

John 3:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Analysis

Jesus draws a fundamental distinction: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' Two realms, two sources, two natures. Fleshly birth produces fleshly existence—unable to perceive or enter God's kingdom. Spiritual birth requires the Spirit's work, producing spiritual life. This explains why new birth is necessary: physical existence, no matter how refined or religious, cannot produce spiritual life. Different origins yield different natures.

Historical Context

The flesh/Spirit distinction appears throughout New Testament theology (Romans 8:5-8, Galatians 5:16-17). Jesus establishes categories that Paul and other apostles would develop. The impossibility of flesh producing spirit eliminates all human effort as the source of salvation—only divine intervention through the Spirit brings spiritual life.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the flesh/Spirit distinction challenge attempts to earn salvation through human effort?
2. What is the relationship between our natural birth and our need for spiritual rebirth?

Interlinear Text

τὸ	γεγεννημένον	ἐκ	τῆς	σάρξ	σάρξ	ἐστιν	καὶ	τὸ
G3588	That which is born	of	G3588	flesh	flesh	is	and	G3588
G1080		G1537		G4561	G4561	G2076	G2532	
γεγεννημένον	ἐκ	τοῦ	πνεῦμα	πνεῦμα	ἐστιν			
That which is born	of	G3588	spirit	spirit	is			
G1080		G1537		G4151	G4151	G2076		

Additional Cross-References

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

1 Corinthians 6:17 (Spirit): But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.

Genesis 6:12 (Parallel theme): And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

Job 25:4 (Parallel theme): How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?

Job 14:4 (Parallel theme): Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.

1 John 3:9 (Parallel theme): 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.

Psalms 51:10 (Spirit): Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

Romans 7:18 (Parallel theme): For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.

Romans 8:13 (Spirit): For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Ephesians 2:3 (Parallel theme): Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

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