

A Sketch on the new birth John III. 3 James A. Riddick
Edenton, N.C. [?] 5 1840

1. There is a gushing and sincere love.
2. There is a beautiful simplicity in childhood.
3. An earnest and [?] truth.
4. An [?] and [?] of [?].

1. Confidence
2. Simplicity
3. Simplicity
4. Humility
5. Truth

John III. 3.

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.

These words form a part of an interesting conversation which occurred between our Lord and a Jewish ruler called Nicodemus. This distinguished Jew, who was also a member of the grand Sanhedrin, having heard of Christ, the reputed Messiah, with all the circumstances of his incarnation, the purity of his character, the sublimity of his doctrines, and the stupendous miracles ~~with~~ which he wrought in confirmation of his divine authority, became anxious to hold an interview with him in regard to the nature of that religion which he came into the world to establish. For this purpose Nicodemus came to Christ by night. He saw that the Saviour was surrounded by a crowd during the day time, and that no opportunity was afforded for such a conversation as he desired to hold. He therefore waited upon the Saviour in the night season, and addressed him in the most respectful manner both in regard to his office and the authority with which he was invested—Rabbi, said he, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou does, except God be with him. The Saviour understanding the object of his visit, replied in the language of the text. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” In the discussion of this important subject, we shall consider,

- I. What we are to understand by “the kingdom of God”
- II. The qualification necessary to our enjoyment of this kingdom.

I. The Kingdom of heaven, is a phrase of rather vague import, and its true meaning can only be ascertained from its relative position.

1. It is sometimes applied to the rise and progress of religion in the soul. For the kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man planted in his field, and which sprung up and grew under the influence of cultivation, and refreshing showers until it became a large and beautiful tree, sending out its branches, and affording a lodgment for the birds of the air. That grace which leads the soul to the fullness of glory may sometimes begin with one good desire, a single wish to escape the punishment of the wicked, and obtain the reward of the righteous. For the path of the just is like the shining light.

2. The kingdom of heaven sometimes refers to the visible church. Hence it is represented under the idea of ten virgins, five of whom were wise, and five were foolish. From this some

commentators have supposed that about one half of those who have been church-ed in the present world will be condemned in the final day.

3. The phrase "Kingdom of God" in our text, must be understood in a two-fold sense; 1st as it refers to the [?] ings of the gospel in the present life, and 2. as it refers to the [?] heavenly glory with which the people of God will be rewarded in a future state.

In this sense respect the kingdom of God ~~will be a place~~ is a source of the most perfect happiness and exquisite enjoyment. But the [?] will not be fully [?] until he shall become a [?] of [?] Lord Jesus Christ will parade the armies of Israel upon Mount Zion and lead them [?] to fountains of living water, and all tears shall be wiped from their eyes. The Christian has frequently wished that he had lived in the days of X. -- -- --

In the kingdom of heaven we shall mingle with the holy angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. S.c John heard the voice of many angels [?] about the throne-- -- --And he saw a vast multitude of all nations XC—When we reach the future abode of the righteous our bodies shall be freed from ~~from~~ pain, disease and all the impediments of mortality, and rendered healthy, vigorous, active, incorruptible and immortal. In the kingdom of heaven our knowledge will be greatly increased—our worship greatly improved—and our happiness will endure forever.

4. To see the kingdom of God implies the enjoyment of religion in the present life-- --And finally to be put in possession of glory, honor, and immortality at the right hand of God. And if we reach that blissful abode, we shall be amply compensated for all our toils and conflicts in the present life.

"Go bring thy flight from star to star
From world to luminous world as far
As this universe spreads its flaming wall
Take all the pleasures of the spheres
And multiply each thro' endless years
One moment of heaven is worth them all"

II. We shall now proceed to consider the qualification necessary in order to enjoy the Kingdom of God. "We must be born again."

On this part of one subject we shall consider ~~the na~~

(I) The nature of regeneration. This is a point of the highest importance to every child of man. For unless we understand ~~the~~ what is meant by this great and essential doctrine of Christianity, we shall fail to obtain that qualification which alone can give us admission into the kingdom of glory.

1. We would observe in regard to spiritual regeneration that this doctrine should not be confounded with water baptism. The Jews were in the habit of making proselytes to their religion, ~~by the ordinance of Baptism~~ and when a Gentile became a convert to the Jewish faith, he was [?] into their covenant by baptism, and considered in the light of a new born babe. But to expose this error, the Saviour said to Nicodemus, that the birth for which he contended must be from above and accomplished by the Holy Spirit.

We know that Mr. Alex Campbell of Brooke Co. [?] has insisted that water baptism was regeneration but he has said this without the least authority from the Bible, the Saviour said to the Jewish ruler, "except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven."

We fear however, that many like Mr. Campbell have attached an undue importance to the external rite of baptism, which is but an [?] many ~~have been~~ are [?] to flatter themselves

because they have been baptized and [?] into the church , that they are in the ~~high~~ favor of God and on their way to the kingdom of heaven. But if we have not [?] the baptism of the holy spirit, if we have not been born from above, we are yet in the dark, in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity.

Human agents may baptize water, but Christ alone has the power to pour upon [?] the baptismal influence of the Holy Spirit, and he who has not [?]? His baptism has neither right nor title to the Kingdom of God.

2. In the next place we would observe that regeneration is not a mere reformation of the outward conduct. This no doubt has been the fatal delusion of hundreds and thousands of the human family. Because they have laid aside their gross immoralities, and read the Bible and go to church occasionally, they are ready to conclude that they are Christians, and that nothing more is necessary. But the ~~Lord Jesus~~ great founder of our religion is very explicit upon this subject. He knew that the Jews were prone to trust in outward observances, he therefore said to his disciples, except your righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. By which he meant that our righteousness must exceed theirs in regard to spirituality. It must affect the heart, and create a kingdom within which is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and [?] in the Holy Ghost.

3. Seeing then that regeneration is neither Baptism nor the reformation of the outward conduct, the question again recurs What is spiritual regeneration? To which we reply that this great and essential doctrine implies that work of the Holy Spirit by which we experience a change of heart. It is that change which God works in the soul. When [?—?] it is brought into life; when it is raised from the death of sin to a life of righteousness. It is that change which is wrought in the soul when it is created anew in Christ Jesus, when it is renewed after the image of God: When the love of the world is changed into the love of God, pride into humility, passion into meekness: hatred, envy, and malice into a sincere, tender, disinterested love of all mankind. In a word, it is that change whereby the carnal [?] mind is converted into that mind which was in Christ Jesus. This great change is sometimes called conversion, a new creation, being born from above, being [?], Christ formed in the heart, and a partaking of the Divine nature, and it is ~~this change is~~ the highest [?] than can be enjoyed in the present world.-- -- --

4. We would observe in the last place on this part of our subject, that this change of heart is an instantaneous act, for it is absurd to suppose that there can be any medium between life and death. The Almighty does not pardon our sins by degree as many have vainly supposed. An individual may be seeking the Lord a long time; he may be slow of faith, but whenever the work is wrought it is accomplished by the same divine act and in the same moment of time.

(II.) We shall consider in the next place the fruits and effects of regeneration. Were it not for this test of Christian experience we might deceive ourselves with frames and [?], with strange and fatal delusions; but the mark of conversion the fruits of a pure heart are laid down so plainly in the word of God, that all who will measure themselves by this standard may ascertain whether they are in the faith.

1. This great change will produce an upright walk, and a godly conversation, For whosoever is born of God do[?] not commit sin habitually or willfully.
2. This change will produce new desires. The carnal mind seeks happiness in the pleasure of the world, but the Christian strives to make every thing subserve the ~~greatest~~ interests of religion.
3. The renewed man enjoys peace of conscience and tranquility of mind.
4. The Christian believer is inspired with hope.

(III.) We shall consider in the last place the necessity of regeneration. This arises from the fallen condition of man, his original guilt and actual transgression. When our first parents violated the law which had been given them for the trial of their faith, they were alienated from the life of God and [?] wretched and unhappy-- -- -- --

This moral contagion procured by the transgression of our first parents has been ent[?] upon the whole of their posterity. We bring with us into the world a moral taint by which we are constantly inclined to do evil. Every child of [?] Adam is born ~~came into the world~~ spiritually dead; entirely devoid of the true holiness in which man was originally created. This then is the foundation of the new birth mentioned in our text. Hence it is that being born in sin we must be born again; and hence every one that is born of a woman, must be born of the spirit of God. God has made provision for our recovery from the ruins of the fall and if we do not accept the great salvation provided in the gospel, we shall die in our sins.

2. We must be born again because the unrenewed man, would be unprepared to appreciate and enjoy the happiness of heaven.

There must be some congeniality between our feelings and the sources of our enjoyment.

Take for example a ~~the~~ man of rude manners, who has been raised in great obscurity accustomed only to rustic life, and place him a parlor with a company of ladies and gentlemen of great refinement, and he [?] be rendered perfectly uncomfortable and dissatisfied with his situation.

Take the swearer, the gambler, the drunkard, the miser or the debaucher, and let him associate with a company of pious persons and hear them ~~speak~~ converse on the subject of religion—the joys of heaven, the love of God [? ?] in the heart, and the punishment which awaits the wicked—such an individual would be wretched and unhappy—anxious to seek the society of more congenial spirits.

And let the unrenewed man be translated to the kingdom of heaven and behold the New Jerusalem, and hear the song of saints and angels-- --such a man would be entirely unprepared to partake of the joys of that bright world and his feelings would not accord with its [?], and heaven itself would be a place of anguish and misery ~~torment~~—and the soul must be created anew and the moral feelings attuned to the joys of heaven, [?] before we can enter upon [? ?] which [?] for the people of God.

And if we have no taste for the exercises of religion in the present world—if the service of God is an [?] task—If we find no pleasure in reading the Bible, in the practice of prayer, and the preaching of the word, we may rest assured that we have no suitable qualification for the kingdom of heaven.

3. We must be born again in the last place because God has required it, and will punish the unregenerate—[?] he is good to all, and sendeth rain upon the just and upon the unjust, and causeth the sun to shine upon the evil and the good, yet he is angry with the wicked every day. (Rom: I. 18, 1 Cor VI. 9, Heb: XII. 14, 1 John II.29.)