

Born of water

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question.--I am a news agent, and as such have calls for vile novels and newspapers giving novels as supplements. What do you think, from a Christian standpoint, of my dealing in such papers?

Answer.--You ask a straightforward question, and no doubt desire a straightforward answer. We reply that we cannot see how saints can do a *general* book-business under prevailing conditions. We would consider the dealing out of poisonous mental food about as bad as the selling of spirituous liquors, and much worse than dealing in adulterated natural foods. We believe that the mind is the most important part of the man, and our conscience would be extremely sensitive as to what we would put before our fellow creatures, or in any manner induce them to use to their injury.

This advice, we fear, will be very far reaching in its relations to your business; but your candid inquiry demands it.

Question.--Please explain [1 Cor. 15:29](#).

Answer.--The word "for" in the Greek signifies "on behalf of." The thought of the Apostle seems to be that our immersion into death is made on behalf of the "dead," not those who are in the tomb, but those who are nominally alive, though under sentence to death because of sin, "dead in trespasses and sins," dead in God's sight, condemned in Adam. We would not need to sacrifice anything were it not for the dead and dying [**R1987 : page 125**] condition of the world, and it is on their behalf (to bring them to Christ or to serve them after they are brought to Him, and to shine as lights in the world, reproofing sin) that it is necessary for us to lay down our lives. Therefore, while our sacrifice is no part of the ransom price, it is, as Paul expresses it in his letter to the [Colossians \(1:24\)](#), a *filling up* of "that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ for his body's sake."

Question.--Please harmonize [1 Pet. 3:19,20](#) and [1 Pet. 4:6](#) with other Scriptures stating that the dead "know not anything."

Answer.--For explanation of the former passage see TOWER for July 15, '94. With this [1 Pet. 4:6](#) has no connection. It refers to the preaching of the Gospel to men resting under the Adamic penalty. In the Lord's estimation the entire race is *dead*, even though some have a measure of what we call "life." So our Lord expressed it when he said to one, "Let the dead bury their dead; but go thou and preach the Kingdom of God." ([Luke 9:59,60](#).) We do not understand by this that our Lord required the disciple to absent himself from the funeral of his own father; but the young man was already a disciple ([Matt. 8:21](#)), and his thought probably was to leave the Lord's service and serve his father until his death. Our Lord knew that if he served [**R1987 : page 126**] his father for several years, other business or pleasure would crowd upon him, and he might never return to the higher service.

Those of the "dead" who hear the Gospel and accept it are reckoned as passed from death unto life, as translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of God's dear Son. Thenceforth, though men continue to judge of them according to the flesh, and by the outward appearance, they are judged by God according to the intents of the mind, here rendered "spirit."

Question.--What did the Lord mean when he said, "Except a man be *born of water* and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."

Answer.--Nicodemus was no doubt acquainted with the fact that John the baptist had conducted a ministry, calling upon the people to repent of their sins and reform their lives, and that those who accepted his teaching were immersed in water as signifying that change of life.

Our Lord and the apostles seem to have continued the arrangement to a considerable extent, preaching likewise, Reform ye, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. This water baptism became, therefore, to the Jews a symbol of reformation of heart and life. As only a mere fragment of the conversation with Nicodemus is reported, it is fair to suppose that the entire teaching and custom of our Lord with reference to the conditions for entrance into the Kingdom He preached were discoursed upon. In this conversation our Lord seems to bring out the fact that such a baptism unto repentance was not sufficient to insure entrance into the Kingdom, but that as the baptism symbolized a reformation, and thus the birth of a new character, it must needs be supplemented with the begetting of the spirit before the Kingdom privileges could be claimed. Hence it was that they were exhorted not only to be symbolically begotten and born to a reformed life, by baptism in water, but also to seek the begetting and birth of the spirit to the spirit nature.

In this connection it is well to remember that the Jews addressed by John and the disciples of Jesus were already God's people by covenant, and were already reckonedly justified; but that on account of disobedience to their covenant they needed to reform, and to return again to harmony with God in order that they might be fit subjects for the privileges and liberties of the Gospel age; namely, to become sons of God through begetting of the spirit now, and through birth of the spirit in the resurrection.

For other suggestions on this conversation see DAWN, VOL. I., pp.277-282. On the subject of baptism see TOWER, June 15, '93.

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