

## **“Except a Man be Born Again”**

**By Elder David Pyles**

*“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,” – John 3:3*

This verse is perhaps one of the most under-appreciated verses in all the word of God, likely because it lives in the shadow of the famous Jn 3:16 shortly to follow. However, Jn 3:16 cannot be properly understood without taking into account the principle intended in this verse.

The common interpretation of Jn 3:16 concludes that a man can be born again by means of his own choice to believe on Jesus Christ. This is a dubious conclusion on the very face of it since nothing can give birth to itself, nor even contribute to the process. Further, Jesus plainly said in the 5th verse that spirit can only be born of spirit, but that flesh can only give birth to flesh, so man in his natural, fleshly state cannot contribute toward his own spiritual birth.

Now Jn 3:3 conclusively corroborates these thoughts. Observe the verse does not say a man is born again *by* or *through* seeing the kingdom of God. Rather, it says that a man cannot see (i.e. perceive) the kingdom of God unless he is *already* born again. That is, the new birth is a *prerequisite* to seeing, and therefore to believing, the things of the kingdom of God. This would of course also imply that it is also prerequisite to seeing the King Himself. Hence, a man does not believe in order to be born again; rather, he is born again in order to believe. His belief on Jesus Christ is the confirmation, not the cause, of his new birth. The cause of his new birth is the sovereign, direct and irresistible working of the Holy Spirit. As Jesus would say in verse 8: *“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.”* So the work of the Spirit in the new birth is like the wind in that it is a sovereign and irresistible force, and also in that it is an invisible force, yet can be detected by the effects it produces. Belief in Jesus Christ is the effect of the new birth, and is the means by which it is ascertained. John expressed these same principles in an earlier verse:

*He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which*

*were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* – Jn 1:11-14

Observe that those who here believed on Jesus did so as a consequence of the fact they had been born of the Spirit, which was in turn the consequence of the *sovereign* decision of God. That is, God made this decision without consulting the will of any man.

The verses here considered are the very cornerstones of the doctrine of the new birth, and they are absolutely void of ambiguity in their claim that the new birth is the work of God alone, and that belief in Jesus Christ is the effect and confirmation of this work, not a means or cause.