

# *A Layman And His Church*

Dr. L. Nelson Bell

## **NO BIRTH CERTIFICATE!**

A man had a dream and found himself at the portals of Heaven. When he demanded admission, search was made and the reply came back: "The rolls of Heaven have been searched and there is no record of your birth!"

If this story brings a sophisticated smile, we would suggest that it is neither imagined nor corny. It speaks of a truth which too many, even in the Church, completely ignore.

Many of us have found ourselves scurrying around to get a birth certificate when applying for a passport, or for any governmental service where certification of citizenship is essential.

To the inquiring Nicodemus our Lord made this unequivocal statement: "*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" Seeking clarification, while at the same time trying to look at our Lord's reply in terms of purely human reasons, Nicodemus asked, "How?"

In words pregnant with deep spiritual meaning our Lord said: "*Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*"

How can we face these words of the Lord Jesus Christ without asking that this work of the Spirit take place in our lives? Then, and then only, will we have our spiritual birth certificates. Then, and only then, will our names be written in the records of Heaven.

What is the answer of some today?

"I have been a member of the Church for forty years." Yes, but have you been born again?

"I have been an officer of the Church for twenty years." Yes, but have you been born again?

"I have been a minister for many years." Yes, but have you been born again? Remember all you church members, Jesus said: "*Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.*" And what is His will? That we shall believe in His Son and trust Him for cleansing and forgiveness. Have *you* been born again?

"I have been a professor in a theological seminary for a long time." Yes, but have *you* been born again? All the "religion" in the world, the most extensive learning, the epitome of erudition, scholarship to its ultimate end . . . none of these can take the place of the new birth. Have *you* been born again?

"I have been active in the Women of the Church for years and have helped promote every program of our Church." Yes, but have *you* been born again? All of the activities in which you have engaged have their legitimate place in the work of the Kingdom, but they mean nothing in your soul's salvation. Have you been *born again*?

"I have never joined the Church because I know so many hypocrites in it. But I have led a good, clean, moral and honest life and have tried to treat others as I want them to treat me." Yes, but unless you have accepted Jesus Christ as your own Saviour from sin and made Him the Lord of your life you have not been born again, you do not have a birth certificate – you cannot possibly enter the kingdom of Heaven.

"I am a scientist and I have seen God's mighty works in creation." Good, but recognizing God as the origin and preserver of the universe is not enough. He sent His Son to redeem you from your sins. Nothing sinful can enter into God's holy and eternal presence. You need a new nature, a complete change. You *must* be born again.

Friends, we are writing about an *imperative*. The securing of a spiritual birth certificate is not an elective for Heaven, it is an *absolute necessity*, and it is obtained in but one way: "*Not by virtue of any moral achievements of ours, but by the cleansing power of the new birth and the moral renewal of the Holy Spirit, which He gave us so generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour.* (Titus 3:5,6 – Phillips.)