

FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

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JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES NO. III

Let us continue our review of the article (Who Are Born Again?) which appeared in the November 15, 1954 issue of the Watchtower. We are now ready to consider the third and final portion of this article. It is entitled

"Born From Water And Spirit"

Watchtower states: "It would not be logical to think that the 'water' is literal. Then is it referring to water baptism? No rather it refers to the truth of God's Word. This water of truth has cleansing power." Let me state first that this view is new to me. I have heard other interpretations as to what the water in Jno. 3:5 is. Some say that to be "born of water" means the physical birth of water. All admit that, normally, everyone is born of water in the physical birth. But Jesus is talking about a "NEW" birth; or "AGAIN" birth; or a birth from "ABOVE". No, friends, he is not speaking of the physical birth. Infants are born with water in the natural birth. But Jesus said: "Except a MAN be born again", not an INFANT! What will happen to those who are born with a dry birth? According to this theory they can not possibly enter into the kingdom of heaven.

The next interpretation is this: The use of the word "water" is a figurative expression denoting a spiritual birth. But this misses the point entirely. Had Jesus wanted to use the word water, and had really meant literal water what word would he have used? But one may say "We know that he used the word water to mean Spirit because he said so in Jno. 4:14; & 7:37-39." In these passages Jesus does indeed speak of the Spirit, using water to represent the Spirit. Let me at this point present a rule of interpretation which I believe is a sound one, and worthy of consideration. Here it is: Always interpret a word or phrase literally unless there is something in the context which show that there must be a figurative interpretation placed upon it. Now,

let us look at the context of Jno. 4 & 7. In Jno. 4:7 literal water is under consideration, for that is what the Samaritan woman came to draw from Jacob's well. Verse 13 confirms that one who drinks of this water would thirst again. But at verse 14 Jesus spiritualizes the word water, and shows that he is using it figuratively. One who drinks of the water Jesus gives, it "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Who would say that this is talking about literal water? Now for Jno. 7. Jesus plainly says that water here means the Holy Spirit. Thus, in both cases there is something in the context to indicate that "water" means something besides literal water.

Going back to chapter 3 may I ask what is in that chapter that indicates that "water" is a figurative expression, and used to mean Spirit? If "water" in Jno. 3:5 means Spirit as it manifestly does in Jno. 7:39, then we have Jesus uttering the absurd expression—"Except a man be born of SPIRIT and of the SPIRIT, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." If water means Spirit and Spirit means water then we hear him say—"Except a man be born of WATER and WATER, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Such is the foolish conclusion to which a false theory leads one. Surely, Jesus was talking about literal water in Jno. 3:5 because there is NOTHING in the context to show otherwise.

Now let us give some thought to the Watchtower's conception as to what the water means in Jno. 3:5. In the quotation above we see that it affirms that the word water is a figurative expression meaning the word. If Watchtower has a right to say that "water" means "word", then I have a right to say that "Spirit" means "word". But anyone ought to know that the Spirit and word are different. The word is the product of the Spirit. It is equally true that there is a difference between the word and the water. To make a

long story short, the Spirit uses the word which directs a sinner to be BAPTIZED, and hence, be born of WATER! Thus we see that one is begotten by the Holy Spirit by the word, which is the seed of the kingdom. (Lk. 8:11). The word directs one to be baptized which is obedience to that "form of doctrine." (Rom. 6). Clearly, water baptism is one of the essentials in the new birth.

Shall we notice Watchtower's proof texts, by which they claim that "water" means the word. The first is Eph. 5:26. Here Paul points out that the church is to be sanctified and cleansed "with the washing of water by the word." Friends, this passage does not say that the water and word are the same. Then what does it mean? Simply, that by the instructions and directions of the word the church was sanctified and cleansed by water. One is baptized INTO the church. The church is set apart and has been cleansed. Note a parallel passage to this one. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized INTO ONE BODY." (I Cor. 12:13). THE ONE BODY IS THE ONE CHURCH OF THE LORD. (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). By the instructions of the Spirit, which instructions sinners receive through the word they are commanded to be baptized into the church which is equivalent to being inducted into a clean, holy, sanctified life. Friends, this is the truth! Let us not ever be guilty of trying to lessen the force of baptism. God put it in the plan of salvation. Let's leave it there.

"Jehovah's Witnesses" say that "water" in Jno. 3:5 means the word, the Bible. I wonder what they say the "water" means in I Pet. 3:20-21? That passage says that Noah and his family were "saved by water." Were they saved by the word? Yes! They were saved by God's WORD which told them to build the ark, and enter it, plus the water upon which the ark floated. The same is true of a sinner today. He heard God's WORD

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Clavis Magsdale

EDITORIAL

Things are looking up in this section. Many gospel meetings have been conducted or are in progress. Prospects for a more successful work in the future are very bright. Perhaps we are lacking more in genuine constructive personal work than any other field. Meetings would be more successful in spreading the borders of his kingdom if they became the climax of our Christian services toward soul winning and if we as Christians made a sincere effort to see that those in sin heard the gospel meeting. 'Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' Rom. 10:17. We must never lose sight of this principle of truth and should always know that it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. I Cor. 1:21.

The preacher situation is most heartening. As the time draws near for a consumation of my work in this section I rejoice that we will have able gospel preachers to carry on and lead the church to greater glory. Bro. Blackwell will be at Mammoth Spring Sept. 1 and beginning July 22, Bro. Don Flanagan and his family will be located in Thayer where Bro. Flanagan will work regularly with the Thayer church. The church at Hardy has not as yet replaced Bro. Flanagan to my knowledge, but have good prospects.

I have been asked if Fulton County Gospel News will continue. Insofar as I know, not only the paper but every other phase of work in this section will continue. The paper, the radio, and mission work will be in able hands and the continued co-operation of everyone concerned is urged and solicited. I have enjoyed very much the work here and expect, trust, and pray for its prosperity.

—Boyd E. Morgan



Arthur C. Blackwell

We are pleased to use this means of introducing Bro. Arthur C. Blackwell to you. Bro. Blackwell is at present preaching for the North Park church of Christ, Loves Park, Ill. Loves Park is a suburb of Rockford. September 1, together with his wife, Essie, and son, Arthur, Jr., he will move to Mammoth Spring and will work regularly with the congregation there. Bro. Morgan and his family are moving to Corning.

812 S. 26th St.
Mt. Vernon, Ill.
July 7, 1956

We have received two or three of the Fulton County Gospel News and like it a lot.

Think it's a real good work, only wish such good reading could be in everyone's home. I give these to different ones to read.

Am sending \$2 contribution.

Yours in Christ,

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Flanagan
Thanks. Such letters are most encouraging. We are in the last half of four years of continuous publication and the appreciation of our readers is a great motivation to keep on. We like the idea of copies being passed on to others.

THE CHOICE OF LOT

In the thirteenth chapter of Genesis we find the account of the parting of Lot and Abraham. Strife had arisen between the herdsman of the two men over pasture in order to put an end to the trouble, Abraham offered Lot the choice of the land to the east or to the west. Lot chose to take the land which lay to the east. This land had better pasture land and was well watered. It was seemingly a wise choice. However Lot overlooked one important thing, for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were located in this direction. In chapter 13:12 we are told that Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom. The people of this city were so wicked that God determined to destroy the city. Abraham interceded in behalf of the city and made an agreement with God that if he could find just ten righteous souls that God would spare the city. Abraham was only able to find four, Lot, his wife, and their two daughters. In the departure from Sodom, Lot's wife was lost when she disobeyed God's command not to look back. Thus the choice that Lot made cost him his wife and his home.

Many people are called upon to make a similar choice today. In recent years Christians have moved to the north and west to find employment. Many found large cities without a church which practiced New Testament Christianity. Instead of establishing a congregation, many became neglectful of their duty and fell into the ways of the world. This is just one way in which we can pitch our tents toward Sodom. We might have a job which required us to work on the Lord's day depriving us of a chance to worship, yet in order to make a living we choose to continue this course. Economic conditions have changed greatly in this nation in recent years. In order to meet the standard of living common for this day, great demands are made on our time. All too often we become too busy to serve the Lord. Remember Lot chose that which promised the most gain from an economic standpoint, with no apparent thought as to the spiritual gain or loss. If we are to avoid the mistake of Lot we must consider the spiritual conditions first and be careful not to make a decision detrimental to the welfare of our soul.

A GREAT CHANGE

Orbie Robbins — Elizabeth, Ark.

Eph. 5:8

The Ephesian Christians had changed from 'darkness to light.' Their previous condition was 'dead in trespasses and sin.' Eph. 2:1. Their changed position was, 'now are ye the light of the Lord.'

Every Christian is a changed person.

1. His mind has been changed by **faith**. Acts 2:36-38.

2. His will has been changed by **repentance**. Acts 17:30-31.

3. His allegiance has been changed by **confession**. Rom. 10:10.

4. His relationship has been changed by **baptism**. Gal. 3:26-27; I John 3:1.

5. His affections have been changed. Col. 3:1-3.

6. His purposes have changed. Rom. 6:16-18.

7. His citizenship has changed. Col. 1:13; Phil. 3:20.

8. His life is changed. II Cor. 5:17.

9. His associations have changed. I Pet. 4:3-4.

10. His name is changed. Acts 11:26; I John 3:1.

11. His garments are changed. Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 3:9-10.

12. His destiny is changed. Mt. 25:46.

Thus we can see from the following scriptures that a Christian is a changed person. So there is a great change in the genuine Christian.

NOT YET

"Not yet," said a little boy. "When I grow older I will think about my soul."

"Not yet", said the young man. "I am now about to enter into a trade. When I see my business prospering, then I shall have more time than I have now." The business did prosper.

"Not yet," said the man of business. "My children must have my care. When they are all settled in life I shall be better able to attend to religion." He lived to be a gray-haired man.

"Not yet," still he cried. "I shall soon have nothing else to do but read and pray." And so he died.

He waited too long. He lived without God, and died without hope.

—Selected

THINGS WHICH CANNOT BE SHAKEN

Marvin Ed Berry

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD CANNOT BE SHAKEN: The Fool hath said...there is no God. Psal. 14:1.

The heavens declare God—Bible reveals God. Psal. 19:1. Gen 1:1. In the beginning God....

THE INTEGRITY OF THE BIBLE CANNOT BE SHAKEN: Many believe that new discoveries are undermining the Bible, but every modern discovery tends to confirm its authenticity. True religion and true science never contradict. Contradictions arise between true science and false religion, and false science and true religion.

The Bible anticipates discoveries of science—is prescientific rather than unscientific. Discoveries were told in the Bible long before man discovered them. Isa. 40:2. The world is round. Earth poised in space. Job. 26:7. Empty space toward the north. Job 26:7.

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST CANNOT BE SHAKEN: The kingdoms of earth pass away, religious denominations shall pass away. Mt. 15:13. Christ's Kingdom shall endure. Mt. 16:18.

THE PLAN OF REDEMPTION CANNOT BE SHAKEN: No human being can improve on God's plan. The requirements God made are binding today. It was designed to meet the needs of humanity in every age. Human plans deceive and delude, and often change, but God's plan will endure.

OUR HOPE CANNOT BE SHAKEN: Why? Because it is built on the existence of God, the integrity of his word, citizenship in his kingdom, and obedience to his gospel.

However much you believe in God, his word, and his kingdom, you cannot have hope without obedience to his gospel. Eternal salvation to them that obey him. Heb. 5:9. What shall be the end of that obey not? I Pet. 4:17. This earth shall pass away. II Pet. 3:12. Your earthly life shall pass away. II Cor. 5:1. Don't you want that eternal home which cannot be shaken?

Some of the best preaching is done by holding your tongue.

Hard work is often an accumulation of easy things you didn't do when you should have.

Marion Farley — Dallas 17, Texas

I thought a brief account of the work and progress of the Midway Church of Christ, 1907 Peachtree Rd., Mesquite, Texas, your writer had a part in getting started in May of 1954, might be of interest to our many friends and relatives scattered over several states.

Just a little over two years ago we met in a rented building about one-half mile from our present location. Four families, with less than ten members of the Lord's Body, formed the Midway church. In September of the same year we moved into our building, built on an acre of land (well located) with several nice shade trees on the West end of the property where we have weiner roasts and dinners.

We are between the city limits of Mesquite and Dallas. About a half mile from each.

The church has had a rather slow but continual growth from its beginning.

In May of last year Bro. Henry McCaghren, minister for a large congregation nearby and an outstanding evangelist, conducted a meeting for us, at which time we had fourteen responses. In June of this year he was with us for ten days, under a large tent owned by several congregations and erected on our lot, at which time we had 16 responses, making 30 in the two meetings. About half of them being baptized into Christ. Other responses were those already baptized.

Bro. W. W. Mosley, Jr. has been with us for about a year, and has done a splendid job of preaching, and editing our church Bulletin. He and his fine family and their efforts are greatly appreciated at Midway.

We have about sixty members now, and are looking forward to a new building as soon as possible. We have been setting aside the fourth Lord's day contribution for a building fund for several months, and we have nearly one thousand dollars to date.

So, we, like Paul, "thank God and take courage." We earnestly solicit your prayers.

Jehovah's Witnesses

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and OBEYS it and is BAPTIZED in WATER. Verse 21 suggests that sinners are saved by baptism. Thus, we see that "water" and "baptism" are used interchangeably. So we ask: If "water" in Jno. 3:5 is figurative, what is "water" in I Pet. 3:20? You will never find where "water" and "word" are used interchangeably.

The case of Cornelius is now up for some observations. Watchtower is as badly confused in this as it is in other things relative to this subject. It affirms that Cornelius was born again before and without water baptism. Remember Watchtower says that the "water" in Jno. 3:5 means the word. It says that one must be born of water (word) and of the Spirit then he may be baptized in water. Now listen: "The apostle Peter brought the 'water' or word of truth to the first Gentile convert, Cornelius." But the facts in this case show that Cornelius received the Holy Spirit before he received a sufficient amount of God's word which would teach him concerning his duty to God. "While Peter YET SPAKE the words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." (Acts 10:44). But how much of the word had Peter spoken? Not much for we read: "And as I BEGAN TO SPEAK, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning." (Acts 11:15). Now, according to Watchtower it takes the water, which it interprets to be the word, and the Spirit to bring about the new birth. But in the case of Cornelius the Holy Spirit came to him before all of God's will. Hence, he was born again with only ONE of the necessary things. Such cannot be. It takes all or none. Cornelius received a miraculous measure of the Holy Spirit before he was born again. The miraculous manifestation of the Holy Spirit had nothing to do with his salvation. It merely served to prove to Peter's fellow Jews that God had accepted the Gentiles as well as the Jews. (Acts 11:18) Peter continued to preach to them, thus establishing faith in Christ. They repented of their sins. (Acts 11:18) and were baptized in water into Christ. (Acts 10:47); Gal.

3:27). Consequently they were born of "water and of the Spirit." If it be argued that Cornelius was saved before baptism because he received the Holy Spirit let it be remembered that he received the Spirit before he had faith. Faith comes by hearing God's word. (Rom. 10:17). One cannot be saved without faith. (Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 5:1). Cornelius had not heard enough to produce faith by which to be saved. He therefore was not saved until he was baptized. Peter was the preacher on this occasion, and I am sure that he preached the same thing to Cornelius as did to others. He declared: "Baptism doth also now save us." (I Pet. 3:21.)

I could make out a better case by saying the "Spirit" is the "word" than the "Jehovah's Witnesses" do when they say the "water" is the "word". John declares: "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; Not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." I could say that the word is truth, but the Spirit is truth, therefore, the word and Spirit are the same. However, the Bible teaches that the word is the product of the Spirit. They are not the same. The "water" and the "word" are not the same either.

Men have for a long time tried to exclude literal water from God's will. This passage shows that it can't be done.

In conclusion, let me plead with the "Jehovah's Witnesses" and others who are trying to destroy the importance of water baptism to accept the truth and rejoice in it. Jesus said—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

More later.

—Don Flanagan, Hardy, Ark.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PAPER

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They who weep all the time live in a wet world.

Never kick up more dust than you can settle.

JOINING

Boyd E. Morgan

The doors of many denominations will be opened this summer for joiners. The general idea will be to be born again (saved) and then join the church of your choice.

Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." John 3:5. Paul said, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Col. 1:12-13.

Considering these two passages we see we are in (enter) the kingdom here in this life. The only logical conclusion is that being born again translates us into the kingdom. God does this through Jesus. His kingdom and Christ's are the same. The only kingdom of God on earth is the church. The church and the kingdom are the same. Acts 2:47 says, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." Since being born again is the equivalent of being saved, then the Lord adds to the church daily such as are born again. Every person born again is a member of the Lord's church (kingdom). There is no such thing as the church doors being closed today. Be born again and you will be in it. But if you then try to join some denomination you'll have to get out of the Lord's church to get into it. What more do you need than being a member of the Lord's church. When you get out of His church you are then out of His kingdom and are again in darkness. Don't join.

"When critics get together,

As critics often do,

To discuss the whys and wherefores,

Of the plan you're putting through,

When they've twisted it and torn it,

And they've done the worst they can,

Just stop and ask them sweetly,

"Have you a better plan?"

—Selected

Success is a ladder which cannot be climbed with your hands in your pockets.

Are there times in your life when would rather have a lie told about you than the truth. Beware.