

Is the "New Birth" for Us?

A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)



Now we are introduced to an ignorant teacher! Intense application to a single textbook for a whole life had not taught him the elements of the truth! Nicodemus, however, was impressed with the Lord's works, little as he understood His words. Like the rest, he takes literally what is figurative. He should have known from Ezekiel, the prophet, that Israel could not enter the kingdom without a new spirit (Ezekiel 36:26). Spiritual regeneration, the one imperative condition, apart from which the kingdom cannot be entered, is utterly beyond his erudition. All that he considered vital was a physical relationship with the favored nation.

The Lord did not give out regeneration as good news, but as bad news. This is not the gospel, even for the Circumcision. The evangel is always concerned with God and His Christ, never with man and his needs or efforts. Of the latter nothing good can be said, no evangel can be formulated. The new birth is not an evangel in any sense. It makes a demand he has no means of meeting.

For one like Nicodemus, expecting to enter the kingdom by physical generation, it would be quite a blow to demand spiritual regeneration. Men are utterly helpless in regard to their physical generation. They can do no more to accomplish their spiritual regeneration. It is the sovereign work of God's spirit.

Searching as the figure is, it does not probe nearly so deeply into human helplessness as the truth for the present economy of God's grace. Now, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation (II Corinthians 5:17). In spirit, we skip the era of the kingdom, the renascence, and enter the new creation, over a thousand years later. A new birth will fit them for a life on earth during the millennial eon. The new creation fits us for our celestial destiny. They will

receive a rejuvenation of the faculties, we will be changed at the resurrection and receive powers and capacities far beyond our present possibilities. Regeneration keeps company with repentance and baptism. The new creation accompanies the dispensation of the conciliation (II Corinthians 5:18).

Concordant Commentary on the New Testament, p. 143

Taken from the *Bible Student's Notebook*[™], a weekly Bible study publication available in two formats (electronic and printed)

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