

Why the New Birth Isn't Optional

Jesus spoke very plainly about something called the new birth. *“No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”*¹ A few moments after making this statement Jesus reinforced his insistence that humans experience new birth. *“You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’”*² According to Jesus’ words, this new birth isn’t optional. There is no eternal life without the experience Jesus referred to as new birth!

Why isn’t the new birth optional? Isn’t there any other way to please God and live with Jesus eternally? Can’t we humans choose our own way of finding a relationship with the Creator?

Why isn’t the new birth optional?

Because the Human Spirit is Lifeless

Humans are more than mere biological animals who possess extraordinary intelligence. We are human spirits housed in physical bodies with an exceptional brain. We are much more than body and mind. Our bodies and minds are merely temporary tents in which the human spirit exists. The departure of the human spirit from the body is what we call “death.” The spirit endures forever; the current bodies we live in last only a few years.

God formed the human body. Nevertheless, it remained an ingenious assemblage of non-living matter. Something miraculous happened when our wonderful Creator breathed into the nostrils of the lifeless body. *“The man became a living being.”*³ The heart began beating, the brain began thinking. Suddenly, Adam’s eyes and ears sent messages to his brain. The presence of a human spirit animated every system of the human body. Life was better than good as the human and divine fellowship in total love and harmony.

But something terrible happened when the first two humans rebelled against the God who made them. The sinless Spirit of God reluctantly withdrew from the human spirit and it became lifeless. The human spirit remained in the man and the woman but had no relationship with the life-giving Spirit of God. They were dead in their transgressions and sins.⁴

Because New Birth Unites Jesus’ Spirit with the Human Spirit

Jesus’ humanity was real—as real as the Adam we read about in Genesis. Jesus was a human spirit living inside the human body. As Adam was created a living spirit, so Jesus came into the world a living spirit. He didn’t inherit spiritual death from his forefathers. Heavenly Father’s Spirit and Jesus’ Spirit were one.

Unlike Adam, Jesus never sinned. Although Jesus was tempted infinitely more severely than Adam, our Lord never yielded himself to rebellion against his heavenly Father. Our Savior successfully overcame every enticement to act independently of heavenly Father's will. His human spirit remained alive even though his body died.

When Jesus' human spirit entered his dead body, he experienced what Scripture calls "glorification." In other words, Jesus' Spirit reanimated his body so that it never again experienced mortality, but lives forever. More than that, the Spirit of Jesus became universally present and therefore able to live in our spirits.

However, the Spirit of Jesus only enters people who surrender to his mastery, his lordship. His Spirit never forces himself into any human spirit. He only unites himself with people who voluntarily admit their sinfulness and invite him to become their Savior. When the Spirit of Jesus enters the human spirit, the human spirit is born again! In the same way that God's breath created Adam's spirit, so Jesus' entrance into our spirits fills them with life. Our spiritual eyes are opened, our spiritual ears begin hearing. We see the will of God and hear the words of God that are recorded in Scripture. The Bible becomes a living book, not a mere mass of words printed on paper.

Because Only Jesus' Spirit Empowers Us to Please God

God created humans to bear his image and likeness.⁵ Originally, mankind loved God the way God loved them. God lavished every good thing on Adam and Eve because that is the way selflessness acts. Likewise, the first two humans treated their Creator with loving respect and sought to please him.

This all changed when Adam and Eve contemptuously disregarded God's feelings and wishes. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve's children bore their likeness rather than the image of the God who is love.⁶

But another huge change took place when Jesus came into this world. As the only begotten son of God he bore God's image. During his lifetime Jesus declared, "*I always do what pleases him.*"⁷ When he drew his last breath Jesus had completed his human journey without ever displeasing his heavenly Father.

The new birth plants the Spirit of Jesus in the human spirit. The human spirit shares Jesus' desire to please God, to seek what rejoices Father's heart. Jesus' complete dedication to perfectly carrying out heavenly Father's will becomes the motivating power in us. We don't strive to please God because we have to. Pleasing God becomes our greatest joy. The apostle Paul put it this way: "*We make it our goal to please him.*"⁸ We share Jesus' love for heavenly Father and this all-consuming love keeps us focused on pleasing the God who first loved us!

By asking Jesus to become your Master and Savior, all the benefits of new birth become yours!

Footnotes:

1. John 3:3
2. John 3:7
3. Genesis 2:7
4. Ephesians 2:1
5. Genesis 1:26
6. 1 John 3:16
7. John 8:29
8. 2 Corinthians 5:9