

How God Makes Christians

International Bible Lesson

James 1:16-27

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“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures” (James 1:18—KJV).

“In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of God’s creatures” (James 1:18—NRSV).

Jesus taught that in order to see and enter the kingdom of God you must be born of the Spirit (John 3:3-8). James explained that the Father of lights gives “us birth by the word of truth.” The Spirit of God uses the Word of God written to change lives, and the difference can only be described as a God-given new birth or new beginning. You can know if you have been born of the Spirit, because “everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God” (1 John 5:1). Believing “Jesus is the Christ” means believing “Jesus is the King,” Who God promised to send when He spoke through the prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures. If you bow before Jesus as your Lord and King, you know that you are born of God, because “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3). Those who are born anew will believe and obey the Bible; for they will “be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves” (James 1:22). James described his first readers as “a kind of first fruits of God’s creatures.” As “first fruits,” they were samples of what God could create in and through the lives of those who followed Jesus as Lord according to the Scriptures. The first Christians, who worked together in the New Testament Church, should serve as examples of what the Holy Spirit can bring forth when He applies the truth to the hearts and minds of those who receive the new birth.

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Thinking Further

1. Name three ways people can be deceived today.
2. Name three of God’s perfect gifts to you and our world.
3. How can praying and resolving to be quick to listen and slow to speak help prevent us from speaking quickly in anger?
4. How can we best nurture the growth of God’s implanted word in our hearts and minds?
5. What does James say is pure and undefiled religion? How might someone misunderstand his teaching on this?