

The New Birth

In this study we will look at the awesome miracle that takes place in someone's heart when they receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior and are born again. This transforming encounter with Jesus Christ is also called 'to be saved.'

A. Why Do We Need A Savior?

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, He created Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, and He placed them in the Garden of Eden. He told them that they could eat from all the trees in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan entered the garden in the form of a snake and deceived both Adam and Eve to eat of this fruit. They lost their relationship with God and sin, sickness, sorrow and death entered this world. God promised them that He would send a Savior to deliver mankind from their sins. The fall affected all of mankind.

David writes in Psalm 51:5, 'Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.' That means every person comes into this world with a sinful nature. Paul affirms this when he writes in Romans 3:23 'for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.' Isaiah writes in Is 59:2 'But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.'

Sin separates us from God so that we cannot have a relationship with Him. If we continue in this sinful state, without turning to God and having our sins forgiven through the death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, Jesus told us that we will die in our sins. He said to us in John 8:24, 'I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.' Paul affirms this in Rom 6:23, 'For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

So what is sin? Sin has to do with our hearts. We can look good from the outside and might even seem to function well in our outward behavior, but it is what goes on in mind and heart that really matters. Jesus said in John 3:19, 'This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.' It is the evil thoughts in our minds and the guilt of sin in our hearts that separates us from God.

B. What About Good Works?

You might say: "I try to be good and I help others where I can. I do good everyday, so I believe I am OK with God." A man came to Jesus with this kind of thinking. In Matthew 19:16-17 we read

Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments."

He was looking for some vindication for all of his good works, but Jesus says to him that there is no one who is good except God alone. You see according to James 3:4, sin is transgression of God's law. This man had kept all of the commands, except the most important one and that is: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' (Matt 22:37) We can only do this when Jesus forgives our sins and changes our hearts. Everyone needs a Savior!

Paul writes in Eph 2:8-9 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast.'

No one can earn salvation through their own good works. God is a just God. Therefore everyone has to come to Him on the same basis. It is only the grace of Jesus and believing in Him that brings us salvation. Sin cannot enter Heaven, because Heaven is where God lives, who is holy. The penalty of sin is separation from God and eternal death in Hell. But, praise God, there is Good News!

C. The Love of God the Father Revealed in Jesus

In John 3:16-17 we read: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.'

God made a way for us to restore us into fellowship with Him. He sent His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus said, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' - John 14:6

And in Acts Peter said, 'Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.' - Acts 4:12

It is only through the shed blood of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection from the dead that we can be saved. There is no other way. So, how can we be saved?

D. We Are Saved Through Believing In Jesus

Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. - John 1:12-13

When we ask Jesus to come into our hearts and receive Him as our Lord and Savior, we become children of God, as we put our faith in Him.

Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.' - John 5:24

'For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' - John 6:40

John 17:3 'Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.'

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world." - John 11:25-27

Furthermore the Word of God says: He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household." - Acts 16:30-31

That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved... As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." ... for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." - Rom 10:9-11 & 13

E. Your Sins Are Forgiven!

When you believe in Jesus and receive Him as your Lord and Savior, He forgives all your sins. Jesus demonstrated this in the Gospels:

Matthew 9:2 Some men brought to him a paralytic, lying on a mat. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven."

Luke 7:47-48 & 50 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ... Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

John 8:10-11 Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

Jesus paid for our sins through His sacrificial death on the cross. According to the Gospel of John these were the final words of Jesus before He died: "It is finished." (John 19:30) With these words Jesus declared that our debt and guilt of our sins was paid in full. He rose from the dead, victorious over sin and death. Through the blood of Jesus all your sins are washed away and you stand before the Father dressed in a white robe of righteousness.

This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. - Matt 26:28

After Jesus ascended to Heaven and poured out the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit, the message of the Gospel, that was preached by the disciples, was forgiveness of sin in the name of Jesus:

He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." - Luke 24:46-49

"God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him." - Acts 5:31-32

"All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." - Acts 10:43

"Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you." - Acts 13:38

When the Lord Jesus appeared to Saul (Paul), on the road to Damascus, He gave him this charge:

"Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." - Acts 26:16-18

So when we become a disciple of Jesus, through believing in Him and having our sins forgiven, we need to be witnesses of this same "Good News".

Paul writes to the church in Rome about this wonderful forgiveness:

"Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him." - Rom 4:7-8

He writes that this blessing is for everyone who believes in Jesus. What good news! John confirms this when he writes:

I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. - 1 John 2:12

So, believe and receive this glorious forgiveness!

F. What About Repentance?

Jesus said, "The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!" - Mark 1:15

So repent (change your mind and purpose); turn around and return [to God], that your sins may be erased (blotted out, wiped clean), that times of refreshing (of recovering from the effects of heat, of reviving with fresh air) may come from the presence of the Lord; - Acts 3:19 The Amplified Bible

Repentance is a turning from our old life. But more importantly it is a turning to God. When we put our faith in Jesus, He enables us to change. We need to willingly give our hearts to Him. He is the one who works the transformation in us.

We cannot change ourselves, but we will be changed as we yield to Him. As the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin (John 16:8-11) and those things that He wants to change in your life, confess your sins to the Lord (Matt 3:6; Mark 1:5; Acts 19:18; James 5:16 & 1 John 1:9), repent of this and stop sinning (John 5:14 & 1 Corinthians 15:34).

G. Born Again - A New Heart and a New Spirit:

The Holy Spirit tells us: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." - Ezekiel 36:26

Our lives are transformed by the Holy Spirit as He takes our old sinful nature out and gives us a new heart and a new spirit. Jesus said:

"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." - John 3:5-6

The Holy Spirit gives new birth to our human spirit and makes us alive in Christ.

Paul writes in Ephesians: As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ... But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. Ephesians 2:1 & 4-5

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

Peter writes: 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, ... For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. - 1 Pet 1:3 and 23

John writes: Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, - 1 John 5:1

When we get born again, the Lord puts His law in our hearts.

I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. Heb 8:10

H. A New Creation

Paul tells us that when we get born again, we become a new creation.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ... God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. - 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 & 21

Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. Galatians 6:15

This is your new identity. You have been born again by the Spirit of God and you now have the seed of the nature of Christ Jesus living inside of you.

I. What Is Next?

The first time that the Gospel (Good News) is preached, on the Day of Pentecost, Peter gives this instruction, through the Holy Spirit, to the crowd, who wanted to turn to Jesus:

"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." - Acts 2:38-39

He gave them three instructions:

1. "Repent" That is believe on the Lord Jesus and turn to God.
2. "be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." After you receive Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you need to be baptized in water, by immersion, as a testimony of what Jesus did in your heart.
3. "And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." This is the "Baptism with the Holy Spirit". You need the power of the Holy Spirit to walk in this world and to grow in intimacy with God, the Father.

It just makes sense, that if we have invited Jesus into our hearts as Lord and Savior, that obedience to him must follow. This obedience includes baptism in water and baptism with the Holy Spirit.

All Scripture taken from the New International Version.

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