

# Born Again!

## The Miracle of New Spiritual Life

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Church January 29, 2023

### Part 5- The *Results* of the New Birth

#### Ephesians 1:3-12

**3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,**  
**4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love**  
**5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,**  
**6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.**  
**7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace**  
**8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight**  
**9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him**  
**10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him**  
**11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,**  
**12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.**

*To the Glory of God the Holy Father; God the Holy Son; and God the Holy Spirit.  
Amen*

I went to school with Alice. And all Alice talked about was becoming a clinical Psychologist. And I always considered Alice to be head and shoulders smarter than me and so, we really didn't ravel in the same groups.

But one day, after she had made an "A" on a test- I saw how happy she was. And so, I asked her *why* she was so happy. And Alice told me that she was happy because by making this "A"- she would get a full scholarship to College. So, I asked her *why* getting a full scholarship to College made her happy. And she told

me that by getting a full scholarship to College- she would be in line to go to Grad School. So, I asked her why going to Grad School made her happy.

Now right about now- Alice was getting pretty upset with me asking her all these “Why” Questions. But being the kind of person I am- I completely ignored her irritation and continued my examination.

So, she reluctantly told me that by going to Grad School- she would have a “leg up” on becoming what she had always dreamed about- being a clinical Psychologist. So, I pressed on and asked her why being a clinical Psychologist made her happy. And Alice looked sternly into my eyes and said, “*Blair, stop asking me all of this- I want to help people- that’s why*”. But, I asked, “*Why does helping people make you happy?*” And she got up and left and I’m not sure she ever spoke to me again.

Now I would never be able to convince Alice of this- but I was dead earnest as to why I was asking these Questions. You see, during the summer between my 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades of High School- I had become Born Again. And I was being told many, many things- most of which had absolutely nothing to do with the Bible or even Christianity as to what the New Birth was supposedly about. And I was becoming more and more confused as to what had happened to me; and why I was thinking the way I was thinking.

I had been told that now that I was “saved” I needed to obey the Bible. And when I asked, “*Why?*”- the basic Answer I got was, “*Because you’re supposed to- that’s why*”. So, I was developing a Theology in my mind that taught me that, now I was saved- I had a “Duty” and an “Obligation” to obey God. And what empowered me to “*Do my Duty*”; and to “*Carry out my Obligation*”- was my own human will- Power.

But when I read the Bible- I saw words like, “*Joy*” (**John 15:11**); and “*Delight*” (**Proverbs 23:26**); and “*Pleasure*” (**Psalms 16:11**)- words that are not normally associated with Concepts like “Duty” or “Obligation”.

So, that stark Contrast- created a “Journey” for me- a Journey through a whole lot of false or incomplete Teaching about WHY we are loved by God; and why being loved by God makes us happy. And for decades of my Pilgrimage with Jesus- I didn’t understand how to put the pieces together- but it was always on my mind.

So, I think I have found out at least part of the Answer. And it has to do with the Miracle of the New Birth. And that is why I wanted to begin this new year with a series on just what the New Birth does to us and for us and how that relates to our Joy in God. SO, let me ask you a series of Questions:

**Do you feel MORE loved by God because God “makes much” of you?**

OR

**Do you feel MORE loved by God because God so changes you (in the New Birth) that you now find the Fullness of your own Joy- in “making much” of Him?**

... in other words, What is the *Foundation* of your Joy? What causes you to be Happier than anything else in this Life? These Questions about Joy and Happiness are actually very serious and important Questions for every single Human Being to answer- because *whatever* “brings you the *most* Joy”; *whatever* “delights your Soul”; *whatever* “makes your Heart sing”- is what you love- the most. And understanding who or what you love- and *why*- is THE single most *fundamental* Issue of our Existence.

Because you see, we all want to be Happy. And it is what we *love*; and what we *enjoy*; what we *want*; and what makes us *satisfied*- that is the Basis of ALL of our Choices; and ALL of our Decisions in this Life. And it is the Choices we make- that, hopefully, bring about our Happiness. That’s why we make Choices. We have determined that if we choose this (over that)- we will be *happier* than we already are.

So, barring any external Influence- we ALWAYS choose what we want; what we love; and what we enjoy. And so, barring any external Influence- we will ONLY choose what we love; what we want; and what we love. That is the Foundation as to WHY we choose what we choose.

And so, finding out WHY we love what we love; WHY we want what we want; and WHY we enjoy what we enjoy- is *paramount* to understanding what makes us tick. And finding out what makes us tick- will help us understand WHY God said the things He said and WHY He did the things He did.

Because there is a fundamental Principle that is rarely spoken and rarely understood- and that is this:

**God wants us to be Happier- than we do.**

... and 1700 years ago, the great Church Father, Aurelius Augustinus discussed this very Issue by making this Statement in his preaching series on **1John**,

“Love [God]- and do what you will...”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The entire Quote is: “Love [God], and do what you will: whether you hold your peace, through love hold your peace; whether you cry out, through love cry out; whether you correct, through love correct; whether you spare, through love do you spare: let the root of love be within, of this root can nothing spring but what is good” Silige, et quod vis fac (Love [God] and do what you will); From a Homily (Sermon) of Augustine, Easter Sunday, 407 AD.

... which illustrates the biblical Truth that the person, who *truly* and *fully* loves God (because he has *already* experienced the Miracle of the New Birth)- would NEVER *want*; or *desire*; or *ask for*; or *do*; ANYTHING that would *displease* God- or that would bring Him no Glory.

The Bible teaches that what *pleases* the person, who has genuinely been radically and eternally transformed by the Miracle of the New Birth, is that God ALONE is glorified; and that God's people (all of them) find the fullness of their *own* Joy- in God alone being glorified.

You see, the New Birth is designed to transform entirely sinful and entirely selfish "Creatures of the Dust" into people, who genuinely "*delight in God*" and NOT in things that God has "made"; or things that are "passing away."

Now as many of you may know- this June I will celebrate my 52<sup>nd</sup> year of my "*Pilgrimage with Jesus*". And during that over five decades long "*Life in the Spirit*"- I have learned many things. I have learned both what is so very Right about the modern American Church; and I have also learned what we need to stop; what we need to fix; and what we need to change- *immediately*. And I have tried to promote what is Right- while also confronting; exposing; articulating; and denouncing what is Wrong.

And the main thing that troubles my spirit more than anything else- is the Concept that I call, "*Man-centered Theology*"; or "*Man-centered Christianity*"; or "*Man-centered Church*." And I see this as a destructive *Perversion* of biblical Christianity- not only in what it teaches- but in the fact that it is so wide-spread and so popular.

Now on the surface- the Phrase, "*Man-centered Theology*" might seem like a contradiction of terms- because the word, "*Theology*" is the "*Knowledge of*"; or the "*Science of*"; or the "*Study of- God*"; and the phrase, "*Man-centered*" has to do with the Focus of whatever you are studying- to be Man. So, how can the "*Study of God*" be *focused* on Man? That's why I call it a "Perversion" of biblical Christianity.

Now we here at the Covenant of Peace Church have been *faithfully* engaged in an Effort since the very beginning of this Church to become "*Biblical*". Both the Leadership of this Church as well as the "rank and file" Members seek to know Jesus more fully; to love Him more dearly; and to obey Him with Joy. And we have concluded that the ONLY way we can do that- is to accomplish two things:

1. Know WHAT we believe
2. Know WHY we believe it

There are many today in the modern Church, who seek some “*New Thing*”. They want to live “*Outside the Box*” and to develop their own, personal, “designer” Religion that pretty much allows them to believe and do whatever suits their fancy. These “*Pragmatists*” see no Value in uncovering ancient Truths; and then altering their Lives to be in accord with them. They want “*whatever works*”; and whatever allows them to “*be what they want to be*” and to “*have what they want to have.*”

But I disagree. I believe that Christianity is a “revealed Religion”. God has revealed Truths about Himself; about Mankind; about Salvation; and about what is Holy and what is Profane- that are both “Absolute” and “Eternal”. So, it is not only Wrong- but it is the height of Stupidity to either *minimize* or to outright *ignore* what God has infallibly spoken- in order to put our Hope in something that Man has said.

I believe that we are Justified by what we believe in; what we trust in; and what we confess and NOT by what we do. And all the “Doing” of Christianity comes AFTER a person has already experienced the Miracle of the New Birth. So, EVERYTHING about Christianity is accomplished NOT by “humanly engineered Morality”; nor by “Human will-Power”; nor by “human Decision”- but EVERYTHING about this Religion we call, “*Christianity*” is accomplished “BY” the Grace of God. And EVERYTHING about Christianity is appropriated to each individual THROUGH the Gift of Faith; or THROUGH the Ability God gives us to Believe.

So, I do NOT seek some “*New Thing*”- I seek the “*FIRST Thing*”; the “*ORIGINAL Thing*”; or in the words of the half-brother of Jesus- I see my Effort to be to...

**... contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints. (Jude 3)**

... and this “*once for all handed down to the saints*” Faith- is what I call, “*Biblical Christianity*”.

And Biblical Christianity is NOT “*up-for-grabs*”. It has *already* been *permanently* established. It has *already* been defined; and it has *already* been “set in concrete.” So, Christianity is ALWAYS what it has ALWAYS been; and it is NEVER what it has NEVER been. So, Biblical Christianity CANNOT change. It CANNOT be altered. It CANNOT be “re-packaged”; and it CANNOT be “new and improved”- precisely because there isn’t anything wrong with it.

Christianity was “RECEIVED” by the Old Testament Prophets and New Testament Apostles (and their chosen Designees); *infallibly* written down; given “Divine Credibility” through Signs, Wonders, Miracles, and various Gifts of the Holy Spirit; and then faithfully preserved to this very day. But that means that

Christianity is NOT being currently “*developed*”. It is NOT “*still in the making*”- or the words of Jude here would make no sense.

We are told to “**earnestly contend**” for something that is already *finished and completed*- NOT something that is *ongoingly* being developed by and through *new Revelations; new Experiences; and new Ideas*.

So, our Job is NOT to “*re-invent the Wheel*”- it is NOT to operate “*outside the Box*”; or “*march to the Beat of a different Drummer*”; or “*do our own Thing*”. God doesn’t *need* nor does He *want* our “*theological Creativity*”. He is NOT interested in “*spiritual Entrepreneurs*”. And Gods cares NOTHING about “*our Slant*”; or “*our Take*”; or even “*our Opinion*” about what He has already infallibly said. What God desires is to so radically change us- through the sovereign Miracle of the New Birth (by what He alone does for us) that we will “*see*”; or “*understand*”; or “*believe*”; that the Path to the *fullness* of our own Happiness- is through humble and joyful Obedience to His Word. And that will bring the MOST Glory to Him while giving us the MOST Joy.

So, our single Call is to struggle (by the Power of the Holy Spirit) to “*fit in*” with the Christianity that has already been established. It is to **contend earnestly** for the “*once for all handed down to the saints*” Faith. The *Christian* Faith.

The Reality is that biblical Christianity CANNOT be “*added to*” and neither can it be “*taken away from*”. And any Effort to do that- does NOT “*fix*” what is supposedly “*Wrong*” or “*Lacking*” with Christianity. What those Efforts do- is to merely *create* a brand- new Religion that is NOT Christianity- at all.

Christianity is the *completion*; or the *finalization* of what God began with **Genesis 1:1** and ended with what God spoke to the Prophet in **Malachi 4:6**- or what we call the 39 Books of the Old Covenant. And to bring about the Fulfillment of that First or that Old Covenant- God sovereignly gave the final, full and completed Revelation of God to Man in the 27 Books of the New Covenant.

So, to understand what Christianity already IS- REQUIRES that we read; and study; and pray about; and sing about; and ponder; and think about; and discuss; and meditate on- those 66 Books. And what that does- is to help each successive Generation “*re-discover*” the Grace of God- by personally experiencing a “*Union with Jesus Christ*”- through the Miracle of the New Birth.

We must understand that Christianity promises “*Freedom*” for the Believer along with “*Liberty in the Spirit*.” But “*biblical Freedom*” MUST be defined *fully and correctly*- or the word is *twisted* and *misused* and this promised Freedom and Liberty- becomes “*Bondage*” and “*Slavery*” very quickly.

For example, people use verses like **2Corinthians 3:17** that says,

**Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.**

... and **James 2:12** that says,

**So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty.**

... and they assume that these two verses are “Absolute” with no nuance; and without defining just what kind of “Liberty” the writers had in mind. And then they form their own, personal designer Theology based on these two verses.

But I would suggest that the “Freedom” and “Liberty” that the Bible speaks about is NOT a *carte blanche* “Freedom” and it is certainly NOT a “Liberty” that allows a person to think; and believe; and to do; and to say *whatever* he wishes.

Those who have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth are now “Free” to obey Jesus; they are “Free” to be near to Him; and they have been set Free- in order that they can desire more than Life itself to honor the Lord Christ in all they do. And this amazing Miracle has empowered them to the degree that they are no longer *defeated* by their Flesh; or the World; or the Devil; or their fallen Nature- in their pursuit of this joyful Submission and Obedience. The Dominion that satan had over them (when they were Lost) has been forever broken! And that is what the Apostle meant when he wrote this in **1John 3:8b**

**... The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.**

You see, when we were Lost- we were cruelly *driven* by our Lusts. But now that we possess new spiritual Life- we are lovingly *led* by the indwelling Spirit of God. And this is what the Apostle meant when he wrote this in **Romans 8:14:**

**For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.**

These are the ones who have been born again; and have received within themselves new spiritual Life- a Life that gives us both the Power and the Desire to follow after Jesus and to see the Commandments of God as being the Pathway to the fullness of their *own* Joy; Happiness; Contentment; and Satisfaction. And it really doesn't get any better than that.

Now last time I told you that that as you ponder the great Mystery of the Miracle of the New Birth- I want to try to present to you exactly what happens to us as this new, spiritual Life comes to us in four concise Statements:

1. The New Birth is us *receiving* new, spiritual “Life”- NOT new “Religion”
2. The New Birth is us personally *experiencing* supernatural Transformation- NOT merely *believing* in it

3. It is in the New Birth where God give us the Gifts of both “Love *for* God” and “Faith *in* God”
4. The New Birth does NOT make the “Old Man” *better*- it is the *creation* of a “New Man”

... and last time- we looked at the first three and so, today I want to look at the last one:

#### **4. The New Birth does NOT make the “Old Man” *better*- it is the creation of a “New Man”**

What happens in the Miracle of the New Birth is NOT the *improvement* of your Old, Lost, Fallen, Rebellious human Nature but the supernatural *creation* of a brand- *new* human Nature that has two Characteristics:

1. It is a Nature that is really *You*
2. It is a Nature that is really *New*

Nowhere in the Bible does it teach that God makes us to be unfeeling; unthinking; uncaring; docile; mindless robots. The New Birth; the Doctrines of Grace; and Christianity does NOT teach that at all. So, if you have been exposed to the Doctrines of Grace or any Teaching on the New Birth; or even any Teaching on Salvation that causes you to think that is what these Truths teach- you haven’t learned them correctly.

God wants us to *want* Him. God wants us to hear and read about WHO Jesus Christ is- and WHAT Jesus Christ has done; and God wants us to *want* Him; to *love* Him; and to *enjoy* Him! So, the New Birth is NOT about God *forcing* Himself on us- as we try as hard as we can to *reject* Him. Rather it is that God sovereignly and radically *changes* us- by giving us new spiritual Life- so that we no longer *reject* Him.

So, Yes! We CHOOSE Jesus! And Yes! That Choice is *entirely* voluntary! But the ONLY reason we do choose Jesus- is because God has sovereignly taken out of us the old, *Adamic* Nature<sup>2</sup> that was “Fallen” and “Rebellious” and replaced it with a brand- new Nature that loves God and that loves the “**Things of the Spirit of God**” (1Corinthians 2:14)<sup>3</sup>.

But because we now *want* Jesus- this new Nature is really YOU. So, it is a real human Nature (NOT angelic) that is really *forgiven* and *cleansed*. And it is

<sup>2</sup> The “*Adamic Nature*” is the Nature hat is after the similitude of Adam AFTER he fell.

<sup>3</sup> The “**Things of the Spirit of God**” include the Church; the Bible; Prayer; godly Fellowship; Fasting; Giving; Service, etc.



also a real human Nature (NOT Deity) that is really NEW- and one that is being *relentlessly* “formed” in you by the indwelling Spirit of God.

Now please allow me to take you on a short version of the Journey that God brought me into- so that I would arrive at this Place. And to do that- please turn with me to **John 3:5** and read carefully what Jesus told Nicodemus on that fateful night:

**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.**

Now there have been many, who after reading this verse formulate a Doctrine that teaches that lost people MUST be baptized in order to be Born Again. So, they teach that it is the Act of Baptism itself- that brings about the new Birth. And those who teach this false Doctrine believe in what is called, “*Baptismal Regeneration*”. And they will point to this verse to justify their wayward Teaching.

Of course, it is ridiculous to think that there is some magical quality about H2O that can wash away the old Nature and replace it with a new one. But millions of people all over the world believe that and teach it- *passionately*. For example, one website ([christusrex.org](http://christusrex.org)) says this:

Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit and the door which gives access to the other sacraments. Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: “Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word.”

Now if this is not true- it is a terrible Tragedy- precisely because literally *millions* of people have been taught this and believe it. Yet the accumulation of many Bible verses categorically say this Teaching is NOT true. And so, with all due respect to their Pasion- they’re wrong about this. And they are *doubly* wrong to use this verse here in **John 3** to justify their Position.

Now since around 1906- those in America- who are involved in the Pentecostal Movement- use **John 3:5** to justify their false Teaching that what Jesus meant here was that lost people have to not only be baptized in water- but they also have to be “baptized” in the Holy Spirit in order to experience the Miracle of the New Birth. And millions of people all over the world believe and teach that- *passionately!*

But, again, with all due respect to their Pasion- they're wrong about this, too. And they too are *doubly* wrong to use this verse here in **John 3** to justify their Position. And to help us comprehend this- I would like to introduce to you three words that will help you see what Jesus actually meant by what He said here in **John 3:5**:

1. Context
2. Context
3. Context

The Context of **John 3:5** is that Jesus was NOT speaking here to Baptists; or Presbyterians; or Pentecostals. And the Context is that Jesus wasn't speaking here to Americans or even 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christians. Jesus was speaking to a Jew, who lived in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century; who never spoke a single word of English; and who had no idea that America even existed. And Jesus was talking to a man, who never thought for a second that, over the next 100 years- God would "move" on several different men to write down *27 more* inspired Books to *complement* (complete) the 39 Books He had already given. So, all Nicodemus knew was what God the Holy Spirit had caused several holy men to infallibly write down in what we call today, the "*Old Testament*".

The Apostle John was careful to tell us that Nicodemus was a "Ruler" of the Jews. So, in **John 3:5**- Jesus is talking in a way that a man, who had studied the Old Testament his entire Life, would comprehend. Now remember, Nicodemus was NOT familiar at all with New Testament Baptism. So, for Jesus to discuss Baptism here would have been completely out of place. At best- all Nicodemus knew was some form of ritual cleansing in water.

So, please allow me to give you three Reasons why I hold this Position:

### **1. There Is No Mention of Baptism in the Rest of John 3**

First, if **John 3:5** was a Reference to Christian Baptism and it was *mandatory* for the New Birth (as some teach)- it seems very strange that there isn't any other Reference of Baptism in the remainder of this Chapter- even though it is filled with Teaching about how we may have Eternal Life. Verse 15:

**"Whoever *believes* in him may have eternal life."** Verse 16:

**"Whoever *believes* in him [will] not perish but have eternal life."** Verse 18:

**"Whoever *believes* in him is not condemned."** These verses mention Faith (believing) as a Requirement and NOT Baptism. And that would be strange- if Baptism was *mandatory* to receive the New Birth.

## 2. Baptism Does Not Fit with the Analogy of the Wind

Second, the Analogy about the Wind in verse 8 would be strange if being born again were so firmly attached to water Baptism. Jesus said, **“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.”** This seems to say that God is as free as the Wind in *causing* our Regeneration. But if it happened every time a baby is sprinkled; or an adult is immersed- that “Freedom” would not seem to be true. In that case the Wind would be very confined by the Sacrament.

## 3. Baptism Does Not Fit with Jesus’s Rebuke of Nicodemus

Third, if Jesus is referring to Christian Baptism, it seems strange that he would say to Nicodemus, the Pharisee in verse 10, **“Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?”** That makes sense if Jesus is referring to something taught in the Old Testament. But if he is referring to a Baptism that would be revealed AFTER the Old Testament was completed and would get its Meaning from the Life and Death of Jesus. And at this point in Time- Nicodemus would have had no way to know about this- because ALL he had was the 39 Books of the Old Testament. So, if **John 3:5** is referring to Christian Baptism- Jesus’ Rebuke of Nicodemus seems out of place.

But what this Ruler of the Jews DID understand was what God had spoken to the Prophet- some 600 years earlier when he wrote this from **Ezekiel 36:25-27**:

**25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.**

**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.**

This is a Prophecy about the New Covenant. And it contains a part in verse 25 where the Lord said,

**Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean...**

... which is referencing God the Holy Spirit *Himself*- sovereignly “*bathing*” lost and unsaved people to cleanse them from ALL their Filthiness and ALL their Idols.

So, not only does this NOT refer to Baptism; it doesn’t even refer to *physical* Water. This is simply referring to the Miracle of the New Birth- where God- *spiritually* “washes away” all Sin; and gives us a new Nature that no longer even desires to sin against God. And the supernatural Transformation of the old, fallen and rebellious Nature into a brand- new Nature (that loves God) is described in Old Testament terminology in verse 26 that says:

**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.**

Now in context- Ezekiel is prophesying here what God will do for his people when He brings them back from Exile in Babylon. But the Implications of this Prophecy are MUCH larger than just for the Jews of that time- because Jesus claims to secure the New Covenant by His Blood for ALL who will trust in Him- Jew or Gentile (**Luke 22:20**).

So, **Ezekiel 36** is the Passage that gives clarity to Jesus Words in **John 3:5**:

**“Unless one is born of *water* and the *Spirit*, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”**

... so, to whom does God say,

**“You shall be my people, and I will be your God” (Ezekiel 36:28)?**

.. to the ones to whom He says,

**I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.**

... and to the ones to whom He says,

**I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you;**

In other words, the new people of God; who will enter the Kingdom of Heaven are those who have a “*Newness*” that involves a cleansing of the old Nature and a creation of a brand- new Nature.

So, I'm telling you that "**Water and Spirit**" in **John 3:5** refer to two Aspects of our "*Newness*" when we are born again. And the Reason both are important is this: when we say that a "new Spirit"; or a "new Heart", is given to us, we don't mean that we cease to be the human being — the morally accountable Self — that we have always been. I was the individual human being, Blair Bradley BEFORE I was born again. And I am the individual human being, Blair Bradley AFTER I was born again. So, there is a Continuity in the New Birth. That's why there has to be "*Cleansing*". If the old human being, Blair Bradley, were completely obliterated- the whole Concept of "Forgiveness" and "Cleansing" would be completely irrelevant. There would be nothing leftover from the Past to forgive or cleanse.

We know that the Bible tells us that our old Self was crucified (**Romans 6:6**), and that we have died with Christ (**Colossians 3:3**), and we are to "consider ourselves dead" (**Romans 6:11**), and "put off the old Self" (**Ephesians 4:22**).

But none of that means the same Human Being is not in view throughout Life. It means that there was an old Nature; an old Character, or Principle, or Bent, that needs to be done away with. So, the way to think about your new Heart; your new Spirit; or your new Nature is that it is still "you"; and so, needs to be forgiven and cleansed. And that is the point of the referring to Water. My Guilt must be washed away. Cleansing with Water is a Picture; or a Type; or a Symbol; or a Sign of that. **Jeremiah 33:8** puts it like this:

**I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me and by which they have transgressed against Me.**

... so, the person that we are- that continues to exist- must be Forgiven, and the Guilt washed away.

But Forgiveness and Cleansing is NOT enough. I also need to be "NEW". I need to be *transformed*. I need new spiritual Life. I need a new way of *seeing*; and *thinking*; and *valuing*. And that's *why* Ezekiel speaks of a "new Heart: and a "new Spirit" in verse 26 and 27:

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

Now here's the way I understand those verses:

1. To be sure, the “heart of *stone*” means the *dead* heart that was unfeeling and unresponsive to spiritual Reality- the heart you had BEFORE the New Birth. It could respond with Passion and Desire to lots of things...
2. But it was a “stone” toward the spiritual Truth and Beauty of Jesus Christ; the Glory of God; and the Path of Holiness. That is what has to change- if we are to “see” the Kingdom of Heaven.
3. So, in the New Birth, God takes out the “heart of stone” and puts in a “heart of flesh.” But the word “*flesh*” does NOT mean “*merely* human” like it does in **John 3:6**.
4. “Flesh” in this Context means “soft” and “living” and “responsive” and “feeling”, instead of being a lifeless stone.
5. So, in the New Birth, our dead, stony Boredom with Christ is replaced by a Heart that spiritually senses (Feels) the intrinsic Worth and Value of Jesus.
6. Then when Ezekiel says in verses 26 and 27, “a new *spirit* I will put within you. . . . And I will put *my Spirit* within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes,” he means that in the New Birth, God puts a living, supernatural, spiritual Life in our heart, and that new Life- that new Spirit- is the “Working” of the Holy Spirit Himself- giving shape and character to our new heart.

The picture I have in my mind is that this new warm, touchable, responsive, living Heart is like a soft lump of clay; and the Holy Spirit presses Himself up into it- and gives spiritual, moral Shape to it- according to His Own Shape. And by being Himself *within* us- our new Heart and Mind take on His Character- His Spirit (**Ephesians 4:23**).

So now let’s step back and sum up these last several weeks. What happens in the New Birth? In the New Birth, the Holy Spirit supernaturally gives us new spiritual Life by connecting us with Jesus Christ through Faith. Or, to say it another way, the Spirit unites us to Jesus where there is Cleansing for our Sins; and He miraculously replaces our hard, unresponsive Heart with a soft Heart that *treasures* Jesus above all things; and a Heart that is being transformed by the Presence of the Spirit into the kind of Heart that not only LOVES to do the Will of God- but finds the highest degree of Pleasure in doing the Will of God (**Ezekiel 36:27**).

Since the way you experience all of this is through Faith, I invite you now, in the name of Jesus and by the power of his Spirit, to receive him as the sin-forgiving, transforming Treasure of your Life.

And that is *exactly* what the Apostle Paul meant when he said this in **Ephesians 1:5a&6a**:

**He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, ... to the praise of the glory of His grace ...**

... or ...

**... He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him ... to the praise of the glory of His grace ...**  
... or that ALL those who have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth have been...

**... predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.**

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

