

The New Birth

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[0 : 0 0] we come this evening to the final part in our little mini-series which we've been looking at titled Special Births. Some of you may remember that we looked a number of weeks ago at the first of these special births in our little series, and that was Isaac with his parents, Abraham and Sarah, awaiting long, many long years for the promise of a child to be fulfilled. We looked also at that of John the Baptist, another child long waited for and long desired, but who again was many years in the fulfilling. Now we could have looked at others if there had been time and enough weeks, we could have looked at the case of others like Jacob, who likewise, with Jacob and Esau, the twins that were gone to Rebekah, she was 20 years waiting for a child, and Isaac interceded for it with the Lord, and then suddenly there was two at once, and the one, the younger, was to rule over the elder. We could have looked at Samson, another child with special promise, where by an angel visited the mother-to-be and gave her directions as to how the child was to be brought up as a Nazarite. We could have looked at Samuel, again whose mother waited long and asked him especially of the Lord, and was heard. And that's what the name is, Samuel is heard of God. So we could have multiplied examples, particularly in the Old Testament, but of course most recently we looked at that of Jesus and his birth, which was again unique, but it's special in a totally different way from the others. You know, in the case of the others, they were longed for, they were prayed for, they were waited for. It was a long time coming. And then it came to those who, you know, had made every possible use, if I can say it delicately, of natural means to bring about the birth of their child, that only the Lord was able to make it happen. And then you've got the case of Jesus, who of course was an unexpected announcement. It was a sudden announcement with the angelic visitation. It was not looked for. I mean, it's reasonable to suppose that Mary would have expected that in due course when she was married to Joseph, she would have hoped and expected there might be children along the way in the natural way of things, but she certainly would not have expected this angelic visitation. She certainly would not have expected that announcement. It was sudden. It was unexpected. It was thought to be impossible. But the angel Gabriel was very specific with God. Nothing shall be impossible.

He will do as he sees fit. He will bring to pass that which he has ordained. So we come this evening then to the final instance of what we are terming special births. And that is that of the new birth. That which is open to all to receive. The individuals involved in the cases of the special births we have looked at. These are physical births. Albeit in the case of our Lord, there is a unique spiritual input. And of course there is a spiritual dimension to all the special births that we could have looked at as well as those we actually did.

But when we're looking at the new birth itself, this is wholly something wrought of God. It is a wholly spiritual phenomenon which we cannot make happen, which we cannot bring on or we cannot initiate ourselves. It is all of God. And if we think in terms of the new birth, which is explicitly referred to by Jesus, of course, at verse 3 and at verse 7, In terms of the new birth, if we compare the examples of those who waited long and trusted the Lord and were devout and faithful and still, the thing for which they had longed for still hadn't happened until finally the Lord answered their prayer and made it happen, compare that with the suddenness and unexpected nature of the announcement to Mary. And you'll find that this also is parallel in the new births of the Lord's people. Because there are those who may have been brought up with the Lord and with the knowledge of his word and brought up in the family of the

Lord's people who have been steeped in his word and all the knowledge, the head knowledge and the worshipping community and so on, and have known and instinctively realised there's something missing.

There's something that isn't alive and exciting in the way they hear that some of these other Christians describing their relationship with the Lord and they know that they don't have that. And they long for it and they want it and they pray for it and it doesn't happen and it doesn't happen and it doesn't happen. And then finally, in the Lord's good time, that life-altering change is brought about. And there's part of them that thinks, why couldn't this have happened ages ago? What could I have done differently to have made it happen sooner? And you couldn't.

[5 : 24] You couldn't do anything. All the means that could be used were being used, but nothing physical, even that which is most devoutly religious, could not make that happen. It is the work of God's great grace. And many more of the Lord's people, I would suggest to you in all reverence, come by this route of long waiting and praying and seeking and being surrounded by all the outward things of the Lord, but knowing that it's not quite alive to them the way they want it to be. It's not this excitement, this new birth, this personal relationship that they long for, but all the outward stuff is there and they wait and they pray and it doesn't happen and it doesn't happen. And finally, it does by the grace of God. God's time never makes mistakes. But of course, these long waited for and slow, if you like, and undramatic means of a soul being converted, these don't grab the spiritual or ecclesiastical headlines. No, the church isn't set abuzz by the knowledge of this dramatic conversion because it's not dramatic. It may be quiet, it may be private, it may be personal, but it will have happened in each soul who actually is born again.

But of course, it's far easier to focus on the dramatic, on the sudden, on the one that was thought impossible, the one who'd been a complete and total enemy of the Lord, the Saul of Tarsus type of conversion, the Damascus Road type of conversion. And how many people end up bitterly disappointed and feeling themselves inadequate because they haven't had Damascus Road? And yet you look at the scriptural evidence and Damascus Road happens to how many saints of the Lord? One. And yet we take this as being the definitive authority to what this should be how it happens to me. It should be sudden.

It should be dramatic. It should be the heavens opening and blinding lights and angelic voices and the Lord speaking to me. It should be this public thing. It should be this dramatic conversion that's so sudden and so, so meaningful that my life is totally changed by it. Well, your life will be changed by it.

But very, very few have this kind of sudden drama. Very few require this kind of sudden drama. There are those. There are those who are picked out specially for that, but far more of the Lord's people are converted quietly and after long waiting, just as the special births in a physical sense. The number that are, if you like, conceived in the normal way, but with the Lord's specific input, far outnumber for those that are sudden and dramatic with angelic announcement and so on. So it is with the new birth. So it is with the spiritual birth. The dramatic and the sudden grabs the headlights.

But it's not the way the Lord often chooses to work. There are as many different ways that the Lord may bring his people to that new birth as there are individual saints of the Lord. There is only one saviour. There is only one new birth per person who is saved. And just as for each of us, there is only one physical birth. And we don't know the circumstances by which, you know, our parents lived or where they went and in the previous nine months and what activities, what jobs they did or where they went, where they traveled and all the rest. We don't know all these details, although perhaps they may tell us subsequently. It wasn't for us to know when we were in the womb, but when we were brought forth and grew to begin with, we didn't even know that we were physically born. It was just life.

[9 : 33] As we knew about the Lord works individually through each individual soul, but there is only one new birth per person. You don't have then another new birth, then a second, then a third, and this is me being regenerated again and so on. There's only one physical birth and there's only one new birth for every saved soul. But the Lord may use many different means to bring it about.

Likewise, there is only one Saviour. Though there may be many ways of coming to know him and many different traditions through which the Lord's people are brought, but still only one Saviour.

He may draw his children by many different ways, but only one new birth per saved Christian and only one Saviour. However many roots we are brought to that arrival.

In verse 3 where Jesus says to Nicodemus, Verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

In one sense, this was revolutionary, because he's saying a man, a person, except a person, whoever he or she may be, is born again, they cannot see the kingdom of God.

[10 : 48] He's not saying, except an Israelite, except a Jew be born again. And Nicodemus would be coming to him in the assumption, in the understanding that only Israelites are going to be saved. Only Israelites are the Lord's people. Of course they are.

What must we do, Jesus? We recognize that you're a teacher sent from God. For nobody can do these miracles that you do except God be with him. So tell me, what is it God wants of us?

Now Jesus said, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And he says this, widening out the kingdom to all those who would come to the Lord by faith.

Now, what he's saying with this, this revolutionary statement is not simply the nature of coming to the Lord, but also intimating that it was time to open up, or it was coming close to the time, to open up the way of salvation to all mankind.

It's not there yet. Jesus is saying this is going to happen, but remember that he, in his own ministry, limited the outreach of his ministry to the Israelites, to those who were themselves Jews.

[12 : 01] Remember in Matthew chapter 10, when he sends out his disciples, he says, don't go into the way of the Gentiles, of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and say to them, you know, the kingdom of heaven is come, and repent, and so on.

But he limits the disciples' ministry, he limits his own activity to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Yes, there is the example of the Philo-Phoenician woman in the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, but she is exceptional.

And there's always exceptions. There is the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar. Yes, these are exceptions. Jesus rather sends and conducts his ministry to the Israelites, because it is to the Jew first, but thereafter to the Gentile.

The day is coming when all of mankind is going to be invited. All of mankind will have the availability of this new birth, of this salvation.

And this is revolutionary. This is unheard of to the Jews, because they thought it was just them. Understandably, because God had hitherto worked only through them in the past.

[13 : 16] But they are, if you like, again, without wishing to be indelicate, it's like, they are like the womb from which the saved are brought forth.

And it is through this womb of the Jewish nation that we rather are enabled to enter in, we who are Gentiles, are enabled to be born into that relationship with the God of Israel.

Because he was their God before he was ours. And he's the Messiah of Israel before he is the Christ of the Gentiles. We enter into their relationship.

They don't get grafted into us. We become honorary Israelites. They don't become castaway Gentiles. So this opening up to all mankind, this is revolutionary.

Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. But even there, in terms of it dealing with, in the past, exclusively with the Jewish nation, how did a person become an Israelite?

[14 : 21] How did they become a Jew? How did they become a priest? They're like, well, you couldn't be, you had to be born one. If you were born an Israelite, well, that was good for you. Because you are one of the Lord's people. And you might be a devout, faithful, religious Israelite.

Or you might be a godless one. But you belong to them because you were born into it. And this is a physical illustration of the way in which we are brought into our relationship with Christ.

You're born, born again into it. We might be faithful and devout in our following of Jesus. Or we might fall away quite often and be not very good examples.

But remember that it is for the good, the bad, the indifferent. It is for sinners that this grace has come. So likewise, just as one became an Israelite by being born an Israelite.

And you didn't have any choice over it. It was a privilege that you didn't have any choice over it. If you were going to be a priest, like John the Baptist was born into a priestly family, you were a priest by birth.

[15 : 21] And so if you're going to be saved, you're going to be a true believer in Christ. It's by virtue of this new birth, over which you have no control. It is privilege.

It is blessing. But just as an Israelite is born racially, physically, into the Lord's people as they were, doesn't mean every Israelite was saved. So likewise, everyone who is saved, it's because they are born again, over which they personally don't have control.

Verse 4, Nicodemus said unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? And he doesn't get it. He is, you know, can even a devout Israelite not somehow be physically born?

Here we have again, the confusion of the flesh and the spirit that Jesus seeks to unpack in verse 6. But we'll come to that in a moment. We have to also recognize that, you know, Nicodemus is saying, Okay, well, can you somehow climb back into your mother's womb?

No, of course you can. So, how can a man be born again? Well, part of the great good news of this salvation is, it's not even just for those who have mothers and fathers.

[16 : 39] What about those who are orphans? What about those who never knew their parents? What about those who have been literally cast away by their parents? You know, some of our missionaries work in Uganda, with the street children there, who have been literally abandoned by their parents, just dumped on the streets and left, just abandoned.

They never know their parents. They'll never have a mother or a father to be able to even think, Well, how do I get born again? Do I get inside my mother's womb again and be physically born? What about those who have no parents?

This is a salvation which brings fatherhood in God, motherhood through the Lord's people, the church, who brings a family to those who previously had none.

Now, Jesus himself comes to them as one who, you know, a priest after the order of Melchizedek, of whom it is written, Hebrews chapter 7, verse 2, to whom Abraham gave tithes of all this, without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, a bride of a priest continually.

We don't know anything about Melchizedek's mother or father, or descent, or his genealogy, or anything. So, just as he appears, and then that's all we know of him.

[17 : 57] So, likewise, Jesus can't ascribe his position, or his saviourhood, to who he's descended from. It's simply, he is unique, like Melchizedek.

He is the one who represents, those who perhaps also have no mother or father, no one to call their own. He will be father unto them. He will be saviour unto them.

He is able to save, and save to the uttermost, them that come to him by faith, regardless of their family circumstances. Although what we see here, likewise, with Nicodemus, is a striving, seeking to try and understand, what Jesus is saying.

He is confusing, flesh and spirit. He doesn't quite understand. But Jesus goes on to say, except the man be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Now, the new birth is not something that happens by water. It is something which God does spiritually. But, the baptism that every Christian receives, symbolizes that new life.

[19 : 09] Symbolizes that anointing with the spirit. And it is the outward symbol, that indicates to the world, as well as to us, whose we are and who we belong to.

You know, let's say, a certain sporting fixture, was happening in Glasgow. And you decided that, purely out of randomness, you were going to walk down the street, in certain part of Glasgow, in a top that just happened to be green and white hoops.

And you decided, your neck was a bit cold, so you would just happen to put on, a green and white scarf. And there coming towards you, were a whole bunch of people in, blue shirts, with union jacks, and cold necks, that just happened to have, blue and red and white scarves, around them there.

What do you think is going to happen? These two lots of people, are not going to pass each other, oh nice, I like it, yeah that's good. Because as far as they're concerned, the outward appearance, symbolizes a belonging, which is an enmity, to what they belong to.

Now you could just as easily, not be wearing anything, to state it, you could just as easily, be wearing, ordinary civilian clothes, and nobody would know, which side you belong to, or who it was you supported.

[20 : 29] But the Christian, is not to be like that. The Christian, is to be prepared, to wear, as it were, the Lord's colors, regardless, of whoever may be, the enemy that comes against them.

You will be the Lord's, within, in your heart, but nobody sees that. By taking the water of baptism, by making your public profession, and sitting, yes at the Lord's table too, but the water, symbolizing, that new birth, of the spirit, you declare, whose you are, and whom you seek to serve.

You don't care, who knows it. You're prepared, to wear, that outward allegiance, regardless, of whoever, may come against it. So likewise, we have the reality, of the new birth, of the spirit, and we have, the public testimony, the outward, symbol, of the water.

We have that, which is inward, and that, which is outward. And the two, must reflect each other. There must be both parts, both sides, of the coin. As there is a change within, so there must be, a public testimony, without.

Otherwise, see, remember how Jesus says, you know, whoever is ashamed of me, and my gospel, in this fallen, and crooked generation, I myself, will be ashamed of him, when we stand before the Lord, at the last day, in the day of judgment.

[21 : 55] And if we think, yes, well of course, I'm a Christian, but I don't want anyone to know it, and I'll just, I'll just stay quiet. I won't say anything, I won't testify anything, I'll just pretend, that I'm not. And that way, I can fit in, with the world around me.

And when we come, to the last day, and the Lord is busy, dividing the sheep, from the goats, I say, well Lord, yes, yes, I was one of yours, I was one of yours too. And he says, yeah, I think maybe you were, but you know, I'm just going to pretend, that you weren't.

I'm just going to, leave it there, because you know, there was no outward statement, so you're ashamed of me, I'm going to be ashamed of you too. Here, take my sheep off this side, you go off that side, with the goats.

That's what Jesus said. He would be ashamed, of those who were ashamed of him. But what does Paul say? Romans chapter 1, verse 16, I am not ashamed, of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God, unto salvation, to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Likewise, he writes to Timothy, 2 Timothy chapter 1, verses 11 and 12, when unto I am appointed, a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles, for the which cause, I also suffer these things.

[23 : 06] Nevertheless, I am not ashamed, for I know, whom I have believed, and I'm persuaded, that he is able, to keep that, which I have committed, unto him, against that thing.

I'm not ashamed, despite the enmity, despite the opposition, I'm not ashamed, of the public statement, that I have made. I am not ashamed, of the one, in whom, I have believed.

It is, not the same, anymore, when we are converted, and likewise, there is, without wanting to pun, too much, not the shame, anymore.

Because, I remember myself, in growing up, and going in a church, going family, and so on, that there was always, a bit of embarrassment, and hoping, that nobody, none of your pals, would see, that you went to church, and you would just, keep it quiet, and hope they wouldn't notice, or they wouldn't be there, when we were going in, and coming out.

But once you are converted, when you have Christ, in your heart, you're not ashamed, anymore. There's no shame, anymore. There's not the shame, because you are not, the same, anymore.

[24 : 13] Because you are changed. There is that, which is inward, and that, which is outward, of water, the outward, demonstration, and the spirit, the inward, reality.

Verily I say unto you, except a man be born, of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter, into the kingdom of God. That which is born, of the flesh, verse 6, is flesh.

And that which is born, of the spirit, is spirit. Now that means, that you cannot, force this, into happening. This is something, God does.

No amount, of outward, church boy, attendance, good as that is, can convert you. No amount, of head knowledge, of the Bible, good as that is, I'm not, rubbishing anything, you should be, reading the Bible, every day.

You should be, attending, the means of grace, as often as you can. Because one day, the day will come, when you're not able, to go anymore. And then your opportunities, will have gone.

[25 : 12] So we should be, making good, every opportunity, that we have. We should be, using, every, available resource, but, we cannot make it happen.

Because one species, cannot bring forth, another species. If you have cows, sometimes you pass them, you know, and they're going, away into Tarbot, or whatever, and you see the cows, sometimes with a little calf.

And it's always, a little calf, that they have. They're not going to have, a kangaroo, or a bear cub. Because a cow, is not going to bring forth, a bear. A cow is not going to, beget something, of a different species.

A cow will always, produce a calf. And whatever species, one has, it's always going to, produce, its own kind, and its own species. A hamster, cannot beget, a goldfish.

Likewise, contrary to what, evolutionists, would tell us. A monkey, cannot beget, a human. And by the same token, the flesh, cannot beget, the spirit.

[26 : 17] That which is born, of the flesh, is flesh. And that which is born, of the spirit, is spirit. Marvel not, that I say unto thee, ye must, be born again. Now just a little, aside here.

Those who are, devotees of, for example, the Roman Catholic faith, will have as part, of the tenets, of their doctrine, this testimony, of what they would call, Holy Mary, Mother of God.

And they would ask her, to pray for them, pray for us, for us sinners, now at the hour of our death. Now, Mary of course, is described sometimes, in Roman Catholic devotion, as the Mother of God.

This is of course, a heresy, a falsehood. And like all heresies, it's not, complete black and white, opposite of the truth. A heresy is that, which is, almost the truth.

Which is, if you like, a half truth, but not the truth. It's like, if somebody gives you, a fire extinguisher, and here's your fire extinguisher, that's great, you can spray it on the fire, but what's inside, it happens to be petrol.

[27 : 22] It's almost the truth, but it's not quite the truth. It is, in a fire extinguisher, you know, a, a, encasement, it looks the part, it's got, it's got liquid inside it, but it's the wrong kind of liquid.

It looks the part, but it's not. It's almost the truth, but it's not. Now, Holy Mary, Mother of God, she's not the Mother of God. Well, hang on a minute, Jesus is God, is he not?

Jesus is God, yes. And she is his mother, is she not? Yes, she is his mother. Therefore, she is the Mother of God. No, she's not. Because that which is of the flesh, can only beget flesh.

Jesus, remember, is holy God, and holy man. Jesus, in his flesh, the fact that he is born a human being, he is begotten and born that way, because of his mother.

She is the mother of his manhood. She is the mother of his fleshly body. She is not the mother of his divinity. She is not the mother of God.

[28 : 26] Because the flesh cannot beget the spirit. That which is human, cannot beget that which is divine. Mary is a woman of great virtue. She is unique in the annals of the history of mankind.

I am not rubbishing the mother of our Lord. But she is his mother in the flesh. She has brought forth her firstborn son, veiled as it were, in flesh.

It is because of her flesh that he has flesh. But she does not bring forth, in that sense, she is not the mother of his divinity. God is the father of his divinity.

It is God who has overshadowed her, and the power of the Holy Spirit has come upon her. And that which is of the spirit begets that which is spiritual. That which is divine begets that which is divine.

Mary is the mother of Jesus. She is worthy of respect and of honour because of that. But she is not to be worshipped. Nor is she to pray for us.

[29 : 33] She is not the mother of God. She is the mother of our Lord in the earthly sense. But his Godhead, she is not the mother of.

Now it is important that we do not overreact the other way and say, oh, what a bad lot Mary is. No, she isn't. This is like that which is being a half-truth, seeks to exalt Mary to a position that the Lord never gave her and which she never sought for herself.

So we have to remember, just as Jesus taught, verse 6, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the spirit is spirit. And then in verse 7, marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.

Now, I'm the one who is always sort of praising up the distinction that the authorised version makes between plural and singular. And yet, here I have to confess, it is only in this past calendar year, 2019.

I can't remember exactly how, where I read it, how I heard it, or what, but in all my years, more than half a century of really, it never once crossed my mind that this verse 7 was actually a plural.

[30 : 45] Ye must be born again. Only occurred in the course of this year. I read that all my life. I've been reading that verse and that marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again.

In other words, I always thought it was you, look at Venus, you must be born again. But it's not you, it's you all, it's plural. Marvel not that I said unto thee, singular, ye, plural, must be born again.

What he's saying is, you must all be born again. All Israelites, all Gentiles, anyone who would be saved, ye, collective, plural, must be born again.

Everyone who is to be saved must be born again. You can miss it so easily. I missed it. All the years of my life, all the years of it, standing here in this group, I didn't get it until this year.

And I cannot remember now what it was, it twigged it, but don't miss it. It is a plural, it is a collective. You all must be born again.

[31 : 44] And we all need that new birth. And so we have, that's just the wind blows, when it lists it in the Greek, in the original verse 8, it's a play on words. Because the Greek word for wind is the same as the Greek word for spirit.

And just as the wind blows, whatever it was, so likewise is everyone that is born of the spirit. How can these things be? Well, in a sense, Jesus is having a slight joke, he might say, if I can say that reverently.

He's exercising a little humour at Nicodemus' expense. Well, how are you, a master of Israel, and you don't know these things? Well, of course he doesn't know these things.

Not only is Jesus talking in the deep things of God, but what he means, he's not being entirely, you know, unfair to Nicodemus. What he means is, look, you're a master of Israel, you know the scriptures.

You know what the scriptures testify, you know what they say. And it is possible to have known the scriptures and still not see where it is that they are pointing. If we turn back a couple of pages, we see at the end of Luke 24, verse 27, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

[32 : 57] Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. Now, what do you think they said? That doesn't say that.

Come on, stranger on the road. The Bible doesn't say that. The Old Testament scriptures don't say that at all. Rather, what do you think they were thinking when he was expounding to them? Oh yeah, I remember that.

I remember that passage. I never realized that's what it meant. Is that what it said? Oh, I never thought. We never knew. We never realized. And once all the pieces of the jigsaw are put together, it seems so obvious.

But it's only easy if you know the answers. And it's only obvious if you can see it clearly. And obviously, in this passage, verse 27 of Luke 24, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Likewise, at verse 45, then opened he their understanding that they might understand the scriptures. He's not writing any new scriptures.

[34 : 05] He's not adding to it. He's not changing bits. But rather, they knew, they had head knowledge of what was in the scriptures. And if they knew, the disciples knew, a bunch of fishermen and tax collectors and ordinary folks, how much more would the likes of Nicodemus and Pharisees like him know the scriptures?

He's a master in Israel. But you don't know these things? Of course, he doesn't know these things. because until all the pieces are put in place, until the lamp is shone on them, he can't see where it is that they are directing him.

Then opened he their understanding. In other words, their understanding was closed before. Despite the obvious truth of what the scriptures were teaching, that they might understand the scriptures they didn't understand before.

And it's no use saying, well, he should have understood. He was a fan. Nobody understood. until Jesus opened it for them. Even his own disciples didn't get it.

They didn't understand. No matter how many times he expounded to them about how he had to go to Jerusalem and die and be crucified and rise again on the third day, they understood not that saying.

[35 : 21] It was hidden from them. So in one sense, Jesus is having a little bit of humour at Nicodemus' expense. But on the other hand, all the evidence is there.

And it is precisely this kind of evidence, whether in the scriptures, whether in creation, whether in logic, whether in science, whatsoever testimony may be, at the last day, when those who are condemned are condemned, all the evidence will be seen to have been there before them.

But they refuse to believe and refuse to accept. But if the disciples didn't know and didn't understand, then when Jesus begins to then use the plural, you know, when he says, you know, verily, verily, I say to thee, we speak that we do know and testify that we have seen and he received not our witness.

Now, you might in the original context think, yeah, he's talking about himself and the disciples. But the disciples, remember, don't understand. The disciples, this is early days. We concluded with the verse 24.

John was not yet cast into prison. Jesus' earthly ministry didn't properly begin until John was cast into prison. You know, when Jesus goes to the wedding at Cana of Galilee, one reason that he's reluctant to do the miracle is because he says, you know, my arm has not yet come.

[36 : 46] I haven't started yet properly because John is not yet cast into prison. So it's not his disciples who constitute the we. Some people think maybe it's John the Baptist and the witness and testimony of the prophets and this is what people aren't getting.

More likely, I would suggest to you in all reverence that the we here, we speak that we do know and testify that we have seen is a reference to the persons of the Godhead.

It is Jesus speaking in the plural just as God in Genesis chapter 1 at verse 26 says, let us make man in our image. And so he created them in the image of God, created he then male and female.

John 14 verse 23, we read, Jesus answered and said unto them, if a man love me, he will keep my words and my father will love him and we will come unto him and make her abode with him.

in 1 John 5, although some versions of course of the scriptures don't have these particular verses, we read in verse 7, there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost and these three are one.

[37 : 56] And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood and these three agree in one. It is the persons, it is most likely the persons of the Godhead who constitute the we.

We testify that we do know. Nobody's been to heaven except the Son of Man who came down from heaven. This is the witness, this is the testimony. And then, from onwards, after that verse, he talks about, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish and have eternal life.

And then the most famous verse in all of Scripture, John 3, 16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through him might be saved. Now when Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness in Numbers 21, the people were plagued with that which was going to kill them.

But they looked to that serpent and when they looked on it with faith, they were spared, they were healed, they were saved. And we are afflicted with the life-threatening plague of sin which is going to destroy us.

[39 : 08] It is going to be our death. But if we look to Jesus, just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, we look to Jesus, we shall be saved because we believe in him.

This is the good news. This is God's blessing because we are all sinners. Just as the Israelites were all afflicted with that plague in Numbers 21, we are all mankind afflicted with the sin of Adam and with our own sin.

We are condemned, we are lost, we are dying except we be redeemed and saved. Now, we can't make the new birth happen.

We can't make this special birth happen. But we can come to the light. Jesus said, everyone that does evil hates the light and he doesn't come to the light lest his deeds should be reprov'd.

But one day he's going to be brought into the light and it's all going to be seen. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest that they are what in God. Come to the light now and let the Lord see what he already knows just how bad you and I are.

[40 : 15] But there is a remedy for that badness. There is a remedy for that plague and that healing and that cleansing is in the new birth that Jesus Christ freely offers.

You see, we come to him and we're conscious of our own weakness. We're conscious of our own sin. We can't make the new birth happen but we can ask, we can seek, we can knock, we can stand in the light and pray for him to heal that which he sees and we acknowledge to be a mess.

For we that are in this earthly tabernacle, 2 Corinthians chapter 5 tells us, we in this earthly tabernacle do groan, being burdened.

Not that for we be unclothed, but not that we want to die, but clothed upon that mortal might be swallowed up of life. The death in which we live here would be swallowed up of the life that the Lord desires to give us because God's soul of the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in should not perish but have everlasting life.

This is the new birth in him. This is what the Lord freely offers. You can't make it happen. I can't make it happen. Flesh can only beget flesh.

[41 : 31] It cannot beget spirit. And you and I cannot beget the new birth. Only God can do it. But God freely offers to do it if we will believe and trust in him because he's soul of the world.

He didn't want to leave us in condemnation. He came that we might be saved. But never underestimate the absolute necessity of this new birth.

Although a child is alive in the womb for all the months before it is actually born, if some tragedy happens and that child is lost from the womb, there will be no birth certificate.

There will be no registration. There will be no growth. There will be no citizenship. There will be no future in our society for the child that doesn't make it to birth.

And likewise there will be no citizenship in heaven. There will be no spiritual birth certificate. There will be no future in glory if we are not first born again.

[42 : 42] Marvel not that I said unto thee, we must be born again. It is plural. we must all be born again. It is God's work.

It is God's grace. It is the special birth which whilst it is uniquely the work of God is freely offered to all.

At the end of a year, at the beginning of a new one, for all the time that you have been spared for, this is good news for sinners like us.

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