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*Forgive Me for Waiting so Long to Tell You This*  
by David Servant

# EIGHT

## Rebirth

I wonder if the drab caterpillar, as he spins his cocoon, understands what is about to happen to him. Does he labor instinctively, uncomprehending, or is he looking forward with excitement to becoming a new and improved creature? Is it because he envisions himself as a beautiful butterfly that he toils so hard? Of course, no one knows what the caterpillar might be thinking.

Regardless, the caterpillar is a prime example of God's power to change something mundane into something exquisitely beautiful. Once limited to slowly crawling down one plant and up another, now the butterfly can fly to exotic destinations and do it in style. Once unnoticed and uncomplimented, he is now praised by onlookers for his delicate beauty as he flutters by. Once at risk of being squashed by uncaring children, now he has become their elusive prize. Once disdained, he now competes with flowers.

Is it possible for God to re-create a human being, change him from a guilt-ridden, sin-sick, selfish creature, into one who radiates love, who lives in harmony with his fellowman, who finds his greatest joy in serving others?

Not only is it possible, but God has already begun that process in *you*. Your metamorphosis is one that begins on the inside and manifests itself on the outside. Jesus unveiled the marvels of that potential human transformation in one of His conversations with a man named Nicodemus:

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Him by night, and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him."

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:1-8).

Notice Jesus said that it is *impossible* to enter the kingdom of God without being born again. He went on to explain to Nicodemus that one is born again when he places his faith in Jesus and what He did on the cross (see John 3:14-16). If you have done that, then you, my dear reader, have been born again!

Jesus originally coined the term, *born again*, but, unfortunately, it has been worn out from overuse in our society. The pure meaning of the phrase has now become polluted as everyone talks about his “born-again experience”-whether it be because of finding a new wife or tasting a new breakfast cereal.

Jesus, however, was talking about a rebirth that is significant-no one can enter heaven unless they’ve experienced it. This rebirth is one that is *spiritual*. We who have believed in Jesus have literally experienced a spiritual rebirth. Let’s examine this truth.

### **The Hidden You**

The Bible teaches that every person is more than just a body containing a brain, bones, and muscle. According to the Word of God, we are tripartite in nature-spirit, soul, and body. The apostle Paul made this clear in his benediction to the Christians of Thessalonica:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your *spirit* and *soul* and *body* be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23; emphasis added).

Obviously your body is what you can see in the mirror. Your soul is your mind, emotions, and intellect. But modern man has only faint visages of the human spirit, labeling it the “subconscious.” It remains largely hidden from human understanding. God’s Word, however, unveils exactly what the human spirit is.

Jesus said that God is spirit (see John 4:24). That doesn’t mean He is just an impersonal force or some nebulous cloud. Jesus said that God has a form (see John 5:37), and we have been created in His image. God, however, is not comprised of flesh and blood but of “spiritual material.” Of course, we can only comprehend that to a certain degree.

We, too, are spiritual beings and, just like God, our spirits have a shape or form. The Bible refers to the human spirit as “the inward *man*.” For example, the apostle Paul states:

Though our outer man is decaying, yet our *inner man* is being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16; emphasis added).

So there is an *outer man* and an *inner man*. The outer man is the body, which is decaying or getting older, and the inner man is our spirit. Again, notice that the spirit is

referred to as a *man*. The inner man is not getting any older because he is eternal. He will live forever, and is, therefore, as Paul says, being “renewed day by day.”

The apostle Peter refers to the spirit as “the hidden person of the heart” (1 Pet. 3:4). Again, the spirit is called a “person” who is hidden. Your spirit is a person. Your spirit is the *real* you. In one sense, your body is only a container in which your spirit is now living. When your body dies, your spirit lives on, traveling to one of two places: heaven or hell.

### **The Rebirth of the Spirit**

When Jesus had His conversation with Nicodemus and told him that he needed to be born again, Nicodemus immediately thought of a physical rebirth: “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” (John 3:4)

Jesus cleared up Nicodemus’ thinking by saying that it isn’t a physical rebirth that is required for entrance into heaven but a spiritual rebirth: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6).

When we repent and believe the gospel, it is our spirits that are reborn by the direct action of God’s Spirit. The amazing changes that take place at salvation are internal rather than external. But those inward changes will manifest themselves outwardly, just as Jesus went on to say: “The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8).

Although the wind can’t be seen, it’s obvious when it arrives because leaves rustle and branches bend. The same is true of the rebirth of the human spirit. When a person is reborn, you can’t see with your physical eyes what has transpired in his invisible spirit. But you can see the evidence of it in his lifestyle. His life will begin to be characterized by supreme love for God and others.

In fact, that’s the reason one of those born-again people gave you this book! He or she loves you and is more concerned with your eternal destiny than with his or her own reputation.

One of the preeminent ways to determine if a person has been truly reborn by God’s Spirit is if he displays a concern for the eternal destiny of others. You probably have already sensed the urge to share what you have recently learned with those who don’t know it yet. But before you give this book away, make sure you finish the remaining chapters!

### **Being Born Into God’s Family**

Amazingly, when our spirits are reborn by God’s Spirit, we actually become children of God Himself. Our spirits are literally born of God, and He becomes our Heavenly Father. There is no more wonderful truth than this!:

For you are all *sons of God* through faith in Christ Jesus....See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called *children of God*; and such we are....Beloved, now we are *children of God* (Galatians 3:26, 1 John 3:1-2; emphasis added).

Furthermore, when we are born again, God’s Spirit comes to live inside us:

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God...? (1 Corinthians 6:19).

God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is the third divine Person of the Trinity. Therefore, we can say that God Himself, by the Holy Spirit, has come to live in us! I know that sounds amazing, and it is! But we shouldn't be surprised because Jesus Himself promised us:

“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world [those who are unsaved] cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and *will be in you*” (John 14:16-17; emphasis added).

Notice that the Holy Spirit is not an “it” but is referred to by using the personal pronoun *Him*. He is a person. He is God. And He lives in you. But this is only true for those who have placed their faith in Jesus. No one else has God's Spirit living on the inside of them.

Naturally, if God comes to live inside you, then there is going to be a change in your life. If God is love, then it would be impossible for God to live inside you apart from His love. Therefore, we can say with assurance that God's love has been deposited within your spirit. This concurs with Scripture:

The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Romans 5:5).

So you see that if you've repented and believed in Jesus, God has done much more for you than simply forgiven your sins! He's declared you righteous and treats you as if you've never sinned. In addition, He has caused you to be spiritually reborn so that you are now His child. God has given you His Holy Spirit so that He Himself lives within you and has deposited a new nature of unselfish love in your spirit! You belong to God and He belongs to you!

You know, I think this is the beginning of a wonderful relationship!

“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).