



Week 14 - Resurrection and Regeneration

Spiritual Resurrection and Regeneration: Resurrected Spiritually with Christ

Our new birth is a spiritual resurrection that unites us today with Christ in heaven. This is a positional resurrection, in that God: “raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6).

At salvation, our inner being is made alive with Christ in this spiritual union. This initial resurrection will one day be made complete when Christ returns, and our bodies are also resurrected. “I tell you the truth, a time is coming... when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. ... Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.” (John 5:25-29).

Our pluralistic society wants to believe there are many paths to God.

Three Faulty Perspectives of Salvation

Universalism	no one will be lost; all will be saved because of the love of God
Pluralism	more than one way to heaven; one religion is not better than another
Inclusion	a blending of Christ’s redemption with pluralism; many will be saved because of their sincerity toward God through a bevy of religions

The Biblical Perspective of Salvation

Exclusivity	Jesus is the only savior (John 3:16-18, John 14:6), and salvation is only possible through faith in him
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To reject the exclusivity of Christ’s work on the cross is to call Jesus a liar. Jesus said: “I am the way and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me” (John 14:6).

Logically speaking, if there were any other way to reconcile man and God, why would God choose to sacrifice His own Son? If any measure would suffice, why would the Father or His Son resort to that supreme sacrifice?

See also: Romans 6:4-14, Colossians 2:13, 3:1, Ephesians 2:5.

Regeneration: A New Life in Christ

Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come. (2 Corinthians 5: 17)

In salvation, or justification by faith, the Holy Spirit brings new life into the believing heart. The experience of salvation varies. For some, it is deeply emotional, a deeply felt sense of new freedom. For others, it feels just like a practical decision. Whether attended by tears of joy or not, conversion is called by Jesus the “new birth” or “born again.” Technically, this is also called regeneration.

Nick at Night Teacher

Jesus told a visiting Rabbi, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” John 3:3-5

Thus, to be a Christian is to be “born again.” When asked, “Are you a born-again Christian?” a reasonable response could be, “Is there any other kind?” In the new birth, our spirit is made alive, we move from death to life, and we begin a new life of fellowship with God through the Holy Spirit.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism and a mighty preacher of the gospel, championed the “born again” message and experience. In his message entitled “The Great Privilege of those that are Born of God,” Wesley described the new birth as, “A vast inward change, a change wrought in the soul, by the operation of the Holy Ghost; a change in the whole manner of our existence; for, from the moment we are born of God, we live in quite another manner than we did before; we are as it were, in another world.”

Scripture distinguishes between the body, soul and spirit in many places: (Romans 7:22; 2 Corinthians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 4:12.) The language of the New Testament, Greek, also uses different words for body and flesh. The body is the physical outer man. The flesh refers to the sinful nature or impulses. This careful word choice makes it clear that the New Testament authors rejected the notions of the Greeks (such as Plato) who called the body evil and the spirit good. Understanding this distinction guards us against the monastic and ascetic errors (see Colossians 2:20-23). Obviously, it is neither the Body nor the “flesh” that gets born again, but the spirit within.

The first warning of death in the Bible was when God told Adam, “If you eat the fruit of the forbidden tree you shall die” (Genesis 2: 17). From the day of Adam to today, we are born into spiritual death and desperately need the new birth that only comes through the saving power of Jesus in one’s life.

Regardless of what we call this experience (saved, converted, etc.), the true agent of this new birth is the power of the Holy Spirit. This experience is totally by the wonderful grace of God, and it allows us to “see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3) and to pursue a new life of righteousness, hence avoiding any negative judgment. This is indeed something much greater than “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.”

Review:

1. What happens at salvation?
2. Name the three faulty perspectives of salvation. What do you believe is the guaranteed way to get to heaven?
3. What does it mean to be “born again?”