

S T U D Y G U I D E



THE NEW BIRTH

STEVEN J. LAWSON

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Steven J. Lawson



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A Necessary Birth

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The phrase “born again” can call to mind a variety of ideas, memories, and questions. Although some Christians passionately refer to being born again as a specific turning point in their lives, others might perceive it as being a more subtle step in a gradual process of coming to faith. Many Christians describe being “born again” as an experience in the past, while others regard it more as a present reality. Some believers even avoid using the term at all.

In the midst of these different perspectives, it is crucial to anchor our understanding of the new birth in the teachings of Jesus. In this lecture, Dr. Steve Lawson will begin to expound what the Bible says about spiritual birth. As we begin this study, Scripture confronts us with the reality that being born again is the necessary gateway to the kingdom of God.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

John 3:1-17; 1 Peter 1:3-5

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To introduce the idea of spiritual birth, or regeneration, as the Holy Spirit’s miraculous work of breathing life into a spiritually dead human soul.
2. To explain why regeneration is a crucial and inescapable part of the teachings of Jesus.
3. To demonstrate that regeneration is necessary in order for a person to participate in the kingdom of God.

QUOTATIONS

Regeneration, therefore, is a spiritual resurrection; the beginning of a new life.

–Charles Hodge

To put it as simply as I can, if you are not spiritually reborn, you are not a Christian.

–R.C. Sproul

Regeneration is that act of God by which the principle of new life is implanted in man, and the governing disposition of the soul is made holy. It is a total transformation of the person on the inside.

–Louis Berkhof

LECTURE OUTLINE

I. The Miracle of New Birth

- A. Jesus' act of transforming sinners into saints is even more miraculous than His acts of healing the sick and raising the dead.
- B. There is no greater evidence of the power of God than in the new birth and salvation of a soul.

II. From Death to Life

- A. Spiritual rebirth, or regeneration, is the life of God in the soul of man.
 - i. Before the new birth, each person is in a state of spiritual death.
 - ii. In regeneration, God immediately implants eternal and supernatural life within the soul of a man or woman.
- B. New birth represents a spiritual resurrection.
 - i. Believers are raised from a condition of being dead in trespasses and sins.
 - ii. Believers are raised unto a condition of being made alive in Jesus Christ.
- C. New birth produces a total transformation of the person on the inside.
 - i. The governing disposition of the soul is made holy.
 - ii. The hearts of sinners become inclined to God.

III. The Need for New Birth

- A. By human standards, Nicodemus appeared to have everything going for him.
 - i. If anyone could have bypassed regeneration, it would have been Nicodemus.
 - ii. As a Pharisee, Nicodemus obeyed the Old Testament law with zeal and purity.
 - iii. As a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, Nicodemus held a position of religious power and prestige.
 - iv. As the teacher of Israel, Nicodemus possessed extensive knowledge of the Scriptures.
- B. Yet, even Nicodemus needed to be born again.
 - i. Nicodemus regarded Jesus as a teacher sent by God and did not realize that Jesus was God who had come to teach.
 - ii. Because of his spiritual blindness, Nicodemus could not see who Jesus truly was.
- C. Jesus understood Nicodemus' need to be born again.

- i. Jesus saw past Nicodemus' pious exterior and addressed the question burning within his heart: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"
- ii. Jesus responded by confronting Nicodemus with his need for regeneration.

IV. New Birth and the Kingdom of God

- A. Apart from new birth, a person cannot see the kingdom.
 - i. Regardless of a person's background or accomplishments, he or she is unable even to see the kingdom without being reborn.
 - ii. To see the kingdom is to have spiritual discernment.
 - 1. One is enabled to understand his or her need for new birth.
 - 2. One is enabled to comprehend who Christ is.
 - 3. One is enabled to grasp what Christ has come to provide.
 - 4. One is enabled to recognize that salvation is given by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.
- B. Apart from new birth, a person cannot enter the kingdom.
 - i. A person must be born of water and the Spirit in order to be able to receive the salvation that Jesus Christ offers.
 - ii. The Holy Spirit must act upon a person's soul in order to birth that person into the kingdom.
 - iii. By His grace, God creates new life in the hearts of the regenerate.
 - iv. God supernaturally invades the natural realm of human hearts and souls in order to bring people into the supernatural realm of His kingdom.
- C. All people are born outside the kingdom and must enter the kingdom through new birth.
 - i. No one is born a Christian.
 - ii. Although God eternally elects Christians to inherit the kingdom, they are dead in their sins until God gives them new spiritual life.
 - iii. Even those who are born into the covenant community of the Church must be born again before they are able to confess Jesus Christ as Lord.
 - iv. The words of Jesus in John 3 clearly state that all people need to be born again.

STUDY QUESTIONS

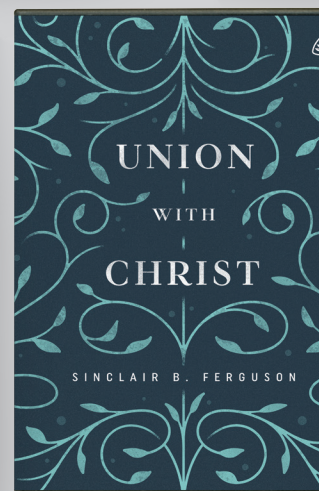
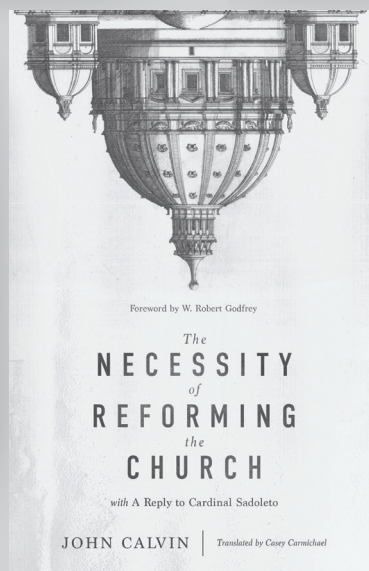
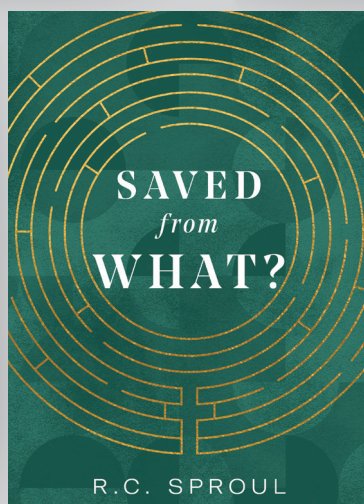
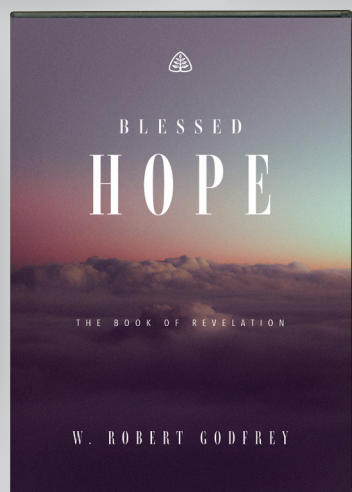
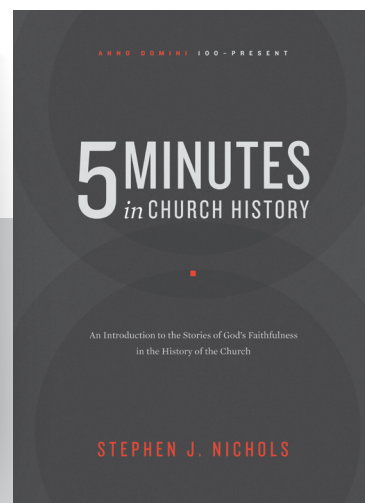
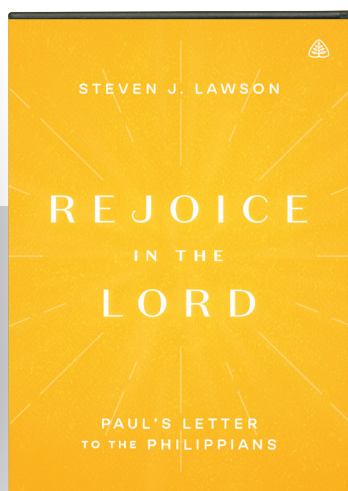
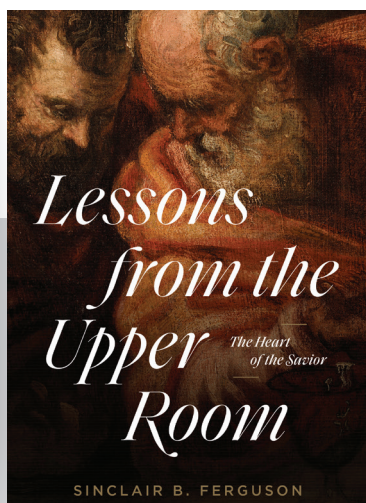
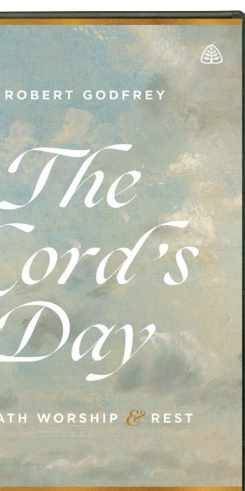
- 1. Spiritual rebirth refers to the life of God in the soul of man.
 - a. True
 - b. False
- 2. Nicodemus was a powerful and influential religious figure due to his position as _____.
 - a. One of the twelve disciples
 - b. The Roman governor of Judea
 - c. A respected Sadducee
 - d. A member of the Jewish Sanhedrin

3. Apart from new birth, a person cannot _____ the kingdom of God.
 - a. Talk about
 - b. Oppose
 - c. See or enter
 - d. Accept or reject
4. The spiritual discernment that accompanies new birth enables the regenerate person to understand everything in the Bible.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. Human beings begin in a state of spiritual _____.
 - a. Indecision
 - b. Death
 - c. Life
 - d. Sickness

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jesus employed powerful imagery when he described the spiritual regeneration of a person as a second birth. In what ways is this an accurate description? How does the idea of a new birth help us to understand the spiritual condition of a person before and after regeneration?
2. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the new birth of a person? Why is this significant?
3. Many people are religious and know the Bible but have not yet been born again. Dr. Lawson observes that often these people can be the most difficult to reach with the Gospel. Have you encountered this in your own experiences? How might being near the truth make a person more resistant to the Gospel?
4. Dr. Lawson ended his lecture by describing George Whitefield's response when a person asked him why he was preaching about the new birth. If someone were to ask you why it is necessary to be born again, how would you respond? How might you help a person to understand the importance of spiritual rebirth?

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