

## REGENERATION

- A. Introduction: We are emphasizing the importance of reading the Bible systematically—especially the New Testament. To read systematically means to read each book from start to finish, over and over.
1. This type of reading helps you become familiar with the books. Understanding comes with familiarity and familiarity comes with regular repeated reading. Systematic reading also helps you see context.
    - a. II Tim 3:16—The Bible is unlike any other book in existence because it is inspired by God. The Greek word translated inspired means God breathed. God breathed out or imparted His thoughts and words to more than forty men over a 1500 year period, who then wrote them down.
    - b. The Bible is not an ordinary book. God, by His Spirit, works in us through His written Word. His Word is compared to food. Just as food imparts nutrients to our body, the Word of God imparts peace, joy, faith, wisdom, and hope to us. It strengthens and changes us. Matt 4:4; I John 2:14
  2. Recently we've stressed the fact that we're living in a time of increasing religious deception. A few days before Jesus was crucified He warned His followers that, prior to His second coming, false christs and false prophets will arise and deceive many. Matt 24:4-5; 11; 24
    - a. If ever there was a time to know who Jesus is and why He came to earth—according to the Bible—it's now. Our only protection against deception is accurate information from God's Word.
    - b. Most of the New Testament authors were eyewitnesses of Jesus—men who walked and talked with Jesus, saw Him die, and then saw Him alive again. They wrote to tell what they saw and heard.
    - c. To be sure that we're equipped to recognize false christs and false prophets, for the past few weeks, we've been looking at who Jesus is and why He came into this world according to the eyewitnesses.
  3. We've made the point that to fully appreciate who Jesus is and why He came into this world, you must understand the big picture or the overall plan of God for humankind.
    - a. Almighty God created human beings to become His sons and daughters through faith in Him, and He made the earth to be a home for Himself and His family. Eph 1:4-5; Isa 45:18
    - b. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. When Adam sinned, human nature was altered and men and women became sinners by nature. Rom 5:19
      1. Both the human race and the earth itself were infused with a curse of corruption and death. Everything began to grow old and die. Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:12; Rom 8:20
      2. The effect of Adam's sin on human nature showed up immediately in the first human born by natural processes. Cain murdered his brother Abel and then lied to God about it. Gen 4:1-9
        - A. Neither humanity nor life on this planet is as God created them to be—This world in its present form is passing away (I Cor 7:31, NIV). God's plan of redemption through Jesus will ultimately restore God's creation to all that He created it to be.
        - B. Jesus came to earth the first time to die as a sacrifice for sin and make it possible for all who put faith in Him to be transformed from sinners into sons. He will come again to restore the earth to a fit forever home for God and His family. John 1:12-13; Rev 21-22
    - c. Christianity is more than a set of creeds and moral codes, it's supernatural. It's an organic relationship between God and man whereby we become partakers of the uncreated life in God Himself. We have more to say in this lesson about what happened to the human race because of sin, and what happens to men and women who believe on Jesus as Savior and Lord.
- B. Due to the effect of Adam's sin on humanity, every human being is born with a fallen nature—a corrupted nature that is contrary to God. When we're old enough to know right from wrong, we choose independence from God and become guilty of sin before a holy God. Eph 2:3; Rom 3:23; etc.
1. Mankind's problem is more than what we do. It's what we are by birth—sinners by nature, cut off from God. Before we acknowledged Jesus (We) were far away from the life of God (Eph 4:18, NLT). (We)

were dead, doomed forever because of (our) many sins (Eph 2:1, NLT). (And), the corruption that was in us from birth was expressed through the deeds and desires of our self-life (Eph 2:3, TPT).

a. But God, motivated by love, devised a plan to deal with sin and transform sinners into His holy, righteous sons and daughters. Two thousand years ago Almighty God entered time and space, took on a human nature, and was born into this world. Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God. John 1:1-3; John 1:14

1. Jesus took on human nature so that He could die and pay the penalty for the sins of the world through His sacrificial death. At the Cross Jesus took the punishment due to us for our sin so that we can be justified or declared not guilty. Heb 2:14-15; Isa 53:5-6

2. Once we are no longer guilty, God can then legally (according to His own Law) treat us as though we never sinned, indwell us by His Spirit and life, and change our nature. The entrance of God's life transforms us from sinners into holy, righteous sons and daughters.

b. God created humans with the capacity to receive His life into our being and become more than creatures He created. We are meant to sons and daughters who partake of His uncreated life. When a person believes on Jesus, God, by His life and Spirit comes into them.

2. In his gospel, John presents Jesus as the God-man who came to give life to men. In his book John used the Greek word *zoe* (or life) 37 times. This word refers to the life that men and women receive when they believe on Jesus—the uncreated life in God, the life of God.

a. John 1:12-13—John reported that to all who receive Jesus (accept who He is and what He has done) He gives the right (power, privilege) to become sons of God.

1. John 3:3-6—Jesus used the terminology born again or born of God to picture what happens when a person believes on Him —spiritual (non-physical) life is imparted to them, in their inner most being. They are born of God because they have received (partake of) His life (*zoe*).

2. There are two Greek words that are translated sons. John 1:12 used the word *teknon* which stresses the fact of spiritual birth (*Vine's Dictionary*). We are born of God: But as many as appropriated Him, He gave them a legal right to become born-one of God (John 1:12—Wuest).

b. Titus 3:5—Paul, another eyewitness of the resurrected Lord Jesus, referred to what happens when a man or woman is born from above as regeneration. Regeneration (*palingenesia*) is made up of two Greek words, *palin* (again) and *genesis* (birth). (This word is also used to describe what will happen to the earth itself when Jesus returns. More on that next week.)

1. God saves us from sin and its effects, not through or because of any good work that we have done, but through giving us new life (His uncreated life). To regenerate means to give life to.

2. When we believe on Jesus, the Word of God and the Spirit of God cleanse us and impart life to us (James 1:18; I Pet 1:23; John 3:3-6; Eph 5:26). He saved us...by the cleansing (bath) of the new birth (regeneration) and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5, Amp).

c. The condition of our spirit (our innermost being) is the basis of our identity (John 3:6). We are either born of God or we aren't. Our spirit is either alive with the life of God or dead (lacking God's life). Consider two statements Paul made about the change in our nature when we believe.

1. Writing to Christians who were being influenced by a false teaching that said men must be circumcised to be saved from sin, Paul wrote: For neither is circumcision [now] of any importance, nor uncircumcision, but [only] a new creation [the result of a new birth and a new nature in Christ Jesus, the Messiah] (Gal 6:15, Amp).

2. Note his description of someone born of God: Therefore if any person is (ingrafted) in Christ, the Messiah, he is (a new creature altogether,) a new creation; the old (previous moral and spiritual condition) has passed away. Behold the fresh and new has come (II Cor 5:17, Amp).

3. One of the reasons we are discussing this is to equip us to recognize false christos who proclaim false teachings. The Bible has much to say about world conditions when Jesus returns. It describes a

worldwide religion under the leadership of the ultimate false christ (a man known as the Antichrist). It will be an apostate religion, (one that has abandoned the basics of orthodox or biblical Christianity).

- a. This apostate religion (a counterfeit Christianity) is already under development. Consider one example. In recent decades there has been increasing ecumenical movement, a move toward worldwide Christian unity or cooperation.
- b. There's nothing wrong with trying to get along with Christians who see things a little differently than we do. But we must never compromise the clear teachings of Scripture in the name of unity.
- c. It's becoming increasingly common to hear people talk about the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, meaning that we're all God's children no matter what we believe or how we live. This is a false teaching. God is every man's creator, but He is not every man's Father.
  1. The Bible states that there are two groups within humankind—children of God and children of the Devil, people with natures changed through new birth and people with unchanged natures.
  2. I John 3:10—By this it is clear who take their nature from God and are His children, and who take their nature from the devil and are his children (Amp). The Greek word translated children is *teknon* which stresses the fact of spiritual birth.
    - A. John was writing to address the issue of false teachers who were influencing believers, denying not only the deity and incarnation of Jesus, but the existence of sin and the need for holy living. John's point was that we see their nature expressed through their actions.
    - B. John cites Cain's murder of his brother Abel as an example of the effect of Adam's sin on human nature and how unregenerate men act. I John 3:12—[And] be not like Cain who [took his nature and got his motivation] from the evil one and slew his brother (Amp).
  4. Jesus came to earth to open the way for sinners (children of the devil) to be transformed into sons and daughters of God through regeneration, through receiving the uncreated (*zoe*) life of God.

C. Through Jesus and His death on the Cross, God obtained His family. Not only is Jesus the procurer of God's family He is the pattern for the family. Jesus, in His humanity, shows us what sons of God are like.

1. Remember who Jesus is. He is God become man without ceasing to be God—one Person with two natures, human and divine. Even though Jesus was and is God, while on earth He did not live as God. He put aside His rights and privileges as God and lived as a man in dependence on God as His Father.
  - a. How was that possible? Much of this is beyond our comprehension because we are talking about how the Infinite, Eternal, Almighty God has chosen to interact with finite, created beings.
  - b. The men who interacted with Jesus (the eyewitnesses who wrote the New Testament) made no attempt to explain it. They simply accepted what they saw and heard from Jesus and wrote about it.
2. People misunderstand who Jesus is because they don't realize that when we read statements about Him in the New Testament, we must determine if they refer to Jesus' human nature or His divine nature.
  - a. When the Bible says that Jesus was tired, hungry, and tempted to sin, it is clearly a reference to His human nature. Mark 4:38; Mark 11:12; Heb 4:15; etc.
    1. But at the same time, Jesus was also fully God, as demonstrated by the fact that He accepted worship and forgave sins. Matt 8:2; Matt 9:18; Mark 2:5-7; etc.
    2. Keep in mind, all but one of the New Testament authors was Jewish, and they knew that only God is to be worshipped and only God can forgive sin.
  - b. Consider one example of Jesus' dual nature. On resurrection day Mary Magdalene was the first of Jesus' followers to see Him alive. Jesus gave her a message for His other followers: Go tell the others that I am ascending to My Father and your Father. John 20:16-17
    1. The fact that Jesus referred to God as His Father does not mean that Jesus was not (is not) God. Just a few verses later, Jesus allowed Thomas to call Him God (v28-29). Jesus didn't correct Thomas. Instead, He blessed Thomas. The man Jesus was not an atheist. His God was God.

2. God is the Father of Jesus' humanity (Luke 1:35). At the incarnation, Jesus humbled Himself and took a role of submission to the Father for the purpose of accomplishing our redemption through the Cross (Phil 2:6-8).

3. This subordination to God is mentioned in reference to Jesus only after He took on flesh—never before He incarnated. Equality of being and subordination in a working relationship are not contradictory. His act of humility did not make Him less than God in His Being.

A. When Jesus incarnated, He became the God-man, fully God and fully man, uniquely qualified to rescue all who put faith in Him from sin, corruption, and death.

B. As God, the value of His Person is such that He could satisfy justice on behalf of an entire race. Because God was the Father of Jesus' humanity, He did not partake of fallen human nature. And, because He lived a perfect life and never sinned, He had no guilt of His own.

3. God's plan since before He created the earth was and is to have sons like Jesus. Rom 8:29—For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters (NLT).

a. The KJV Bible says we are to be conformed to the image of His Son. The Greek word translated conformed means having the same form as, and has the idea of inward transformation. The word translated image means to be like, to resemble. Rom 8:29—[share inwardly His likeness] (Amp).

b. We don't become Jesus. He is always and ever will be the Creator God, and we are the created. He is the Only Begotten Son (unique, one of a kind), the only Man who existed before He was born. He is the Firstborn. Firstborn means chief, preeminent—superior, supreme.

1. We don't become God-men. Jesus is the only God-man, fully God and fully man. We become sons and daughters who are born of God, partakers of the uncreated life (*zoe*) in God.

2. I John 5:11-12—And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life (*zoe*), and this life (*zoe*) is in his Son. So whoever has God's Son has life (*zoe*); whoever does not have his Son does not have life (*zoe*) (NLT).

A. The entrance of God's life and Spirit is the beginning of a process of transformation that will ultimately fully restore us to the person we were meant to be before sin corrupted the family—like Jesus in character, holiness, love, and power. (Lessons for another day).

B. Right now, we are finished works in progress—fully God's sons and daughters through new birth, but not yet fully conformed to the image of Christ (Christ-like) in every part of our being. But He who has begun a good work in us will complete it. I John 3:2; Phil 1:6

c. I Cor 15:45-47—Jesus is the representative Man. He went to the Cross as the Last Adam, as the representative of the entire fallen human race. He rose from the dead as the Second Man, the head of a new race of sons of God, men and women born of and indwelt by God.

D. Conclusion: We have not said all there is to say about God's plan to transform His damaged creation through regeneration—through giving life to a dead world. But consider these points as we close.

1. Lessons like this one don't seem practical because we all have problems and we need help. Because of the nature of life in a fallen, sin damaged world, many problems are not easily or quickly solved.

a. But when you learn to look at life in terms of the big picture it changes your perspective and it gives you hope in the midst of this very difficult life. There is redemption and transformation ahead.

The life that we all long for will one day be ours.

b. The big picture helps you see God's love for you. His entire plan was motivated by love. He loved us enough to join us in this fallen world and endure a grueling death on the Cross so He could recover His family.

2. Regular, systematic reading of the New Testament will give you the big picture and persuade you of the fact that God really will get us through whatever we are facing until the completion of His plan.