

EVIDENCES OF THE NEW BIRTH

Essays by Elder Vernon Johnson, Denton PBC, Texas

Relationship between Belief and New Birth

In this essay we will look at the relationship between belief and the new birth.

Most people today are taught and believe that you must hear and believe the gospel in order to be born again. In a cause/effect relationship, they think that "belief" is the "cause" and that the "new birth" is the "effect." This concept is to them supported by an erroneous belief in what John 3:16 teaches. In truth, the "new birth" is the "cause" and "belief" is the "effect" of the new birth.

When we are unsure what a person is teaching, it is best to go to him and let him explain what he is teaching. We will let John explain which comes first, belief or the new birth. For this we will consider several verses of scripture in the book of John as follows:

A. John 1:11-13...to them that believe on his name: which were born...of God." For the sake of brevity we didn't quote all the above passage, but please note -"believe" is in the present tense, while "were born" is in the past tense. Grammatically, therefore, the birth must precede the belief; i.e., they were born of God prior to believing.

B. John 3:36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life..." Again, "believeth" is present tense and "hath" is past tense. Thus everlasting life (new birth) precedes belief.

C. John 5:24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Once again, "heareth" and "believeth" are present tense and "hath" is past tense. Hence, everlasting life comes before we can hear or believe. Thus we must be born again prior to "hearing" or "believing." Hearing and believing are evidences of the new birth.

D. John 6:47, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life." You show me someone who believes on Jesus and I will show you someone who already has everlasting life.

E. John 8:43, 47, "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye cannot hear my word." "He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." Clearly, you must first be of God (born again) before you can hear God's words (gospel).

F. John 10:26-28, "But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." In this passage the sheep are those to whom Christ gives eternal life. Those who are not given eternal life do not believe. Only those who are given eternal life believe, thus belief is the evidence of the fact that God has given us eternal life (new birth).

G. John 13:37, 38, "But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him: That the saying of Esaias the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" It is

not the miracles we see with our natural eyes that enable or entice us to believe, but it is the miracle performed within us (new birth) that enables or causes us to believe. God must first cause us to be born again (reveal his holy arm <strength> within us) and then we can "believe the report."

H. 1 John 5:1, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Once again, "believeth" is in the present tense and "is born" is in the past tense, thus again showing us that the new birth precedes belief and in this case "belief that Jesus is the Christ."

Plainly it can be seen from the several verses quoted that John taught that the new birth comes before belief. Thus the question should be asked, "What then does John 3:16 teach?" One thing it teaches us is the eternal security of the believer. Believing doesn't cause us to get eternal life, but Christ died that we may have eternal life. Since eternal life (new birth) precedes believing, then I may conclude that any person that believes already has eternal life and that Christ died for them in order that they may have eternal life.

In our next installation we will look at the evidences of the new birth.

Evidences of the New Birth

In the last several essays we have proven conclusively that God is sovereign in bringing about the new or spiritual birth in one of his children. We have shown that we are born spiritually when Christ speaks spiritual life with HIS voice into our very heart and soul.

Knowledge of God's sovereignty in causing one to be born again should cause each of us to seek the answer to a critical question: "Am

I born again." If I am born again, heaven will be my eternal home and all the promises of God to his people are precious and sure to me. How can I know if I have been born again? The bible gives us several incontrovertible evidences of the new birth. If I find any one of the evidences in my life then I have conclusive proof that I have been born again. It isn't necessary to be able to identify all the evidences, any one of the evidences is sufficient to identify us as a born again child of God.

In this essay we will look at seven of the evidences of the spiritual birth. While there are several more evidences, these seven are perhaps the easiest to conclusively identify in our lives.

First, love toward the people of God is an evidence of our new birth as stated by the following verses of scripture:

A. 1 John 3:14 - "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death."

B. 1 John 4:7 - "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

C. 1 John 4:12 - "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."

Second, doing that which is right is an evidence of our new birth as shown by the following scriptures:

A. 1 John 2:29 - "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of him."

B. 1 John 2:3-5 - "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him."

C. 1 John 3:7 - "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."

Third, if we have ever been led by the Spirit of God we can rest assured that we have been born again as Rom. 8:14-17 teaches us, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the Spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be we suffer with him, that we may be glorified together."

Fourth, growth in Christian virtues is an evidence of our spiritual birth. II Peter 1:5-10 proves this principle: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure."

Fifth, if we have felt the chastening rod of God in our lives then we are assured of our spiritual birth as the following verses prove:

A. Rev. 3:19 - "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."

B. Job 5:17 - "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth: therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty."

C. Prov. 3:11, 12 - "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be weary of his correction: For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth."

D. Heb. 12:5, 6 - "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Sixth, confessing Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is an evidence of our spiritual birth as the following two passages prove:

A. 1 John 4:1-3 - "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God."

B. 1 John 4:15 - "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

Seventh, belief is an evidence of our having been born again:

A. 1 John 5:1 - "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God."

B. 1 John 5:9-11 - "If ye receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son."

C. 1 John 5:13 - "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."

Thus the scriptures say "by their fruits ye shall know them. A good tree bringeth forth good fruit." We can know with assurance that we have been born again by looking at the evidence of that spiritual birth in our lives. May God be praised for his unspeakable works and for his manifold assurances toward us.