

Born Again

Genesis 1:24-25, 1 Corinthians 1:18, 1 Corinthians 1:23, Matthew 7:22-23, 1 Peter 1:3, 1 Peter 1:23, Luke 24:27, 1 Peter 2:2, Philippians 2:12-13

Slide 1

Birth is a remarkable culmination of months of miraculous development, in fact, there are excellent documentaries that are available on the internet showing the fetal development from conception to birth.

Why am I talking about the miracle of birth? It's because the creation of human life is a glorious testimony to the power of God, but so too is the new birth in a reprobate life.

According to God's master design, birth is a continuous cycle. It's according to His command as seen in Genesis 1.

Genesis 1:24-25, "And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good."

However, when man was created, God gave them specific instructions.

Genesis 1:28, "God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

God never intended death to be the master in His creation. That came about through man's acceptance of sin which is the reason creation is filled with such sorrow.

Mankind loves its sin and repentance is the last thing a natural man will ever pursue. If it wasn't for the intervention of God, man would've continued his downward spiral into chaos.

We can't go back into our mothers' wombs and be reborn in the hope that we turn out to be a better person because we'd still come out the same way – born in sin and iniquity, no better than the first time.

Therefore, there must be a better way, a completely new birth of supernatural origin.

We know we're incapable of doing that, so we have to recognize and accept God's way, a way He provided at a great cost.

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In the third chapter of John, we see Jesus discoursing with Nicodemus. Jesus, in uncertain terms, spoke of the necessity of a new birth.

Now, Nicodemus was thinking of physical birth, but Jesus told him that this new birth had its origins from above, and without it, no one would enter heaven.

The third chapter of John is vitally important in explaining what this new birth is because regeneration through the new birth is in the spiritual arena, and only spiritual people can really understand it.

The unconverted think it's silly, stupid, or foolishness, but God knew they'd say that –

1 Corinthians 1:18, *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*

1 Corinthians 1:23, *“But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.”*

All of us were born with spirits dead to God but alive to wickedness and only God can change that.

It's necessary that we understand this new birth, because the confusion that reigns in churches today is caused partly by the neglect to teach what the new birth is.

Most conservative Christians speak about being born again but so many churches either neglect it or don't believe in it. They think church rituals, programs, and constitutions are what faith is all about.

We can't dismiss, even for a minute, the whole truth of the Bible. That's a betrayal of the Word of God and it's the Bible that'll be our judge in the coming day.

Think about how dreadful it would be to hear God say to you the following words found in Matthew 7.

Matthew 7:22-23, *“Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’”*

Born again means to be born into God's family, to have the rights of sonship and inheritance, it's not living in the servants' quarters.

Born again Christians live in the Father's house as His own very sons and daughters.

That's a privilege we must never take for granted. We should always consider the cost of our salvation: the suffering and death of Jesus Who loved us and gave Himself for us.

It's very important that we remain close to the Lord. Two messages ago, we looked at deviation, the condition where we can depart from God, and not even notice it.

Once we start walking in devious or questionable ways, our born-again status begins to fade. In fact, the saddest thing is when people deviate so much that they have no desire to repent or return to the Lord.

Peter, through the Holy Spirit, sheds light on the operation of this new birth, allowing us to understand it more. In a previous message, we saw that this new birth had its origin in the mercy and love of God.

God's mercy to us is like the parable of the good Samaritan found in Luke 10.

The Samaritan stooped down in compassion and lifted up a beaten man in great need, carried him to a place of restoration, and then paid to have him cared for.

God lifts the man, beaten up by sin and vileness, and tenderly restores him, creating a new person. God is the great "Rebirther!"

If any person is in Christ Jesus, he is a new creation. "Creation" is the correct word, because God creates us anew.

From sin to righteousness; from deadness to life; from despair to hope; from sadness to joy.

Slide 3

1 Peter 1:3, *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”*

We sang about this mercy just a few minutes ago.

Mercy there was great, and grace was free.

Pardon there was multiplied to me.

There my burdened heart found liberty -

At Calvary.

My burdens were lifted through God’s pardon. My liberty was my regeneration. My regeneration was from God’s mercy.

Then, a few verses down from here, Peter moves his readers to a further understanding of the new birth.

1 Peter 1:23, *“For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”*

This new birth is the fruit of the imperishable seed, it is everlasting and divine in quality; it also means the seed itself was eternal.

But Peter doesn’t let it hang there as a mystery. He qualifies the nature of this regenerative seed which he declares is the *“living and abiding word of God.”*

This is the second time in this letter Peter uses the word *“living.”* There was a living hope we studied last week and now, a living word.

The implication behind using the word “living” is that “hope” and the “Word of God” are active, effectual, and growing as all life grows.

So, what makes the Word of God effectual? The Holy Spirit makes the Word of God effectual in convicting and drawing power. He's the One who activates this living word.

Peter spoke of "*the word of God*" and there's no doubt he meant the scriptures. The scriptures of the early church were mainly the books of the Old Testament.

I've heard people say, "*The Old Testament is too difficult and not relevant because it doesn't mention Jesus.*" How short sighted can one be.

Luke 24:27, "*And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.*"

Moses wrote the first five books of the Old Testament so starting there, then moving to the Psalms and the Prophets, Jesus explained the scriptures concerning Himself, but He only did a fraction of the references because there are hundreds of them.

People who don't study the Old Testament or don't preach on it are doing a disservice to the Lord. It's His word so let's honor God in the study of His provided word.

Have you heard this saying, when talking about the Bible, "*The New is in the Old concealed and the Old is by the New revealed.*"

Both Testaments dovetail perfectly as do the entire God-inspired scriptures breathed by the Holy Spirit.

Make no mistake about it. There can be no regeneration of the human soul, which is dead to God, without the operation of the Word of God.

Therefore, a preacher must be aware of the importance of the quickening Word in preaching. The absence of this is what makes the social gospel so false and dead.

Because some churches are reluctant to preach on the new birth, the devil's tares are increasing. The easy believeism of mega churches is a good example.

It's the Holy Spirit who convicts and reveals the Lord, but He won't be able to do that without being able to apply God's word. This why we must never neglect the Bible.

Additionally, this regenerative Word is also termed the "*abiding word*" by Peter.

That's a comforting thought, for the same Scriptures that gave rise to the new birth, are the ones that continue with us to develop the regenerated life.

Having begun with the Scriptures, it's vain to think we can continue to progress without them. The Scriptures are essential for the whole Christian life - birth, development, maturing, and consummation.

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1 Peter 2:2, "*Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.*"

The milk of the Word is pure or another way to put it is, it's "unadulterated." This is the purest food God can give us.

It's just as essential for a newborn Christian to feed on the Word as it is for a newborn baby to feed on its mother's milk.

I continue to be amazed of the material I'm given in the Bible. I thought I understood the Bible well enough but even now there's more and more coming out of those Words.

It's like a gold mine that has a vein of gold going straight down to the center of the earth. You go deeper and deeper and still there's more.

Then Peter says we should "crave" the Word of God. The word crave means "*long for or desire.*" That indicates a deep, fully committed longing that can only be satisfied by being granted.

A baby will cry its lungs out, go red, shake its arms and legs because of its craving to be fed. That same attitude should be evidenced in a Christian.

If only young Christians would earnestly seek to know the Bible and grow closer to the Lord, then so much of the shallowness we have in churches would disappear.

If only those who stand in pulpits would immerse themselves in the true Word of God, then churches would change dramatically. If only those in churches were sincere about their faith and not just pay lip service to it.

Sadly, these are the times of Laodicea where people rule churches and institutions, and not God.

In too many places the Christian faith has been prostituted; watered down, adulterated, where no longer is "pure milk" available.

I remember when neighbors got milk directly from dairy farms, 100% milk. They would let the milk sit on the counter for a while for the cream to settle on the top.

Now it comes in plastic containers or cardboard packets with all sorts of processing done to it and it's watered down. That's exactly what has happened to the preaching and teaching of the Bible.

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Conclusion

The purpose of this longing for this spiritual milk is for growth in respect to salvation. It doesn't mean that salvation is obtained by works.

It means that, in regard to all three aspects of salvation, the word of God is essential. So, what did Paul mean when he said this:

Philippians 2:12-13, "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."

Working out one's salvation has nothing to do with working for salvation. We can't work for salvation; it's a free gift through faith.

Working "through" one's salvation and working to establish it through the Lord, is what we must do.

We're not just floating jellyfish in a sea of humanity. We are sons and daughters of the King of Kings.

And, as such, we must work in His kingdom and make sure our faith is established in order that we can help others in their faith as well.

You can't help anyone unless you are fixed in the faith, unmovable, and can grasp and hold those being swept among by instability.

Our faith has three tenses, past, present, and future.

The past tense relates to being saved from the penalty of sin at the new birth.

Sin leads to death and if your sins are not covered by Christ's sacrifice on the cross then you're in mortal danger of passing into a lost eternity.

Salvation is when you come to Jesus for forgiveness and accept Him as your Lord and Savior.

At that point, your sins have been taken away and the penalty of death removed from you because Jesus took your penalty.

The present tense. The Christian life is not a rosy bed of luxury with all your problems solved. In fact, for some people, that's when the problems begin.

You'll come under attack because you belong to Jesus. Satan hates that and attacks the children of God. Also, we still have the old nature that wants to rule our lives and pull us down into the cesspool of sin.

We're being saved daily from the power of sin on this earth. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to become overcomers and to walk in victory.

The future tense. Lastly, we have a most beautiful aspect of salvation. It's when we're going to be saved from the very presence of sin when we're in the Lord's presence.

One day all those who are truly the Lord's will be in the presence of Jesus Christ where there is no sin or even the slightest imperfection whatever.

Don't you long for that time when your salvation is complete for all eternity?

Saved from sin's penalty; being saved from the power of sin on this earth; and finally, saved from any presence or remembrance of sin!

What a lovely situation Jesus has brought us into, but sadly too many don't know that. They haven't responded to the grace of God. By faith we're saved and made to be a child of the King.

We must always long for the unadulterated Word of God that we might grow in regard to salvation.

Feast yourself on the word of God for it will establish you in the storms of our present age that are increasing.