Repentance to Be Followed by Change of Character

"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord God. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin." Ezekiel 18:30, NKJV.

The learned Nicodemus had read these pointed prophecies [e.g., Psalm 51:10-13; Ezekiel 36:26, 27] with a clouded mind, but now he began to comprehend their true meaning, and to understand that even a man as just and honorable as himself must experience a new birth through Jesus Christ, as the only condition upon which he could be saved and secure an entrance into the kingdom of God. Jesus spoke positively that unless a person is born again he or she cannot discern the kingdom which Christ came upon earth to set up. Rigid precision in obeying the law would entitle no one to enter the kingdom of heaven.

There must be a new birth, a new mind through the operation of the Spirit of God, which purifies the life and ennobles the character. This connection with God fits mortals for the glorious kingdom of heaven. No human invention can ever find a remedy for the sinning soul. Only by repentance and humiliation, a submission to the divine requirements, can the work of grace be performed.

Iniquity is so offensive in the sight of God, whom the sinner has so long insulted and wronged, that a repentance commensurate with the character of the sins committed often produces an agony of spirit hard to bear.

Nothing less than a practical acceptance and application of divine truth opens the kingdom of God to human beings. Only a pure and lowly heart, obedient and loving, firm in the faith and service of the Most High, can enter there. Jesus also declares that as "Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

The serpent in the wilderness was lifted up on a pole before the people, that all who had been stung unto death by the fiery serpent might look upon this brazen serpent, a symbol of Christ, and be instantly healed. But they must look in faith, or it would be of no avail. Just so must people today look upon the Son of man as their Savior unto eternal life. The human race had separated itself from God by sin. Christ brought His divinity to earth, veiled by humanity, in order to rescue the race from its lost condition. Human nature is vile, and the character must be changed before it can harmonize with the pure and holy in God's immortal kingdom. This transformation is the new birth.--The Signs of the Times, November 15, 1883.