

A Transforming Birth

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Date: 25 March 2019

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[0 : 00] We come this evening to get another aspect of the new birth and you're probably thinking, my gosh, how many aspects are there?

! Well, for our purposes, there's one more after this one. And then that in two weeks, we're going to do something very special. Not that special, I'll be talking, but special. Last time, we looked at the fact that the new birth or being born again from above is a saving birth.

It actually saves people. This evening, we're going to pay heed to the fact that the new birth is a transforming birth.

It not only saves you, but it transforms you. Now, what do we mean by that? And I was hoping you would ask that question. In the words of Steve Lawson, the new birth radically and dramatically changes a person's life.

The new birth accomplishes this from the inside out. No one can truly be regenerated without their life being significantly altered.

[1 : 29] It can't happen. This is still Steve Lawson. This goes far beyond having your life before salvation changed when you were saved.

It is not so much that your life is changed as it is you receive a new life. It's a new life. Old things pass away. Newness comes into your life.

The Bible even describes you as a new creature or a new creation. I'll give you a saying that's worthy of writing on the whiteboard.

We used to say blackboards, but they don't. Do you ever have any blackboards in school? Very few. Yeah. Or somewhere in your Bible. Or hang this on your refrigerator door if your wife separates the kids and grandkids and everything.

If your beliefs have not changed your life, change your beliefs. Pretty profound.

[2 : 34] True salvation, God's way, is a life-changing experience. Once we know Jesus, we cannot continue to walk the same path we did as unbelievers.

Now we're going to lapse into that because we lapse into sin, but we're going to be miserable because of the convicting presence of the indwelling Spirit of God in the life of a believer.

Now I'm not talking about perfection. We'll leave that with Wesley, who even admitted on his deathbed he never got there. I'm talking about something radically new.

When we come to the realization that we've been bought with a price, and when we come to the realization that price was the life of Christ himself, very God of very God, second person to the Trinity, son of God, Savior and Lord and King, who laid down his life for us, we find ourselves on a new path and in a new direction.

The Word of God says that we were once walking according to the spirit of this world. And you can't sugarcoat that.

[4 : 05] That's Satan. He is the spirit or the God of this world. Small s or small g. Now something has turned us around, and we're going in a different direction.

Someone has said we've gone from walking toward hell, and now we're walking toward heaven. And in my walk, I've gotten off the trail more than once, and I've fallen down, and the Lord picks me up, puts me back on the trail, might give me a swat, but it's a pretty thick diaper or skin.

He says, now get on with it. Keep going. And again, I say this is not unto perfection. It is unto direction.

Perfection's going to come. And we're going to study that. That'll be the last thing we study in this whole series. Probably about January. Maybe a little later.

Perfection will come when we see Jesus. Because when we see Jesus, the Scripture says you're going to be like Him.

[5 : 19] Because you're going to see Him as He is. And I'm going to be real honest here, and I hope I don't step on anyone's toes or feelings or whatever. But these guys go around and make a living, saying, I've been to heaven, and I've seen Jesus, and I talked to Him.

The worst was Jesse Duplantis. He was the first of the main charismatic televangelists that said, I got called up into heaven this week.

And everybody oohed and aahed. And he got there, and Jesus was crying over in the corner. And he went over and says, What's the matter, Lord? And he said, I failed. All these people are going to hell.

I can't do anything about it. Well, that's not the God I know. And he says, Oh, you haven't failed. We've got everything under control down there. I put my arm around him and patted him. He said, Oh, I feel a lot better.

I'm going to tell you guys, that's blasphemy. Within a month, all of the leading charismatics, televangelists, had been there to heaven. You know why they said that? Because everybody started sending Jesse the money.

[6 : 22] They said, Well, he's been to heaven. And I'm sorry these books are written. You know, I went to heaven. Paul went there, and he said, I can't talk about it.

I can't even. Man is not allowed to speak about what I saw. Wouldn't you love to sit down with Lazarus? I mean, they came to the left and said, If you don't shut up talking about being brought back to life, we're going to kill you.

Go ahead. I've been there. I've been there. When we see Jesus, we're going to be like Him. And you know what that's called in our stuff here? Glorification. And there's something really interesting. The passage in Romans 8 where it says, Those whom He justified, what? He glorified. Do you notice something there? Past tense. Past tense. Those whom God justified, past tense, He also glorified.

[7 : 28] You'll hear that again in a year. Past tense. How can I do that? It hasn't happened yet. Because in God's mind it has. Past. We're already there in God's mind. But for now we are being recreated into the very image of Christ Jesus.

This recreation occurs during the sanctification process, which we're going to spend a considerable amount of time on when we get there.

Remember the Ordo Salutis we started out with? It's got nine points. We're on point three. We're still on three. But we're going to get there. We're going to get there.

All of this is brought about by the new birth. We receive a new heart. We receive a new mind. We receive a new and different disposition. We receive new affections.

We receive a new nature. And we receive a new will. And those are dramatic. Not to perfection, but to direction. We cannot receive those things and not have our life radically altered.

[8 : 40] I'll tell you, these guys that claim they've been saved 14 times, baptized and re-baptized, guys, they haven't been there.

Because new comes in. And it's radically different. So with these things in mind, we come to our lesson this evening that the new birth is a transforming birth.

And by that I mean it's life-changing. It's life-changing. And it changed my life. And boy, not into perfection, I can guarantee you. But I know what I was before.

And it wasn't pretty. So we're going to return to John. Very familiar to us. John chapter 3, verse 3. It's where we started. This is true.

This is true. I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Can't see it. Those words, born again, are one word in Greek.

[9 : 43] We've said that. It's the word anothēn, meaning born from above. It is a birth that comes down to those being saved from God Himself. That's why it's a transforming birth.

That's why it's a transforming life. It comes from God. Of course it's transforming. And this goes far beyond a new start in life.

This is a new life. It's a new life. Let me give you an example of being born anothēn in the Word of God.

It is actually found in the first chapter of the Gospel of John, beginning in verse 41 through verse 43. Real interesting. It starts out, He, and that is referring to Andrew.

Remember Andrew? The brother of Simon? He, Andrew, first found his own brother, Simon, and said to him, We have found the Messiah, which means Christ.

[10:51] It means the anointed one of God. Messiah is Hebrew, and Christ is Greek, and same word. And Andrew, he brings him to Jesus.

And Jesus looks at him, and he says, You are Simon, the son of John. And he says, You shall be called Cephas, which means Peter, in our language.

You're Peter. Changed his name on the spot. And don't fail to see five important words in there. Talking about Andrew, it says, He brought him to Jesus.

We need to be in the business of bringing men and women to Jesus. That's what we need to do until Jesus comes back for us, or until we go to Him. I believe at the moment Peter was, at that moment, I believe Peter was regenerated.

Born again, born from above, by the Spirit of God. I don't think he knew it. I can't tell you when I was born again. And I don't think that he knew that.

[12:10] In theological terms, that was what was going on. But the conversion of Simon was so real, Jesus even changed his name. He said, You're going to have a new name. You're going to be Peter.

And in fact, the conversion of Simon was so real, that he got a new name. And Simon represented his old life, and what he was in that old life, before he met Christ.

And now, because his brother Andrew brought him to Jesus, probably more accurately, he brought Jesus to him, but they brought each other together.

I believe Peter was born again in that instance, and he would grow from there in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. And like all of us, Peter took two steps forward, one step back. Sometimes two steps forward, three or four, five steps back. You know, we love Peter, foot in mouth of Peter. But you've got to love him. Some say that conversion couldn't happen at that time, because Peter had not yet prayed the sinner's prayer.

[13:21] Guys, don't worry about that. Peter was saved around 30 A.D. and the sinner's prayer was invented around 1970 A.D. So there's quite a, about 140 years difference, 1,940 years difference between the two.

The change in Peter, though, was inside. And as evidence of that, God even changed his name. You may say, well, wait a minute. How come when I was converted, when I was saved, God didn't change my name?

I didn't get a new name when he saved me. Well, just hold on. Because when you get to the book of Revelation, you find out something's startling.

It says in Revelation 2, 17, you'll be covering that. I will give him a white stone with a new name written on that stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.

Jesus is going to give everyone in here a new name and that's only going to be known by Jesus and you. He's going to write it down on a stone because if he's like, if the guy's like me or Mike, he won't remember it.

[14:36] You're going to have to take it out of your pocket and look at it. And I love what John MacArthur says here. He says, he has never preached that verse without someone in his congregation or church coming up to him asking later and saying, what is that new name?

And he tries to muster up kindness and grace and he says, I don't know. It's only known by the Lord until he gives it to you and then only you and he know.

This we do know. Jesus brings about change. Even in the first recorded miracle we see the Lord bringing about change.

And I guarantee you no one in there, I never thought about it this way. Let me read this in John chapter 2. On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee and the mother of Jesus was there.

Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When the wine ran out don't worry the Baptist in there had grape juice.

[15:54] When the wine ran out the mother of Jesus said to him they have no wine. And Jesus said to her woman what does that have to do with me? By the way that's a term of endearment not in our day but in that day.

That was a term of you know mom. And Jesus says woman what does that have to do with me? my hour has not yet come.

His mother said to the servants do whatever he tells you. She knew what he did. He was going to obey. You know he was going to obey. Do whatever he tells you.

Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification each holding twenty or thirty gallons. That's a lot. Jesus said to the servants fill the jars with water.

And I'm going to guess guys this probably wasn't bottled water. They had a lot of problems with water in the Middle East. Sometimes it wasn't very good.

[16 : 57] But they were obedient they filled them up to the brim. And he said to them now draw some out they're drawing water out take it to the master of the feast so they took it when the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine and did not know where it came from though the servants who had drawn the water knew the master of the feast called the brim and said to him everyone serves the good wine first and when people have drunk freely then the poor wine but you've kept the good wine until now this is the first of his signs Jesus did it Cana and Galilee and manifested his glory and the disciples believed in him by the way that was a huge deal to run out of wine these weddings took about seven days and that would have been the height of embarrassment this guy would never have gotten over that I mean people 30 years from then would say you're the guy who ran out wine at your wedding that was a big deal so let me make a couple of comments or two about this miracle that the

Lord performed not just this one but miracles plural during the incarnation incarnation Jesus was not a circus actor okay he was not performing to impress the crowds he wasn't a televangelist we see false miracles on television all the time or hear about them the miracles the Lord did were signs they were done to authenticate his message and to authenticate his claims that he was the Messiah come down from heaven from God the Father they were authenticating I mean how many times did he do some miraculous thing and tell them don't tell anybody of course what's the first thing the people did went and told somebody

Jesus did many signs while he was on earth which were pictures of the new birth he changed common water into the best wine the wedding guests in Cana ever tasted changing water into wine his is a ministry that brings about change the changes most evident in his followers that are born from above they're transformed and that's what we're talking about this evening Jesus did other signs he raised Lazarus from the dead and I've said before he didn't do Lazarus any favors you know Lazarus didn't come and say boy I didn't think I'd ever get out of there no he raised Lazarus from the dead and it was a sign of the new birth he was dead been dead four days so much so his sisters interceded said don't open that grave he smells he smells

Lazarus was dead we were dead in trespasses and sins and the Lord raised us from the dead every believer in here has been raised from the dead you were dead in trespasses and sins what is that the inability to do anything spiritual when Jesus healed the blind man it was a picture of our new birth we were blinded by sin we could not see God gave us spiritual eyes and spiritual sight and now we see it's all rebirth new birth that message again Jesus turning water into wine it's a picture of the new birth it is a miracle of change that occurs from the inside out it is a radical transformation of our lives in a moment in time before our rebirth we were like that water we were common probably had some little pollution about us the Lord took that bad water and he made us into the best wine before that we were dirty polluted had probably a smell about us but the Lord brought about change and like our little quote my wife put on the board there your free will didn't bring about that change can't even cure a toothache or a sore finger according to top lady who wrote Rock of Ages by the way and others the Lord brings about the change and then suddenly we become new creatures in Christ and it's so fast we don't even know it we have to experience it in my case my language cleaned up I was an FBI agent I was profane and I used some pretty bad profanity one day after I had been saved and I suddenly realized I'm not supposed to be doing that I haven't been perfect but I stopped I stopped that we suddenly become new creatures in

[22 : 44] Christ like the best wine he gives us a new life to live on earth and one day in heaven we became new people in Christ and are now living a radically different life in him Jesus even said I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly abundantly abundant abundant life is produced by anilfin being born from above that's the only place the abundant life can come from it's the only place what kind of life did the spirit of God put inside us when we were born again it's the life of Christ it's the life of Christ and that brings up an intriguing question we don't have a long lesson tonight by the way but it brings up an intriguing question what happened to

Nicodemus did we hear about him anymore once we get out of the third chapter of John was his life changed as a result of this encounter maybe not instantly right then but maybe later as he reflected

I mean it doesn't have to happen in that second guys I used to have an old school field Bible and in the flap you got several blank pages I had 25 names of people that gave me pieces of the gospel I had grandmothers in there I had my mom in there I had 25 names my wife sent bound and that's the page they tore out and threw away just devastated me what happened to Nicodemus was his life transformed if rebirth is a transforming life was he reborn and did it transform him what's interesting to consider that we can kind of follow him in scripture a little bit you know he's mentioned three times in

John chapter 3 which we've been looking at and then we find out he's also mentioned in John chapter 7 his name comes back up and then we find out he's mentioned finally for the last time in John chapter 19 very interesting and it's sort of like tracking a package it's interesting to see the progress here so we can we can treat this like FedEx or the U.S.

Postal Service and track him through the passages in John in John chapter 3 we're introduced to Nicodemus where it says now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews the man came to Jesus by night we're told a bunch Pharisee Jesus had wars with the Pharisees the Pharisees were one of the chief people that put him on the cross they were horrible guys and they were ruling over these people and they were a boot on the people and it says Nicodemus came to Jesus by night now we've already studied the fact that he was the teacher of Israel remember that so we see Nicodemus come to

Jesus to ask him a question and he comes under the cover of darkness and he's most likely worried about fallout from his fellow members of the Sanhedrin and Pharisees to be seen with Jesus and I've said before the Sanhedrin ran the country 70 of them and they were made up of Pharisees and Sadducees and there are 70 of them and they were the legislative executive and judicial branch of the government all wrapped up into one so Nicodemus slipping around now at night because everybody knew him he's the teacher of Israel I can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born well of course not that would be absurd and we see one final reference to

[27 : 57] Nicodemus boy I put K instead of C that looks like it's Russian we see a final reference to Nicodemus in the third chapter of John in John chapter 3 verse 9 this is the final time in the third chapter Nicodemus said to him how can all these things be that's when Jesus said you're the teacher of Israel and you don't know and then he got him into Deuteronomy Ezekiel Jeremiah he should have known all those by the end of chapter 3 Nicodemus has disappeared from the scene and he will not surface again until John chapter 7 over there men had been sent by the religious leaders of which Nicodemus was one to arrest Jesus but they did not obtain the results they wanted so let me read to you John chapter 7 beginning in verse 40 when they heard these words some of the people said this really is the prophet which is an Old

Testament reference to the Messiah others said this is the Christ but some said is the Christ to come from Galilee well I could answer that two ways yeah and he didn't come from Galilee he came from Bethlehem fulfilling Micah in the Bible has not the scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David and comes from Bethlehem the village where David was so there was a division among the people over him some of them wanted to arrest him but no one laid hands on him the officers then came to the chief priests and the Pharisees who said to them why didn't you bring him why didn't you arrest this guy the officers answered no one ever spoke like this man they were mesmerized by the words of Christ the

Pharisees answered them have you also been deceived I love the arrogance here have any of the authorities or the Pharisees believed in him I saw a drama presentation once where the high priest said I know he can't be the Messiah God would never send the Messiah without informing me beforehand now that's not in the Bible but I bet that probably happened he said he'd let me know before God would let me in on it before he would send the Messiah so this says none of the Pharisees believe in him why do you believe in him but this crowd that does not know the law is a cursed so they put a curse on everybody that was saying good things about Jesus including the own officers of the court Nicodemus now here his name comes again Nicodemus who had gone to him before and who was one of them and I really constantly know that but every commentator said no they're saying he's one of the

Pharisees he's part of their group said to them does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does see the efforts to arrest Jesus and when he was actually arrested violated all kinds of Jewish law the night he was arrested and he had six trials all of them illegal three illegal under Jewish law three illegal under Roman law and then that brave pilot

declared him innocent and sentenced him to death and that great so the Pharisee leadership replied and said are you from Galilee too search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee which is not true by the way I think Jonah was from there and there were some others that came from there but do you notice an ever so slight turn in the attitude of Nicodemus here he's been thinking he must be born again he must be born from above it's a spiritual birth he's been thinking about all this and now you start seeing him he's defending the

Lord if only mildly but he's coming to his defense he may at this point not display full fledged support but he does speak up for the Lord to this very hostile crowd of Pharisees who are wanting him arrested tried convicted and executed but watch what happens because we don't hear again from Nicodemus until chapter 19 and Jesus is dead he's been crucified since it was the day of preparation and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath for that Sabbath was a high day assembly that was a special Sabbath and they had those periodically the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken that they might be taken away they didn't want them hanging there on the

[33 : 36] Sabbath I mean after all that might taint the Sabbath God is hanging on a cross and they don't want to taint the Sabbath so the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and then they broke the other who had been crucified with them the two thieves but when they came to Jesus they saw he was already dead and trust me Romans understood what dead was they did not break his legs but one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear and at once there came out blood and water he who saw it is born witness his testimony is true and he knows that he is telling the truth that you also may believe for these things took place that the scriptures might be fulfilled not one of the bones will be broken and again another scripture says they will look upon him whom they have pierced that was written 700 years before crucifixion and piercing and a crucifixion after these things after his crucifixion

Joseph of Arimathea who was a disciple of Jesus but secretly for fear of the Jews asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus and Pilate gave him permission so he came and he took away the body now listen to this Nicodemus also who earlier had come to Jesus by night came bringing a mixture of myrrh by the way the other word for myrrh is Smyrna myrrh and alloys about 75 pounds in weight think about that guys he had to have a wagon he's got to have servants helping him so they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices as is the burial custom of the Jews now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid so because of the Jewish day of preparation since the tomb was close at hand they laid Jesus there they got to get this done before sundown the Sabbath is going to start what does that mean it's daylight it's daylight earlier when Nicodemus came to the Lord he did so at night under the cover of darkness oh I hope no one sees me man I don't want to be seen I hope can you imagine if I ran into the chief priest he's out going to the dairy queen with his wife or something you know with his kids he doesn't want to be seen he was so scared that he chooses darkness no one in religious leadership wanted to be remotely connected to Christ no one now in chapter 19

Nicodemus comes to the Lord after the crucifixion in broad daylight he brings with him 75 pounds of ointment to anoint the body he brings with him linen to wrap the body Nicodemus steps out of the darkness I'm getting a little emotional I hope that doesn't happen but that's rebirth when you were born again you stepped out of the darkness Nicodemus steps out of the darkness he is no longer in the shadows he is no longer a secret disciple the whole world can see him that was 2000 years ago and we're sitting here in 10,000 miles away talking about him no longer is Nicodemus widely known as the teacher in Israel afraid of what the leaders may see or hear what happened to Nicodemus that he would so boldly in the face of such fierce opposition do what he did

I think there's only one logical explanation Nicodemus had been born again from God above and that's not only his primary concern it's his only concern to do what will please God somewhere along the way Nicodemus had crossed the line God carried him across the spirit of God carried him across the line and he entered into the kingdom of God we said last week you enter in the kingdom of God at your rebirth not at death we just had to be on earth until Jesus is through us and then we go to the kingdom in heaven he entered in through the new birth we're not told when that's not important what is important is that he had you and

[39 : 13] I may not know when we were born again that's not important what is important is that you know you have been born again from above by God that's what's important so we can track

through John the tremendous transformation in the life of Nicodemus through the new birth and he wouldn't be the first he wasn't going to be the last it's like the pebble in the pond and it starts those ripples and they go out and they go out the pebbles that were thrown in the Middle East in Israel when Jesus walked on this earth are still going out to the four corners of the earth I've said before I've been in a lot of places the gospel is so powerful it penetrates the darkest places on planet earth I've run into believers in all kinds of places on elevators in the back alleys ran into 23 Hmong pastors in a dark room half this size because they heard some westerners might be coming and bring bibles to us and we did they heard a rumor we couldn't even turn on a light until finally we built up enough courage to turn on one light bulb and they had me pray and we had a translator and we gave them the bibles then we had to leave because the north vietnamese intelligence service had been following us and one of us had some experience with counterintelligence who were able to duck them I'm not at liberty to say who that was I'm probably bragging on myself they're too much Nicodemus life was transformed don't be surprised by that everybody who is born again undergoes a transformation now looking around I don't imagine anyone in here has a problem with that but if you're sitting there saying I don't think I've been transformed come see us get a hold of the pastor me Mike anybody Dan if a person's not been transformed he has not been born again transformation comes with the new boss