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Jesus And Nicodemus' Conversation, Another View, Defining 'Earnest Of The Spirit', Coming Glory, Jesus' Beneficiaries We Are Bought With A Price, Two-Fold Salvation - Redemption Of The Body And Salvation Of The Spirit, Mystery Of God And The Seventh Trump, Jesus' Proof Of The Resurrection, Our Spiritual Temple, Enigma Of New Jerusalem, Some Challenging Questions, What Is Our 'Treasure In Earthen Vessels'?

Within modern Christianity, many people are familiar with the term 'born-again'. As most of my Christian readers will already know, this term finds its origin in the following well-known conversation found in John chapter three, where Jesus has a night encounter with the inquisitive pharisee, Nicodemus:

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 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. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 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." John 3:3-8, KJV

While I was aware of the fact that, like Nicodemus, many people of the world fail to understand the concept of being born again, recently, it was brought to my attention through reading some messages from a few of our readers, that there appears to be some degree of confusion regarding the rebirth experience, even amongst certain Christians. The primary confusion seems to revolve around the exact timeframe when the born-again experience actually occurs. Personally, based upon my study of the Holy Scriptures, I believe that one is reborn, by faith, at the moment in which he accepts Jesus Christ, and acknowledges Him as his Lord and Saviour. Some Christians, however, apparently do not believe that this is so. So the question which we must settle here, is which of these two schools of thought is the correct one?

According to one Christian friend who wrote to me recently, he believes that when we each receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit, it is a sort of down payment, or 'earnest', of the true Salvation to come. My friend then explained to me, that it is his current belief that 'the Spirit of Christ takes up residence in the same location as our human spirit at the time of repentance, and actually unites with it to form the new creature.' He continued to explain that at that time,

'it is merely an embryo, not yet born'. According to my friend, the actual born-again experience 'is as literal as Jesus apparently made it seem, but that it happens at the 'redemption of the purchased possession', or in other words, the resurrection of the dead in Christ, and at the change Paul talks about at the last trump'. Please note that for the sake of accuracy, all of the words within quotation marks are my friend's own words, as it is not my desire to misrepresent him. My friend then provided the following verses to support his views:

"Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." 2 Corinthians 1:22, KJV

"Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 5:5, KJV

"Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." Ephesians 1:14, KJV

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." 1 Corinthians 15:52, KJV

So basically, it seems that what my friend is saying, is that he believes that at the time one receives Christ, a new creature is indeed created, but it is not born yet; and will not be born, until the time of the Resurrection of the Dead, sometime in the near future when Christ returns. While I can certainly agree with my friend regarding the Resurrection of the Dead, I must confess that there is a major difference in our understanding regarding the rest of his statements. As I stated earlier, while my friend views the rebirth experience as a future event, I believe that it has already happened; and that it is not the purchase of the full possession to which Paul is referring. Of course, I don't just expect you the reader to accept this view merely because I say so; thus, I will now begin to share some Scriptures with you in order to hopefully convince you of my understanding.

In the previous verses I shared with you a moment ago, the word 'earnest' is derived from the Greek word 'arrhabon'; which my Greek lexicon defines as money, which in purchases, is given as a pledge or down payment, that the full amount will subsequently be paid. What Paul is stating here then, is that God has already given us the down payment of the Spirit. He has already given us something which is only a small glimpse, a small reminder, of much greater and more glorious things to come in the future. Please notice that according to the definition of the word, it isn't just an empty pledge; it isn't just an empty promise; not that any of us would ever dare to even think that anyway; but there is something attached to this special pledge from the Lord; there is something which is given along with the promissory note; in order to prove that it is a valid, legal, binding agreement; and that the remainder of the amount will be paid in full at the time appointed. Concerning the balance that is still owed to us, the Apostle Paul wrote:

"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

1 Corinthians 2:9, KJV

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Romans 8:18, KJV

Perhaps you are wondering why anything is even owed to us to begin with. We certainly don't deserve it. Well, if that is what you are thinking, then you are absolutely right. Due to our sinful and sometimes rebellious nature, the only thing that we deserve, is the Lake of Fire. Not only that, but it isn't that we are owed something directly; we are merely the blessed beneficiaries, or recipients, of Someone else's abundant love and mercy. As the Apostles John and Paul wrote:

"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren." 1 John 3:16, KJV

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

Romans 5:6-8, KJV

So you see, when the Apostle Paul talks about acquiring the full purchased possession, he isn't talking about something that we ourselves purchased through some degree of goodness or righteousness of our own; he is referring to something which was purchased for us by Jesus Christ Himself, through His very own Sacrifice on the Cross. Consider the following verses:

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

1 Corinthians 6:19-20, KJV

"Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men."

1 Corinthians 7:23, KJV

"Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Matthew 20:28, KJV

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." 1 Timothy 2:5-6, KJV

So as I point out in such articles as 'Are You Crucified With Christ?', we are not our own any longer. We belong to Jesus. The main point I wish to emphasize here, is that according to Paul, because of Christ's Sacrifice, God the Father has already given us some kind of down payment; so we have to ask ourselves, exactly what is it? According to my

friend's understanding, it is some sort of embryonic state. As I have already explained, I believe that it is much more than that. Based upon my personal study of the Scriptures, I have come to conclude that there is a distinct difference between our spiritual Salvation, and the physical Redemption of our bodies. Not only that, but I believe that they occur at different times. Furthermore, as I explain in the series 'Great Cloud Of Witnesses: God's Holy Ghosts?', should death occur before Christ returns, I believe that our body, and our saved spirit, will be reunited at the time of the great Resurrection of the Dead.

As I have pointed out before, at this moment in time, God is primarily concerned with our spiritual Salvation. As far as our physical Redemption is concerned, it will come later. If you take the time to really study Paul's writings, you will see that whenever he talks about the coming Resurrection, he is referring to physical Redemption, when the corrupt body of flesh will be transformed and clothed in Immortality, and reunited with our already saved spirit which, according to my belief, will be resting in Heaven, if we have died before the Lord's Return. Again, please refer to the series 'Great Cloud Of Witnesses: God's Holy Ghosts?'. To substantiate my claim, allow me to begin by sharing the following verse. Please notice that Paul is clearly talking about physical Redemption and not spiritual Salvation:

"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Romans 8:23, KJV

Nowhere in this verse, or even in the surrounding verses, does Paul mention the forgiveness of sins and spiritual Salvation. His primary emphasis is on the Resurrection, Transformation and Redemption of the physical body, and nothing more. This is the wonderful Mystery of God at which the unbelieving world currently scoffs; which will occur at the glorious sound of the Seventh Trump, as we see in these verses:

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." 1 Corinthians 15:51-52, KJV

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."
1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, KJV

"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets."
Revelation 10:7, KJV

In my view, this is undoubtedly one of the main reasons why

Jesus showed Himself to over five hundred people following His Resurrection. He was making a statement. Not only was He giving final proof of who He was and is, but the Lord was basically telling His followers 'Look; this is what all of you are going to receive one of these days. See me; touch me; feel me. I want you to know and see that my Father keeps His Word. You will rise from the dead, just as you have seen Me rise from the dead. You will inherit and possess a body just like my own'. As if that wasn't already enough, the Lord then proceeded to eat physical food right before their very eyes. Consider the following verses:

"And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures," Luke 24:36-45, KJV

Now, in light of the previous verses, and considering that Paul clearly tells us that the Redemption to come is that of our physical body, let us read again one of the verses my friend shared with me; however, this time, I am going to include some of the verses which surround it, so that you can see it in its full context. It should become quite evident to you that the full purchased possession to which Paul is referring, is our new transformed Eternal Body. Like the verse I shared a moment ago, Paul does not even mention the forgiveness of sins or spiritual Salvation until later in the chapter:

"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."
2 Corinthians 5:1-9, KJV

Allow me to offer a clarification for those of you who may

require one. When Paul uses the phrases 'our earthly house of this tabernacle', 'in this tabernacle do groan', and 'in this we groan', he is not referring to a church building of stone where various members are groaning and lamenting; he is referring to our weak body of flesh from which we long to be freed into the glorious liberty of the Children of God. You may recall that earlier I shared the following verses with you. I am including an additional supporting verse below it:

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."
1 Corinthians 6:19-20, KJV

"Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Romans 8:21, KJV

So it is evident then, that this tabernacle, or temple, is our physical body which, for the time being, houses God's Holy Spirit. Following are several more sets of supporting verses which further strengthen this belief that we are each a part of God's Spiritual Temple; and that it is from within this Temple, that is, our body, that we must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth:

"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"
(1 Peter 2:5-9)

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:16-18)

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name."
(Revelation 3:12)

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first

heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Revelation 21:1-2, KJV

In like manner, when Paul uses the phrases 'a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens' and 'our house which is from heaven', he is referring to our coming Spiritual Body, for which we all long and groan for in the spirit to receive. In a more general sense, as some of the previous verses also indicate, we can also say that Paul is referring to the New Jerusalem, of which we will all be a part. While this may seem rather paradoxical to you, it seems that New Jerusalem may not only be a place, but it may also be a reference to we the Body of Christian Believers, who are each a spiritual temple, building or pillar within the City of God; after all, a city without inhabitants is not really a city. Thus, while John's description of the New Jerusalem descending from Heaven may be interpreted in a very literal manner, it may also be a reference to we the Saints, returning to dwell upon the New Earth. To add to this enigma, consider Jesus' words found in John chapter fourteen, and compare them to Paul's words below:

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:2-3, KJV

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians 2:19-22, KJV

So the questions we must ask ourselves are these: Are the mansions of which Jesus speaks actual buildings within New Jerusalem, the City of God; or is the Lord saying that we are each a mansion, or member, of God's Spiritual Household as Paul indicates in the previous verses, which are 'fitly framed together' and 'builded together'? Or is it possible that both are true? In other words, is there an actual City of Gold, of which we will be its golden citizens? Allow me to add yet another challenging question to our list. Is John's mention of the City and the streets being made of gold meant to be understood literally, or is this merely a reference to our faith which has been refined in the fires of chastisement and tribulation? Before you answer this question, consider the following verses which shed some additional light on the issue:

"But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold." (Job 23:10)

"And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them:

I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God." (Zechariah 13:9)

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."
(James 1:2-4)

"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:" (1 Peter 1:7)

"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified."
(1 Peter 4:12-14)

"I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see."
(Revelation 3:18)

If I may dare be so bold, allow me ask yet another question which may cause you to stop and ponder the possible true significance of part of John's vision. Is the River of Life which flows from the Throne of God really an actual river, or is it merely symbolic of the Spirit of Truth of God's Words which wash us clean and gives us all Eternal Life? Again, allow me to present some interesting verses for your consideration:

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."
Revelation 22:1-2, KJV

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water."
(John 7:38)

"Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it: but the instruction of fools is folly."
(Proverbs 16:22)

"The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook."
(Proverbs 18:4)

"BETH. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word." (Psalms 119:9)

"Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (John 15:3)

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"
(Titus 3:5)

As a final question for your consideration, if we accept that some of John's description is meant to be understood in an allegorical manner, is it possible that the trees which grow along side of the River of Life, are really symbolic of the Saints of God who, at some time in the future, will be sent out by the Lord to physically and spiritually heal the peoples of the world by sharing the Truth found in the leaves, or pages, of His Holy Word? Is it even possible that the fruit which these trees bear each month are actually the souls which will be won, and the lives which will be changed through our Ministry of Mercy in sharing the Word with them? While all will be perfect and well within the Golden City, this is clearly not the case with those who dwell without. Before you attempt to answer these questions, allow me to remind you of some verses I shared with you in part one:

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."
Psalms 1:3, KJV

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." Proverbs 11:30, KJV

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned...Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." John 15:1-6, 16, KJV

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Romans 7:4, KJV

As you can see, there are truly some very profound mysteries hidden within the Word of God, and I for one do not pretend to fully understand them all. As to the correct answers to my questions, hoping to not disappoint you, I must humbly confess that I cannot answer any of them with one hundred per cent certainty. Like the Apostle Paul, all I can say is:

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Romans 11:33, KJV

Returning to our main topic of discussion, what we have seen thus far, is that in writing about the coming Resurrection of the Dead, Paul seems to emphasize the Redemption of our physical bodies, and not forgiveness and the Salvation of our spirits. So we must ask ourselves, why is this? If you accept my earlier explanations, then I believe that it is because Paul already considers our spiritual Salvation as an accomplished task; and he lets us know this by his repeated reference to this mysterious 'earnest of the Spirit', this hidden down payment of the Spirit which he tells us that we already possess. In fact, these are not the only verses where Paul mentions this. In his second Epistle to the Corinthians he writes:

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."
2 Corinthians 4:7, KJV

As in earlier verses, by using the phrase 'earthen vessels', Paul is referring to our earthly bodies; but what exactly is this 'treasure' of which he speaks? This is a question which I will be answering in part two of this series. In addition, we will take a look at such topics as Holy Ghost Power, our inheritance in our Resurrected Bodies, the Lord's Spirit of Promise, our Quickened Bodies, spiritual Rebirth, the Spirit of Christ within us, the promise of Eternal Life, dead in sin, spiritual Salvation now and physical Redemption later, the miracle of butterflies, our coming Glorified Bodies, and no partial birth or embryonic state. I trust that you will join me.

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Defining The 'Treasure', Holy Ghost Power, Our Inheritance - Our Resurrected Bodies, Spirit Of Promise, Quickened Bodies, Spiritual Rebirth, Spirit Of Christ Dwells In Us, Promise Of Eternal Life, Dead In Sin, Spiritual Salvation Now, Physical Redemption Later, Miracle Of Butterflies, Coming Glorified Resurrection Bodies, No Partial Birth Or Embryonic State

I concluded part one by asking, what is this 'treasure' of which the Apostle Paul speaks? If we look at the verse which comes right before the one which contains this word, and if we then compare the two with another verse which my friend shared with me, it becomes evident that the 'earnest of the Spirit', and the 'treasure in earthen vessels', are the very same thing. In other words, Paul is saying that it is in fact the Holy Spirit itself; which is the Spirit of Truth which shines the Light and Knowledge of God's Word into our hearts; thus resulting in our spiritual Salvation. While the translators of the Bible have divided Paul's thoughts into two separate verses, I am joining them together below so that you can plainly see that Paul is actually saying 'ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance':

"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."
2 Corinthians 4:6-7, KJV

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." Ephesians 1:13-14, KJV

In other words, the Holy Spirit is the down payment of our coming inheritance; it is just a small part of what is yet to come. As further proof that the 'treasure in earthen vessels' is also a reference to the Holy Ghost, that is, to the 'earnest of the Spirit', notice that Paul employs the phrase 'that the excellency of the power may be of God'. This is not the only place in the Scriptures where the Holy Spirit is associated with Divine Power. Please consider the following examples:

"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."
Luke 1:35, KJV

"And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about." Luke 4:14, KJV

"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." Luke 24:49, KJV

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Acts 1:8, KJV

"Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." Acts 8:19, KJV

"How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him." Acts 10:38, KJV

"And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:" Romans 1:4, KJV

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost...Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ." Romans 15:13, 19, KJV

"And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." 1 Corinthians 2:4,5, KJV

"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake." 1 Thessalonians 1:5, KJV

So as can clearly be seen, this 'treasure' which we have in our Earthly bodies, which Paul tells us is the down payment, or 'earnest of our inheritance', is the Power of the Holy Ghost. The next obvious question is, exactly what is our inheritance? As we saw earlier, it is the full 'purchased possession'; that is, it is the Redemption of our physical bodies, which will then be rejoined with our saved spirit. Here again is a verse which I shared with you in part one:

"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Romans 8:23, KJV

As we saw in part one, Jesus Himself promised us the Gift of the Holy Spirit, which would serve as our Teacher and Guide into all truth. I believe that it is for this reason that in the previous verse from his Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul

refers to it as the 'Holy Spirit of promise'. This fact is verified for us by a number of other verses found in the New Testament:

"And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." Luke 24:49, KJV

"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." John 14:26, KJV

"Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come." John 16:13, KJV

"And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me." Acts 1:4, KJV

"Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Acts 2:33, KJV

"That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Galatians 3:14, KJV

"In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise," Ephesians 1:13, KJV

So the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of promise, is the 'earnest', or down payment, of our inheritance, which currently dwells within our physical bodies. It is a treasure and a part of our inheritance, but it is by no means the full thing. So the question we must ask ourselves is, what part is it? It can't possibly be the physical part, because we know that the Redemption of our bodies won't happen until the Lord returns; therefore, it must be the spiritual part; it must be directly related to our spiritual Salvation. Now, allow me to remind you of a verse which I shared with you in part one:

"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." John 6:63, KJV

Now notice carefully what Jesus says here. He tells us that the Spirit quickens, and that His words are Spirit and Life. Exactly what does that word 'quicken' mean? It is derived from the Greek word 'zoopoieo', pronounced dzo-op-oy-eh'-o, which my Greek lexicon defines as follows:

----- Begin Quote -----

- 1) to produce alive, beget or bear living young
- 2) to cause to live, make alive, give life
- 2a) by spiritual power to arouse and invigorate
- 2b) to restore to life
- 2c) to give increase of life: thus of physical life
- 2d) of the spirit, quickening as respects the spirit, endued with new and greater powers of life
- 3) metaph., of seeds quickened into life, i.e. germinating, springing up, growing

----- End Of Quote -----

So what Jesus is actually saying in the previous verse, is that it is the Spirit which makes us alive. Not only that, but it is the Spirit which restores life, and endues us with New Life. Furthermore, Jesus is plainly telling us that His words are Spirit, and that they give us this Life. In other words, when each one of us hears the message of Salvation, and receives it into our heart, we are filled with the Spirit, and are brought back to life. In fact, we are given Eternal Life. This is precisely why Jesus said:

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."
John 10:28, KJV

So again, the Lord is telling us that when we accept His words into our hearts by faith, we are quickened; that is, we are brought back to spiritual life, by His Spirit which takes up residence within us; because as He said, His words are Spirit, and they are Life. We become one with the Word, and He becomes one with us. This is the only possible way that we can gain this New Life, this Eternal Life, because He is the only one who has overcome Satan and Death through His Sacrifice on the Cross, and subsequent Resurrection from the Dead. Without the Spirit of Christ dwelling in us, we are totally lost. It is for this reason that the Apostles Paul and John wrote such verses as the following:

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Romans 8:9, KJV

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love," Ephesians 3:17, KJV

"To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:" Colossians 1:27, KJV

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Colossians 3:16, KJV

"Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." 1 John 4:13, KJV

Notice that in that last verse, John makes a rather clear connection between Christ dwelling in us, and the Gift of the Holy Spirit. John appears to be saying that the very

fact that we have each been given a certain measure of the Holy Spirit, is proof that Christ dwells in us. In other words, John seems to be making a direct connection between the born-again experience, which is a result of accepting Christ, and the Holy Spirit. This relationship between the promise of the Holy Spirit, and the Gift of Eternal Life is supported by other verses as well. Just as I have shown you that the Holy Spirit was promised to us, Eternal Life was also promised to us. Consider the following verses:

"But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Galatians 3:22, KJV

"For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Timothy 4:8, KJV

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus," 2 Timothy 1:1, KJV

"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;" Titus 1:2, KJV

"And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." Hebrews 9:15, KJV

"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." Hebrews 10:36, KJV

"And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." 1 John 2:25, KJV

Now, obviously, the reason that we each had to be brought back to life, the reason that we had to be quickened, is because before knowing Christ, and before we accepted His loving Atonement, we were dead in our sins; as is quite apparent by the following verses:

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23, KJV

"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;" Colossians 2:13, KJV

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;...But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Ephesians 2:1, 4-7, KJV

Please notice that in writing of our spiritual rebirth, Paul does not appear to be speaking of it as something which will happen some time in the future; he seems to be addressing it as an already accomplished task. He is clearly writing in the past tense. He is telling us that we were brought back to life, we were quickened, the very moment that we trusted in Jesus Christ, and received of His Holy Spirit. To further strengthen this view, consider the tense of the following verses. You will notice that Paul writes 'we have', and not 'we will have' or 'we shall have'.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;"
Ephesians 1:7, KJV

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:" Colossians 1:14, KJV

Notice though, that in the verses from his Epistle to the Ephesians, right after stating these things, Paul switches to the future tense and tells us that even though we have already been brought back to life, or quickened, through our faith in Jesus Christ, he realizes that we currently do not possess very much physical proof that these things are so; thus he offers us encouragement by saying that 'In the ages to come', we are going to receive the full assurance of these things, because we are finally going to receive the full possession; we are going to receive our new Glorified Bodies; and then we will fully know and understand God's grace and kindness, which will be bestowed upon us because of the Sacrifice of His Son. In other words, Paul is saying 'This is what you've already got'; past tense, 'but this is what you are going to get'; future tense. Paul is very consistent with this message. Consider another verse I shared with you a moment ago:

"For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." 1 Timothy 4:8, KJV

Can you see how clear that is? Paul says 'the life that now is, and of that which is to come'. In other words, we have Eternal Life right now; we have already been born again, or quickened by the Spirit; but it is only a small portion of that which is yet to come. We have already been given a sufficient measure of the Spirit to bring us back to life, but it is nothing compared to the things which will yet be. Jesus Himself told us that He came to give us Life, that is, Eternal Life, but even more abundantly; but that isn't going to happen just yet. We only have a little bit of it, but we do have it here and now by faith:

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10, KJV

The Apostle John adopts the very same attitude. He plainly wants us to know that we already have Eternal Life now; we have already been reborn in this current life, and that it is not something which will occur in the future. There is no need to wait for our spiritual Salvation, because that is

already ours now, by faith in Jesus Christ. Please notice that John uses the present tense; thus indicating that he views our spiritual rebirth as already being an accomplished task. In fact, if you look at the very first verses, he places the rebirth experience in the past by saying 'which were born'. So John is saying 'We believed, we received, and we were born again'; and obviously, we still are born again. If we try to put some of these verses in the future tense, so that they can apply to the Resurrection of the Dead, they make absolutely no sense whatsoever in my view:

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."
John 1:12-13, KJV

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." 1 John 3:9, KJV

"Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."
1 John 4:7, KJV

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him...For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith...He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God....We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." 1 John 5:1, 4, 12-13, 18 KJV

So you see, we have Eternal Life now, by faith, just as we are told in Hebrews 11:1. We cannot see it yet, because we have not yet received the final 'purchased possession'; that is, we don't possess our new resurrected, glorified bodies; but it is nevertheless already ours, because God's Word says so.

It is for these reasons, that I believe that our spiritual Salvation, our spiritual Rebirth, occurs the minute in which we accept Christ; because that is what the Holy Scriptures plainly state in my view. Jesus clearly said 'I give unto them eternal life', and not 'I shall give unto them eternal life'. We received New Life, a New Birth, a Second Birth, the very moment in which we trusted in Him. That is when we were quickened. That is what all of these verses seem to say to me. We have already received our 'earnest', we've already received our down payment, through the quickening of the Holy Spirit, which we now have in these 'earthen vessels', in these 'temples of the Holy Ghost', in these 'tabernacles' of the flesh, here and now.

So, to reiterate this point, all we are doing right now, is waiting to receive the rest of the purchased possession; the

full possession; that is, the transformation of our bodies, at the time of Christ's Return. That is when we will finally be perfected; that is when we will all finally be complete; because that is when our saved spirit will be reunited with our new, transformed and quickened bodies, so that we can totally enjoy our Eternal Life fully and abundantly, without any further restrictions by these weak physical bodies of flesh. Notice what Paul says in the following verse:

"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Romans 8:11, KJV

Now please notice, that in the verses I shared with you a moment ago from his Epistle to the Ephesians, Paul was clearly speaking in the past tense in reference to our spiritual quickening; however, in the above verse, he is clearly speaking in the future tense. Why is this? If you look at the topic of this verse, it becomes quite obvious. Just as Paul spoke in the future tense in previous verses when discussing the quickening of our mortal bodies, he is doing the same thing here. So this seems to be yet another confirmation, that he views our spiritual quickening, that is our spiritual Salvation, as an accomplished task when we accept Christ, while he views the Redemption of our physical bodies as a future event at Christ's Coming.

Please notice also, that while Pauls speaks of our physical transformation as a future event, he seems to be speaking of the in-dwelling of the Holy Ghost as an already accomplished event. He states 'his Spirit that dwelleth in you'. In other words, if the Holy Spirit dwells in you now, then you must already possess Eternal Life; you must already be born again now, and not later. In fact, indirectly, it may be that Paul is stating that the Redemption of our physical bodies, may in part be a result of the Holy Spirit which already dwells within us. To say it another way, the catalyst for change, the catalyst for our physical transformation at the time of the Second Coming, already exists in our body this very moment. Allow me to share a very graphical example which just now came to me. It is possible that I may share this same example in other articles as well. In his Epistle to the Romans, Paul wrote:

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:" Romans 1:20, KJV

This verse simply means that we can know and understand God's Power, and that He truly does exist, merely by looking around us at the physical creation. God can, and does, speak to us, and teach us, by way of His Holy Spirit, in a myriad of ways; if we are willing to take the time to listen. For example; consider the lowly caterpillar. By all outward appearances, unless we were already familiar with the life cycle of the caterpillar, we would never possibly imagine that someday, it will be transformed into a beautiful winged creature which will be freed from the bounds of the Earth, so that it can soar freely in the sky; yet that is precisely

what is going to happen.

Pretending that we are not aware of its life cycle, our erroneous assumptions are based upon its outward appearance. There is no hint whatsoever of the glorious transformation to come. All we can see is a fat, multi-legged, hairy body, which lumbers along, looking for the next juicy leaves to eat; however, just like those of us who have accepted Christ into our lives, it too already possesses the 'earnest of its inheritance'. Just as we now possess the Spirit, and have thus already been born again, within its body, it possesses the chemicals which will someday result in it casting off its Earth-bound state, so that it can be freed once and for all; yet due to our ignorance of its life cycle, we might totally deny this fact, because we can't see it yet. Just as our change is timed for the future, the caterpillar's change is also timed for the future. Barring premature death by its enemies, it is a sure event; just as the Redemption of our physical bodies is also a sure promise. In both cases, the catalyst is already present. The promise has already been given.

So similar to the lowly caterpillar, our Salvation is also a two-fold process. We receive the Salvation of our spirit now through the process of being born again when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour, which also results in the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit; and we will experience the Resurrection, Transformation and Redemption of our physical bodies, at the time of Christ's Return when body and spirit will finally be reunited. As I share in other articles, the Scriptures are full of wonderful verses which tell us of our coming change. Consider the following:

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Romans 8:29)

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:" (Colossians 1:15)

"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." (2 Corinthians 5:1-4)

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." (Philippians 3:21)

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2)

"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial:

but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Corinthians 15:40-52)

If you are interested in learning more about this glorious future event, may I suggest that you read such articles as the series 'Death: Final Battle, Final Victory', and 'The Great Tribulation And The Rapture'. For now though, let us backtrack in our thoughts for a moment. If my understanding of the Scriptures is correct; if it is indeed true that we are fully born again in the Spirit at the time in which we accept Christ, then it only seems logical that there should be some Scriptural evidence which discusses this New Life in Christ. One thing of which I am certain, is that, just as in the physical birth process there is no such thing as partial birth, the same rule applies to the Spirit. Either a person is fully born again at the time he receives Christ, or else he isn't. There is no such thing as some kind of temporary embryonic state which lasts until Christ's Return.

In the final part of this series, I will be presenting my Scriptural evidence in order to validate this point. This will also include looking at such topics as human pregnancy and childbirth, new creatures in Christ, spiritual milk and meat, no growth without birth, spiritual pride, knowledge versus love, spiritual children, the inner spiritual man, spiritual maturity and spiritual fruit, the blindness of the Jews, the children of the Kingdom cast out, the Invisible Kingdom, the veil removed, and Christ's Millennial Rule with a Rod of Iron. I trust that you will join me.

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Human Pregnancy And Childbirth, New Creatures In Christ, Spiritual Milk And Meat, No Growth Without Birth, Spiritual Pride, Knowledge Versus Love, Spiritual Children, The Inner Spiritual Man, Spiritual Maturity Results In Spiritual Fruit Spiritual Blindness Of Jews, Children Of Kingdom Cast Out, Not With Observation, The Invisible Kingdom, Veil Removed, Christ's Millennial Rule And Rod Of Iron, Concluding Remarks

It becomes evident from studying the Scriptures, that none of the writers of the New Testament described the born-again experience as being some kind of an embryonic spiritual state in which we all exist until Christ returns to redeem our physical bodies. Not only did they believe in and teach a full spiritual birth, but they also discussed spiritual growth as well. Obviously, growth cannot occur, if birth has not yet occurred; at least not the growth which they clearly describe in the verses I will be sharing with you. As we've already seen through quite a number of Scriptures, Paul and the other Apostles clearly viewed the physical Redemption of our bodies as a future event, while they also viewed the Salvation of our spirits through the remission of our sins, as an accomplished fact which took place at the time in which a person first received Christ and the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit. This is what has come to be known as the born-again experience, which Jesus discussed with Nicodemus.

Now, if you are old enough to read this, then you are also old enough to realize that the natural result of repeated sexual intercourse is pregnancy; unless steps are taken to prevent it. At the same time, pregnancy ultimately results in the labour process; which itself leads to childbirth. There is really no natural way around this. It is ordained of God. Not only is the baby more than ready to come out, but with most mothers, at least with God-fearing ones who respect the sanctity of life, and who don't selfishly murder their babies through cold-blooded abortion, they are also very eager to bring their child into the world.

From the beginning of the pregnancy to the end, it is quite a job, and a responsibility, for any mother-to-be, to bring that baby to full term. After the initial morning sickness, she is confronted with months of putting on extra weight; plus the possibility of increased heartburn due to the baby displacing her stomach; not to mention an increase in lower back pain; plus all of those sleepless nights because it is difficult to find a comfortable position in which to sleep; not to mention increased bathroom runs. So by the time those nine months are up, and labour has passed, that poor mother has had enough! Yes, it is a blessed event full of joy, but oh what a relief it is; right moms? As Jesus said:

"A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her

hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." John 16:21, KJV

So the point I wish to make here, is that just as human sexual intercourse may result in pregnancy and the eventual birth of a child, when God's loving Spirit has intercourse with us, His human creations, it too results in spiritual rebirth; that is, in a new life, and in a new creature in Christ; just as Mary's union with the Holy Spirit resulted in Jesus' conception in her womb. The Apostle Paul was clearly aware of this fact; and this is why he wrote:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17, KJV

But exactly what kind of creature is this? Is it just some kind of spiritual embryo which is waiting to be fully born at the time of Christ's Return as my friend believes? The Apostles certainly do not seem to have held such a view. As the following verses clearly indicate, they believed in full birth; that is, in the birth of a new babe in Christ Jesus:

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Hebrews 5:12-14, KJV

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:" 1 Peter 2:2, KJV

Now, obviously, if Peter and Paul viewed new Christians as mere spiritual embryos, then there certainly would not be this talk of giving them milk, much less meat, as we see in the previous verses. Milk, be it physical, or the spiritual milk of the Word, can only be given to a baby which has been fully born, here and now. From these verses, we can gather a few other bits of information as well. For example, notice that Peter says 'that ye may grow thereby'. This is a clear indication that not only did the Apostles believe in a full born-again experience at the time one received Christ, but they also believed that spiritual growth should occur from that point on. This is why in his comments to the Hebrews, we also see Paul writing 'But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age'. That certainly indicates a regular cycle of spiritual growth.

Common sense dictates that it is impossible for one to grow spiritually, if he has not even been born again yet. The problem that Paul seems to have been encountering with the Hebrews, is that due to their pride, some of the Disciples felt that they were spiritually mature enough to be teachers of the rest of the flock, when in Paul's opinion, they apparently were not. Perhaps this is why Paul felt that he had to knock them down a few levels in order to teach them a bit of humility. As we read in the Book of Proverbs:

"Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom." Proverbs 13:10, KJV

"Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs 16:18, KJV

From reading Paul's Epistle to the Church at Corinth, it appears that he may possibly have encountered the very same problem with those brethern as well; for in it he wrote in part:

"Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him." 1 Corinthians 8:1-3, KJV

Of course, it is also possible that dear Paul may have been speaking of himself; because only a few chapters later, we find him writing the following lines regarding his own personal battles in the flesh:

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing." 1 Corinthians 13:2, KJV

Regardless of whom Paul was writing about, surely his words apply to us all, and we would each do well to take heed to them. What we have seen thus far then, is that not only did the First Century Apostles believe in a full born-again experience, but they also believed that spiritual growth should occur following that event, as a result of seriously studying and obeying the Word. Naturally, just as a physical baby does not immediately mature into a full-grown adult, it becomes apparent in the Scriptures that neither the Lord, nor His Apostles, expected this of their followers either. In fact, Jesus quite often referred to His own Disciples as children, thus indicating that through their belief in Him, He considered them to be spiritually reborn, but not yet full-grown adults. Consider the following verses which verify this point:

"And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."
Matthew 3:9, KJV

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Matthew 5:9, KJV

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."
Matthew 5:44-45, KJV

"And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the

bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast." Matthew 9:15, KJV

"The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children." Matthew 11:19, KJV

"The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;" Matthew 13:38, KJV

"And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 18:3, KJV

"But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 19:14, KJV

"And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" Mark 10:24, KJV

"And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Luke 16:8, KJV

"Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Luke 20:36, KJV

"While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them." John 12:36, KJV

"Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you." John 13:33, KJV

"Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No." John 21:5, KJV

Following Jesus' own example of addressing His followers as spiritual children, even though they were physically grown men, or at least young adults, we find that the Apostles did the very same thing in their Epistles which were addressed to the brethren who were scattered throughout Israel and Asia Minor. Consider the following verses which verify this point:

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together...Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Romans 8:16-17, 21, KJV

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:26, KJV

"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," Ephesians 1:5, KJV

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;...For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:" Ephesians 5:1, 8, KJV

"Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness." 1 Thessalonians 5:5, KJV

"As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:" 1 Peter 1:14, KJV

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:...I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father...Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time...And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." 1 John 2:1, 12-13, 18, 28, KJV

"Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous...In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother...My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." 1 John 3:7, 10, 18, KJV

"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." 1 John 4:4, KJV

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments...Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." 1 John 5:2, 21, KJV

"The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth;...I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father...The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen." 2 John 1:1, 4, 13, KJV

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." 3 John 1:4, KJV

Continuing with our current parallel, children do not remain children forever; neither do they remain teenagers. There comes a time when they must mature into full-grown adults, who can not only care for themselves, but who can care for others as well. Thus, while the Apostles did address their followers as spiritual children, they also let them know that they, and the Lord, expected them to grow into the full stature of the inner spiritual man. Consider the following verses which highlight this point:

"Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men."
1 Corinthians 14:20, KJV

"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;" Ephesians 3:16, KJV

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:...But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Ephesians 4:13-15, 20-24, KJV

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:" Colossians 3:9,10, KJV

"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." Hebrews 5:12-14, KJV

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."
2 Peter 3:17,18, KJV

As I explain in other articles, such as 'Are You Just A Baby Huey?', 'The Parable Of The Tree And The Storm', 'Once Upon A Time: A True Story', and 'My Personal Vision And Your Challenge', once we have grown to spiritual maturity, then the Lord expects us to begin to bear fruit for His Kingdom. As I also explain in the series 'Is Jesus The Only Begotten

Son Of God?', this is a major part of God's overall plan, that is, to create an entire race of born-again children, who will populate His coming Kingdom. In fact, according to God's own Word, we will be like gods to the rest of the world in the time to come; but this can only happen if we grow and mature now, and begin to bear fruit of our own, as we see by the following verses:

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."
Psalms 1:3, KJV

"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise." Proverbs 11:30, KJV

"And these are they which are sown on good ground; such as hear the word, and receive it, and bring forth fruit, some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred."
Mark 4:20, KJV

"But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." Luke 8:15, KJV

"He spake also this parable; A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." Luke 13:6-9, KJV

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John 12:24, KJV

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned...Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you." John 15:1-6, 16, KJV

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Romans 7:4, KJV

With these verses, we have now completed the full spiritual cycle. We began with the born-again experience which begins in this current life when one accepts Christ and receives the in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit, and we have ended with the good fruit which should result once that new spiritual creature has matured into the full stature of the man, or woman, of God.

So returning to the verses which began this series, what Jesus was telling Nicodemus, is that his error, like so many other Jews of that era, such as the revolutionary Zealots, was that he was trying to understand things with his mind, instead of seeing them with the eyes of his spirit. He was looking for the Kingdom of God to come physically in the flesh, when it had already begun in Spirit. Many of the oppressed Jews of that time were looking for a Saviour who would literally free them from the cruel bondage of Roman Imperialism, just as Moses had freed them from cruel bondage in Egypt several thousand years before. Because they were temporal creatures of this world, some of the Jews were blinded to the truths of the Spirit, by the false god of this world; Satan himself; as we see in this verse:

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." 2 Corinthians 4:4, KJV

All some of them understood was physical Earthly power; and they thought that the Messiah would at that time restore the kingdom to Israel. When Jesus failed to do this as they had expected of Him, they went from crying 'Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest'; to 'Crucify Him, crucify Him!...His blood be on us, and on our children!'. In fact, as I point out in other articles, they were probably outraged even more when Jesus told them that the kingdom would be taken from them, and given to a nation more worthy than themselves. The Apostle Paul wrote all about the children of the flesh, and the children of faith. Consider the following verses:

"But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matthew 8:12, KJV

"Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." Matthew 21:43, KJV

Even the Lord's own Disciples at first had a difficult time understanding that the real Kingdom which He brought them, and the real liberation which He offered them, was spiritual in nature. It is for this reason, that even after He had been raised from the dead, and just prior to His return to the Heavenly Realm, we find the following incident occurring in the Book of Acts:

"When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put

in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." Acts 1:6-9, KJV

Like Nicodemus, the Apostles still hadn't understood that, at least for the time being, the Kingdom of Heaven would not come by physical observation; it would not be a physical kingdom upon the face of the Earth; and it would not bring physical liberation to the Jews from their Roman oppressors. The Kingdom of God could only be seen by those who were born again of the Spirit; and that is why Jesus then commissioned His followers to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, as we see by the previous verses. Jesus brought spiritual liberation, and new life, for those who accepted His words of truth. Consider the following verses as well:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised," Luke 4:18, KJV

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free...If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8:31-32, 36, KJV

"And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you." Luke 17:20-21, KJV

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:" 1 Peter 2:9, KJV

Just like the invisible wind which the Lord used as an example in order to try to help Nicodemus to understand the invisible nature of God's Kingdom, for the past two thousand years, God has been recruiting new members into His spiritual Household, through spiritual Rebirth. This worldwide Nation, this worldwide Kingdom, just like the wind, has remained for the most part invisible to the blind children of the world; because they have not been born again spiritually; and thus they cannot understand the things of the Spirit. In fact, such things are foolishness to them, as we see by this verse:

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."
1 Corinthians 2:14, KJV

However, someday, and hopefully very soon, in our lifetimes, the veil is finally going to be lifted, and everyone will

understand; even the Jews. In fact, as I explain in other articles, such as in 'Is God A Racist?', Paul tells us that the current blindness of the Jews, is for our own benefit, until the full harvest of Gentile souls is brought in. Consider the following verses:

"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief: Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." Romans 11:25-32, KJV

When all has been fulfilled according to God's perfect Will, the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ is going to return in the Glory and the Power of His Father; and the Kingdom which is only seen now through the eyes of faith, will become a physical reality upon the Earth during the time known as the Golden Age of the Millennium. At that time, beginning with the Battle of Armageddon, the Lord Jesus Christ will crush all of the rebellious governments of the world, when He rules them with a rod of iron. Consider the following verses, which you will also find in such articles as 'From Armageddon To The New Earth':

"Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces...And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever."
(Daniel 2:34, 44)

"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Psalms 2:6-9)

"Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?...And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them." (Matthew 21:42, 44-45)

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18)

"And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." (1 Corinthians 10:4)

"This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner."
(Acts 4:11)

"Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner," (1 Peter 2:6-7)

"And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father."
(Revelation 2:26-27)

"And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne." (Revelation 12:5)

"And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." (Revelation 19:15)

"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." (Revelation 11:15)

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

At that time, Jesus' prayer will truly have been answered, when He said 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven'; and we will reign with Him as well, if we are faithful now. With these inspiring thoughts, I am going to bring this article to a close. I pray that it has been a blessing and an inspiration in your life. It won't be long! Be thou faithful unto death, and He will give you a Crown of Life! Are you born again? It's not too late!

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