

26 QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE ASKING!

QUESTION #15: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BORN AGAIN?

Q. What does it mean to be “born again”?

A. Being “born again” involves an inner change and an outer response. God does a mysterious work inside us to make us spiritually alive, an act called “regeneration.” Then we respond externally in repentance from our sin and trust in Jesus for our salvation, an act called “conversion.”

REGENERATION

1. IT IS ENTIRELY A WORK OF GOD.

We are all born spiritually dead because of Adam's sin, but God sovereignly chooses to make some alive.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (Eph 2:1-3)

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— (Eph 2:4-5)

2. IT IS MYSTERIOUS AND COMES BEFORE SAVING FAITH.

God causes we who were dead to suddenly be spiritually alive. We cannot have faith in Christ while being spiritually dead. When made alive, we cannot help but have faith in him.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. (Rom 8:5-7)

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, (Col 2:13)

All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. (John 6:37)

3. IT BRINGS RESULTS.

Regeneration is a mysterious inner working by God, but it will over time result in changes in our character and our desires.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. (Gal 5:22-24)

No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. (1 Jn 3:9-10)

CONVERSION

1. INCLUDES KNOWLEDGE, BELIEF AND PERSONAL TRUST

Knowing and believing the basic facts about ourselves and God is necessary but not sufficient. Jesus calls each of us personally to place our trust for salvation in him.

For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? (Rom 10:13-14)

You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! (James 2:19)

He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:11-12)

2. REQUIRES FAITH AND REPENTANCE

True saving faith is trust in Jesus Christ as a living person for forgiveness of sins and for eternal life with God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (John 3:16-18)

Such trust will be accompanied by true repentance, which is a heartfelt sorrow for sin, renouncing of it, and a sincere commitment to forsake it and walk in obedience to Christ.

...how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 20:20-21)

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Matt 11:28-29)

3. FAITH AND REPENTANCE CONTINUE THROUGHOUT LIFE

The heart attitudes of faith and repentance begin at regeneration and conversion, but continue throughout our lives. Our faith grows as our knowledge of Christ grows.

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:20)

“Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.” (Luke 11:2b-4)

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ. (Rom 10:17)