

## Born of Water and Spirit

Jesus said, "Unless one is born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." "Born of water and Spirit" explains "born anew (again or from above)" (John 3:3-5). Historically, most have understood Jesus' words to refer to the baptismal experience when a person receives God's Holy Spirit. Some, with various theological doctrines to defend, have clumsily explained "water" in other ways, but most of those explanations die the death of a thousand qualifications.

Baptism in the New Testament is the immersion of believers in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their personal sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). Many traditions teach and practice other things, but on the Day of Judgment only the teachings and practices of Scripture will carry any weight (John 12:44-50).

Consider the implications of not being born of water and Spirit. Jesus said you will not enter God's kingdom. This may not rattle you much here and now, but what about in your final hours, or on the last day when all humanity stands before the judgment seat of God? What will it be like standing outside looking into the kingdom of God? How much will human traditions mean then? Will people still be defending their doctrines against Scripture? Perhaps, but who will listen?

*After comments were received regarding this article, Schuyler decided to add some additional points:*

A reader has taken issue with my understanding [Born of Water and Spirit (1)] that "water" is a reference to baptism in John 3:5—"Unless one is born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." However, the connection between water and baptism was common to both Jews and Christians: "John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there; and people came and were baptized...[T]hey came to some water, and the eunuch said, 'See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?' And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him" (John 3:23; Acts 8:36, 38; et. al.).

The reader suggested "water" represents human birth ("water" in the womb?), and presumably "Spirit" represents divine birth. However, water is never used in Scripture to represent human birth. More important is the fact that the whole expression "of water and Spirit" defines how one realizes divine birth (i.e., "born from above," John 3:3). John already stated that this divine birth has nothing to do with human birth (John 1:12-13). Furthermore, would not Jesus only be stating the obvious by declaring one must experience human birth before being born again spiritually?

I appreciate your comments that cause me to re-examine issues, and hopefully prompt each of us to meditate earnestly on God's word, not our traditions, to find the truth.