

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins

The words above are found in Acts 2: 38-39. In the NIV the context reads: Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." (Acts 2:38-39 NIV)

Forgiveness of Sins

The first thing that is clear from these words is that if we want to have our sins forgiven, we must repent, and be baptized.

There are those who would like to ignore the need for baptism, which they consider as only a work, in a world where faith alone should rule. But the Apostle is very clear in his instruction. He does not say to believe and your sin will be forgiven.

Jesus also was clear in his teaching. He said: "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.**" (John 3:5)

When we are baptized, our robes are symbolically washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb.(see Rev 7:14) Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin. (See Heb 9:22) The act of baptism identifies us with the blood of Christ. Without that connection, through faith and baptism, our sins could not be forgiven.

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"A lamp for those who travel"

The Promise of the Spirit

The other blessing associated with baptism, as stated by Peter, is that we would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This verse has led to much confusion. It is assumed by many that this refers to those gifts of the Spirit that were available to the disciples in the first century, to perform miracles.

However, the context of the verse in Acts 2, presents a different hope. If we read the following verses carefully, we will understand the meaning:

"He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." (Acts 2:31-33)

Resurrection, the Promise

The promise that we receive at baptism is simply this. We will not be left in the grave. We will be resurrected with the hope of eternal life after the judgment.

Things Concerning

The Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ

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"Except a man be born again, he can not see the kingdom of God."

READINGS: JOHN 3: 1-10

Nicodemus was a teacher in Israel. He was considered an expert in matters relating to religion. But this learned man could not understand what Jesus meant when he spoke the words above.

His question was "How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"

His question seems a little silly, but it helps to illustrate how difficult it was for a natural man to understand spiritual things. For "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor 2:14)

Jesus answered Nicodemus by saying: "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."

Two Step Process

Being born again involves two steps. We are born first in the waters of baptism and then we must be born of the Spirit.

Water baptism is patterned after the ceremony that John the Baptist used in the New Testament. He called for the people to repent and be baptized to wash away their sins and prepare themselves for the Messiah and his coming Kingdom.

Death, Burial and Resurrection

Supplement to The Christadelphian Advocate

John baptized the people in the river where there was plenty of water. (see John 3:32)

Much water was necessary because the Bible model for baptism is complete **immersion.** This method was used because there was a symbol involved.

Baptism represented the death of the old man and the birth of the new man. "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."(Rom 6:4-5)

When we are immersed in the water, we figuratively put to death the old man and his ways. We were originally born in the family of Adam but when we come out of the waters of baptism, we are symbolically resurrected, into the family of Christ.

In Adam, we were associated with the sentence of death. In Christ, we have a renewed hope for the blessing of life. "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men."(Rom 5:18 NIV)

Born of the Spirit

The second part of the process of being born again is not as straightforward. (continued on next page)

That which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Born of the Spirit

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There are actually two applications of this part of the process of being born again. Jesus taught that being born of the Spirit was not as obvious as being born of water. He said: "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."(John 3:8)

Transformation?

We can go through the motions of repentance and the ceremony of baptism, but no one can tell what is really in our heart. Baptism is not just the washing away of the dirt on our body in water, it is the pledge of a good conscience toward God.(see 1 Pet 3:21 NIV)

Being born of the Spirit then, requires a change of heart. We must be converted and become as little children. We must be transformed by the renewing of our mind. We must become spiritually minded.

Mind of the Spirit

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Romans, explains it this way: " Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."(Rom 8:5-9 NIV)

The Spiritual Body



There is another more important phase to being born of the Spirit. After the resurrection, and if by the grace of God we are found worthy at the judgment, there will be a final change in our physical nature.

"So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual." (1 Cor 15:42-46)

Born Again, of water and Spirit

When we learn the gospel and believe that Jesus is the Christ, if we are then baptized, we are being born again by water.

This new birth should demonstrate the obedience of a man who has also been born again by the Spirit, having a good heart and a spiritual mind that is tuned to the ways of God.

Our birth by the Spirit is finally sealed at the judgment, if we are found faithful and are rewarded with eternal life.

Our natural body will then be changed into the spirit nature and death will be swallowed up in victory.

“Without God and without hope in the world” ???

Our inherited Condition

The natural man is born under the sentence of death, because of the disobedience of the first man in the Garden of Eden.

In our natural state, we are described by the Apostle Paul in these words: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being **aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.**" (Eph 2: 11-12)

Hope through Christ

Our inherited condition is without any hope, but when we enter into Christ through baptism our condition changes. Paul states: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Eph 2: 13)

Citizens with the Saints

Paul is not speaking about a change in our nature. When we are baptized, we are still mortal creatures. He is talking about a change in our status or relationship.

At birth, we are aliens and strangers, as if we were citizens of a foreign country. When we are made "nigh by the blood of Christ," we "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God." (v 19)

A Mediator

Another significant change in our status at baptism is that we gain access to God through Christ as our mediator. The forgiveness of sin is possible for " we have an advocate with the Father, and If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will

forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1: 9; 2:1)

Forgiveness and Inheritance

Baptism has other benefits including the potential for an inheritance: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, **and heirs according to the promise.**"(Gal 3:27-29)

Through Christ, we "receive **forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith.**" (Acts 26:18)

Resurrection in Christ

Certainly not the least of the benefits of our baptism is the assurance of a resurrection if we should fall asleep before Christ returns. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming." (1 Cor 15:22-23)

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." (1 Thess 4:16)

Baptism Changes:

1. Our citizenship changes from Adam to Christ
2. Our sins are forgiven.
3. We gain access to God through Christ as our mediator.
4. We become Heirs of the promises to the Fathers.
5. We are certain to be raised from the dead and judged.
6. We are no longer without hope and without God in the world.