

“Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5)



Being Born Again

Jesus made it very clear that we must be born again and that there are two stages to our new birth. First, we must be born of the water, which is our baptism by immersion. Jesus told his disciples, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:15-16)

Being born of the spirit is more involved and it can be difficult to understand. In John chapter 3, Nicodemus was confused by this concept and he asked, “How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?” (John 3: 4) Jesus told him, “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.” (Verse 8)



The wind blows but it is difficult to see the direction. Being born of the spirit is not an outward act, such as our baptism in water. Something has to take place inside of our heart. We have to be sufficiently influenced by the true Word of God so that we are motivated to manifest that Word in our lives. Peter explained this as “being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.” (1 Peter 1:23)

Being born of the spirit is something that happens in stages. We are first born again by the Word of God. We hear the Word and receive it into our hearts developing faith. Our response to the influence of the Spirit Word in our hearts leads us to repentance; hopefully this will result in the obedience of faith as we enter into the water to be born again.

The next stage is a progressive conversion, a transforming of our minds from carnal to spiritual. We must be converted, humbled as a little child, trusting completely in our Heavenly Father to feed and lead us. As this new man develops, turning away from sin and bearing fruit unto holiness, we are then better equipped to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. If we are faithful in our spiritual worship, our hope is to be completely *born of the spirit*, by being granted eternal life in God’s Kingdom.

Free copies of back issues of *Things Concerning* are available from the Advocate Publications office and from **OUR WEB SITE: www.christadelphian-advocate.org**

LOCAL CONTACT:

Send all Correspondence to:
“Things Concerning”
 27 Delphian Rd
 Springfield, VT 05156
 e-mail: jimillay@vermontel.net

Things Concerning

The Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:24)

Worship God

It is a fundamental essential of pure religion to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. There are many who worship God in the spirit, having a humble, emotional attitude in their prayer and supplication, but they do not honor Him with a good understanding of the truth of His word.



Conversely, there are others who may have every *jot or tittle* of the Word firmly planted in their minds, but they are unable to effectively absorb this knowledge into their heart and apply it in their lives.

Thy Word is True

The Word of God as originally written is completely true, but there are many private interpretations that greatly diminish its value. Consequently, there are those “who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.” (Romans 1:25)

Jesus, who was a living manifestation of the true Word of God, spoke of himself as *the way, the truth, and the life*: His teachings were true, they were consistent with the teachings of God as recorded for our learning in the Old Testament. Today, there are a multitude of Christian books, tapes, and videos that claim to provide insight into the Word of God, but if they are not true reflections of the teachings of the Bible they can deceive the people. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” (Isaiah 8:20)

Mixtures of Truth

An outright lie is often less dangerous than a mixture of the truth. When something sounds very much like the words of the Bible and when the lies are cleverly mixed with true facts, people are easily deceived, even as Eve was deceived by the lies of the serpent in the Garden of Eden.

To worship the Father in spirit and in truth, one must first “study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**” (2 Timothy 2:15) We must search the Scriptures daily to see if these expositions of the Bible are based on *the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.* (Acts 17:11)

“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” (Romans 2:28-29)

Circumcision of the Heart

Being born of the spirit so that we can worship the Father in *spirit and in truth* is not a concept that is unique to the teachings of Jesus. This idea is found in the whole council of God.

Ancient Israel was told, “*And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.*” (Deuteronomy 30:6)

This Old Testament teaching is amplified by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans. (See Romans 2: 28-29 as quoted above.) Paul makes the point that circumcision of the flesh is outward and that circumcision of the heart is inward. Even as being born of the water in this dispensation is an outward act while being born of the spirit is an inward influence in our heart.

The physical act of circumcision of the flesh was a type of circumcision of the heart. The foreskin of sin’s flesh was removed indicating symbolically, that it is important to remove sin from our hearts. Jesus spoke to this need when he said, “*For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.*” (Mark 7:21-23)

The manifestation of these evil thoughts in action is even more damaging than thinking about them. Jesus also taught however, that we need to transform our hearts before the sin even begins. “*But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*” (Matthew 5:28 — See also Jeremiah 17:9-10; 2 Corinthians 10:5)

Circumcision and the Believer

The teachings of the Apostles make it clear that circumcision of the flesh is not to be practiced by the followers of Christ today. In the first century, there were those who tried to promote circumcision as a necessity, but they were told this was not how to worship God in truth. (See Acts 15)

Circumcision of the heart is still important. This is simply another expressing for being born again of the spirit, for being transformed by the renewing of our minds and becoming as a little child. There are a number of other New Testament expressions like “circumcision of the heart” encouraging us to develop the inner man in Christ Jesus. (See John 3: 5; Matthew 18:3; Romans 12:1-2; Luke 22:32; Ephesians 3:16-17.)

There are many elements of Old Testament Law that are no longer binding on those who worship God in spirit and truth today. However, these things were “*were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*” (Romans 15:4) We can still learn from these early examples so that we will understand how to “*serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter.*” (Romans 7:6)

“I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God--what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

(Romans 12:1-2)

Sacrifice a Type

The use of sacrifices as a means of worship in the Old Testament pointed forward to the sacrifice of Christ, the lamb of God who would take away sin.

We no longer practice these typical offerings of lambs without blemish. They were provided as lessons to lead us to Christ. However, the idea of sacrifice is still very much a part of **our spiritual worship**.



Living Sacrifice

Our offering today is a **living sacrifice** patterned after the lessons taught in the animal sacrifices. We still want our offering to be unspotted by sin; we also want our service to be the very best that we have and we want to be able to offer it willingly.

Jesus asked his followers to willingly offer a life of denial and self-sacrifice. “*And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.*” (Luke 9:23)

This life of sacrifice requires a long term commitment. The typical sacrifices in the Old Testament were basically one time events, even though they were repeated annually and for various occasions of transgression. A living sacrifice is something that involves a continual offering; it is the full time sacrifice of our will in respect for the will of God.

This daily offering of spiritual worship requires a change of thinking. We are asked to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. This is our spiritual birth, our conversion to become as a little child. The ways of the old man must be left behind and the new man must be developed in response to a continual diet of spiritual food from the Word of God.

Our minds cannot be changed from fleshly to spiritual thinking unless they are renewed continually with the influence of the Words of God. Jesus said, “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*” (Matthew 4:4) He demonstrated in his own life how important the Word was and he used his memory of Scripture to help him resist temptation. (Psalm 119:11)

So it is that this transformation of the mind to the spirit must begin in and continue with a daily supply of the Word of God. We must be “*born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*” (1 Peter 1:23)