

C. The Major Ministries Of the Spirit to Believers

The ministries here referred to as "major" include four: regeneration, indwelling, filling, and fullness.

1. Regeneration

The word "regeneration" (παλιγγενεσία) is used only twice in the Bible, in Matthew 19:28 and Titus 3:5. The Matthew reference refers to the end time, when things will be made new; the Titus reference speaks of the initial application of salvation, when the Spirit of God cleanses and makes new the believing sinner.

But what does "regeneration" mean? What does it involve?

The word "regeneration" in ordinary English is used to mean "the act or process of generating or producing anew or of restoring to original strength or condition." Thus we use regeneration to mean the normal process of the body's renewing of itself day by day, or the restoration, after injury or loss, of a part of the body by the growth of new tissue. And we also use regeneration to mean the upgrading of energy that has been used and would ordinarily be lost for useful work, but can now be used again.

But what does the term mean biblically and doctrinally?

Upon completing an examination of a number of scriptures, we will draw a detailed idea of regeneration, but for the time being we will employ the following working definition of regeneration:

Regeneration is the impartation, by the Holy Spirit, of spiritual life to one who is spiritually dead.

But before we examine scriptures that speak of regeneration, we must ask why regeneration is necessary. And for the answer to this question, we turn to the Bible, and note both the Old Testament and New Testament references pertinent to this question.

Old Testament References

Genesis 8:21 -- "man . . . every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood."

I Kings 8:46 -- "for there is no one who does not sin."

Psalm 14:2-3 -- "The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one."

Psalm 51:5 -- "Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."

Psalm 58:3 -- "Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies."

Psalm 143:2 -- "for no one living is righteous before you."