

THE PROCESS FOR BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

REPENT AND BELIEVE IN THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST

- ❖ “...Jesus came...proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the **kingdom** of God is at hand; **repent** and **believe in the gospel**”” (*Mark 1:15*).

To “repent” means to change one’s mind because of new knowledge that one has received or to have a change of disposition, often including a changing of one’s loyalties and allegiances.

- ❖ Jesus said: “I must **preach the kingdom of God** to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose” (*Luke 4:43*).
- ❖ “But when they **believed** Philip preaching the good news about the **kingdom of God** and the name of **Jesus Christ**, they were being baptized, men and women alike” (*Acts 8:12*).

So the gospel or good news to be believed contains the two aspects of:

1. The future Kingdom of God which Jesus will establish on earth at his return.
2. All aspects of what Jesus did, is doing, and will do, including his functioning as our Messiah, high priest and advocate before the Father. This particularly includes his work in paying for mankind’s sin by means of his sacrificing his own life and, through resurrection, being granted a new immortal, indestructible and powerful life.

EVERYONE IS BEING CALLED TO REPENT NOW

Key Text — *Acts 17:30*

- “...but **now** he [*God*] commands **all people everywhere to repent**”

So **all people** are now invited to repent and become part of the Christian community.

MANY ARE CALLED BUT FEW ARE CHOSEN

Jesus gave two banquet illustrations, one in Luke 14:16-24 and the other in Matthew 22: 1-14. In these illustrations the Greek word **Kaleo**, often translated ‘called,’ is translated as ‘summoned’, or ‘invited,’ and both of these illustrations indicate that the invitation or calling is made to all, but that not all will accept the invitation or summoning to attend.

So when Jesus says “**many are called** (*invited*) but **few are chosen**” (Matt. 22:14) he is making a contrast and *so means that everyone is called because* in John 12:32 we learn that he – Jesus - “will draw **all** men to” himself.

The *Word Biblical Commentary* notes regarding this parable:

14 This final logion ties in well with the preceding and especially the parable of vv 1–10. In πολλοί; γὰρ εἰσὶν κλητοί, “**for many are called**,” the πολλοί is probably to be taken as a **universalizing Semitism**, which can be translated “**everyone**” (cf. the same word in the same sense in 20:28; see J. Jeremias, *TDNT* 6:541–42). Thus in keeping with the opening of the **invitation to all**, “as many as you find” (v. 9), the point is that “**everyone is invited**.” Counterbalancing this, however, is the second half of the logion, οἱ λίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοί, “**but few are chosen**.” The word οἱ λίγοι, “few,” is here very probably also to be understood as a **Semitism** meaning “**fewer than**” in the sense of “not all.” The term does **not indicate the smallness** of the actual number of the chosen but merely that *in contrast to the scope of the call not all are chosen*.

BEING BORN AGAIN OR REGENERATED

Generally people think this is a subject that is spoken of only in the Gospel of John when Jesus spoke to Nicodemus. However, it is a subject that **most of the Christian Scripture writers comment on** with the exception of Jude and the writer of the letter to the Hebrews. Yet, even that writer comments on the means of how one is born again, namely through “the word.” Also Matthew, Mark and Luke’s contribution to this subject of being born again is by their recording of Jesus’ parable of the Sower which we will look at later. So if we simply use the statements to Nicodemus in John’s Gospel regarding being born-again, elsewhere called **regeneration**, we will only have part of the picture and so get a faulty understanding. The Greek word for “regeneration” is *palingenesia*:

- First in time is the **personal regeneration** of individuals (Titus 3:5)—those who are born again.
- Secondly the concept applies to the **regeneration of the whole world**—the renovation of all visible things (Matt. 19:28). This is commented on in Volume 2, STUDY 2 “WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

On the personal level regeneration denotes a spiritual change – **a change of disposition** toward God so that one is no longer estranged from Him. It **is the work of God**. Nevertheless, personal regeneration involves the response of the individual as we shall see in a moment. Although there are these two different aspects to regeneration, namely the cosmic/universal and the personal, the Scriptures present **personal renewal as really a part of the cosmic renewal**. This means that the regenerated person has not yet reached the goal but moves forward toward it.

FROM PAUL

❖ “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the *washing of regeneration (palingenesia)* and (or “even”) renewing by the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

This second of the two times that *palingenesia* is used in the NT concerns individuals and so is personal. It results in such radical changes in the person that he has become a new person:

- ❖ “...if anyone is in Christ, he is **a new creature...**” (2 Cor. 5:17).
- ❖ “For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**” (Eph. 2:10).

FROM JOHN

❖ “But to those who did accept him [*Jesus*] he gave power to become **Children of God**, to those who believe in his name, who were *born (generated) not by natural generation* nor by human choice nor by a man’s decision but of God” (John 1:12, 13 NAB).

Both 1 John 3:9 and 5:18: speak of Christians as being “*born (begotten) of God.*” Indeed, the synonymous terms of *regeneration, begotten* or *born again* with regard to individuals are **metaphorical**. Clearly, this usage does not mean any kind of literal birth as Nicodemus mistakenly thought.

JESUS’ DISCUSSION WITH NICODEMUS

❖ “Jesus answered and said to him [*Nicodemus*], ‘Amen, amen I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being *born from above*...I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being **born of water and Spirit**’” (John 3:3, 5 NAB).

“*Being born of water*” likely refers to baptism but interestingly “*being born of...Spirit*” refers, according to the writings of the other apostles, to one’s reception of “the word”. Often the usual evangelical discussion of this subject ends here. The thought is that the holy spirit performs a mystical

operation on us, perhaps at the time of baptism, and we are miraculously changed forever! Yet this is far from the complete story. There is an actual *process of* this new birth—this being born again.

FROM JAMES

- ❖ “In the exercise of His will He *brought us forth by the word of truth*, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures” (*James 1:18*).

FROM PETER

- ❖ “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy caused us to be *born* (generated) *again* to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (*1 Peter 1:3*).
- ❖ “For you have been *born again* not of **seed** which is perishable but **imperishable**, that is, *through the living and enduring word of God*...but the *word of the Lord* endures forever.’ And this is *the word which was preached to you*” (*1 Peter 1:23-25*).

“THE WORD” IS THE MEANS OF GOD’S CALLING/INVITATION
BUT NOT ALL “THE CALLED” BECOME OR REMAIN “THE CHOSEN ONES”

- ❖ “So *faith* comes from hearing, and *hearing by the word of Christ*” (*Rom. 10:17*).

Below is given Jesus’ explanation in Matthew 13:18-23 of the parable of the sower and the four kinds of soil, which represent all kinds of people. The parable gives 3 key factors:

- The sower = Jesus
- The seed = the word of the kingdom
- The soil = each individual and their various responses

“The word” is “*the word of the kingdom*” which the Apostle Peter tells us “is *the word which was preached to you*” (1Pet. 1:25). So “the word” is the specific message that Jesus preached i.e. the good news of the coming kingdom of God (Mark 1:15, Luke 4:43).

So Jesus said: “Hear then the parable of the sower:

1. ‘when anyone hears *the word of the kingdom* and does **not understand it**, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside **the road**.

Such understanding is not based on intelligence or lack of it. Nevertheless this type of person rejects the Kingdom message and never becomes a Christian.

2. The one on whom **seed** was sown on the **rocky places**, this is the man who hears the word and immediately **receives it** with joy; yet he **has no firm root** in himself, but is only temporary, and when **affliction or persecution arises** because of the word, immediately *he falls away*.

This type of person becomes a Christian for a short while, but later stops believing and ceases to be a Christian any longer.

3. And the one on whom seed was sown among **the thorns**, this is the man who hears the word, and **the worry of the world** and the deceitfulness of wealth **choke** the word, and *it becomes unfruitful*.

This type of person becomes a Christian but later loses spirituality and so becomes a Christian in name only i.e. a carnal Christian.

4. And the one on whom seed was sown on *the good soil*, this is the man who hears the word and *understands it*; who indeed *bears fruit* and brings forth, some a hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

Only this type of person remains a Christian permanently.

So the parable of the soils is an additional demonstration that there is a calling or invitation made to all people. Yet the majority fail, over the long term, to become or remain as “the chosen.”

RECEIVING THE SEED

So those who are spiritually dormant are first of all *awakened* when, through various means, they come to hear the message of the kingdom and “the name of Jesus Christ.” Then they are *enlightened* by this message. And finally they are *persuaded* by it. So for one to be born again involves the willing reception of this seed “*word of the kingdom*,” and **the understanding of it**. It is this receiving that causes a person to be “*born again*,” which means being “*born from above*,” “*born of God*” or “*regenerated*.” Such a born again Christian has become a “**Son of the kingdom**” (Matt. 13:38), “**a new creature...**” and then he begins to bear fruit “*and brings forth, some a hundred fold, some sixty, and some thirty*” according to their varying circumstances. So the received word or message is the means of one’s rebirth:

- ❖ “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who *hears my word*, and *believes* Him who sent me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgement, but has passed out of death into life” (*John 5:24*).

MORE DETAILS FROM LUKE’S VERSION OF THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Luke 8:10-15 ESV:

“To you it has been given to know the **secrets of the kingdom of God** ... Now the parable is this: the **seed** is **the word of God** [*the message of the kingdom*].

1. The ones along **the path** are those who have heard. Then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may *not believe* and *be saved*.
2. And the ones on **the rock** are those who, when they hear the word, *receive it with joy*. But these have no root; they *believe for a while*, and in time of testing *fall away*.
3. And as for what fell among **the thorns**, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and *their fruit does not mature*.
4. As for **the good soil**, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good **heart**, and bear fruit with patience.”

Now in Matthew’s version of the parable we notice that it is only the first [*the road*] that did “**not understand it**.” This type of person is never a believer – is never born again. However, **the 2nd** type [*the rocky soil*] in both Matthew and Luke **received the word of the kingdom** with joy, *but they “believe for a while*, and in time of testing (i.e. affliction /persecution) *fall away*.” *Being no longer believers they are no longer “born again.”*

NOTE: This is a metaphorical phrase so that in that sense someone can become unborn.

If we look at the details of **the 3rd** type [*the thorns*] in both Matthew and Luke we see *that the seed word of the kingdom “becomes unfruitful”* i.e. “*their fruit does not mature.*”

All this indicates that the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th soils all became born again. So categories 2 and 3 had become genuine Christians, were born again, and were saved; yet group 2 falls away and is no longer saved. This shows that the concept of once saved always saved is not biblical. Yet, group 3 seems to remain saved but does not allow its fruit to mature.

ANYONE WILLING TO LISTEN TO AND OBEY GOD'S KINGDOM MESSAGE
CAN CHOOSE TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

- ❖ “God shows no partiality, but in every nation **anyone who fears him** and does what is right is **acceptable to him**” (Acts 10:34).
- ❖ “**IF anyone wishes to come after me**, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

GOD WILL DRAW ANY WILLING PERSON TO HIMSELF

- ❖ “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me **draws** (*helkuo*) him...” (John 6:44).

The Greek word **Helkuo** means ‘to draw, lead or impel’; yet not implying anything compulsory. All such drawing is done through the Scriptures:

- ❖ “It is written in the Prophets, ‘And they will all be taught by God.’ Everyone who has **heard and learned from the Father** comes to me...” (John 6:45).

The *Word Biblical Commentary* notes that:

44...only they whom the Father “draws” can come to him; in them the promise of Isa 54:13 is fulfilled—they are “taught of God.” This leads Bultmann to interpret the “drawing” by God as taking place **when man abandons his own judgment and “hears” and “learns” from the Father**, and so *allows* God to speak to him: “The ‘drawing’ by the Father occurs not, as it were, *behind* man’s decision of faith, but in it” (232).

JESUS ALSO DRAWS THE INDIVIDUAL SO THAT HE SEEKS GOD

- ❖ “...and I [*Jesus*], when I am lifted up from the Earth **will draw all** men to myself” (John 12:32).
- ❖ “...whoever would **draw near to** God must **believe** that he exists and that he rewards those who **seek him**” (Heb. 11:6).

However, God and Christ “draw” individuals toward them by the invitations made in the Scriptures i.e. with the Kingdom message, and this is a far cry from any forcing of individuals. *Certainly, this is not an irresistible drawing of only particular individuals because Jesus said that he would draw all men to him (John 12:32), yet not all men respond as shown in the parable of the soils.*

GOD DOES NOT FORCE ANYONE - THEY CAN RESIST HIS WILL FOR THEIR SALVATION

- ❖ “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s **kindness** is meant to **lead you** to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4).

What would be the point of God exercising patience and forbearance with individuals if He is really forcing them to repent so that they may be saved. Jesus showed that the Jewish leaders had a choice when he said to them:

- ❖ “Yet **you refuse** to come to me that you may have life” (John 5:40).
- ❖ “But the Pharisees and the lawyers **rejected God’s purpose for themselves**, not having been baptized by John” (Luke 7:30).

This refusal would not be the case if such ones were irresistibly drawn. In fact, some who have allowed themselves to be drawn may later draw back (Heb. 10:38, 39) - Judas Iscariot having been an example of this. So Romans 9:19 and 11:29 in no way provide any proof that humans do not have genuine free will to choose or reject God’s offer to them.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CALLING/INVITATION

- ❖ It is God “who **called** (Gk. *kaleo*) **you out of darkness** into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2: 9b).
- ❖ “God is faithful, by whom you were **called into the fellowship** of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9).
- ❖ “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are **called according to his purpose**. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined **to be conformed to the image of his Son**, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and **those whom he called** he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified” (Rom. 8:28-30)
- ❖ “For **to this you have been called**, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you **might follow in his steps**” (1 Pet. 2:21).
- ❖ “Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that **those who are called** may receive the promised eternal **inheritance**, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant” (Heb. 9:15).

THE QUALITY OF THE CALLING

Christians “share in **a heavenly calling**” (Heb. 3:1), meaning that it is “**a holy calling**” (2 Tim. 1:9) and therefore “**the high calling** of God” (Phil. 3:14).

THOSE “CHOSEN” ARE STILL TERMED ‘THE CALLED’

Although everyone is invited or called, those who respond positively are still described as “called.” However, as they remain faithful they are also described as “chosen” so that: “**those with him [Jesus] are called and chosen and faithful**” (Rev.17:14b). Nevertheless, the call or invitation still continues to go out to everybody else.

THE NEW CHRISTIAN IS GIVEN TO JESUS BY GOD

- ❖ “All that the Father **gives** (Gk. *didomai*) to me will come to me...No one can come to me unless it is **granted** (Gk. *didomai*) him by the Father” (John 6:37, 65).

The Greek word **Didomai** means: ‘to grant, to give to one asking, or to let have,’ and this is a very different aspect of God’s work than is the calling of all men. This concerns those who have responded to God’s love and are now given to Jesus. All of these factors still allow complete free will for the individual. No one is force-fed “the bread of life.” On other occasions *didomai* is used to indicate something given by God which may or may not be received—He simply gives the opportunity. This makes men responsible for making their own choice as to how to respond. Certainly salvation is not something that anyone can demand—God is the One who gives it - but individuals have to accept it.

THE MOMENT ONE BECOMES A BELIEVER HE IS A CHRISTIAN, A CHOSEN ONE, AND IS IN ‘THE BODY OF CHRIST’

From the above information it is clear that God calls all men by making available the kingdom message. Those who **abandon their own judgment and “hear” and “learn” from the Father** are then drawn by Him to Jesus with Jesus himself also drawing them to himself. Because of their positive response these ones are then deemed to be “chosen ones.”

- ❖ “But to all who did receive him, **who believed in his name**, he gave the right to become **children of God**” (John 1:12).

Therefore, all such believers immediately become born-from-above children of God – spiritual infants who must drink of the milk of the word (*Heb 5:12, 13*).

ONE RECEIVES HOLY SPIRIT AT THAT MOMENT

- ❖ “Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink. **Whoever believes in me**, as the scripture says, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from within him.’ He said this in reference to **the Spirit** that *those who came to believe in him were to receive*” (*John 7:37-39 NAB*)
- ❖ “In him you also, who *heard the word of truth*, the gospel of your salvation, and have **believed in him**, were **sealed with the promised Holy Spirit**, which is the first instalment of our inheritance toward redemption as God’s possession, to the praise of his glory” (*Eph. 1:13, 14 NAB*).

ONE RECEIVES FORGIVENESS OF SINS AT THAT MOMENT

- ❖ “To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone **who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins** through his name” (*Acts 10:43*).

ONE IS COUNTED AS RIGHTEOUS AT THAT MOMENT

- ❖ “...that He [*God*] himself is just and **counts** among those **just** those who go by **the faith of Jesus**” (*Rom. 3:26b Unvarnished NT*).
The UBS interlinear expresses it as “justifying the one of faith **of Jesus**.”

ONE RECEIVES THE PROSPECT OF SALVATION AT THAT MOMENT

- ❖ “And they said, “**Believe in the Lord Jesus**, and you **will be saved**, you and your household.”” (*Acts 16:31*).

In these texts there is no mention of Christians having to undergo water baptism so that they may become “*children of God*” or be “*sealed with the promised Holy Spirit*” or so that they “*may receive forgiveness of sins*” or be “counted as righteous” so that they are initially saved. However, where possible the believer should symbolize it by water baptism.

SUMMARY

Because it is “now [that God] commands **all people everywhere to repent**” (*Acts 17:30*) He makes available the message of the kingdom contained in the Holy Scriptures as well as those who would take this message to them. By this means God patiently attempts to draw people to him—He invites them. Many will reject these attempts to draw them and so not all who were called will respond positively. The ones who **let God draw them** then become “the called and chosen and faithful” (*Rev. 17:14b*) simply meaning that they “belong to Christ” i.e. they are Christians. To continue as “chosen ones” they **must remain in the body of Christ** by **faithfully** living the Christian life that they were called, drawn to and are now chosen for.

BAPTISM IS ONLY FOR BELIEVERS

Once a person fully believes, they should publicly demonstrate this new position by undergoing water baptism which means being fully immersed for a few seconds under water.

- ❖ At Pentecost “those who **received his word** were **baptized**” (*Acts 2: 41*).
- ❖ “...when [*the Samaritans*] **believed** Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were **baptized**” (*Acts 8:12*).
- ❖ *Peter stated that* “everyone **who believes in him** receives **forgiveness of sins through his name**.” ... “And he [*Peter*] commanded them to **be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ**.” (*Acts 10:42-43, 48*).

- ❖ “And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul **believed** and were **baptized**” ([Acts 18:8](#)).

WHAT DOES BAPTISM “IN THE NAME OF JESUS” SYMBOLIZE?

Christian baptism is an outward testimony of what has occurred inwardly in a believer’s life:

1. *THAT ONE HAS REPENTED AND HAS BEEN FORGIVEN*

- ❖ “...And Peter said to them, ‘**Repent** and **be baptized** every one of YOU *in the name of Jesus Christ* for {meaning: in view of} the **forgiveness of YOUR sins**’” (*Acts 2:38, 41*).

2. *THAT ONE HAS BEEN BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST, HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION*

Christian baptism symbolizes a believer’s identification with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. In Christian baptism, the action of being immersed in the water symbolizes dying and being buried with Christ, and coming up pictures Christ’s resurrection:

- ❖ “Do you not know that all of us who have been **baptized into Christ** Jesus were **baptized into his death**? We were **buried** therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was **raised** from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have **been united with him in a death like his**, we shall certainly be **united with him in a resurrection** like his. We know that our **old self was crucified** with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin” (**Rom. 6:3-6**).

So we symbolize our joining with and identifying with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection; also that we have died to our old way of life as we go under the water and have been resurrected to a new life as we come up out of the water as born again. It is **only complete immersion in water** that it is possible for these things to be symbolized.

THE PRE-BAPTISM CONFESSION

However, because no genuine miraculous gifts of the spirit are in evidence today (See Volume 3 STUDIES 11-14), it is necessary, prior to baptism, for the new Christian to make a confession before other Christians of his/her faith by expressing an understanding of the faith to ensure that he/she truly is a believer. This harmonizes with Paul’s encouragement to Timothy:

- ❖ “Compete well for the faith and lay hold of that eternal life you were called for and made your good confession **in the presence of many witnesses**” (*1 Tim.6:12*).

IS A PERSON NOT SAVED UNLESS HE HAS UNDERGONE WATER BAPTISM?

There are denominations who consider that in all cases a believing person is not saved unless he has undergone water baptism. These denominations consider water baptism as something that, in itself, accomplishes a person’s salvation. However, the following situations need to be considered:

- **The criminal** dying alongside Jesus who expressed his faith, rather obviously had no chance to get baptized, yet he was promised to be with Jesus in the kingdom paradise.
- Those who become believers, but **die before** having the opportunity to get baptized or are **so frail** that it would be physically dangerous to fully immerse them in water.
- Those who become believers, but **live in outlying areas** with no one near them to administer baptism.
- Those who have believed, even for some time, but not got baptized in water because they **did not realize** that that was what was required i.e. not known all the factors involved in baptism.

Clearly God's saving work is not going to be frustrated by such limiting situations.

SUMMARY

1. Baptism is a public declaration of one's already having the faith of Jesus Christ i.e. the basics of his belief system (Rom 3:26). It is the holding of this belief system that makes one eligible for salvation.
2. Nowhere in the Scriptures is there a statement to the effect that one is not eligible for salvation if one is not baptized.
3. If baptism was the basis for salvation, it would mean that no one can be saved unless a third party is with them to administer baptism. This, therefore, limits God as to who He can save.
4. If baptism were the basis for salvation then a physical act—a rite has replaced faith as fundamental and so what a person really is must count for nothing.
5. Scripturally, when one believes, he/she **receives God's holy spirit** and appropriates to themselves all God's promises and blessings. He/she does not have to wait for these until the convenient time for getting baptized (John 1:12; 3:16; 5:24; 6:47; 20:31; Acts 10:43; 13:39; 16:31). Such a believing person does not come under judgment and has passed from death to life (John 5:24) even before the time of baptism:
 - ❖ "In him we have redemption through **his blood, the forgiveness** of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (*Eph. 1:7*).
6. Notwithstanding the fact that new Christians should be baptized, if the Roman catholic concept of 'baptismal regeneration' was the key to gaining salvation it would indeed predominate in the many Bible statements about salvation. As we have seen it does not.

Although water baptism is a clearly necessary practice for Christians in obedience to Jesus it is equally evident that it is not absolutely essential for salvation if one is circumstantially unable.

BAPTIZED INTO THE BODY OF CHRIST—THE CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION

- ❖ "For in one Spirit we were all **baptized into one body**—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to **drink** of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13).

Here the word "baptized" is being used metaphorically and does not refer to one's literal personal baptism. As shown earlier one is a Christian and is in the body of Christ from the moment one believes. Therefore, baptism is a demonstration to others of that fact.

NOTE: Because God's spirit is not a physical substance or something tangible it cannot be literally drunk. So the phrase "**drink** of one Spirit" is a metaphorical expression, but is compared to water, because of the reference to baptism. For the same reason one cannot literally be immersed in holy spirit.

There are several metaphorical expressions in reference to one's receiving of the **holy spirit**, and *baptize with holy spirit* is only one of them. These are:

- being filled with it.
- having it poured out.
- being anointed with it.
- having it come upon them.
- having it fall upon them.
- receiving it.
- being given it.

HOLY SPIRIT IS GIVEN **BEFORE** BAPTISM AND CAN BE GIVEN **AFTER** BAPTISM

In *Hard Sayings of the Bible* Peter Davids states:

We note in this connection that Acts and Paul use the phrase “baptized in Holy Spirit” **differently** as well. For **Acts** it indicates precisely this **experiential** reception of the Spirit as **empowerment for mission**. For **Paul** (1Cor. 12:13) it describes the action of the Spirit in making a person part of the body of Christ, something closer to **regeneration** p. 525.

THE SPIRIT GIVEN **BEFORE** BAPTISM IS FOR **REGENERATION**

It is clear from the teaching of Paul that Christians receive holy spirit before baptism because they have believed.

- ❖ “**Whoever believes in me**, as the scripture says, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from within him.’ He said this in reference to **the Spirit** that *those who came to believe in him were to receive*”
(John 7:37-39 NAB).
- ❖ “In him you also, **when you heard the word of truth**, the gospel of your salvation, **and believed in him**, were **sealed with the promised Holy Spirit**” (Eph. 1:13).

It is clear from the teaching of Paul and from the situation of the baptism of **Cornelius** and his household (Acts 10:44-47) that Christians receive holy spirit before baptism because they have believed.

Also baptism was not prior to the receiving of holy spirit in ACTS 2:38, 41:

- ❖ “**Repent**,” Peter said to them, “**and be baptized**, each of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah *for {mng: in view of} the forgiveness of your sins*, and **you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**.”...⁴¹
So those who **accepted his message** were baptized, and that day about 3,000 people were added to them.”

Because these 3,000 had “*accepted his message*” their repentance brought immediate forgiveness of sins and immediate receiving of “**the gift of the Holy Spirit**” in harmony with Ephesians 1:13. Being baptized was the next stage in symbol of these changes.

RECEIVING HOLY SPIRIT **AFTER** BAPTISM AS **EMPOWERMENT FOR MISSION**

However, how are we to understand the situation in the accounts in Acts 8 and 19 which show that new converts only received holy spirit after baptism? Here we have the two cases where hands were laid upon the baptizees and then they were empowered by holy spirit to exorcise demons, heal the sick and to prophesy.

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS FOR IMPARTING THE SPIRIT **AFTER** BAPTISMS, WAS TO EMPOWER FOR MISSION

PETER'S USE OF THE SECOND KEY OF THE KINGDOM

- ❖ “Even Simon [*the magician*] himself believed and, after being **baptized**, became devoted to **Philip**; and when he saw the **signs and mighty deeds** that were occurring, he was astounded. Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, *they sent them Peter and John* [*both apostles*], who went down and prayed for them, **that they might receive the holy Spirit**, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord. Then *they laid their hands on them* and they **received the holy Spirit**. When Simon **saw that the Spirit was conferred** by the laying on of the apostle’s hands, he offered them money and said, “Give me **this power** too, so that anybody *upon whom I lay my hands may receive the holy spirit*”
(Acts 8:13-18 NAB).

Rather than being the Apostle Philip, this Philip was one of the seven chosen by the apostles (Acts 21:8). He had received the gifts of the spirit when the apostles had laid their hands upon him (Acts 6:3, 5, 6). But why did these Samaritans not receive holy spirit until two apostles had prayed and laid their hands on them?

Prior to the arrival of Peter and John, Philip had performed the signs of exorcising demons and healing the sick (vss. 6, 7). After the apostles had laid their hands on the Samaritan baptizees and they had received the holy spirit, Simon the magician also wanted “*this power too, so that anyone I lay hands on may receive the Holy Spirit*” (vs. 19). So evidently the Samaritan baptizees had been **empowered by the spirit** to do what Philip had been doing, namely the signs of **exorcising demons and healing the sick**. However, this does not mean that they had not, prior to baptism, been regenerated by the spirit as shown by Paul (Eph. 1:13). Yet in this situation in Samaria, even after baptism “[*the holy spirit*] had not yet fallen upon any of them” until the apostles Peter and John prayed “that they might receive holy spirit” (vs. 15) and laid their hands on them.

PAUL'S IMPARTING OF THE SPIRIT

❖ “On hearing this, they were **baptized** in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when **Paul** had *laid his hands on them* (*the 12 in Ephesus*), **the Holy Spirit came on them**, and they began to speak with [other] languages and to **prophesy**. Now there were about 12 men in all” (*Acts 19:5-7 HCSB*). Evidently, after Paul had laid his hands on them, these disciples were **empowered by the spirit to prophesy**. However, this does not mean that they, too, had not been regenerated by the spirit prior to their baptism.

REGARDING TIMOTHY

❖ “Do not neglect **your gift**, which was given you through a prophetic message when the **body of elders laid their hands on you** [Timothy].” (*1Tim. 4:14 NIV*).

❖ “For this reason I [**Paul**] remind you [Timothy] to fan into flame **the gift of God**, which is in you through the **laying on of my hands**,” (*2Tim. 1:6*).

These two comments about Timothy seem to refer to the same event when Timothy received “the gift of God” and so this would be a case of an apostle leading a body of elders in the laying on of hands so that Timothy would have been empowered for the coming mission.

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT WAS TRANSMITTED ONLY THROUGH THE APOSTLES

PRIMARY APOSTLES—THOSE DIRECTLY CHOSEN BY JESUS

“So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us...one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection” (*Acts 1:20*).

So an apostle in the primary sense was one who had been a witness to the resurrection of Jesus and who had been chosen by him. This was the case for **Matthias** as replacing Judas.

The basis was stated by Paul:

“Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?” (*1 Cor. 9:1*).

Evidently **Paul**, too, was an apostle in the primary sense (Acts 9:3-8). Others who were called apostles were such in the secondary sense of having been *sent forth* in a missionary capacity but did not have the credentials that the twelve had. (*Did someone else die or drop out?*). Only these ones were ever able to transmit the miraculous gifts of the spirit:

“The signs (marks) of a **true apostle** were performed among you with all perseverance, *by signs* and wonders and miracles.” (*2 Cor. 12:12*).

WHEN ANANIAS LAID HIS HANDS ON PAUL, WAS IT TO IMPART THE SPIRIT TO HIM?

Jesus later gave Ananias [*also not an apostle*] authority to lay hands on Saul for the purpose of Paul's regaining his sight:

"Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, 'Ananias.' And he said, 'Here I am, Lord.' And **the Lord said to him**, 'Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying, ¹² and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and *lay his hands on him* so that he **might regain his sight**' ... ¹⁷ So *Ananias* departed and entered the house. And *laying his hands on him* he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent **me so that you may regain your sight** and be **filled with the Holy Spirit**.' ¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and **was baptized**;..." (*Acts 9:10-12, 17, 18 ESV*).

Please notice that Paul had already received the spirit as a believer (Eph. 1:13), and that he had been commissioned directly by Jesus. Also that this was a "laying on of the hands" before Paul got baptized. So the laying on of hands was so that Paul could recover his sight and then he could get baptized so that he might receive the spirit in the special way to empower him for his mission.

THE REASONS THE GIFTS WERE TRANSMITTED ONLY THROUGH THE APOSTLES

1) They were **formal eyewitnesses** of the resurrected Christ.

- ❖ "Therefore of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us...one of these must become **a witness** with us **of his resurrection**" (*Acts 1:21*).
- ❖ "I am Jesus who you are persecuting ... for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and **a witness** not only *to the things which you have seen*, but also to the things in which I will appear to you..." (*Acts 26:15-19*).
- ❖ "...and **last** of all as one untimely born, *he appeared to me* also" (*1 Cor. 15:8*).

NOTE: "Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize...taking his stand on **visions he has seen**, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind" *including those today who claim to have seen Christ*. (*Col. 2:18*).

2) They learned the gospel directly from Christ not from Scripture or men.

- ❖ "Paul an Apostle, not sent from men or through the agency of man, **but through Jesus Christ** and God the Father..." (*Gal. 1:1*).
- ❖ "...for I neither received it (*the gospel*) from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a **revelation of Jesus Christ**" (*Gal. 1:12*).

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS FOR COMMISSIONING THOSE WHO WERE
ALREADY "FULL OF SPIRIT"

- ❖ "Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, **full of the Spirit** and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty ... So they chose *Stephen*, a man **full of** faith and the **Holy Spirit**, and *Philip*, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte from Antioch. They had them stand before **the apostles**, who prayed and *laid their hands on them*" (*Acts 6:3, 5, 6*).
- ❖ In Antioch "as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for Me **Barnabas and Saul** for the work that I have called them to.' ³ Then, after they [**the prophets and teachers**] had fasted, prayed, and *laid hands on them*, they sent them off" (*Acts 13:2, 3*).

- ❖ “When they [*Paul and Barnabas*] had appointed **elders** in every church and prayed with fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (Acts 14:23).
- ❖ **Timothy**: “Do not be hasty in the *laying on of hands* [for appointment], and do not share in the sins of others.” (1Tim. 5:22).

This was written some time between 62 and 64 AD showing that “laying on of hands” was still practiced up to that time, at least for appointment of elders.

SUMMARY

Those who laid hands on others to impart the spirit were always:

- Of the 12 apostles (mainly Peter using the keys of the Kingdom).
- The apostle Paul. (**and along with the body of elders**).

Those who laid hands on others to heal or to set apart for a mission were:

- Ananias who was directed by “the Lord” to do so.
- The brothers [*probably elders*] in Antioch who set Paul and Barnabas aside for the work

THE SPIRIT EMPOWERS FOR ORDINARY AND EXTRAORDINARY GIFTS, MINISTRIES, AND ACTIVITIES

“Now there are different *gifts*, but the same Spirit. ⁵ There are different *ministries*, but the same Lord. ⁶ And there are different *activities*, but the same God is active in everyone and everything. ⁷ A manifestation of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial: ⁸ to one is given a *message of wisdom* through the Spirit, to another, a *message of knowledge* by the same Spirit, ⁹ to another, *faith* by the same Spirit, to another, **gifts of healing** by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another, the **performing of miracles** (Lit. *powerful deeds*), to another, **prophecy**, to another, **distinguishing between spirits**, to another, different kinds of languages, to another, interpretation of languages. ¹¹ But one and the same Spirit is active in all these, distributing to each one as He wills...

¹² Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it. ¹³ And God has placed these in the church: first **apostles**, second **prophets**, third **teachers**, next, **miracles**, then **gifts of healing**, **helping**, **managing**, various kinds of languages. ¹⁴ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all do miracles? ¹⁵ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in languages? Do all interpret?”

(1Cor. 12: 4-11, 27-30 HSCB).

Here Paul demonstrates the great diversity within the body – the congregation. Most of these gifts/ministries/activities are not supernatural and most likely it is only **the gifts of healing and the performing of powerful deeds** that are actually outwardly evident as supernatural. The rest appear to be naturally acquired knowledge and abilities of Christians who are then empowered by God’s spirit to accomplish His purposes. Jesus had earlier said that “*the Advocate, the holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name – he will teach you everything and will remind you of all that I have told you*” (John 14:26 NAB).

“According to the grace given to us, we have different gifts: If **prophecy**, use it according to the standard of faith; if **service**, in service; if **teaching**, in teaching; if **exhorting**, in exhortation; **giving**, with generosity; **leading**, with diligence; **showing mercy**, with cheerfulness” (Rom. 12:6-8).

All of these gifts are empowered by God’s spirit, but none of them are outwardly supernatural.

“Now grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of the Messiah’s gift. ⁸ For it says: When He ascended on high, He took prisoners into captivity; He gave **gifts** to people. ...

¹¹ And He personally gave some to be **apostles**, some **prophets**, some *evangelists*, some **pastors** and **teachers**, ¹² for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, [growing] into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ's fullness” (Eph. 4: 7, 8, 11-13).

This passage further demonstrates that such gifts are the normal skills and talents of caring Christians who are empowered by God’s spirit to use their talents for the benefit of others. It also shows that such gifts do not necessarily have to occur supernaturally. *All of these gifts clearly continue to today.*

SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS FOR BECOMING A CHRISTIAN

- **The invitation.** God is calling/inviting everyone.
- **Repentance.** This is because of now believing in the good news of the Kingdom and the name of Jesus. This repentance and belief immediately brings:
 1. Holy spirit
 2. Being forgiven of one’s sins
 3. Being counted as righteous
 4. Inclusion in “the body of Christ”
 5. Initial salvation

All of this means that one is now a born from above child of God and therefore a Christian.

- **Baptism.** At the earliest time one should, if possible, undergo water immersion by another Christian, after which other Christians may:

Lay their hands on one to indicate that one is set aside for God’s service and for which one is especially empowered by holy spirit.

NOTE: This special empowering enabled the apostles and others (Philip) to perform miracles. However, this was no longer passed on to others after the Apostles had all died, yet the laying on of hands continued as a way of the setting apart of someone for a special work or appointment.

APPENDIX

THE FIGURATIVE BAPTISM OF THE CHURCH “IN HOLY SPIRIT”

Being “baptized in holy spirit” was the metaphorical phrase used by John the Baptist in Matthew 3:11 (also in the parallel accounts of Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33) and Jesus in Acts 1:5.

A 1ST CENTURY SPECIAL HISTORIC EVENT FOR THE CHURCH

Because baptism is always a single event the “baptism in holy spirit” was also an historic event, but fulfilled in three main phases: 1) at Pentecost for **the Jews**, 2) The **Samaritans**, and 3) at the home of Cornelius for **the Gentiles**. This historic event was when Peter used the “keys of the Kingdom” which Jesus gave him and when the church was metaphorically baptized in holy spirit:

FORETOLD BY JOHN THE BAPTIST

- ❖ “**I baptize you with water** for **repentance**, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. *He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire*” (Matt. 3:11). Also Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33.

PROMISED BY JESUS

- ❖ "...for John baptized with water, but you will be **baptized with (in) the Holy Spirit** *not many days from now*" (Acts 1:5).

FULFILLED IN THREE MAIN PHASES FOR COMMISSIONING THE CHURCH'S WORK

1. PETER'S USE OF THE **FIRST** KEY OF THE KINGDOM

- ❖ "When the day of **PENTECOST** had arrived, they were all together in one place. ² Suddenly a sound like that of a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole **house** where they were staying. ³ And **tongues, like flames** of fire that were divided, appeared to them and rested on each one of them. ⁴ Then they were **all filled with the Holy Spirit** and began **to speak** in different languages, **as the Spirit gave them ability for speech**" (Acts 2:1-4 HCSB).

When the crowd thought that the 120 common disciples of Jesus, who by God's spirit were boldly speaking out His message, were drunk Peter explained that this was not the case and that it was God's work through Jesus:

- ❖ "Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the **Holy Spirit, he [Jesus] has poured out** this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing ... ³⁸ And Peter said to them, '**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** ... ⁴¹ So those who received his word **were baptized**, and there were added that day about three thousand souls'" (Acts 2:33, 38, 41).

Jesus had given Peter "**the keys of the kingdom of heaven**" (Matt. 16:19) and later Jesus showed what the occasions would be for their use:

- ❖ "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in **Jerusalem and in all Judea (Jews) and Samaria (Samaritans), and to the end of the earth (Gentiles)**" (Acts 1:8 ESV).

NOTE: However, this is not the beginning of the Christian Congregation, as some think. The Congregation really began when Jesus chose his 12 apostles and set his teachings as the ethics of the Christian Church. Rather, the Pentecost event, the Samaritan event, and the Cornelius event were the giving to the Church the means to accomplish the '**Great Commission**' i.e. the gift of the holy spirit.

2. PETER'S USE OF THE **SECOND** KEY OF THE KINGDOM

- ❖ "Even Simon [*the magician*] himself believed and, after being **baptized**, became devoted to **Philip**; and when he saw the **signs and mighty deeds** that were occurring, he was astounded. Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, *they sent them Peter and John [both apostles]*, who went down and prayed for them, **that they might receive the holy Spirit**, for it had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord. Then *they laid their hands on them* and they **received the holy Spirit**. When Simon saw that the Spirit was conferred by the laying on of the apostle's hands, he offered them money and said, "Give me this power too, so that anybody *upon whom I lay my hands* **may receive the holy spirit**" (Acts 8:13-18 NAB).

However, this does not mean that they had not, prior to baptism, been regenerated by the spirit as shown by Paul (Eph 1:13). Also after Philip's initial work he then **deferred to Peter**, as the holder of the second figurative key (see NOTE 1) and as representative of the apostles, so that now holy spirit could be poured out on the Samaritan believers and thereby opening the Samaritan door with the Kingdom key. However, these Samaritans were really saved when they believed Philip and did really receive the holy spirit at the time of conversion when they were regenerated, but were only empowered with special gifts of holy spirit when the apostles Peter and John laid their hands on them. (see NOTE 2).

NOTE 1: Peter was the leading spokesman at: (1) Pentecost to welcome the Jews into Christianity, and (3) later at the home of Cornelius to open the door for the Gentiles.

NOTE 2: The 7 chosen men (Acts 6:3, 5, 6) already were “full of the Spirit” before the apostles laid their hands on them. So the laying on of hands empowered them with the powerful “gifts of the spirit.”

3. PETER’S USE OF THE **THIRD** KEY OF THE KINGDOM

At the home of *CORNELIUS* for Gentile believers:

- ❖ “While Peter was still speaking these words [*the good news*], the Holy Spirit came down on all those who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded, because the **gift of the Holy Spirit** had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speaking in [other] languages and **declaring the greatness of God**. Then Peter responded, “Can anyone withhold [*the*] **water** and prevent these from being baptized, *who have received the Holy Spirit* just as we have? And he commanded them to **be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ**.””
(Acts 10:44-48).
- ❖ “As I began to speak, the **Holy Spirit fell on** them just as on us at the beginning. And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’” (Acts 11:15, 16).

Professors Mullins and Bromily give the following four main reasons why ‘baptism in holy spirit’ is a past event:

FINALITY OF THE “BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”

In Acts 1 Jesus predicts, that the baptism of the Holy Spirit would take place “*before many days*” (Acts 1:5). This would seem to point to a **definite and specific event** rather than to a continuous process.

Peter’s citation in Acts 2:17–21 of Joel’s prophecy shows that in Peter’s mind the event his hearers were witnessing was **the definite fulfilment of the words of Joel**.

The one other event that is described in the NT as the baptism of the Holy Spirit may be regarded as **the completion of the pentecostal baptism**. The passage is that contained in Acts 10:1-11:18, in which the record is given of the following events: (a) a miraculous **vision** is given to Peter on a housetop. (10:11-16), indicating that the things about to occur are of **unique importance**; (b) speaking in **tongues** occurs (10:45f.); (c) Peter declares to the brethren in Jerusalem that the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles, in this instance Cornelius and his household, “*as on us at the beginning*” (11:15); (d) Peter also declares that this was a **fulfilment** of the promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit (11:16f.); (e) the Jewish Christians who hear Peter’s account acknowledge this as **proof that God has also extended the privileges** of the gospel to the Gentiles (11:18).

The baptism of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon Cornelius and his household is thus **directly linked with the first outpouring at Pentecost**, and as the event signalling the formal opening of the door of the gospel to Gentiles, it is in complete harmony with the missionary significance of the first great pentecostal outpouring.

Nowhere in the Epistles do we find a repetition of the special baptism of the Spirit so that the event with Cornelius completes the baptism of the Spirit. This would be remarkable if it was understood by the writers of the Epistles that this baptism was frequently to be repeated. There is no evidence outside the book of Acts that the baptism of the Spirit ever occurred in late NT times...We conclude, therefore, that according to the NT teaching the pentecostal baptism, taken in conjunction with the baptism of the Spirit in the case of Cornelius, completes the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a special event.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. 1 427-8.

NOTE 1: Re. 3b. Please see STUDIES 3-12 and 3-13 showing that the languages spoken by the disciples at Pentecost were natural languages which the disciples understood.

NOTE 2: We differ with Mullins and Bromily concerning their view that there were only two main out-pourings as a baptism of the church. Although the phrase “baptized in holy spirit” does not occur in the account about the Samaritans, it certainly does fulfil Jesus’ prophesy:

- ❖ “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in **Jerusalem and in all Judea (Jews)** and **Samaria (Samaritans)**, and to the **end of the earth (Gentiles)**” (*Acts 1:8 ESV*).

NEVERTHELESS THE NEW CHRISTIAN GETS THE SPIRIT FOR REGENERATION THE MOMENT HE FULLY BELIEVES

Although “baptism in the spirit” is a past event and the receiving of the gifts of the spirit occurred only with the laying on of the hands of an apostle, nevertheless any new Christian is regenerated and sealed by the spirit from the moment they fully believed:

- ❖ “In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and **believed in him**, were **sealed with the promised Holy Spirit**” (*Eph. 1:13*).

THE FRUITAGE OF BEING BORN AGAIN AS A CHRISTIAN

- ❖ “No one who is *born of God* practices sin, because **his seed** abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (*1 John 3:9*).

According to the NIV notes this does not mean: “a complete cessation of sin, but of a life that is not characterised by sin.”

- ❖ “We know that no one who is *born of God* sins; but he [*Jesus*] who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him” (*1 John 5:18*).

AGAINST “WORKS OF THE FLESH”

- ❖ “When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarrelling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissention, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties and other sins like these... anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the kingdom of God” (*Gal. 5:19-21 NLT*).

FRUITAGE OF THE SPIRIT

- ❖ “But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (*Gal. 5:22, 23 NLT*).

So to be born again means an absolute revolution/transformation in us as people. The whole person is being changed from his worldly way of feeling and thinking to God’s way of feeling and thinking, so that now he has God’s mind on things. Our on-going fight against “the desires of (our) sinful nature” and our bearing the good fruit as above will complete us as people who will be used by Jesus in the furtherance of God’s kingdom purpose at the regeneration of the world.

CONCLUSION

Being born again or regenerated concerns the Messianic hopes for the final restoration. On the personal level it is the future “life of the age to come” as brought into our present experience (John 3:16) by our positive response to the good news message of “the Kingdom of God” as demonstrated in the parable of the sower. On the cosmic/universal level it will be the rebirth of the world in the kingdom “new heavens and new earth.”

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