

# Born of the Flesh and Born of the Spirit

By Lucien LeSage

Jesus said, ***“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”*** (John 3:6).

So exactly what does that mean? What does it mean to be born of the flesh? What does it mean to be born of the Spirit? Who are the ones born of the flesh? Who are the ones born of the Spirit? How is one born of the flesh? And finally, how is one born of the Spirit?

## **What does it mean to be born of the flesh?**

It should be apparent that Jesus is speaking of two births here. One that is natural and one that is spiritual. To be born of the flesh means to be born into this world as a human being. The natural birth is just that, to be born of the flesh. It should be pointed out that when men are born of the flesh they are not born of the Spirit at the same time. Of men born by natural conception, only John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). So men born of a woman are born of the flesh and that which is born of the flesh is flesh. So, all men and women that have ever lived on this earth have been born of the flesh. Men are born of the flesh not by their choice. The usual method is for a man and woman to come together and conceive a child. The child did not make a decision nine months before his birth to be born. He didn't go to his mother and

father and ask to be born. Anyone can see the folly of such a thought.

Man that is born of the flesh may have a spirit but that spirit is separated from God from his mother's womb because of the sin of Adam who stood as the federal head of all mankind. David said, *"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."* (Psalm 51:5). Paul declared that men are *"dead in trespasses and sins"* (Ephesians 2:1 & 5). Paul is speaking of a spiritual death. This is the condition in which men come into the world. This is the condition of men *"born of the flesh"*. As the book of Job declares *"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one"* (Job 14:4), and again *"What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?"* (Job 15:14). David said in another place, *"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies"* (Psalm 58:3). The Bible is very clear that all men are sinners and that there is none that doeth good, no, not one (Psalm 14:1; 14:3; 53:1 and Romans 3:12). No wonder Jesus said, *"the flesh profiteth nothing"* (John 6:63). Paul verifies the same for he said *"they that are in the flesh cannot please God"* (Romans 8:8).

Now if that which is born of the flesh is flesh and men are born lost in their sins and dead spiritually what can they do? Well Paul said that they *"CANNOT please God"*. Paul said in another place that *"there is none that seeketh after God"* (Romans 3:11). Do you think godly sorrow would be pleasing to God? After all, it is godly sorrow that *"worketh repentance to salvation"* and that repentance will never be repented of or turned away from. (See 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 7:10) The obvious answer is yes, godly sorrow and repentance are pleasing to God, but if *"they that are in the flesh cannot please God"* as Paul tells us then who can be saved? Well, that reminds me of

what Jesus said concerning this very thing, *“With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible”* (Matthew 19:26).

### **What does it mean to be born of the Spirit?**

If you will notice, the word Spirit is capitalized in John 3:6. The translators knew that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit involved in this birth. No wonder John in his first epistle called it *“born of God”* (1<sup>st</sup> John 3:9; 4:7 5:1; 5:4 & 5:18). Jesus said, *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”* (John 6:63). Just as you were quickened in your mother’s womb and born naturally into this world, so to in a like manner the child of God has been quickened by the Holy Spirit.

So how does this happen? It did not happen by any decision you made, as much as men would like to think that. It is no more by your decision than you were born of the flesh by your decision. To trust in a decision is not to trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but more on that in a bit. Men may write books on how to "get" born again as though there is something you can do to “get born again” as they like to say, but *“let God be true and every man a liar”* (Romans 3:4). Well, why don’t we just let Jesus answer us on how a man is *“born of the Spirit”*. Jesus never said you must "GET born again" but you must "BE born again". Here are the words of our dear Lord and Savior on how a person is *“born of the Spirit”*. *“The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit”* (John 3:8). Jesus compared the Holy Spirit to the wind. You can’t see the wind. You can’t tell where it came from or where is going. It *“bloweth where it listeth”*. So too, with men born of the Spirit of God. The Spirit goes where He wants and quickens whom He wants and when He wants. **He is sovereign in this matter!** That should remove all boasting you would think, but it seems to

raise more anger in religious people than anything. Anger in people who are really trusting in something they have done. Someone will argue, "yes, but we have to receive Jesus, don't we?" Well, who receives Him, I would ask? The Bible tells us. *"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"* (John 1:12-13). Did you get that? The ones that received Jesus as their savior were the ones already born of God ("were born"). They were not born again through the blood of their parents or ancestors, nor of the will of their flesh, nor the will of any man, but of the sovereign pleasure of God who is all mighty to save.

So who are the ones that are *"born of the Spirit"*? It is the ones that *"believe to the saving of the soul"* (Hebrews 10:39) as **evidence** of that new birth. Paul said, *"So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"* (Romans 8:8-9). They are the ones who bring *"forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold"* (Matthew 13:8 & 23).

### **The Fruit of Regeneration**

Why did Jesus use the term *"fruit"* for good works so many times? May I use the analogy of a fruit tree? Let's say an apple tree. Does an apple tree obtain life because someone hung apples on it? Does it become a different tree, now an apple tree, because someone hung apples on it? Do apples produce life in an apple tree? Or is it that the tree first has life and is an apple tree and therefore produces apples? These are rhetorical questions as the answers are obvious. Only God can give life. So in the spiritual realm it is the same. Men are dead in sins and God quickens to life and that new man that is created in the

new birth produces the fruit of godly sorrow, repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as his Lord. Listen to Jesus words in Mathew's gospel chapter seven: *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them **by their fruits**. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every **good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them"*** (Matthew 7:15-20). Notice Jesus said that a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit and a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. It is the old man that was *"born of the flesh"* that cannot bring forth good fruit. But the new man that God has created *"cannot bring forth evil fruit"*. Now we still live in this body of flesh and we must crucify the old man daily or that old man will rob us of our joy in the Lord. You see we are not a reformed people. It is not that the old man has been reformed at all, but a new man has been created. *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5:17).

So my friend, godly sorrow and repentance and true faith in Jesus Christ are but the fruit of the quickening of the Holy Spirit. We have nothing to boast of. Our *"salvation is"*, as Jonah said, *"of the Lord"* (Jonah 2:9). We are saved by faith, but faith is what brings us forth and the cause of it is the quickening of the Holy Spirit. Babies in the flesh breath, cry and grow and do all sorts of things that pertain to the life in the flesh, but these are the results of being quickend in your mother's womb.

### **The Doom of Decisional Regeneration**

Let's go back to the words of Jesus again and quote a lengthy passage and look at it in the light of what has been pointed out so far:

*Matthew 7: 13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: 14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. 15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. 16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? 17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. 19 Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. 20 Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. 21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 **Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?** 23 **And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.***

The "many" in verse 22 are not the Muslims of the world who deny that Jesus is the Son of God. They are not the atheist of the world. They are not the Jews that reject Jesus as Messiah. Notice, they tell the Lord Jesus Christ that they had done many wonderful things **in HIS NAME**. They had done these wonderful things in the name of Jesus. They had prophesied in the name of Jesus. They had cast out devils in the name of Jesus. But you see, that which is of the flesh is still flesh. The "*flesh profiteth nothing*". These people had decided certain things about Jesus Christ. Certainly they would have said they made a decision to follow Jesus or made some sort of decision for

Him. But decisions done in the flesh CANNOT produce life. Paul said, *"For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing"*. So what does Jesus say about these people and their wonderful works that they had done in His name? He said, *"Depart from me, ye that **work iniquity.**"* And notice it was not that they were once saved and just lost their way, for Jesus said, *"I **NEVER** knew you."* There was never a time that He ever knew these people. What an awful doom. What awful words to hear. What an awful thing to be deceived by preachers who had taught them to trust in a decision, a prayer they had prayed, or a card they had signed rather than the completed work of Jesus Christ.

### **The completed work of Jesus Christ**

You see when Jesus died on that tree He obtained eternal salvation for His people. *"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life"* (Romans 5:10). *"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us"* (Hebrews 9:12). *"He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities"* (Isaiah 53:11)

May God Bless!

Lucien LeSage