

Born Again

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Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] I'd like to invite everyone back to your seats.

As we're making your way back to your seats, I'd like to share with you a few announcements. First thing, if you need a Bible during today's service, you can pick up one at the back of the room. So now's a good time to go back and pick up one of those. So you'll have one of those during the sermon. I'd also like to share with you about our 21 days of prayer and fasting, which is currently taking place right now.

And as part of that, we will have a prayer service this Friday right here. So starting at 7, there will be a prayer service here. So please consider attending that. It's a great time of praying together, of being prayed for, of hearing God's word, including ourselves in the presence of the Spirit.

And also, Steve wanted to share with us a little bit about an upcoming conference. Yeah, so, hi guys. So there's an upcoming conference for, targeted towards, like, millennial age, like, older teenagers and young adults.

[1 : 21] And it's in a few weeks. It's the first weekend of November, so November 4 through 6. And we have, it's down in Philadelphia. So at first I was like, oh, it's going to cost a lot of money to stay in a hotel. And then I realized we have connections through the Hopkins, who have lots of friends there that will let us stay at their places for a very cheap price and free.

So that significantly decreases the cost. So I know it's kind of last minute. It's kind of, you know, you've got three weeks or so. I still got to work out whether, you know, I can be able to get off work part of that day or all that day, whatever we need for that Friday.

But if you're interested in it, definitely let me know. I know a few people are already going from our church. A few people are interested in going. So just talk to me after the service, and we'll just start coordinating this and figuring out what it is. But it's November 4 through 6.

It's called the Thrive Conference. It's at another church. It's part of our denomination. And it's just a chance to, we'll take a road trip and hang out together and hear God's word. So I'm going to have to be interested. Thanks.

So, Steve, you said that was for millennials. Does that mean I'm not invited? You said that was for people who know I love you. You can also check your worship guide.

[2 : 31] There's some other announcements listed in there. Now I'd like for you to turn your Bibles to John chapter 2. And our reading will be coming from there.

All right. If you guys are using the blue ESV Bibles from the back, we're on page 887. We're going to be starting in chapter 2 of John, verse 23.

John 2, verse 23.

Now, when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover of these, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus, on his part, did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

Now, there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God.

[3 : 44] For no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him. Jesus answered him, 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's old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again.

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.

Nicodemus said to him, how can these things be? Jesus answered him, are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? 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.

[4 : 54] If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you of heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

And as Moses lifted up the servant in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. The word of the Lord.

All of you guys have been to birthday celebrations, I'm sure.

We just had one for our little teddy that Tuckets were part of. And we celebrate birthdays because it's a momentous occasion for someone to be born into this world, right?

Because it happens once in a lifetime, and when they're born, they radically change your life, right?

And the people around you, your family, your friends, it's never the same again, right?

[5 : 57] That's a momentous occasion, so that's why we celebrate birthdays. But even though an amazed parent can exclaim, you know, when their child is born, oh man, this is a miracle.

This beautiful child of mine is a miracle. That's technically not true, right? Because it's not a miracle. It's a biological process that happens within the God-ordained confines of nature, right?

It's actually very ordinary. It's not extraordinary. It's a physical birth. It's not spiritual. And it's natural.

I mean, very natural, right? It's not supernatural. But the birth that this passage talks about in Jesus, he tells us that all of us, every single person, must be born again.

And that this spiritual, this second birth, is not natural, but supernatural. It occurs due to the work of the Holy Spirit. That it's not physical, and it's extraordinary, not just ordinary.

[6 : 57] It's something that you experience on a day-to-day basis. Even now, probably a baby's being born somewhere. But this birth is something that cannot happen by natural processes. And what this passage teaches us specifically is that all must be born again of the Spirit by believing in the crucified Son of Man.

That's the main point of this passage. And he tells us about the need for the new birth, and the nature of the new birth, and then the means of the new birth, how we become born again.

So the need for the new birth, the nature of the new birth, and the means of the new birth. So if you look with me, verse 23, it says that though John doesn't record many signs that Jesus does except for several that he picks out, it does say that he did many signs, because in verse 23, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.

But this is kind of dangerous, because John elsewhere talks about it, and Jesus admonishes people later in chapter 4, 48, who would not believe unless they saw some kind of sign.

Because often a faith that's dependent on a sign can be a spurious faith. It could be a faith that's plagued by doubts, because if you come to Jesus because of some spectacular miracle you see, you can go from one place to another, one miracle to another, one conference to another, one retreat to another, seeking one experience after another, seeking another high, something that's able to bring you into more ecstatic experience of God.

[8 : 22] And if that's the case, then your faith rests not on who Jesus claims to be, but on your own feeling and your own experience. And that could become dangerous, and Jesus knows this.

So that's what he says in chapter 2, verses 24 to 25, But Jesus, on his part, did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

There's a word play here, because the word entrust in verse 24 is the same word used in verse 23, where it says many believe in his name.

So if you are to bring that out a little more, obviously you could say, the people trusted in his name, in Jesus' name, but Jesus did not entrust himself to them. The word highlights the fickleness of people, and the reliability and the constancy of the Son of Man, of Jesus Christ.

People will frequently jump from one champion to another, one, you know, let's say a political candidate to another, because they might flatter you one day, they might slander you the next day.

[9 : 27] Right? And that's people, but Jesus knows this, and he's not enticed or duped or caught off guard by any human being. He's not swayed by human opinions or desires of human approval.

Jesus knows everyone, and that's why he says Jesus doesn't need anyone's witness about man. For us, finite, you know, fallible human beings, we rely on other people's references to get an idea of what kind of people, what kind of people we're dealing with.

So when we apply for a job, we have to submit references, and they ask those people to figure out what kind of this person, this person that's applying for a job is. That's a reference. But Jesus doesn't need any such reference.

He says he knows all men, and therefore he doesn't need anyone to bear witness about man. And there's a repetition of the word here, of to know.

It says he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man. Verse 24, it says Jesus knew all people. 25 says Jesus knew what was in man. And then later in chapter 3, verse 10, Jesus tells Nicodemus, asking you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things.

[10:38] That's actually the exact same word, though translated differently. Understand, know, do you not know these things? And then finally Jesus says in verse 11 of chapter 3, 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.

This is remarkable, because people back during this time in the ancient world, they believed that miracle workers can see, kind of understand the hearts of some people.

They believed that they can just kind of know what they were feeling or thinking. But they still insisted, by and large, that only God knows the hearts of all people, right?

Based on what was taught in Jeremiah 17, 10, the Lord searches the heart and tests the mind, like to give every man according to his ways. But by displaying his supernatural knowledge about all people, and you'll see this over and over again over the next couple chapters, Jesus is demonstrating his deed, that he is God, that he knows the hearts of all men, right?

And that's what John is trying to tell us here. And so the people are fickle and changing. Jesus is unchanging. People have incomplete knowledge, so they're not entirely trustworthy, yet Jesus has infallible, complete knowledge of God.

[11:54] And that's why he's the one that reveals God to us, and not vice versa. He's the one that speaks to us about the Father, not vice versa. So we might come to Jesus, maybe like these people who sought the signs did, with our own set of rules, and say, you must meet these criteria, you must meet these standards, then I will accept you as my Lord.

But instead, Jesus wants us to come to him, and to interact with him, and respond to him on his terms. Because he is the Lord, he is the Son of Man, and we must come to him for revelation of God.

And this Jesus, who knows the hearts of all men, now reveals God to us in this passage. And he tells us that all of us need to be born again.

So he talks about the need for the new birth. Look at verse 1 with me, chapter 3. Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

So Nicodemus is kind of a foil for Jesus here, that's going to show us what Jesus knows. And this Nicodemus is a pretty outstanding individual in this culture, because he's a Pharisee, right?

[13:04] He belongs to the strictest sect, Jewish sect. They understand the law and follow it exactly. That's what they're known for, the Pharisees.

But not only that, he says he's a ruler of the Jews. That means he belongs to the exclusive group of the Sanhedrin. He is the group of judges that ruled on the religious matters of the Jews.

So he's a very prestigious teacher. He's about as prestigious as he can get, right? In terms of the religious credentials. And this Nicodemus comes. And that's why Jesus calls him the teacher of Israel, in chapter 3, verse 10.

That's a phrase that refers to a master, a recognized master of something. So it'd be kind of like in our days, calling somebody reverend doctor or something. This reverend doctor of religion, reverend doctor of Christianity.

He comes and Jesus calls him the teacher of Israel. Yet, this reverend doctor comes to Jesus in ignorance. And we know that because it says that he came by night, verse 2, chapter 3.

[14:07] And night is used metaphorically throughout the Gospel of John, four times to be exact, to refer to spiritual darkness, moral darkness, someone who doesn't know what's going on.

And Nicodemus says to Jesus, 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.

And at this point, he hasn't asked any questions, right? But Jesus answers as if answering a question. He kind of sees into him. He already knows what he's thinking.

And he goes into his answer in verse 3. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And the word again, born again, could also mean born from above. It's the same word means both things. And John, as he frequently does throughout his Gospel, probably is employing double meaning. So we must be born again, born a new a second time, but also born from above.

[15:05] And then Nicodemus is completely caught off guard, so he asks a further question, verse 4. Well, how can a man be born when he's old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?

I mean, at this point, you're probably a little impatient, right? Nicodemus, come on. You're the teacher of Israel. Do you not understand that? I read that once and understood that, right? I mean, what's going on?

And you have to get into his mindset, right? Because he really should have known what Jesus was talking about because the Jews already were in, they talked about Gentile converts to Judaism as newborn children because they believed they had to take on a new identity, right?

Become part of a new, have a new legal identity, a new part of the family. Yet, because Nicodemus is Jewish and he's so steeped in his learning, he can't, the possibility of him needing to convert doesn't even occur to him, right?

So that's why he's like, what do you mean born again? Like, I'm a Jew. Like, how am I supposed to be, am I supposed to go back into my mother's womb and be born again? And so even, and so Jesus is making a radical statement. Even Nicodemus, the strict adherent of God's law, a ruler of the Jews, the reverend doctor, the teacher of Israel, cannot see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

[16:23] That means no matter how morally upright you are, no matter how hard you have lived to do good in this world, you must be born again. You cannot see the kingdom of God unless you're born again.

And no matter how educated you are, maybe in matters of religion, no matter how many theology books you've read, even how many times you've read the Bible, you have to be born again to enter into the kingdom of God.

No matter that you come from a Christian family of maybe a hundred generations of Christians in your life, still you must be born again. There's no exception here.

Unless you are born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God. The need for the new birth is universal. And now that he has called attention to the need for the new birth, Jesus tells us about the nature of the new birth in verse five to eight.

So Jesus explains verse five, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. So the phrase here, unless one is born of water and spirit in verse five is parallel to the clause in verse three, unless one is born again.

[17:33] So from that structure, you know that to be born again is to be born of water and spirit. To be born of water and spirit is to be born again. So they're conceptually tied. So the water and spirit have to refer to being born again.

So the two are related. That's why you can't separate those two things and say like, oh, being born of water means, you know, when the water breaks in the biological birth and the spirit is when you're born spiritually. That's the two are referring to the same thing, water and spirit.

And what's behind that is Ezekiel 36, 25 to 27. It says, I will sprinkle clean water on you. This is from the Old Testament. And you shall be clean from all your uncleanness.

And from all your idols, I will cleanse you. 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.

And I will put my spirit within you because, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. So here you see the concept of a cleansing water and a refreshing spirit, an enlivening spirit.

[18:35] They come together. And spirit is frequently described throughout the Bible in terms of being poured out. And again, that's water language, right? You, you pour liquid out. Spirit is poured out on us.

And, and this is what theologians call regeneration. Taylor already mentioned it, right? That we are born again, that we are, we are regenerated. That means by the water and the spirit, by the water of the spirit, really we are rinsed, refined, we're revived.

It's a spiritual renaissance. It's a rebirth. You have new light because of, and, and when this happens, everyone knows that it's happened, right? And if you have experienced the new birth, you know what the new birth is like because people who were unable prior, prior to this point to, to love God and obey him, now love him and want to do his will.

That the people who previously were unable to, really believe in God, to have faith, and to entrust their life to him, now after their regeneration, new birth, are able to place their faith in Christ completely.

This is, is a radical change, in soul radical, in fact, the only proper way to describe it, is as a new birth. It's like being born a second time. And verse six, confirms his conclusion, by contrasting flesh with the spirit, right?

[19 : 50] He says, read with me, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the spirit, is spirit. So the intended contrast is between being born of the flesh, and being born of the spirit.

So water and spirit both refer to being born in the spirit. So then John's primarily talking here about the work of the spirit, but especially as we think about baptism today, I do think that John has a water baptism of Christians in mind, in a secondary sense.

And the reason why is because even though John's writing about things that happened in 30 AD, around Jesus' lifetime, he's writing around 80 AD to a church that's for half a century been baptizing people, right?

So if you recognize that, and when you read this, it'd be almost unmistakable, the reference to water, that it would evoke images of water baptism for believers.

And the context also suggests this in chapter 1, 32, 33, where John the Baptist testifies, I saw the spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on Jesus.

[20 : 52] I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, he on whom you see the spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. So already in the Gospel of John, water, the baptism, and the spirit of God, his descending have been connected, right?

And so let me digress just a little bit to teach on baptism, just because we're having baptisms today. And even though the degeneration, the feeling of the Holy Spirit is a sovereign work of God that we cannot control, that doesn't mean that we don't have responsibilities, that we have nothing to do. In fact, God calls us to respond in very specific ways, and you see this in Acts 2, 38, where Peter calls believers, people, tells people to repent, and then to be baptized.

And then he promises, then you will, you know, that you receive the Holy Spirit, right? So we see three things that form a complex of conversion, we might say, right? So that we, you must, the individual must repent and believe, right?

And those are two, two sides of the same coin, because repentance means a change of mind. You're turning away from something, and if you're changing your mind, you need to change your mind to something. You turn away from sin, and your old life, or past, you could turn toward faith, to believe in God, and living for him.

[22 : 06] That's repentance and faith by the individual. And then there's baptism by the church, right? And Jesus charged his disciples in Matthew 28, 18 to 20, to disciple, to make disciples of all nations, and to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

And the apostles are the representatives of the church. And so, so when you're baptized, right, you're identifying with the buried and risen, and ascended Savior, right?

So you're saying that Jesus died and rose again, the same way, I'm going into the water, that is my death, now rise again in spiritual new life, right? And as you identify with him, in that way, you get the assurance from the corporate life of the church, as you continue in the corporate life of the church.

Because being, identifying with Christ also means identifying with the body of Christ, which is the church. So when you're baptized, you're baptized into the church. That's why it's always a church that baptizes, as opposed to, you know, going to a river on your own, it's letting your Christian friend baptize you.

That's not the way that's supposed to happen, right? And so those, and then the third, and final, the most important thing, of course, is actual feeling, the regeneration by the Holy Spirit.

[23 : 14] And those three things always happen together, in close conjunction, if you look at the Bible. And because those things happen together, sometimes in the Bible, they will take one of those things, and assume the other.

And that's why you find passages like this passage, where it says salvation comes through regeneration. And then passages like 2 Peter 3.9, 2 Corinthians 7.10, where it says that salvation comes through repentance and faith.

And then there's passages like 1 Peter 3.21, and 1 Corinthians 6.11, that says that salvation comes through baptism, right? The reason why you get all three of these is because whenever they mention one thing, they have the whole complex of conversion in view, right?

They're referring to one to refer to the whole, right? So it's kind of like a wedding ceremony, you can think of it this way, right? Because wedding, when you get married, it's, you get married before God, and God's the one that ultimately makes the marriage, right?

So that's apart from God forming that union, like the marriage doesn't happen. So at some point during that ceremony, God unites a man and a woman and makes them a couple, one in God's eyes, right?

[24 : 19] But exactly what point that happens, no one knows, right? When does that happen? Is it, is it when they're taking the vows, when they exchange the rings, or maybe when they sign the papers, or maybe when they go home, right?

And consummate their marriage, right? It's, what does that look like? When does that happen exactly? So we don't know that, but we know that at some point in time, something spiritual took place, and God made that man and woman one, that they married.

In a similar way, when we're converted, at some point in time, the spirit regenerates us, and he's given us a complex of things for us to do, for to respond to repentance and faith, and the confession of Jesus, and being baptized, so that we can have that assurance, in a both corporate and individual sense, right?

And this is, if you look at examples of this, it's the importance of this becomes much more clear. I was just talking to a pastor friend, who used to pastor in the South, and in the South, they really emphasize walking down the aisle, right?

They talk about, you know, if you want to come to faith, you've got to walk down the aisle, respond to the altar call, and receive Jesus into your heart, right? That's what, that's what matters for those people. And, and, and he said, it's funny, he met someone, he was serving as an interim pastor of a church for a year, and he meets, meets a woman and says, oh, so you're a Christian, so what, which, which, what church are you part of?

[25 : 35] And then she says, oh, I'm part of this church, and she names the church where he's pastoring, and, and he's never seen her before, right? And, and, and then she goes, oh, I love this church. It's like, oh, and I love that pastor, Pastor Ronnie.

He's not Ronnie. The pastor Ronnie had retired a year before, so she hasn't been to church in a year, and she says she loves this church, and she's so convinced that she's saved, because she walked down the aisle that one time, right?

Even though she has no spiritual life to speak of, no interaction, and no, no, I mean, no connection to the body of Christ. That's really dangerous, because now you're isolating your personal individual faith apart from church, and there's no assurance that comes from the corporate life, no accountability, no church discipline, no way of participating in the Lord's Supper, right?

That's dangerous. And the flip side of that, of course, is some of the more high church traditions, where they baptize babies soon after they're born. And when you baptize babies soon after they're born, and they, they, they could also have a false sense of assurance, and then they grow up, because they're part of the church, they've been baptized, they can partake in communion.

Now, they think that they have, they're saved, that they have the Spirit of God in them, even though they have personally never repented and believed. That, again, can also provide a false sense of assurance.

[26 : 51] But Jesus, and intends, God intends for us to have both the corporate, and individual assurance, the individual personal assurance of salvation from repentance and faith, and the sacramental corporate assurance of salvation from our baptism, and then ongoing involvement in the life of the church, right?

So that's a digression just from the passage to teach you about baptism. But, so when we're baptized, we're born again into God's family. That's what, that's why we're born again. When you're born, you're born into a family.

And in verse 7, it says, do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again, right? And you've been with us for the series, you've already saw in chapter 1, where John talks about how being born into God's family is not in blood, or of the will of man, or of the flesh, but of God, right?

Being born in the flesh, biologically, that depends on the will of man and woman, right? It depends on, on the will of the flesh, but not being born of, of the spirit, not being born again.

Being born again depends on God. And it is incomparably more monumental than at first birth, because it has eternal significance. It's, it's, it refers to our spiritual birth into the family of God.

[28 : 06] And, if you follow along with me in verse 8, this confirms the sovereign activity of the Holy Spirit when we're born again. It's the God, it's God who makes us born again. Look at verse 8.

It says, 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.

So the word wind can also be translated as breath. So in the same way that breath imparts life to us, the spirit imparts spiritual life to us. And, and just like the earlier phrase, water in the spirit was an illusion to Ezekiel 36, the wind and the spirit is an illusion to Ezekiel 37, where the dry bones in the valley come to life when the spirit of God blows on them.

Right? And so this, and it's much, the Christian birth is much like the wind, right? Because you can't see the wind, right? No matter how hard you try, you cannot see the wind, but you know, it's there because you see its effects.

The wind moves. The wind is powerful, right? You see what happens as a result of it. Same way, we cannot see the spirit regenerating someone, but we see, we surely see the effects of it because their lives are changed.

[29 : 17] They live transformed lives. And, and in the much the same way, you can't control the wind, no matter how hard you try to control the wind, directly to go somewhere else, to figure out where it comes from.

We can't do that. In the same way, this passage says, the spirit of God blows where he wills. He will come upon someone, and that person can be regenerating. Person who thought, oh man, that person will never come to Christ.

But the spirit of God regenerates that person because he can do that. It's his sovereign activity and he blows where he wills and we don't know where he comes from. And that actually shouldn't lead us to despair in our evangelism.

That actually gives us a lot of hope because we recognize that no matter how, what kind of person you meet, no matter how much of a settled, maybe antagonistic atheist that person might be, no matter what kind of person, how degenerate that person might be, when the spirit of God blows, that person will be regenerated.

He will be brought from death to life. And that's the nature of the new birth is that it comes of the spirit. All must be born again of the spirit.

[30 : 20] Now, but if that's the sovereign activity of the Holy Spirit, then what if we want to become new? What if we want to be born again? Is there anything we can do or do we just watch helplessly and wait for the spirit to do something?

Right? As I said before, whenever there's God's sovereignty, the Bible always teaches human responsibility on the side, right next to it. And we have something we ought to do.

Verses 11 to 15, follow along with me. It says, Truly, 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.

If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, and whoever believes in him may have eternal life. He's going back to the idea of the Son of Man, that he is the ultimate Son of Man, that he comes to represent us, he comes to save us.

[31 : 26] And he's the only person that can tell us about God because he's the only person that's been with God. He's saying, you know, only person that can tell you about heaven is someone that's been there and Jesus came from there so he can tell us about who God is and what it means to be born again.

And this allusion to the serpent seems a little confusing at first. He's like, okay, man, that seems to be a random citation. Why is this in there? But the connection is actually really strong because that story of the serpent comes from Numbers 21 where Israelites are on their way to the promised land and on their way they grumble again.

They're impatient with God. They start to speak against him and his servants. And as a result of his holy wrath, judgment comes on them. He sends a fiery serpent among them who bites and kills many of them.

But at the same time, while his justice still is ongoing, God has mercy on the same people that rebelled against him. And he provides a way for them to be healed. And he sends, he tells Moses to make a bronze serpent, set it on a pole, and then lift it up.

And people who have been bitten by the snake will look at it and live, it says. They will be healed. They will live. And that's exactly what Jesus does. Because the word lifted up, they lift up the serpent, that word is used four times throughout the Gospel of John.

[32 : 47] And every time, it refers to Jesus being lifted up on the cross and being glorified on the cross. That cross where Jesus dies is the point of his exaltation. And when he is lifted up, that's when he gathers his people to himself.

Just in the same way, when the serpent was lifted up, it provided way for the people who were ailing to be healed. Just as that serpent restored physical life, now Jesus, the Son of Man, gives spiritual life, new spiritual life.

And think about this. Because we're, we were the subjects of God's kingdom, his creation. He created all of us. He rules over all of us. Right? And he gave it to his son to reign alongside him, on his throne.

Yet we rebelled against him. We were the rebellious subjects. We were guilty of treason. Right? We wanted to take his throne for ourselves. That's what it means to live in sin and to want to live apart from God.

And yet, the Prince, the Son of God, the King, comes to die to bear the punishment for our treason so that we can be received again into the kingdom of God.

[33 : 54] Right? And we were part of his family. Right? God was the Father of all creation. Yet, we betrayed him and severed our ties and said, we don't want anything to do with him.

Yet, he sends his own son to die for us. Right? So that we, he can bear the punishment and the wrath for our betrayal and we can be received back into the family of God.

That's what Jesus does. And that's the means of the new birth. He said, by believing in the crucifixion of man, by looking to him, we are born again of the Spirit. And if you have not believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, I pray, today you will be the day when you believe in him and you are baptized like some of us are being baptized today.

And if you have already believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, then I want to exhort you to continue to look to him. Continue to look at the Son of Man lifted up on the cross. As 2 Corinthians 3.18 says this, he says, Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. The Spirit of God works in us to make us like his Son, more like him, more like God's Son.

[35 : 07] And that happens as we behold his glory. And as John teaches us, his glory is most spectacularly displayed on the cross where he dies for our sins and atones for us. And that's where the powerful growth comes from.

As we behold him on that cross, as we behold his love for us revealed on that cross, we are transformed, we are filled with the Spirit, we are regenerated and we are able to, we have the regenerative power to be able to obey and to follow him.

And if, as is the case, for centuries, people can, you know, travel thousands or hundreds of miles to travel to some part of the world to pay homage to a great work of art.

I mean, people do that all the time. People have been doing that for centuries. They will travel hundreds of miles and look at this great piece of art and marvel at it. I mean, if they can do that with people's creation, surely we can behold and always look to this glorious Christ of surpassing beauty and glory and never tire of this wondrous thing and never be wary of believing and beholding in Christ.

So let's pray to that end. God, we never want to lose the wonder, the wonder of your grace and mercy, God.

[36 : 31] Oh God, help us, Lord of faith. There's, our people here who do not know the new life in Christ. Bring them to new life by your sovereign spirit and help us all as your church to behold you always, look to you, the crucified son of man.

So that we may be changed into his glorious image day by day. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.