

LESSON 16
(1958, 1966)

AMBASSADOR COLLEGE
BIBLE CORRESPONDENCE COURSE

"Potter at Work"

About Our Cover ...

A potter molds and shapes a rough lump of clay into what will become a beautiful vase. God likens Himself to a Master Potter. He inspired Isaiah to write: "We are the clay, and thou art our POTTER, we all are the WORK of thy hand" (Isa. 64:8). God is in the process of forming His supreme SPIRITUAL masterpiece out of mortal man -- the "clay model." GOD IS REPRODUCING HIMSELF! THIS lesson reveals how you can become a SPIRIT-BORN son of God!

AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

SOME of the teachings in the Bible are a little hard for the average thinking mind to understand.

James tells us to count it all joy when trials, ordeals, and reverses beset us. TROUBLES a JOY? That's pretty hard to accept, isn't it? And, for the average person, a lot harder to put into practice.

Few find any pleasure, let alone JOY, in the obstacles and troubles they encounter. Yet this Biblical teaching says we ought so to count them. There is a REASON, although FEW understand it.

In one of the Psalms you'll read that the righteous are going to have to bear MANY afflictions. But, it promises, the Eternal will deliver us out of them all -- IF we believe and trust Him!

Again, it is through MUCH TRIBULATION that we must enter the Kingdom of God. WHY? There's a reason!

Now consider another Biblical teaching hard for some to understand.

Several years ago I wrote an article, now available in booklet form, "What Do You Mean -- BORN AGAIN?" In the fifth chapter of Ephesians you find a husband-wife relationship pictured as corresponding to Christ and the Church. Scriptural teaching assures us that, at His coming, Christ is going to MARRY the Church. Also the Scriptures teach that the Church will, at His coming, be BORN of God, by a resurrection of all who have died, and the instantaneous conversion from mortal to immortal of those then living (I Corinthians 15:50-53).

So one man reasons: Could a full-grown MAN marry an infant girl baby, just born? If those in the Church are to be just then BORN of God, how can they marry Christ before they grow up?

This, too, seems difficult for some to comprehend. Yet the answer to James' teaching -- the UNDERSTANDING of what James really means, is also the answer to this seeming inconsistency.

There is a third seeming inconsistency, hard for some to understand. Contrary to the thinking of many, a Christian may -- and too often does -- actually commit sin AFTER he is converted. He SHOULD NOT, of course. But too often he does, and still remains a Christian. The true explanation of James' teaching, first mentioned above, is also the explanation of this

experience.

So LET'S UNDERSTAND!

WHY were we born, in the first place? What is the real PURPOSE of human life? God Almighty the Creator is reproducing Himself! As truly as we mortal humans have been given power to reproduce ourselves -- to bring forth progeny in our own image, born with our very nature even so the Great God is bringing forth sons in HIS image, born with His very divine nature!

The very PURPOSE of our existence is that we be begotten as God's children, and become BORN of Him.

And human reproduction is the very type of spiritual reproduction. What God created at the time described in the first chapter of Genesis was a PHYSICAL creation. You'll find nothing spiritual there. In physical man, made of the dust of the ground, God created the MATERIAL WITH WHICH He may mold, shape, form, and create the SPIRITUAL being. He pictures us as the clay, Himself as the Potter -- forming us into the spiritual image of HIS designing.

Now human reproduction, I say, pictures spiritual reproduction. Each human, since Adam and Eve, started from a tiny egg, called an ovum, the size of a pinpoint. It was produced in the body of the mother. The egg is INCOMPLETE, of itself. It has a life of only about 48 hours, according to some authorities. Unless fertilized by the life-giving sperm cell from the human father within that limited lifetime, it dies.

Each human, spiritually speaking, is like an egg. The average human lifetime is said to be 70 years. Adam was created INCOMPLETE, and each of us was BORN INCOMPLETE -- that is, we were made to NEED the Holy Spirit of God. And unless, within our limited life-span of some 70 years, we are begotten of God -- by His Spirit which is HIS IMMORTAL DIVINE LIFE entering to impart eternal life to us, we shall die and that shall be the end -- except that God has appointed a resurrection of all who have lived, and, for those who reject His gift of eternal life, the final second death in the lake of fire.

But, in the case of the human ovum, once fertilized as a begotten human, the egg -- now called an embryo -- is kept within the body of the mother and is nourished and fed material food through her and protected by her. And there it must grow -- being fed physically through the mother -- large enough to be born. After a number of weeks, the embryo is called a fetus, and at birth it is a human baby.

In like manner, the Bible calls the CHURCH the "mother of us all." That is, the mother of Christians -- those begotten of God. It is the function of the Church to protect and feed, spiritually, on the spiritual food of GOD'S WORD, those begotten children of God, so that we may GROW SPIRITUALLY, in the divine character, ready to be born.

Surely this is a wonderful comparison. Yet types and anti-types are not always alike in every detail.

When a physical baby is born, it is not ready for marriage. When the spiritual child of God is BORN he will be fully mature for the spiritual marriage. How can this be? This is what one thinking man could not see.

The unborn human fetus is only growing PHYSICALLY. At birth, the human baby knows nothing. He is helpless. He must be taught. He must learn. He is born merely with a mind CAPABLE of learning, knowing, thinking. He is not yet of mature size physically or mentally. Many do marry who are still entirely immature spiritually and/or emotionally. But we do assume that one has

reasonable maturity physically and mentally before marriage. In the human, this development takes place in the human state AFTER the human birth.

Therefore, the human baby is not ready for marriage at birth.

But the spirit-born are different!

Just as the fertilized ovum -- the embryo which becomes the fetus -- must grow PHYSICALLY from material food, so the spirit-begotten child of God must grow SPIRITUALLY before he can be born. BUT THERE IS A DIFFERENCE!

The fetus does not attain to complete physical MATURITY before birth, and has no mental maturity. But, in the spiritual rebirth, one must attain reasonable spiritual maturity BEFORE he is spirit-born.

Now what IS spiritual growth? Just as the physical embryo-fetus must GROW physically large enough to be BORN, so the Spirit-begotten Christian must grow SPIRITUALLY or he will never be BORN of God. But spiritual growth is CHARACTER-DEVELOPMENT.

The Spirit-begotten starts out with a MIND from the beginning. God IS perfect character -- divine, spiritual character. God is also LOVE. And perfect spiritual character is THE WAY of LOVE! Such a character is the attainment of the ability, in a separate independent entity of free moral agency, to be able to discern right from wrong -- the true values from the false truth from error -- the right way from the wrong; and then to make the right CHOICE or DECISION, even against self-desire, impulse or temptation; plus the WILL and self-discipline to resist the wrong and to DO the right.

No human, with human nature, has the power -- of himself -- to do this. But God has made AVAILABLE the spiritual power and help man lacks. Man must desire to KNOW -- must hunger and thirst for truth; man must make his own decision, exercise his own will, even against the pulls of his nature. But without the help of God -- without spiritual POWER from God -- man is utterly unable.

That is why truly converted Christians sometimes actually DO SIN. They are like the apostle Paul, as he describes himself in Romans 7. With his mind he WANTED to go the way of God's law, yet he found himself unable. Another law -- human nature warred within him against the good resolutions of his mind. But the sequel to Romans 7 is Romans 8 -- the Holy Spirit chapter. WHO, Paul cried out, could save him from this body of death he struggled against in vain? The answer is, GOD, through His Holy Spirit.

A true Christian doesn't want to sin -- should not. But sometimes he finds himself caught in the vise of habit, or overwhelmed by temptation or by circumstances from which he is unable to free himself. Surely, had such a one been CONTINUALLY praying, keeping himself CLOSE TO GOD, and detached from the world or its lures or the temptations of the flesh, he probably would have had sufficient divine help to have prevented the sinning. But ONLY JESUS CHRIST ever did keep close to God!

God looks on the heart. In such a case, the Christian does not sin maliciously, with malice aforethought. He is merely caught in the vortex of a temptation which sucks him helplessly down into the sin. Then he is terribly sorry. He is disgusted with himself. He repents. He goes to work to overcome. He may not succeed, due to human weakness, at once. But he remains determined and, finally, does, with God's help, overcome completely. Many a true Christian has had such a struggle over a particular human weakness and temptation, and after even several

setbacks, finally, through God's power, won the victory and fought his way free.

God looks on the heart. God FORGIVES in such cases. The living Christ, our High Priest, has compassion, is filled with mercy -- as long as the attitude is right, the DESIRE of the inner man is to conquer the flesh and overcome the temptation and be FREE from it entirely. In the end, it is GOD who gives the victory. But, in such a struggle, the Christian DEVELOPS CHARACTER.

Now character, I have said many times, is something God does not create automatically. It is DEVELOPED, against the opposing pulls of human nature, with the decisions and wills and struggles of the individual, and through EXPERIENCE.

The development of that CHARACTER is the very PURPOSE of our being alive. Also the development of that character, unlike the purely physical growth of the unborn baby, actually is growth toward SPIRITUAL MATURITY, right now in the BEGETTAL stage prior to spirit BIRTH -- in this present mortal human life.

Notice how the "mother of us all," the Church, is to protect and FEED those in it, until they reach spiritual MATURITY. In I Corinthians 12, you'll read how God gives spiritual gifts for various administrations, or functions of service. In Ephesians 4:11-14, Christ has given special spiritual abilities or talents to certain ones in a chain of authority under Him in the Church -- and notice for what PURPOSE:

"And His [Christ's] gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ [the Church], UNTIL we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, TO MATURE MANHOOD, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (R.S.V.).

In other words, TO FULL SPIRITUAL MATURITY!

Now WHY should we count the troubles and problems and temptations that beset us as all JOY?

Simply because we CANNOT hurdle these obstacles successfully in our own power. They drive us to seek help from God. To go to God for the wisdom to know WHAT to do, and the power to be able to do it, requires FAITH. This is a LIVING faith. It is ALIVE. It is active.

When we meet such trials, we often do not know what to do. We lack the WISDOM to make the right decision. So open your Bible to the first chapter of James. Notice verse 5.

If you lack wisdom, in such trials, GO TO GOD for it! But ask IN FAITH -- no wavering -- no doubting. Be SURE God will not fail, but will give you this wisdom. Depend upon Him for it. If you waver, you are like a wave in the ocean -- tossed back and forth -- going nowhere! So, instead of wavering, BE STEADFAST. And if you don't get the answer immediately from God, have PATIENCE. Don't give up. Trust Him.

Now notice verses 2-3: "Count it all JOY, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness" (Revised Standard version). These trials force you to your knees. You must have FAITH to meet them. They TEST your faith. They DEVELOP spiritual CHARACTER!

In the King James version, it says the trying of your faith produces patience. It produces that kind of patience that is steadfastness. THAT IS CHARACTER!

Sure, it may be unpleasant for a while. But, Paul assures us that if we suffer with Christ, we shall REIGN with Him -- and the

GLORY TO BE revealed in us is so incomparably greater than anything we now are, that this promised future for eternity is something to REJOICE over!

Yes, count it all JOY! Even if unpleasant. It is maturing you, now, for the marriage to Christ. The CHURCH of God shall be BORN the KINGDOM OF GOD! The Kingdom of God will not be composed of spiritual know-nothings and infants.

When we are born again -- born of God -- resurrected in spirit bodies, those bodies will not be small, like a human physical infant which must GROW to full physical size. We shall LOOK as we do now, so far as form and shape and features are concerned. But the resurrected body will be a DIFFERENT body -- composed of SPIRIT instead of flesh and blood (I Cor. 15:35-44).

The original twelve apostles were Christ's WITNESSES. That is, they were actual eyewitnesses that Jesus rose from the dead -- that the living resurrected Christ was the SAME Jesus who had been crucified. They were with Him forty days after His resurrection. But nobody will be foolish enough to suggest that when Christ was BORN very Son of God by the resurrection (Romans 1:4) that He was resurrected in a tiny infant's body composed of spirit. He was resurrected FULL GROWN, as He had been when crucified. How did the apostles KNOW He was the SAME Jesus? Because they knew what Jesus had looked like -- and in His born-again resurrected body HE LOOKED THE SAME, except He now was composed of SPIRIT instead of matter!

The resurrected Christ was PERFECT -- He was very God! But He did not grow up into perfection AFTER He was resurrected. It was during His human lifetime, setting us the example, that He WAS MADE PERFECT as you read in Hebrews 2:10 and 5:8-9.

Thus it is plain that we must develop spiritual character, growing to spiritual adulthood, DURING THIS LIFE -- not after our resurrection in GLORY! THIS IS the SPIRITUAL growth, of which the PHYSICAL growth of the unborn child, from tiny embryo to a size and weight of some six to eight pounds at birth, is a type. The physical growth of the unborn human is a growth of physical size and weight. The SPIRITUAL growth of the begotten, but yet unborn SPIRITUAL child of God is a growth in spiritual CHARACTER, not of physical volume, size or weight. The human baby merely grows large enough to be born prior to birth -- NOT TO PHYSICAL OR MENTAL MATURITY. But he DOES GROW. And this physical growth is the TYPE of the spiritual growth by feeding on the Word of God, and prayer, and Christian fellowship, and participation in the Work of God in the life of the begotten child of God.

The DIFFERENCE IS merely the difference between matter and spirit. One is a material growth. Material growth is measured by volume, size, weight. The other is spiritual growth, measured by character development.

Jesus was BORN a very Son of God by His resurrection (Romans 1:4). He was born fully MATURE. He was born in a spirit body, which was manifested to His apostles in the same apparent size and shape as when He died. When He appears on earth the second time, in His spirit glorified body, we shall be resurrected, or instantaneously changed, into a body that will be LIKE HIM (I John 3:1-2) -- FULL GROWN -- ADULT!

At that instant, our present mortal physical VILE bodies will be CHANGED like unto His glorified body. BUT our vile carnal CHARACTERS will not be suddenly and instantly changed. Our CHARACTER must be changed, and developed to spiritual adulthood NOW, during THIS life. Otherwise we simply shall not be then born of God!

But all who are then born of God will be born full adult spiritual beings! Yes, ready for the marriage to Christ!

If we NOW overcome, we shall reign with Christ (Rev. 3:21; 2:26-27). We shall be married to Him! We shall be BORN SPIRITUALLY MATURE. This development to spiritual maturity is precisely what IS spiritual GROWTH sufficient to be born.

But, once BORN of God -- born spiritually MATURE -- do we then stop growing spiritually? I ask, once a human grows up to human maturity, does he then STOP growing? Physically, yes -- but mentally, morally, spiritually, emotionally he SHOULD continue to grow and develop as long as he lives. Perhaps many humans don't. But we all SHOULD. I reached this physical maturity many years ago. But I still learn new things continually.

If you are meeting problems and trials, don't be discouraged. Take them to CHRIST for wisdom and power and help. Have FAITH. And count it all JOY! And NEVER quit or give up! Have perseverance!

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE "BORN AGAIN"!

ON BUSY street corners and especially in evangelistic campaigns, you hear ministers ask, "Brother, have you been 'born again'? Just believe, and give the preacher your hand and the Lord your heart, and you'll be a 'born again' child of God."

But is that all there is to being "born again"? True, YOUR BIBLE DOES TEACH THAT YOU MUST BE "BORN AGAIN." But it also teaches that there is much more you must do before this happy event can happen to you than "just believe, and give the preacher your hand."

Neither do these ministers tell you WHY YOU need to be "born again"! LET'S UNDERSTAND this whole matter of "rebirth"!

WHY You Must Be Born Again

Man was born without the vital essence that will enable him to live forever. Man is mortal. Man is a breathing, blood-circulating, temporarily existing material being. Man is subject to death. And this includes you!

Your time is fast running out, second by second. There is NO ETERNAL LIFE IN YOU as a result of your first birth. Your parents did not have immortality to give to you. You are exactly like any animal at death (Eccl. 3:19).

You were born a mortal flesh-and-blood being composed of matter, with the probability of living some seventy years.

WHAT YOU NEED IS TO BE BORN AGAIN, this time as an immortal being composed of spirit -- with INHERENT eternal life so you can't die!

Man Created Mortal

God formed our first parents, not out of spirit, but "of the dust of the ground." To the man whose creation is described in Genesis 1:26 and 2:7, God said, "DUST thou art." NOT immortal spirit -- just DUST. Man is MORTAL, not yet immortal!

Adam was a perfect PHYSICAL specimen, yes! Whatever God creates is perfect, not imperfect. But what God created, in Adam, was a FLESHLY man -- a MORTAL man of flesh and blood! He was the perfect "clay model" with which, by now adding a spiritual ingredient and reshaping his character, the Master Potter

purposes to CREATE a reproduction of His glorious self!

Adam, in other words, was not complete!

One vital thing was lacking -- and this one thing he was made to need -- to hunger and to thirst for -- the indwelling of God's HOLY SPIRIT!

 PHOTO CAPTION: No baby is born with immortal life. You were born a breathing, blood-circulating, food-eating human being, subject to death. You need to be "born again" -- this time as an immortal spirit being with inherent eternal life!

WHY We Need the Holy Spirit

We inherited mortal life through Adam. But we can become HEIRS of ETERNAL LIFE -- heirs of God and the Kingdom of God -- by being SPIRITUALLY begotten by the HOLY SPIRIT, which is the eternal LIFE of God. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his SON" -- NOT in an "immortal soul" we are SUPPOSED to possess. "He that hath the Son HATH LIFE; and he that hath not the Son of God HATH NOT LIFE. These things have I written unto you," says John, "that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (I John 5:11-13).

Eternal life with unending spiritual power is A GIFT OF GOD. It is an attribute of the Holy Spirit. "For the wages of sin is death; but the [free] gift of God is eternal life" (Rom. 6:23). If we already had eternal life, it would NOT be a gift; it would be INHERITED from our physical parents.

Notice the RESULT of having the Holy Spirit: "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ [the Holy Spirit] he is none of his. And if Christ be IN YOU" -- living the same life IN US now by the HOLY SPIRIT, as HE lived by the Holy Spirit while He was personally on earth -- "the body is dead" -- i.e., dying -- "because of sin; but the SPIRIT IS LIFE because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him" -- the Father -- "that raised up Jesus from the dead DWELL IN you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also QUICKEN" -- make immortal -- "your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you (Romans 8:9-11).

How plain. If the Holy Spirit dwells in us, we will ultimately receive ETERNAL LIFE as Jesus did!

BUT HAVING THE HOLY SPIRIT NOW DOES MORE than impart THE POWER TO COMMENCE ETERNAL LIFE in us. It imparts to us the CHARACTERISTICS of the Almighty, the all-powerful God the Father.

A Different Nature, Too

You also need a different NATURE SO YOU will not continue to live eternally in sin, suffering and misery. The human nature which causes you to sin and brings upon you the death penalty must be replaced by a new and different nature the DIVINE NATURE of God which cannot sin (I John 3:9).

God the Father has PERFECT CHARACTER, perfect control over Himself. That is what you need. But you weren't born with such powers. The only way to have God's character developed in you is to receive within your mind the Spirit of God -- the divine nature of God.

The only One who has both eternal life, and perfect character, is God. You NEED TO BE BORN OF GOD! But how?

How Is Rebirth Possible?

About two thousand years ago Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, was puzzled by this question like you probably are. Jesus had told him, "Except a man be BORN AGAIN, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Nicodemus understood the true meaning of the word "born," unlike most preachers today. But he still couldn't understand how it could be possible to be born once AGAIN, to have another life. "HOW can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be [re-] born?" he asked Jesus (verse 4).

Nicodemus knew only of a physical birth from physical parents. Therefore Jesus said to Nicodemus, "That which is born of the flesh IS FLESH!" Then He explained we must be born AGAIN -- NOT again of the FLESH -- NOT again by entering our mother's womb, as Nicodemus thought He meant -- but be born of the Spirit -- born of God! GOD must be our FATHER this time! As we were born of the flesh from fleshly human parents, so now we must be born of the Spirit of our heavenly Spiritual Father.

Here are TWO DIFFERENT KINDS OF BIRTH, ONE PHYSICAL, THE OTHER SPIRITUAL. When you were born of your FLESHLY parents you were COMPOSED OF FLESH. Your father and mother passed on to you a FLESHLY NATURE at birth. But, unlike that birth, the SECOND birth is not a physical, fleshly one, but a SPIRITUAL BIRTH!

Just as a human being is flesh because he was born of fleshly parents, Jesus declared that anyone born again of SPIRIT IS COMPOSED OF SPIRIT -- he IS SPIRIT, no longer flesh! "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" and NOT flesh. There will be no blood in his body. He will not have to breathe air to exist. That's the plain teaching of the Bible!

The new birth is NOT an emotional experience, but A LITERAL GIRTH. SO YOU would not mistake the true meaning of being born of the Spirit, Jesus explained that as "the WIND bloweth where it listeth [where it wills], and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is BORN OF the spirit" (verse 8).

Notice what Scripture says. WHEN YOU ARE "BORN FROM ABOVE," BORN OF THE HEAVENLY Father -- GOD -- YOU WILL BE INVISIBLE like the wind which human eyes can't see. The work of the wind is easily discernible, but the wind itself cannot be seen. Also, if you were already "born again," as the common teaching is, you would possess the FULL MEASURE of the NATURE of your heavenly Father -- which, of course, you do NOT!

 PHOTO CAPTION: Tree uprooted during windstorm. You can't see the wind. But its tremendous power is quite visible! When you are born of God, you, too, will be invisible like the wind.

Jesus compared the physical birth to the Spiritual one. The former is a type of the latter. Human parents pass on a fleshly nature at birth to their children; so with our Heavenly Parent. God the Father impregnates or begets us with His Spirit at conversion when we desire, with all our heart, to turn from our old ways. He imparts to us His Spiritual nature which must grow through a lifetime until it finally COMPOSES our minds WHEN WE ARE BORN AGAIN. WE MUST GROW SPIRITUALLY, just as a human fetus must GROW physically before it can be born. If we don't grow, we

become a "miscarriage" and are NOT BORN again.

Born Again at the Resurrection

Obviously all human beings who claim to be BORN AGAIN, now at this time, are deceived -- they are STILL flesh and blood. The new birth is something yet to occur AT THE RESURRECTION. Jesus said you must be born again, you must be composed of spirit in order to see or enter the Kingdom of God.

IN SPEAKING OF THE RESURRECTION in I Corinthians 15:50 the apostle Paul says, "Now this I say, brethren, that FLESH AND BLOOD CANNOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM of God; neither does corruption inherit incorruption."

Note that Paul preached to the Corinthians the very same doctrine that Jesus at the first spoke to Nicodemus. You never can enter or inherit the Kingdom or Family of God unless you are born of God -- composed of Spirit which DOES NOT DECAY.

Paul tells in the next verses WHEN the new birth of Christians will occur. "We shall all be changed" -- no longer flesh and blood -- "at THE LAST TRUMP: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised." In verse 44, Paul says, "It is SOWN A NATURAL BODY" -- your first birth was natural, physical, fleshly, but when you are BORN AGAIN "it is RAISED A SPIRITUAL BODY."

Notice it! Both Jesus and Paul speak of PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL BODIES. Jesus tells WHY YOU will be composed of spirit -- in being born again you have the spirit body of your Parent, for LIKE PRODUCES LIKE. If you are BORN OF GOD, your Heavenly Father, you WILL BE SPIRIT -- because God is Spirit -- you will be composed of the same substance of which He is composed.

 PHOTO CAPTION: Busy pedestrians pause to hear a minister preach about what he thinks the "new birth" is.

PHOTO CAPTION: Riverbank evangelistic campaign on the Ohio River. Whatever the different doctrinal approaches, most professing Christian churches believe that Christians are already "born again."

Paul tells us that THIS CHANGE from flesh to spirit TAKES PLACE AT THE RESURRECTION. Then you will be composed of spirit, PROVIDED YOU have been BEGOTTEN in this life and provided you have GROWN sufficiently in grace and knowledge and godly character to be born of God.

Don't Be a Miscarriage!

Here is the terrible consequence of believing that people are already "born again" because some preacher says so. Instead of GROWING as unborn babes NEED TO DO in order to be born, those who trust in a false new birth believe that there is no need of spiritual growth now, or obedience to the commandments, because they think they are already "saved." When the resurrection comes, such people will not be there! They will not have grown or developed into the stature of Jesus' character because of not having obeyed the commandments of God.

Do you want to follow the broad way and perish, like a MISCARRIAGE of a human fetus -- a child that is conceived, but

never born?

Or do you believe what Jesus said -- that once "converted," or begotten by the Holy Spirit, you need to grow by every word of God which CLEANS YOU UP SPIRITUALLY, just as water cleans you physically (John 3:5; Eph. 5:26), SO you can finally be born of God and inherit the kingdom of God?

"Born Again NOW" a False Teaching

Because Jesus made the new birth essential to entering the kingdom of God, Satan has his churches and his ministers preaching COUNTERFEIT "NEW BIRTHS" to DECEIVE the people, and to make the true way appear false (II Cor. 11:14, 15).

Masquerading as ministers of righteousness, they have DELUDED MILLIONS -- not the few, but the millions -- into accepting and appropriating the NAME of Jesus Christ, shedding a few tears and believing in a superstitious "born again" experience.

Some make it a little more involved by working up an emotional ecstasy which is interpreted to mean "regeneration," "sanctification," "baptism of the Holy Ghost," and a "new birth"!

Whatever the slight doctrinal differences, the devil has the CHURCHES UNIVERSALLY DECEIVED into believing that Christians are already "born again," that everything is all set. There are "NO WORKS," as the saying goes. No need to obey God! There is no need, preach the false ministers, to obey God's commandments because you are already "regenerated."

This is SATAN'S CLEVER METHOD OF BEGUILING THE PEOPLE INTO FORGETTING THE REAL PURPOSE of the Christian life AND REJECTING THE ONLY WAY TO BE BORN AGAIN.

Now let's understand what it really means to be born again -- what it means to become a SON OF GOD -- what the Holy Spirit actually is -- and what the CONDITIONS are for receiving the Holy Spirit.

Final Instructions

We are about ready for the actual lesson. But first, read these instructions!

Remember -- you must open your Bible to every passage. Never say to yourself, "Oh, I think I know what the lesson is referring to" -- and then pass over the scripture. You need to "KEEP YOUR NOSE IN THE BIBLE," so to speak. You must read and REREAD and STUDY each passage in your Bible. Don't forget, this is a BIBLE STUDY Course -- not just a study of these words.

This lesson is intended to direct you to the Bible -- to help you understand the Bible. Here is the METHOD OF STUDY:

Have your Bible, a good dictionary, a concordance, if you have one, and your stationery, all placed in front of you on a desk or table. Now WRITE down neatly on your paper "Lesson 16," and underscore it. Next write down the lesson TITLE. Then as you come to each question section, write down its heading. Then underneath, number each question and write down the answer to each, together with any pertinent ideas that come to your mind. Now we are ready to begin.

LESSON 16

How to Receive the Holy Spirit

Since Jesus makes the physical birth a TYPE of the spiritual, let's compare the similarities of these two DIFFERENT births which each one must experience in order to be saved.

Physically speaking, you became a child of your parents at the very instant of conception when a new physical life was begun. At that time you were conceived, or begotten, but not yet born. But you were your parents' child just as much as Jacob and Esau were their parents' children BEFORE birth: "For the CHILDREN BEING NOT YET BORN ..." (Romans 9:11).

IN THE SAME MANNER, if you are a real Christian, you are now a BEGOTTEN child or son of God. Upon conversion, God the Father placed within you His Spirit, THE GERM or SPERM, so to speak, of eternal life. HE BEGOT YOU WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT JUST AS THE SPERM FROM A HUMAN FATHER IMPREGNATES THE EGG OF THE MOTHER. Your mind is like an egg. You needed to be impregnated with the germ of eternal life to BEGIN the process of spiritual growth. But you are NOT YET BORN of God -- NOT YET COMPOSED OF SPIRIT -- NOT YET IMMORTAL.

As the unborn son or daughter is nourished and protected by its MOTHER for a period of time, at the end of which period it is born, if it has grown properly, so it is the FUNCTION OF THE TRUE CHURCH -- the "MOTHER of us all" -- to feed true Christians with the pure Word of God. Thus you must be NOURISHED as God's child on spiritual food -- the words of Scripture -- you must LIVE by every word of God -- you must GROW spiritually (II Peter 3:18) -- until you are mature enough in righteous character to be BORN of God.

But how is it all possible? How do we receive the Holy Spirit which makes us the children of God and makes possible the beginning of eternal life within us? Understand.

1. IS REPENTANCE one of the requirements for receiving the Holy Spirit? Acts 2:38. What is repentance? Notice II Corinthians 7:9-10 for the answer.

COMMENT: In Acts 2:38, baptism is mentioned as part of the prior condition to receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit from God. The entire subject of water baptism will be presented in two future lessons. In the meantime you should write for our free booklet "All About Water Baptism."

2. Is the Holy Spirit a GIFT from God -- or is it something we were born with by nature? Compare Luke 11:13 with Acts 10:45.

3. Then the Holy Spirit is NOT something we already have -- NOT something we were born with, is it? Acts 11:17.

4. Are we to ASK GOD TO GRANT us the Holy Spirit? Luke 11:13 again.

5. How can we know that God HEARS US when we ask Him for His Holy Spirit? I John 3:22. Doesn't keeping the commandments and doing the things that please God satisfy His requirements? Same verse.

COMMENT: We must have REPENTED of having lived by our OWN ways -- our own standards or laws -- and now have made a complete change of direction. Now we must be so desirous of pleasing God that we are keeping HIS COMMANDMENTS as much as we are HUMANLY able to do with our weak, carnal, fleshly minds. THEN, when we ask God to be begotten of Him (as our spiritual Heavenly Father) by the Spirit of POWER which will enable us to truly keep His commands in their highest SPIRITUAL sense, He will HEAR US and impregnate us -- the egg -- with His very Spirit which will help to gradually change our carnal natures until we are finally BORN of God at the resurrection!

 PHOTO CAPTION: BEGETTAL OF HUMAN LIFE - Seven steps showing a sperm impregnating a human egg and subsequent growth and division of the cell. This typifies the begettal of a human mind by the Spirit of God. Once impregnated, the individual must SPIRITUALLY grow in grace and knowledge until mature enough to be SPIRITUALLY born of God at the resurrection.

Steps: (1) Sperm wiggles into egg; (2) Centrosome appears; (3) Connecting material forms; (4) Nuclei fuse; (5) Chromosomes line up; (6) Chromosomes divide; (7) Cell divides.

6. Does Acts 5:32 also verify the fact that OBEDIENCE is one of the conditions to receiving the Holy Spirit -- one of the conditions to receiving the gift of eternal life?

COMMENT: The Holy Spirit is a freely offered GIFT from God. It is NOT ANYTHING WE CAN EARN. There is nothing you can do which will force God to give you the Holy Spirit. Rather, God offers to give you freely of His Spirit if you will believe in the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, for your sins and become willing to DO what He commands you. These are prior conditions, but they DO NOT EARN YOU eternal life.

A Counterfeit Spirit Preached

Most people are totally unaware of Paul's WARNING that there would be many false churches preaching DIFFERENT doctrines about the Holy Spirit -- DECEIVING THE MANY into accepting a DIFFERENT spirit from the one, true Holy Spirit revealed in Scripture, which ALONE can beget eternal life within us!

Notice: "But I fear" -- Paul was sorrowed, he knew what was coming in our day -- "lest somehow, as the SERPENT beguiled Eve in his craftiness, YOUR thoughts should be corrupted from the SIMPLICITY and the purity that is toward the Christ" (II Cor. 11:3, "Panin" Trans.). Christ's doctrine is SIMPLE, when we understand it -- it is not a theological mystery!

Continuing with verse 4: "For if he who cometh" -- any false minister coming in the name of Christ, "preacheth ANOTHER Jesus" -- the world is filled with the preaching of a DIFFERENT Jesus who was born, who died and rose at a different time than the true Messiah; a different Jesus who rejected the Father's immutable laws -- "whom we did not preach" -- says Paul -- "or ye receive a different spirit, which ye did not receive" -- from the preaching of the apostles -- "ye bear well with him --" or accept or are DECEIVED by him.

That is what has happened today. Paul warned about receiving a "different spirit" and "a different gospel."

This prophetic warning from Paul has already been fulfilled! The world has accepted a DIFFERENT spirit -- THE SPIRIT OF ERROR, not the spirit of truth.

1. How can we know that we have received the true spirit of God and not some counterfeit spirit from the devil? Notice the principle recorded in Matthew 7:20. We can KNOW which ministers are preaching about the Spirit of God BY THE FRUITS of the Spirit in their lives, can't we?

2. What is the FRUIT of the TRUE Spirit of God? Galatians 5:22.

3. What is the first one of the fruits listed -- the most

important fruit? Is it love? Same verse.

4. Is the love of God one of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit? Romans 5:5. Isn't it clear that a person does not have the love of God if he does not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him?

5. What is the love of God? Rom. 13:10. Is not this the same teaching we discovered in I John 3:22-23? This has been God's message from the beginning, hasn't it? I John 3:11-12.

COMMENT: Before one can receive the Holy Spirit, he must have the attitude of obedience. He must become willing to do God's will -- obey God's commandments. BUT IT IS NOT UNTIL HE HAS RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT HE OBTAINS THE POWER TO PERFORM GOD'S LAW. The Holy Spirit is the POWER of God manifest in our lives (Romans 15:13).

The other fruits of the Spirit, mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5:22, amplify the attitude of love. Obedience to God is not harsh and cruel and unyielding -- it is a joy, it is peaceable and gentle, it expresses itself in SELF-CONTROL. Self-control is the key to real spiritual power. Most people cannot be filled with spiritual power because they have not been willing to exercise self-control. Uncontrolled power is worse than no power at all.

You have probably been taught that you cannot receive the Holy Spirit until you work up your emotions or until you reject God's law. That deceptive teaching results from hearing a PERVERTED gospel -- a DIFFERENT gospel than Jesus preached.

Begotten Now -- Not Yet Born of God

The Holy Spirit, which a person may receive if he asks God for it, in conformity to His will, MAY BE COMPARED TO the GERM or SPERM of physical life. IT TRANSMITS GOD'S MENTAL POWERS AND SPIRITUAL ATTRIBUTES TO US. It is His LOVE. It is His divine NATURE. It is His immortal life.

First, notice that the Holy Spirit -- the germ by which we are begotten -- comes from the Father. God has masculine characteristics. That is why we call Him "Father." We are called the BEGOTTEN children of God (I John 3:1). God, then, has the power to BEGET US as His children. HE BEGETS US "BY HIS SPIRIT." The Spirit by which we are begotten is termed in the Bible a GERM or "seed." Peter tells us we are "begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through God's Word, which liveth and abideth" (I Peter 1:23 "Ivan Panin" trans.). Jesus completes this by saying we must FINALLY BE BORN AGAIN -- at the resurrection -- when we shall be spirit. Now we are ONLY FLESH with the spiritual germ of eternal life EMPOWERING US.

Now consider the full scriptural PROOF that we are only the BEGOTTEN children of God, not yet born of Him.

1. Are we already called the "sons of God"? Compare Romans 8:14 with I John 3:1.

2. Does being a son of God mean that we are already BORN of God, OR are we ONLY BEGOTTEN of Him now? I Peter 1:23.

COMMENT: ONE Greek word means BOTH "BEGOTTEN" AND "BORN." The translators unfortunately, at times, selected the wrong one of these two words when translating a Bible sentence, so that the English word "born" may appear where "begotten" is intended, and vice versa.

3. If we are the children of God, are we inheritors of the Kingdom of God, or only HEIRS to it? Romans 8:17.

COMMENT: Notice that although we are now the sons of God, we are only HEIRS. Why? BECAUSE WE ARE ONLY BEGOTTEN children. We shall be INHERITORS WHEN BORN of God at the resurrection, when we shall be composed of spirit.

WHATEVER IS BORN OF SPIRIT IS SPIRIT, said Jesus. We are not yet born of spirit. We are STILL FLESH AND BLOOD! We are therefore only HEIRS to the kingdom of God (I Cor. 15:50).

4. When do we become incorruptible spirit and no longer flesh? I Cor. 15:42. Has the resurrection of the dead occurred yet? Then we are NOT YET born into the Kingdom of God as inheritors, are we?

We are only the begotten children of God!

5. Are we ALREADY like Christ in appearance and in composition? I John 3:1-2. When WILL we be like Him? -- when He appears to raise the dead? Verse 2. We are only BEGOTTEN sons now.

COMMENT: We are begotten of God, impregnated by the Holy Spirit from the Father, which is the beginning of eternal life. But we are not yet born of Him, for it has not yet appeared what we shall be like. We do NOT look like Christ now. Note the point that John emphasizes. We shall be like Him, COMPOSED of Spirit -- "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" -- "when He shall appear" -- at the resurrection when Christ returns to raise the dead.

Then we shall see Jesus as He really is. Christ told Nicodemus that in order to see the Kingdom or Family of God, in which He -- Christ -- now is, we must be born again. How consistent the teaching of the Bible is!

When we are born again, composed of spirit, we shall be able to SEE spirit -- we shall BEHOLD Jesus Christ as He ACTUALLY appears. But the people of the world, who will still be composed of FLESH and can't see spirit, will see Christ only as He PHYSICALLY manifests Himself in glorious form at His return.

We Receive "Spirit of Sonship"

1. Is God called the "FATHER of spirits"? Heb. 12:9. Then does this not clearly prove that we can be finally literally BORN of God? -- be born as His SPIRIT-COMPOSED CHILDREN?

2. Is Christ called the "FIRSTBORN of MANY BRETHREN"? Rom. 8:29. Since He is the first Son BORN into the God-Kingdom, then there must BE OTHER SONS also TO BE BORN into it.

Does not this same verse clearly explain that we are to be like Christ -- "conformed to the image of His Son" -- that we are to be His brethren?

COMMENT: PRIOR to THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST, He was the ONLY begotten Son of the Father, BUT SINCE THAT TIME WE ALSO MAY BE BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER.

3. IS JESUS CHRIST declared to be the firstborn from the dead? Col. 1:18. Since He is the FIRSTborn from the dead, then are the OTHERS who are to be raised from the dead also to be born into the Kingdom of God as Jesus has been? How else could He be the firstborn?

4. Are Christians called the CHILDREN of God? Gal. 3:26.

5. Now compare Galatians 3:26 with Romans 8:14-17 and Ephesians 1:5. Do these verses reveal the SAME truth -- that we are to be born again in order to inherit eternal life?

COMMENT: In some versions of the Bible the expression "adoption of sons" or "adoption of children" is used. This is not a proper translation. The original inspired Greek expression

"huiiothesia" means sonship. WE RECEIVE THE "SPIRIT OF SONSHIP," not the "spirit of ADOPTION." The Holy Spirit makes us LITERAL SONS OF GOD. WE ARE GOING TO BE LIKE OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

6. What is the NAME which all truly begotten children of God bear as a result of receiving the Holy Spirit from the Father? Ephesians 3:14-15.

COMMENT: The name which all converts bear as a result of being begotten by the Holy Spirit is "God."

We are called the "sons of God" or "God's sons" -- just as human beings bear the names Johnson, Robertson, and Jackson, meaning originally the sons of John, Robert and of Jack. GOD is the FAMILY NAME of the divine Kingdom. It is the Father "of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. 3:15).

The Father's name is "God" in English.

Jesus is called God in John 1:1 and in other verses. He is not angelic spirit, but divine or GOD Spirit.

God is a GROWING Family or Kingdom into which we may enter. God is a Family, a Kingdom, NOT A TRINITY. The Father in Heaven wants you to become a member of His divine Family. You can be His son if you surrender your whole life to Him -- believe all that is in the Bible -- believe Christ is your Saviour and obey Him -- and be filled with the power of the Spirit of God.

SPIRITUAL THINGS seem unreal to most people. And no wonder! Spiritual qualities are invisible, not discerned by the senses until revealed in writing in the Bible!

When we speak of the Holy Spirit, many cannot grasp its nature. Yet the Bible makes clear the nature of spirit.

Notice, "God is spirit" (John 4:24). The God-Family is composed of spirit. The Father and the Son, who are already composed of spirit, have definite SHAPE. From one end of the Bible to the other we are told about the SHAPE and the parts of each member in the God-Family. The Father and the Son each have a head, hair, eyes, nose, mouth, arms, fingers, a torso, legs, feet, plus inward parts. So has man. Man is in the IMAGE of God. But man is born only of flesh. Man is matter, but God is spirit. (Review the lesson entitled "What Is Man?" You will now learn things you didn't see in that lesson before!)

Even though the Father and the Son are spirit and are in definite locations with respect to each other, the Spirit proceeds from them into the entire universe much like air fills everything on earth! Note David's words that God's Spirit permeates EVERYTHING. (Ps. 139:7-11.)

The divine Spirit that fills the entire universe is the channel by which the Father and the SON CREATE. MAN HAS NO SUCH ATTRIBUTE OR POWER BORN INTO HIM. But man may FORM TOOLS and electronic brains to make things.

Man is put here on earth to LEARN to develop tools for limited creative work -- to train himself for the eternal goal -- becoming part of the GOD-FAMILY, which means SHARING control of the creative Spirit of God.

That is what it means to become born again -- to be fully imbued with God's power when composed of Spirit.

To Become PERFECT When Born of God

Only when one is BORN of God by a resurrection does a person become PERFECT (I John 3:9). Christ is the only human being thus far BORN of God. He is PERFECT.

Of course! If we are God's children, we are to "GROW UP" to become like Him.

The Eternal God has created innumerable galaxies of stars and planets. The full extent of His entire finished creation is completely beyond the grasp of the human mind -- completely beyond the telescope or the microscope.

But wonder of wonders! -- GOD IS STILL CREATING BEFORE OUR VERY EYES HIS HIGHEST AND NOBLEST WORK -- He is fashioning begotten sons to be BORN INTO HIS OWN FAMILY! YOU and I have the opportunity of becoming a son in the Family or Kingdom of God!

By a process completely hidden to the world, and revealed only to His own children by the Bible, God is now begetting, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, sons AFTER HIS OWN KIND -- after His own character and likeness. The begetting, nourishment and actual birth of sons into the God Kingdom by a resurrection to divine and glorified immortality is THE SUPREME PINNACLE OF CREATION -- GOD THE CREATOR'S SUPREME ACHIEVEMENT!

Yet most churches do not realize this wonderful truth. They talk about being born of God, but they DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS!

1. Are Christians to have the very MIND of God? Phil. 2:5. Did Jesus Christ have that mind in Him when He walked on earth? Same verse.

2. Is man naturally born with the mind of God? Rom. 8:6-7. Is the mind of man naturally subject to the laws of God?

3. What is the natural mind of man like? Mark 7:21-22, Mat. 15:19 and Jer. 17:9.

4. Are we commanded to surrender our natural, carnal minds to God? Gal. 5:16-17. Are we to yield our minds to the influence of the Spirit of God? Same verse.

5. Are the laws of God to be ingrained in our minds if we are Christians? Heb. 8:8-11. Isn't it clear that one of the final characteristics of Christians who are now begotten and finally will be born of God is that they will have become like God in character -- perfect -- unable to sin? Note especially verse 10 and I John 3:9.

One Other Point

It has been the favorite teaching of some that Christians can't sin anymore in this life because they are "born again." This doctrine originated from misapplying I John 3:9: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." Notice what this means.

1. Can Christians commit sin? I John 1:8. Who is doing the speaking in this verse the apostle John? And is he using the present tense of the verb? Then the apostle plainly means that Christians now can, and sometimes do commit SIN, doesn't he? Notice that he includes HIMSELF -- "WE."

2. Was the apostle Paul beset with recurring sin long AFTER he repented and received the Holy Spirit? Rom. 7:14-25.

3. Does Jesus admonish us to overcome sin continually? Rev. 2:26.

4. Is there a just man on earth who does not at some time commit sin? Ecclesiastes 7:20. Therefore Christians are NOT now born of God in this mortal flesh, are they?

5. Now notice I John 5:18. What does this scripture reveal?

COMMENT: Notice the difference between the two conditions referred to in this verse. The one CAN'T sin because God's "seed remaineth in him." He is BORN of God and has God's nature, NOT

the human nature that once caused him to sin if he didn't have the strength to resist. The other, who is BEGOTTEN, must keep himself from being spotted -- he must continue to RESIST the deceptions and the pollutions of the world. Such a one CAN commit sin. HE WILL NOT WILLFULLY SIN -- BUT WHEN CAUGHT OFF GUARD OR IN A MOMENT OF WEAKNESS -- HE CAN SIN. Life is to the begotten child still a CONSTANT STRUGGLE against the wiles of the devil operating in the world and through his own human nature. Although he has now received THE DIVINE NATURE (II Pet. 1:4), he still has HUMAN NATURE, and the one wars against the other. The Christian must keep his human nature "nailed to the cross" -- and WILL to be LED BY the Spirit or nature of God. (Ephesians 3:20; Romans 8:14.)

Much of the confusion about being born again has resulted from misinterpreting the original Greek.

In the English language we have two different verbs -- TO BEGET and TO BE BORN -- which are used to translate the ONE Greek word GENNAO. This Greek word means "to conceive," or "to beget," and also "to bear," or "to be born." In order to know which meaning is intended, we must let the Bible interpret the Bible. Since the Bible plainly reveals that Christians can sin now -- in this flesh-and-blood mortal existence -- we therefore KNOW that it is only when one is actually BORN OF GOD IN THE FUTURE, at the resurrection, that he CANNOT sin anymore.

SUMMARY

In summary, the Holy Spirit of God is this: It is the very spirit -- the very LIFE, the very ESSENCE of God the Creator! God, according to John 4:24, is Spirit. But man is mortal. Man is flesh. God is composed of Spirit. Spirit is not like matter. Man is composed of matter. Matter occupies a definite amount of physical space, and has weight. But God's Spirit emanates from Him, like the air. It is force. It is POWER, it is LIFE, it is CHARACTER!

When God's Spirit, emanating from the very person of God, enters into a man, it IMPREGNATES that man's mind with the very LIFE OF GOD. It plants within that man or woman the divine nature of God, to develop the very character of God, until we, through His Spirit, BECOME LIKE GOD -- until we THINK as God thinks -- until we see things with the same attitude as God sees them, and we act as God acts -- yes, until we BECOME GOD even as Christ is now VERY GOD -- BORN MEMBERS OF THE GOD FAMILY which is THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

What WONDERFUL NEWS! What meaning there is to being "born again"!