

The Kingdom of God and Eternal Life (7)
Who Can Enter into The Kingdom of God?
Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

Recapitulation

Last time we saw that the greatest in the kingdom of God is the one who humbles himself to become a slave to save people. Of course ultimately that is our Lord Jesus Christ. If you follow the Lord's example, if you humble yourself to be like a slave to save people, and if you obey God's teaching to the point of death, then you will also be great in the kingdom of God. After hearing this, do you still want to enter into the kingdom of God?

^{NAU} **John 3:1 – 5** Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; ² this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God *as* a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." ³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" ⁵ Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

This Pharisee named Nicodemus came to talk to the Lord Jesus at night, and the Lord said to him, "unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus did not understand what it means to be born again, so the Lord explained further that, "unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Please take notice of this statement, this is the very word declared by the Lord Jesus, if you want to enter into the kingdom of God, you have to be born of water and the Spirit.

What does it mean to be born of water and the Spirit?

^{NIV} **Titus 3:4 – 5** But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,

Here it says that God saved us not because we have done some righteous deeds. When we were living a self-centered life, we would always take care of our own interests first, we would see our own interests as being more important than the needs of other people, and we would do some good

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deeds only if our own interests are not affected, and we would not do things that can affect our own interests. This kind of so-called good deeds are not good in God's eyes; that's why it says here that God saved us not because of those so-called righteous things we have done, He saved us because He had mercy on us.

How did He save us? Verse 5 says that God saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

- Washing refers to baptism;
- Rebirth means re-born, born again;
- We need both: rebirth at baptism and renewal;
- What does "renewal" mean? The Greek word for renewal is "ἀνακαίνωσις" (anakainosis). The Greek dictionary points out that renewal is a process; when a person goes through a renewal process, he is becoming a spiritually new person who is completely changed from the old one.

According to this passage, Titus 3:4 – 5, it is by the Holy Spirit that we are born again at baptism, after that we are being made into a new kind of people through the renewing process. It is through rebirth and the renewal process that we are saved.

Baptism is the starting point of salvation, but does it mean that as long as one gets baptized, he will be born again automatically and then changed by the Holy Spirit? And he will be saved? Or does he have to fulfill certain requirements before he gets baptized? Does he have to do certain things before he gets baptized?

These are very important questions related to our salvation, we need to look into the word of God to find the answer.

Baptism – the pledge of a clear conscience toward God

First of all, what is the meaning of baptism?

^{NIV} **1 Peter 3:21** and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Here it says that baptism is not just taking a bath to remove dirt from the body; baptism is the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. That means at baptism you make a pledge to God of a clear conscience.

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What pledge is that? It is through the baptism you enter into the spiritual kingdom of God, therefore the pledge that you make is that you will submit to the kingship of Yahweh God. At the baptism you make a pledge to submit to God, He is king in your life, you obey Him totally; But you need to make this pledge with a clear conscience.

How can you have a clear conscience?

When you have sins in your life, your conscience is certainly not clear.

^{NIV} **Titus 1:15** To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.

If your heart is pure, which means that you have no sin in your heart, then everything is pure. If you are corrupted, which means that you have sins, then both your mind and conscience would not be clear, they are corrupted.

Apostle Peter says that baptism is the pledge of a clear conscience toward God, therefore you have to repent of all your sins before you get baptized, especially repent of your self-centered life and change to a God-centered life, then your conscience is clear, then you can get baptized. I have explained the meaning of “repentance” and “self-centered life” in an earlier message titled, “Repent, for the kingdom of God has come near,” so I will not repeat them here.

At baptism, with a clear conscience you make a pledge to God to submit to His kingship totally.

What happens to us at baptism?

Then what happens to us at baptism?

^{NAU} **Romans 6:3 – 4** Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

Here it says that we have been baptized into Christ; Take notice of this word into, we are baptized into Christ, that means we become one with Christ, our spirit is one with Christ; Whatever happened to Christ two thousand years ago would also happen to us today spiritually.

- Christ died to sin two thousand years ago, and we die with Christ, so we also die to sin.

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- As Christ was buried, we are also buried with him spiritually;
- Christ was resurrected from the dead, so we are also resurrected with him, then we live in a new life! We become a new person, our old life is changed into a new life.

Through baptism we die with Christ spiritually, we are buried with him spiritually and we are resurrected with him spiritually.

We continue to do the will of God in the new life

But does it mean that after we get baptized and become a new person, then we will certainly enter into the kingdom of God?

^{ESV} **Matthew 7:21** Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Please take notice that these people call the Lord Jesus, “Lord, Lord,” they are not non-believers, they are Christians; the Lord says that not every Christian will automatically enter the kingdom of God, but only he who does the will of our Father in heaven can enter the kingdom of heaven.

Even though our old life is changed into a new life, and we become a new person, it doesn't mean that we will automatically enter into the kingdom of God, No! No! we have to continue to do the will of God in order to enter into the kingdom of God.

But how can we know the will of God? And how can we do His will? We need the help of the Holy Spirit.

Receiving the Holy Spirit

^{NAU} **Acts 2:38** Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Apostle Peter says that when you repent and are baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven, and God will give His Holy Spirit to you. We just learned that at baptism the Holy Spirit makes us into a new person; and more than that, this passage Acts 2:38 says that God will give you the Holy Spirit as a gift. Before that happens, the Holy Spirit has been working in our hearts to teach us, to help us and to lead us to God, but He does not live inside us. Then at baptism the Holy Spirit is given to you as a gift, He will live inside you. What is He going to do?

1. The Holy Spirit reminds us of the teaching of the Lord Jesus

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^{NAU} **John 14:26** “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.”

Here the Holy Spirit is called the Helper, because He is going to help us; He will teach us all things, especially He will “bring to your remembrance all that I said to you”, which means that the Holy Spirit will remind you of the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

Quite often when I face a situation in which I don't know what to do, I turn to Yahweh God for help, then the Holy Spirit would remind me of a certain teaching of the Lord Jesus, so that I can apply it in my situation.

2. The Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment

^{NAU} **John 16:7** “But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. ⁸ And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment;

The Lord Jesus says that after he goes away, that is, after he dies and goes to the Father, he will send the Holy Spirit to us; When the Holy Spirit comes, He will point out to us the sin of the world. Please take notice that when the Holy Spirit points out the sin of the world, that includes our own sins too. The Holy Spirit will convict us of our own sins as well as the sin of the world. He will also teach us about righteousness and judgment.

Some people in the world don't have the conviction of sin, they don't see their sins. Many years ago I read an article in which the boss of a pornographic magazine was being interviewed. The interviewer wanted to make fun of him, so he asked this boss, “Do you sometimes feel embarrassed by what you do?”, but this boss replied shamelessly, “What embarrassed? I don't understand what you mean? I don't feel embarrassed at all!” Obviously this boss doesn't have the conviction of sin in his heart, because he doesn't have the Holy Spirit!

3. The Holy Spirit intercedes for us

^{NAU} **Romans 8:26** In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for *us* with groanings too deep for words;

Sometimes when I am very sad to the point I don't even know what to pray for and how to pray, and I simply can't utter any words, then the Spirit would intercede for me, He would pray for me with groanings.

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Many Christians have received help from the Holy Spirit as well as the conviction of sin. One time when we preached the gospel in a certain country, I was talking about how the Holy Spirit would lead us to do the right thing, but He would also convict us of our sins. When an evil thought passes through our mind, He would immediately point out our wrong attitude; while I was still talking about this point, a brother in the group responded, saying with a loud voice, "That's right! It's exactly like that!" This brother had committed serious crimes before, for which he had been put in prison! That's why when I heard his statement I was so happy, because the Holy Spirit was working in his heart to teach him, to convict him and to change him!

Another time we went to preach the gospel in a new place, I gave a sharing about how the Holy Spirit corrected me of my wrong attitude; After that a sister told me that she also had the same experience. When I heard that I just praised God for the leading of the Holy Spirit, because I didn't even know her name, we just came to that place, I knew nothing about her life, but the things I had shared was exactly her experience, isn't that amazing? It was for her benefit that the Holy Spirit had led me to share that experience so that she could see her own problems.

The Holy Spirit leads us and teaches us everyday, He also convicts us of our sins, in this way we are being changed to become more and more like the Son of God Jesus Christ; that is the renewal of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

Now we sum up everything we have learned today. We looked into the question of who can enter into the kingdom of God. The Lord Jesus said that unless you are born again, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Born again means born of water and the Spirit. Water refers to baptism; at baptism you die to the old life, then you are born again into a new life, and every day you are being changed by the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is the starting point of your salvation, it is not just taking a bath to remove dirt from the body. Before you get baptized, you have to repent of all your sins, especially the sin of the self-centered life. Baptism is a pledge that you make to God to submit to His kingship, to obey Him totally; Then Yahweh God will give you the Holy Spirit to live in your hearts. The Holy Spirit reminds you of the teaching of the Lord Jesus; and because He lives inside you, He knows your heart, He will convict you of your sins and teach you to do the right thing. Everyday you are being changed by the Holy Spirit to become more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ, you are on the way to being saved, you are entering the kingdom of God.