

Sunday, January 5, 2014

A New Birth

The incarnation and the birth of Christ gave a new beginning to man.

The beginning of mankind started with Adam and Eve. However, **Adam's nature was corrupted by sin**, and as he passed on life to his offspring, he passed onto them death as well. We, as Adam's offspring, received this corrupt nature that is destined to death. **We received death alongside with life, eternal death with earthly life.**

This nature that we took from Adam, was changed when the Lord Jesus was incarnate. This nature is called in the New Testament "**The old man**" (Colossians 3:9) because when Jesus united with our nature [the old one], he granted to us a new nature. Everyone who believes in Him and enters with Him into a covenant through baptism is granted a new birth and new life that is not defeated by death. This new nature is called "**The new Man**" within us (Ephesians 4:24. Colossians 3:10). This new man is in the image of Christ, His creator. The new man gradually grows in righteousness and holiness, like a young growing child till the features of Christ clearly appear in him. Thus, Christ is called "**The second Adam**" (1Corinthians 15), that is to say He is the beginning and the head of the new creation. This is emphasized by our Teacher St. Paul the Apostle in his words "**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation**" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Hence, we recognize that the incarnation and birth of Christ was the only means through which He granted us the gift of new birth and son-ship to God and belonging to the new Adam who became to us a "**Life-giving Spirit**" (1 Corinthians 15).

Therefore, as we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, we ought to celebrate our own new spiritual birth from the second Adam. Our belonging to the second Adam has surpassed the shortcoming of belonging to the first Adam, and cured all the deadly diseases that entered into the human nature through the first Adam. Therefore, we now find a new life in our Lord Jesus, the second Adam, one which is not chained by sin nor defeated by death...

In other words, it is not enough to celebrate the birth of our Lord without bearing in mind our new birth and our new glorious life. We gained our new birth when we died and resurrected with Him in our baptism. And in baptism, the seed of the new man, the image of God, was sown within us. Through our strife and with the help of the Holy Spirit that is granted to us in the sacrament of confirmation, this seed grows within us, and the features of the new man start to appear in our lives.

In the light of this notion of the new birth, we recognize the meaning of the following verse:

+ "**having been born again, not of corruptible seed** [the seed of man through the first Adam] **but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever** [Christ the incarnate word of God]" (1 Peter 1:23).

+ "**As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby,**" (1 Peter 2:2). That is to say we need to feed the new man rational food, spiritual one, to let him grow... This food is the word of God, prayer, and communion.

+ "**But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who 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), "**Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.**" (1John 3:9). It is evident here that the new man doesn't sin, but we sin through the old man. The more we spiritually strive through grace, we get rid of the dominion of the old man and his sins. In the meantime the new man, who does not sin but lives in holiness and brings fruits of righteousness and virtues, grows within us.

+ "**My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you.**" (Galatians 4:19). It is evident here that the spiritual ministry gives birth to souls for Christ... Souls that receives the seed of the new life and grows until the radiant image of Christ appears in it.

+ "**Put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, putting away lying Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor... Be angry, and do not sin, do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification... And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.**" (Ephesians 4:22-32).

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Perhaps we can see in these verses the characteristics and the works of the old man which we ought to completely get rid of. We can also see the characteristics and the works of the new man which we ought to strive in growing them so His glorious image radiates from us.

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