



Lecture # 30

Bible Doctrine I- TH-110

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Course Information

I. Course Description

A study of the persons of The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit and their unified teaching of the doctrines of the Bible.

Survey of the Doctrines of the Bible

VII-Doctrine of Salvation

Regeneration

What does it mean to be born again?

EXPLANATION AND SCRIPTURAL BASIS

We may define regeneration as follows: Regeneration is a secret act of God in which he imparts new spiritual life to us. This is sometimes called “**being born again**” (using language from [John 3:3–8](#)).

John 3:3-8 (NASB)

³ Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

⁴ 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?”

⁵ 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.”

⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

⁷ Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’

⁸ “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

A. Regeneration Is Totally a Work of God

Paul specifies that it is God who “made us alive together with Christ” ([Eph. 2:5](#); cf. [Col. 2:13](#)).

Ephesians 2:5 (NASB)

⁵ “Even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved).”



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Colossians 2:13 (NASB)

¹³ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions.

And James says that it is the “Father of lights” who gave us new birth: **¹⁷“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. ¹⁸In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures”.** ([James 1:17–18 NASB](#)).

Finally, Peter says that God “**Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead**” ([1 Peter 1:3 NASB](#)). We can conclude that both God the Father and God the Holy Spirit bring about regeneration.

What is the connection between effective calling and regeneration? As we will see later in our studies, Scripture indicates that regeneration must come before we can respond to effective calling with saving faith. Therefore, we can say that regeneration comes before the result of effective calling (our faith). But it is more difficult to specify the exact relationship in time between regeneration and the human proclamation of the gospel through which God works in effective calling.

At least two passages suggest that God regenerates us at the same time as he speaks to us in effective calling: Peter says, **²³“for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God..... ²⁵And this is the word which was preached to you”** ([1 Peter 1:23, 25 NASB](#)).

And James says, “**In the exercise of His will He brought us forth (birth) by the word of truth**” ([James 1:18 NASB](#)). As the gospel comes to us, God speaks through it to summon us to himself (effective calling) and to give us new spiritual life (**regeneration**) so that we are enabled to respond in faith.

Effective calling is thus God the Father speaking powerfully to us, and regeneration is God the Father and God the Holy Spirit working powerfully in us, to make us alive. These two things must have happened simultaneously as Peter was preaching the gospel to the household of Cornelius, “**while Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message**” ([Acts 10:44 NASB](#)).

Sometimes the term irresistible grace is used in this connection. It refers to the fact that God effectively calls people and also gives them regeneration, and both actions guarantee that we will respond in saving faith.



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The term irresistible grace is subject to misunderstanding, however, since it seems to imply that people do not make a voluntary, willing choice in responding to the gospel—a wrong idea, and a wrong understanding of the term irresistible grace.

The term does preserve something valuable, however, because it indicates that God's work reaches into our hearts to bring about a response that is absolutely certain—even though we respond voluntarily.

The Sovereign Gospel

Turn to [John 3](#), I want to show you this. This is so important. There's a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, ruler of the Jews... **THE ruler** of the Jews which really means the teacher of the Jews. This is a man who was a notable teacher, one of the leading teachers.

John 3:1-4 (NASB)

¹ Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews;

² this man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

³ Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

⁴ 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?"

v.2 Came to Jesus by night, said to Him, "Rabbi, we know You've come from God as a teacher, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." So he's affirming the fact that everybody affirmed this...the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the whole leadership of Israel, even though they rejected Jesus and crucified Him, never denied His miracles, okay?

Never. They never denied His miracles, they were not deniable. They were ubiquitous, they were everywhere. They were every day. They were all over the place. They were not deniable. They never tried to deny them.

But here's the testimony of one who speaks for all and says, **v.2** "No one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

It's obvious. Miracles, power over demons, power over disease, power over death, power over nature...but Jesus knew there was a question in the heart of Nicodemus that Nicodemus hadn't verbalized and so He went right to the heart and He said, **Verse 3**: "Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again he can't see the Kingdom of God." And Nicodemus said to Him, **verse 4**: "How can a man be born when he's old?"

Now he understands Jesus speaking metaphorically, you need to be born again. You need to go back and start all over at the very beginning. It's not about religious advancement, it's about birth.



So, he asked the question, “**How can a man be born when he is old?** How do I do that? How do I go back to the beginning? I’m an old man now and I’ve been in this legalism all these years, my whole life. He can’t go a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” **And he’s talking metaphorically.** He understands it. He’s not talking physically. He’s not making a joke.

Jesus said, “**Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born of water in the spirit,**” and He’s borrowing from Ezekiel, right?

John 3:5 (NASB)

⁵ 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.**”

The New Covenant passage. “**That you need to be washed with water, cleansing, and be given a new heart to replace the stony heart.**”

Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NASB)

²⁶ “**Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.**”

²⁷ “**I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.**”

So, He’s talking **Ezekiel talk** to a teacher of the Old Testament. You need New Covenant experience. You need what even **Jeremiah 31** talks about, you need to be cleansed and you need to have a new heart and you need to have the Spirit planted within you before you can enter the Kingdom of God.

Jeremiah 31:33-34 (NASB)

³³ “**But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,**” declares the LORD, “**I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.**”

³⁴ “**They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,**” declares the LORD, “**for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.**”

That’s the New Covenant. You need to be regenerated. You need to be transformed.

John 3:6 (NASB)

⁶ “**That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.**”

Because “**That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.**” Your flesh, and you’re just continuing to continue the process of the flesh, until you go back to the very beginning, are born again spiritually by the Holy Spirit, then you can enter the Kingdom of God.



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John 3:7 (NASB)

⁷“Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’”

So don’t be amazed that I say you must be born again.

Now at this particular point, you would say to someone, “I’m telling you, you need to be born again.” And if a person said to you, “How do I do that?” You would say, “Ah, pray this prayer,” right? “Repeat after me, pray this prayer. You just need to repent and believe.

What did Jesus say to Nicodemus? A really strange thing. **Verse 8**, “**The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it’s going, so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.**”

John 3:8 (NASB)

⁸“The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

What is that? If somebody came to you and said, “I think I need to be born again, I think we need to get out of this sort of relentless life of the flesh. I need a new birth. I need a new heart. I need a new Spirit. What do I do?”

Would you say to them, **“Can’t do anything...you can’t do anything. This is the work of the Spirit and He comes and goes when He wills on whom He wills.”**

What? So much for formula evangelism. So much for “pray this prayer.” **This is Jesus, this is not some novice who doesn’t quite get evangelistic technique. This is Jesus.**

What He’s saying to Nicodemus is, I just have to tell you, you need to be born again, you need to be born **anathen**, literally from above and **you’re not in charge of when that happens.** What a statement.