

Elder Vernon Johnson

Numbers

Eight and Fifty

New Birth

God made a covenant with Abraham and gave him the sign of circumcision as a token of the covenant he had made with Abraham: Gen. 17:10 "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. 11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. 12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. 13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."

Under this covenant, the male children were to be circumcised when they were eight days old. If they were not circumcised, then they had broken the covenant and thus had no part in the covenant. Circumcision was a sign that they had part in the covenant. Circumcision identified them as having part in the covenant that God made with Abraham.

This pointed to a much greater covenant that God made before the foundation of the world. This covenant is often referred to as the covenant of redemption and is stated in Rom. 8:29, 30 "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. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." In this covenant, God foreknew, predestinated, called, justified, and glorified a people to be his. It is in the calling that a person can identify himself as having part in this covenant that God made before the world began.

The effectual calling of God brings about the new or spiritual birth. This new or spiritual birth is described in several different ways, one of which, is spiritual circumcision of the heart: Rom. 2:28 "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter;

whose praise is not of men, but of God." This spiritual circumcision of the heart is also spoken of in Col. 2:11 "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." Thus, in the new birth we are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands by Jesus Christ. Deu. 30:6 "And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live." This spiritual circumcision of the heart identifies us as having a part in the covenant of redemption.

Gal. 5:22 "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23 Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." When we can see the evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives, then we have the assurance that we have been born of the Spirit and therefore are a part of the covenant of redemption.

The new birth gives us spiritual ears by which we can hear and understand the things of the Spirit of God. Eight times in the gospel we read where the Lord said along this line, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Likewise, in the book of Revelation we read eight times, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." With the spiritual ears of the New Birth we can hear and respond to the things of the Spirit of God, that we could not do without the new birth: 1 Cor. 2:14 "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."

The New Birth imparts unto us a new nature that cannot sin: 1 John 3:9 "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." This is in contrast to the old flesh nature which Paul stated, "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing."

The new birth is truly a new beginning for the elect of God. Before the new birth they were incapable of doing any good or seeking God or worshipping God in Spirit and in truth. Once they were born of the Spirit, however, they can do good, seek God, and worship God in Spirit and in truth. Also, seeing the evidence of the fruit of this spiritual birth in their lives gives them the assurance that they have part in the covenant of redemption and that heaven will be their eternal home.