

Our New Birth The Miracle of the Cross

Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." "But how can anyone be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked Him. "He cannot enter his mother's womb a second time and be born?" Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh, and whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be surprised that I said, You must be born again." John 3:5-7

What did Jesus mean that you must be born again to enter the kingdom of God? The Bible says when we were physically born, we were born with a sinful nature that separated us from God (Psalm 51:5; Isaiah 59:2). Our sinful nature was like a "sin factory" within us, continually producing sinful attitudes and actions. This was our spiritual condition before we were born again. We were sinners by nature and no matter how hard we tried, we could not escape the destructive effects of sin. God's solution to our sin problem was to get rid of the "sinner," or the "sin factory" within us. Since we were born into sin, the only way we could be freed from sin was through death. God's remedy was to spiritually include us in His Son's death in order to remove our sinful nature, so that the Spirit of His resurrected Son could live in us (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 1:27). The Bible says, "God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Galatians 4:6)." This death of our sin nature was not merely symbolic. When we were saved, God actually removed our sinful nature, which was at the core of our inner being and the root of our self-identity and rebellion toward God (Romans 6:6; Colossians 2:11). Since our sin nature died when we were born again of God's Spirit, we have been set free from sin's dominion and destruction. The Bible says, "Whoever has died has been freed from sin... count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:7, 11)." Thus, when we received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, God performed what we might call a "divine heart

transplant." God used His Son's eternal sacrifice to spiritually remove our terminally sin-sick heart and replace it with His Son's divine heart (Romans 6:6; 2 Corinthians 13:5). This New Covenant divine heart transplant was foretold six centuries before Christ's birth when the Old Testament prophets declared that God would remove our sin-hardened heart and replace it with a new spiritual heart when He put His Spirit within us (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:26-27). Thus God delivered us from the power of sin by removing our sin nature, so that Christ could live in us (Romans 6:7; 8:9; Galatians 2:20). This divine heart transplant is the promise of the New Covenant, the purpose of Christ's Atonement, and the cornerstone of God's church. We see that God's way to permanently deal with our chronic sinning was to remove the sinner (the sin factory) from within us and substitute Christ in its place. This is the miracle of our new birth made possible by Jesus being willing to die in our place. Whereas we were once sinners by nature, God now calls us His saints or "holy ones," who are partakers of Christ's nature and members of His heavenly family (1 Peter 2:5 & 9).

The New Testament Greek word used for eternal life is *zoē*. Of the two kinds of life, *psychē* or soul-life originates from man, but only *zoē*-life originates from God and is divine. This is the divine life Jesus described when He said, "I have come that they may have *zoē*-life, and have it more abundantly (John 10:10)." This is the life that John referred to when he wrote, "He who has the Son has the *zoē*-life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the *zoē*-life (1 John 5:12)." Before Jesus saved us, we did not have *zoē*-life. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no *zoē*-life within yourselves (John 6:53)." Consequently, our life before Christ consisted of our *psychē* soul-life (which we inherited from our natural parents) and our inward sinful nature (which we spiritually inherited from Adam, the first man). However, when we were born again of God's Spirit, we received Christ's resurrection *zoē*-life into our spirit. As Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6)." In God's divine

order, everything reproduces after its own kind. Plants reproduce plants, animals reproduce animals, and humans reproduce humans. In the same way, just as earthly seed reproduces the image of the earthly, only heavenly seed produces the image of the heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:45-49). According to God's plan of redemption, Jesus Christ is the heavenly seed that reproduces His church. Jesus said, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single seed; but if it dies, it produces much fruit (John 12:24)." Jesus spoke here of His death on the cross by which He would birth His church and bring many new-born sons and daughters into His divine glory (Hebrews 2:10). The Bible says, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God (1 Peter 1:23)."

Jesus did not have a sinful nature. He was born with a human body and soul (his will, intellect and emotions). However, since Jesus was born of a virgin, God was His Father and He was indwelt by God's Spirit. Jesus did not inherit Adam's sinful spiritual nature like we did. This is why He was able to obey God and live a sinless life. If Jesus had a sinful nature, even He would not have been able to overcome sin. Now that we are born of God and indwelt by God, we no longer have a sinful nature and are capable of obeying God and not practicing sin (1 John 3:6-9). Whereas Adam was the first born of God's old creation of humanity, Jesus is the first born of God's new creation of a divine race indwelt by God (Colossians 1:18). But before God could make us His new creation in Christ, He had to first deal with the old Adam creation. Thus God used the death of His Son to not only deal with the fruit of the old fallen creation (by forgiving our sinful deeds), but to also get rid of its root (by removing our sin nature). The Bible says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old life is gone, a new life has begun (2 Corinthians 5:17)."

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Peter 1:3