

ANDREW, does not Jesus say we must be born or begotten of the Spirit?

Yes, sir, he does; but is it not the same thing as to say we are begotten of God, for "God is a Spirit"? or the same to say we are begotten "by the word of Truth," or "by the Word of God," for that came by the Spirit, as it is said in 2nd Peter, i 20, 21—"Holy men of God spake (or wrote the Scriptures) as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"?

I am delighted, my dear boys, to find that you understand the subject thus far so clearly. There is another question, however which I hope you will answer with equal clearness and simplicity. Jesus says that it is necessary to be "*born of water*"—"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." What does this mean, PHILIP?

I think, sir, it is very plain that Jesus here refers to the Baptism of the believer in God's Word. The individual who truly believes the Divine testimony, who gladly receives the Word, begins to receive its spiritual comforts and enjoyments—he begins to be "renewed in the spirit of his mind;" and, because of this—because he feels so happy in his own mind when he knows and believes the Gospel—because he is begotten again to a kind of new existence by the good news from Heaven, he desires openly to express his love to his God and Saviour—to enter upon its higher enjoyments by being born into the family of God; he is required to enter the Church of God in the world by being baptized. He is *begotten* by the word of the Spirit, and afterwards he is then *born of water*. They are two distinct things, and appear in Scripture to stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect.

Your explanation is simple, clear, and Scriptural, but I must have you to point to the Word of God to prove the important answer you have given. Direct me to some passages to illustrate this matter.

I have selected only a few. See Galatians iii. 26, 27, there Paul says we are made children of God by faith or believing in Christ, and that we put on Christ, or openly profess our faith in Christ, by being baptized or immersed into his name. Titus, also, chap. iii. 5, says that the renewing of the Holy Ghost is one thing—the washing of Regeneration another. In the Epistle to the Ephesians also, chap. v. 26, the same idea is taught by the Apostle. Christ gave himself for the Church "that he might sanctify and cleanse it with a bath of water and with the word." (See Macnight's Translation.) To be born of water and of the Spirit appears, therefore, to mean simply to believe the Gospel and be baptized.

Your answer, Philip, has given me the highest satisfaction, and your late profession of faith in Christ, and your union with the Church of God in Baptism, as I believed, was the result of intelligent conviction—of a true acquaintance with the directions of the Divine Spirit to the Soul.

I hope, my dear young friends, that through the belief of the Word of the Spirit of Truth—the glad tidings of salvation—you will all be *begotten* again to a life-giving hope: that, possessing this hope and life you will gratefully "put on Christ" by being baptized in his name; or, in other words, that you will be *born of water*, and thus be introduced into the church of God on earth: that, "as new-born babes," you will then "desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby:" (1st Peter ii. 2)