

Alive Again

John 3:1-21 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." 9 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

The "New Birth" ("Regeneration" in theological terms) is the language of New Creation.

"Regeneration is the putting into the soul of a new, spiritual law of life, light, holiness and righteousness which lead to the destruction of all that hates God...Regeneration produces an inward miraculous change of heart...Our minds have a new, saving supernatural light to enable them to think and act spiritually"

- John Owen

2 Corinthians 5:17-18 If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God.

Titus 3:4-6 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Ephesians 2:4-7 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Big Idea: The New Birth is the first and necessary taste of grace for God's people.

I. The New Birth is wholly the work of God

we do not contribute to the new birth, we simply display the evidence of it

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3:5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

3:8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

3:13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

3:21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

Ezekiel 36:25-27 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone

from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

John 1:9-13 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. 12 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 6:63-65 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe." (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) 65 And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.

John 8:46-47 Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? 47 Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.

it challenges our desire for control
it upholds all our security in God – it can't be reversed

II. The New Birth is the prerequisite to all true spiritual life

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Understanding, believing, repenting, and entering the kingdom

it challenges our understanding of spirituality
it propels all our spiritual progress

"Since spiritual life originates in heaven, it will always gravitate toward heaven. God is not only the cause of spiritual life, but also the object of its motions. God Himself is all the delight, pleasure, and joy of the regenerate man. He cannot be without God. He wishes for and must enjoy the light of God's countenance, peace with God, and love and communion with God."

- Wilhelmus Brakel

III. The New Birth is made possible by the cross of Jesus

3:14-21 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

not by our good intentions
not by our intelligence
not by our church involvement

it is the ultimate showcase of our need for rebirth

it challenges our assumptions of human nature
it confirms God's love for us