

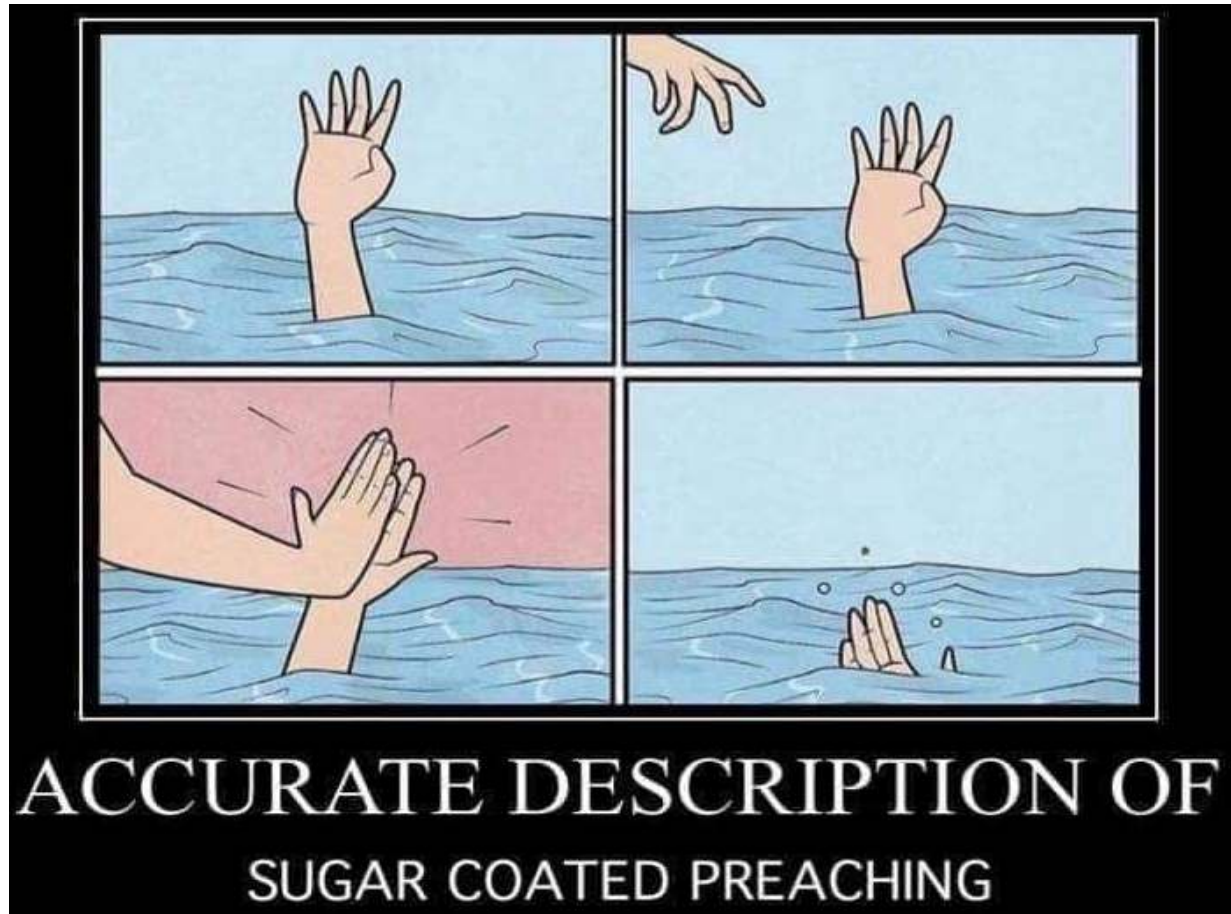
Today's Sermons

Morning: Christianity: A Three-Fold Change
Evening: Joses: The Son of Consolation

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FOR THE RECORD

Sunday Bible Study	41
Sunday AM Worship	54
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Wed. Bible Study	35
Offering	\$1875



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Times of Services:
Sunday
Bible Study:... 10:00am
AM Worship...11:00am
PM Worship:...6:00pm
2nd Sunday:.....1:30pm

Wednesday
Bible Study:.....7:00pm

Radio Program
Sunday:.....7:30am
"Back to the Bible"
AM 580 WSKK
93.5 FM

**We Extend A
Warm & Cordial
Welcome
To All Our
Visitors!**

The New Birth

Andy Robison

The Pharisees were a self-righteous party ascribing to themselves broad powers of enforcement of their traditions associated with God's laws (Matthew 15:7-9; 23:1-37). There was, however, at least one who seemed to be intent on doing right.

Nicodemus, one ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night and began by acknowledging the import of Christ's miracles. He said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a Teacher come from God..." (John 3:1-2). Later, this same man would take up for Jesus' right to speak for Himself before any possible condemnation (John 7:50-51), then would help Joseph of Arimathea with the burial of the Lord's body (John 19:38-40).

Jesus' answer seemed far removed from the statement of Nicodemus: "...Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Nicodemus tried to clarify, knowing only the physical birth (3:4). Jesus assured that it was a spiritual birth, "of water and the Spirit" (3:5). What is the new birth? Ascertaining it requires honesty with Scripture.

Continued Inside

Consider that the Holy Spirit is the member of the Godhead responsible for inspiring the apostles and the prophets (John 14:26; 16:13; Ephesians 3:5; 1 Corinthians 2:9-13; 2 Peter 1:20-21). Without the Spirit's work in writing the Divine record, people living subsequent to the first century would know nothing about those events, or they might know a jumbled version from oral history. Perhaps that is one reason Paul said, "...no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). The Spirit revealed the Divine message to men in the first century, and they would record it for all time. I never would have heard of Jesus if it were not for the Bible—the Spirit-inspired Word. In that way, I cannot say "Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit."

Then, note the power of 1 Peter 1:22-23. "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever..." The new birth had taken place for Peter's audience because they obeyed the truth of God's Word "through the Spirit." That does not and cannot mean the Spirit came suddenly upon them. They were the ones who acted; they chose to obey. Yet, they had learned from the Spirit what to do. From the Spirit, they learned the truth (John 16:13).

The "water" to which Jesus referred in John 3:5 has to be the waters of baptism. Immediately after Jesus' discourse to Nicodemus, there is the record of John's baptism and statements of John pointing to something greater in Christ (John 3:22-36). The arrangement of paragraphs is no accident.

Water baptism was commanded on the first day of the church (Acts 2:38). Water baptism was requested by an Ethiopian eunuch who learned of Jesus (Acts 8:35-39). Water baptism was the means of Saul being cleansed from sins (Acts 22:16). Yet, the Bible ascribes no magical power to the water. In "baptism," it is not "the removal of the filth of the flesh" that saves, but "the answer of a good conscience toward God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). The water in baptism would have no power were that not the intent of God. We would not know it was the intent of God without the revelation of the Spirit.

Further, a new life begins at baptism. In reenacting the resurrection of Christ, the old man of sin is buried, and the new man arises to walk in a new life (Romans 6:3-6). That sounds like a new birth, like being born again.

Those who were baptized were added to the church (Acts 2:41-47). Those who were translated from the power of darkness to Christ's kingdom (Colossians 1:13-14) were the ones who had been "buried with Him in baptism...and raised with Him through

faith in the working of God" (Colossians 2:11-12).

For Nicodemus, this was vital. He could not take pride in a Jewish birth. Neither nationality nor physical family could make one right in God's sight. Now, all must be born again (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 5:25-26).

Yet, baptism alone saves no one. It must be accompanied by genuine faith, repentance, confession, and followed by a faithful lifestyle (John 3:16; Acts 17:30-31; Matthew 10:32-33; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (II Corinthians 5:1-9).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- April 7 – Men's Business Meeting & Ladies' Bible Class
- April 14 – Preach-N-Eat & 1:30 Worship
- April 28 – Song Service
- May 5 – Gospel Meeting with Jeff Cannon; Preach-N-Eat & 1:30 Worship
- Please give support money for Chinese orphans to Minnie Kennell