth is totally the work of God through the Holy Spirit; the only part which we play in it is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. This miracle of transformation which occurs on the inside of all who believe, is what sets Christianity apart from every other religion or form of belief in the world. Other religions try to alter a man's conduct sufficiently to bring about a change of his heart. *But, faith in Jesus Christ alone will bring about a change in a man's heart, and only this change will alter his conduct.*

The New Birth does not occur as a result of works, but as a result of faith in Christ; it is not a work of the flesh, but a work of the Spirit. "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*" (John 3:5).

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The changes brought about by being born again are radical:

- You pass from death into *life*. (I John 5:24).
- You are delivered from the authority of darkness and *translated into the kingdom of God's Son* (Colossians 1:13).
- You received *Eternal Life, the nature of God* (Colossians 3:9,10).
- You are made a *new creature*; old things pass away and *new things come* (II Corinthians 5:17).
- You have the *indwelling presence of God's Spirit* (I Corinthians 6:19).