



In the study 'Discipleship (1)'<sup>1</sup> we explained that Jesus Christ expects those who are converted<sup>2</sup> through faith in Him to become His disciples as well, by giving Him authority over their life. Jesus alludes to this in the conversation with Nicodemus, the Pharisee, and calls **discipleship: Entering into the Kingdom of God.**

When Nicodemus asked Jesus about His doctrine, He answered him:

- *Very truly I tell you, no one can **see** the kingdom of God unless they are **born again**. (John 3:3)*
- *"How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a **second time** into their mother's womb to be born!" (John 3:4)*
- *Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can **enter** the kingdom of God unless they are born of **water** and the **Spirit**." (John 3:5)*

This shows that Jesus makes a distinction between:

- **seeing** the Kingdom of God
- **entering** the Kingdom of God.

To **see** the Kingdom of God a person has to be **born again** (anew).

To **enter** the Kingdom of God a person has to be **born** of **water** and the **Spirit**.

### Seeing the Kingdom of God - conversion.

A person has to be '**born again**' to be able to see the Kingdom of God.

#### To be born:

In the study 'To beget and to be born'<sup>3</sup> we explained that the Greek word '**gennao**' is used, and that this can be translated both as **to beget** and as **to be born**.

The NIV version of the Bible translates the text in John 3:3 as meaning that a person has to be **born** again in order to be able to see the kingdom of God.

It is more probable that Jesus meant to say here: **to be begotten**.

#### Again:

'**Again**', is '**anthen**' in Greek, translated by the OLB as:

- from above, from a higher place
- of things that come from heaven or from God
- from the very beginning
- anew

Nicodemus reacted to Jesus' declaration: *unless they are **born again**, ...* by asking whether a person is actually able to be born '**anew**'.

This is not what Jesus meant, however.

Jesus meant that a person has to be born **from above, from heaven**, as the text is also translated when John the Baptist testified of Jesus:

- *The one who comes **from above (anthen - from heaven)** is above (epano - more than) all. ... (John 3:31)*

1 Study: Discipleship (1).

2 Study: Conversion.

3 Study: To beget and to be born.



'From above, from heaven' means: **spiritually**.

**Conclusion:**

'To be born again' can be translated as: **to be begotten from above, by God**.

**That is what happens through the forgiveness of sins, when someone comes to faith in Jesus Christ and is converted.**

By **conversion** a person is **regenerated to new spiritual life** in a relationship with God.

When Jesus told Nicodemus:

- ... *no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are **born again**. (John 3:3)*

He meant to say:

- ... *no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are **converted**. (John 3:3)*

**Through faith in Jesus Christ, through being converted, the believer gets awareness of the spiritual world and he is able to see the Kingdom of God.**

**Entering the Kingdom of God - discipleship.**

Jesus desires, however, that a person be not only converted (becomes a believer) and able to see the Kingdom of God. He desires the believer to place his life under His authority and to become His **disciple**.

Jesus calls this: '**Entering** the Kingdom of God' in His conversation with Nicodemus.

**That which is hidden** (the spiritual life that is 'begotten' through conversion) will have to become **visible** through '**birth**': **discipleship** in order to be able to enter.

Jesus says:

- *Very truly I tell you, no one can **enter** the kingdom of God unless they are **born** (not begotten) of **water** and the **Spirit**. (John 3:5)*

The believer must be **born** through **two steps of obedience** in order to be able to **enter** the Kingdom of God:

- **to be born of water**
- **to be born of the Spirit**

**To be born of water - step 1 of obedience.**

**To be born of water** is the image of the water baptism, the immersion in water<sup>4</sup>, that follows conversion.

The public confession of faith in Jesus Christ by baptism makes conversion (being begotten into the spiritual world) **visible** to everyone.

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<sup>4</sup> Study: Baptism.



Jesus gave His disciples the instruction:

- *Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes **and is baptised** will be saved ... (Mark 16:15-16)*

**Baptism**, immersion in water, should follow conversion automatically and is **the first step of obedience**.

### **To be born of the Spirit - step 2 of obedience.**

Paul writes:

- *We were therefore buried with him through **baptism (immersion)** into death in order that, **just as Christ was raised from the dead** through the glory of the Father, we too may live **a new life**. (Romans 6:4)*

When he writes 'we', Paul means the believers, the people who have been raised to spiritual life through belief in Jesus Christ.

This 'being raised' should be followed by immersion in water as a sign of the **birth** to a new life.

Paul says about this that, as Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, the person baptised is expected to start to walk '**in newness of life**' and reorganise his/her life as such.

That is what Jesus meant when He said: **Follow Me** to people who believed in Him.

After baptism, placing one's life **under Jesus' authority** is the **second step of obedience**, whereby the converted person becomes a **disciple** of Jesus.

Jesus calls this: **being born of the Spirit**<sup>5</sup>.

**He calls being born of water and the Spirit, living as a disciple of Jesus: entering the Kingdom of God.**

### **Summarised:**

Jesus teaches that:

**Seeing the Kingdom of God** is the consequence of being begotten to spiritual life, through faith in Jesus Christ, **through conversion**.

**Entering the Kingdom of God** is the consequence of **two steps of obedience**, which the believer must take by:

- **being born of water**: confirming conversion by baptism (immersion in water)
- **being born of the Spirit**: making faith, trust in Jesus Christ visible by deciding to start to live as a disciple of Jesus, under His authority, whereby the Holy Spirit will pour out the love of God into the disciple's heart.

Entering the Kingdom of God is the same as living in God's family.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Study: Discipleship (2).

<sup>6</sup> Study: Child of God.