

Biblical Keyword - Regeneration

The conversion of man is like a gorgeous diamond. Every time when we see it from a different angle, we see new things. Each part shows a certain detail that other parts do not have. This is also the case with regeneration. In time, it takes place at the same moment as calling, faith and justification. It is the moment when conversion and sanctification begin. Again the table for an overview.

Keyword	Timeline	Description
conviction	Process	Knowing his sinful heart and lifestyle
calling	Moment	Words of Scripture or the sermon speak
regeneration	Moment	Receiving of new spiritual life
faith	Moment/Process	Trusting in Jesus as the only Savior of sin
justification	Moment	Acquitted from sin before God and right to eternal life
conversion	Process	Turn from sin and turn to God
sanctification	Process	Process of renewing of a man
glorification	Process	Man is made sinless and perfectly glorifying God

The term Regeneration

What is regeneration? It is to be born for a second time. We could translate the word in the Bible with “born again” or “born from above” (John. 3:3). Why is it called regeneration or born again? Because it has numerous similarities to an earthly birth. In this article we will look to it from that perspective. It is a moment of radical change. Before this, the person was dead in sins and trespasses (Eph. 2:1). He lived in sin. He desired to do wrong things. However, with regeneration, he receives new spiritual life. The Bible sometimes call it quickening or a making alive (Eph. 2:5). It is like creation, but then in a spiritual manner (Gal. 6:15). It is strongly connected to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3). Even there, as it were, came something again to life. We will explore regeneration from various perspectives.

The Father of Regeneration

In daily life a child does not ‘just come into existence.’ For this, we need one man and one woman. The only exceptions in history are Adam and the Lord Jesus. All other children come forth from parents. The DNA of both is the foundation for the physical characteristics of the child. That can be seen. For instance, the child has its character of his father and the physical appearance of his mother. What about such things in regeneration? Then also a ‘father’ is required. An author or source. Who is this? That is God Himself. The Bible says that one is “born of God” (John 1:13). He is the cause for the regeneration of man. Which person in God is responsible for it? Is that the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit? At least all three are involved. The Bible mentions two Persons. The first is God the Father. Peter says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *which* according to his abundant mercy *hath begotten us* again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Pet. 1:3). In the original it says here “born again.” At the same time, we see in Scripture that the Holy Spirit has its operation in this. God’s children are “born of the [Holy] Spirit” (John 3:8). He gives new life to a sinner. Why He? Because He did this already in creation. Then He hovered over the earth as a brooding bird moves over his young (Gen. 1:2). In the Bible it says that the Holy Spirit gives man life at birth (Job 33:4). In that text, He is called the breath of God. For these reasons, He also does this spiritually. What does the Holy Spirit use for this? By what means one is regenerated?

Means of Regeneration

For the means, in our minds we go back to a normal birth. Humanly speaking both parents are the

cause. However, by what means a child is begotten? That is the sperm of a man and the egg of a woman. Without these two it is impossible to generate new life. Still these two must fuse. If that is not the case nothing happens. That is what we call conception. Only with the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit did it supernaturally. How is all this in a spiritual sense? Even then there is no regeneration without seed. It is a seed that always remains. It is immortal. Peter says about it, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, *but of incorruptible...*" (1 Pet. 1:23). What is this incorruptible seed? That is the Bible. Sometimes called the Word of God. Peter explains, "but of incorruptible, by the *word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*" (1 Pet. 1:23). The Word of God will abide forever. When this seed is sown in one's heart, it will never depart. Even though it seems at times that nothing remains of it. Still the root stays. James does, therefore, surely write, "Begot he us with the word of truth" (Jam. 1:18). The truth does not change. That remains the same. How does that then happen? When one reads the Bible or hears a sermon, the Holy Spirit sows a little 'seed' in the heart of a sinner. From this new life arises. In normal cases, it always happens by the Word. The only exception is children in the womb, like John the Baptist (Luke 1:41), or severely disabled people. In such cases, the Holy Spirit causes regeneration in a supernatural manner. What is the result of regeneration? Then we go back to daily life.

Effects of Regeneration

What happens when a sperm and ovum are fused? New life comes into existence. A new creation out of the hand of God. Scientists have discovered in this area something amazing. At the moment that the sperm enters the ovum, they see a flash of exploding zinc. They were able to capture it with a special camera.¹ Scientists state that then unique DNA comes into existence.² These cells will multiply and grow. It gets more and more its shape. Psalm 139 beautifully explains that God weaves as it were a little human being (Ps. 139:15-16). Also in regeneration something happens. Then new spiritual life comes into existence. The Bible says that if "any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17). Sometimes is spoken of a quickening, making alive or being raised with Christ (Eph. 2:5). In essence there is no difference. Furthermore, this life gets more and more its shape. It becomes step by step visible. This is both in the heart as outwardly. What does then happen? The Bible mentions various marks. The first effect is that one *believes in Jesus Christ*. How? That He is the Messiah and Deliverer. That there is no other way to salvation outside Him. John writes about this, "Whosoever believeth that *Jesus is the Christ* is born of God" (1 John 5:1). It surely shows that there is a link between regeneration and faith in the Messiah. This means that there cannot be regeneration without the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. It is important to test ourselves with respect to this. What do we know of Him? How indispensable is He for us? If He, even with the knowledge of sin, is not the only way of salvation, we have to seek it. Why? Without Him there is no salvation.

The second mark is that one that is born again *does not want to sin*. He loathes it. John writes concerning this, "Whosoever is born of God *doth not commit sin*; for his seed [the Bible] remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John 3:9). Does this mean that a regenerated one does never sin? No. That is clearly shown from the histories in Scripture. Peter denied his Master. David committed adultery. Abraham lied about his wife. What does it then mean? It is no longer his desire. He is no longer slave of it. He does not want it. Before this time, sinning was no problem, but now it is. It pains him that he still does it. Still it goes deeper. A regenerated person exists in a two-man: the old and the new man. The old man is never renewed. That one does sin. Nevertheless, it is dying from the moment of regeneration (HC LD 33). At regeneration, a new man comes alive. That one desires only to do good. What God wants. That causes strife between the two. Therefore, a child of God could sin at times (and does desire it then), and other times he fights against sin. But the new man will never sin. Even this is an important mark to test ourselves to. Do we know the fight against sin? Are we getting tired of it? Do we know the desire to go into the ways of the Lord? Why is it critical to ask ourselves such questions? In our day and age, there is a Christendom that believes it is

¹ <https://www.sciencealert.com/scientists-just-captured-the-actual-flash-of-light-that-sparks-when-sperm-meets-an-egg>

² <https://arizonafertility.com/fertility-library/genetics-overview/>

sufficient to “believe in Jesus.” That is enough. More they do not need. However, we cannot see in their lifestyle that they are true Christians. All of their lives is about the here and now. They watch all kind of series on television, even when sin is demonstrated. They enjoy the wrong kind of music, as pop or house music. Such people smoke, drink abundantly and curse. The language they use is far from holy. Their clothing does not reflect that they want to be modest. The worse part is that they think, “But is it not about the heart, and not the outward appearance?” I do agree that there can be a good outward appearance, without a renewing of the inward parts. However, the appearance is a mirror of the inside. Does Jesus not say, “Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:16)? No, good works are not the foundation of salvation. But it is like new life on earth that demonstrates itself, so also spiritually. Then one wants to do the will of God.

Another essential mark of true regeneration is *love to God’s children*. John tells us, “Every one that loveth him that begat [which is God] loveth him also that is begotten of him [the believers]” (1 John 5:1). What does this mean? Simply said, when God regenerates a human being, this person loves God. At the same time he has love to other children of God. They feel a certain connection to them. There is a spiritual bond. If it is well, it does not matter to what denomination that person belongs. For that bond of love is stronger than the walls of the churches. It makes me think what I ever heard of a minister of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations. I think it was Rev. Koster. That week he had visited his brother in the ministry from the Reformed Congregations of North America. They spoke about the ways of the Lord. They felt a bond of love. The next Sunday, this minister spoke about this from the pulpit. He said, “I wish to become a member of the Reformed Congregations of North America.” That bond was so deep. At the same time, I need to make a comment. The mark of the bond of love could give a feeling of coming short. One could think that he has to feel a bond of love with all Christians. Thus, those that say to believe in the Lord Jesus, or those that always speak about the Savior. That is incorrect. Not each that confesses to be a child of God, truly is. Not every tree is a living tree. Only living trees produce a fragrance of love. No fake trees will. This is also true spiritually. Not each person that believes to be a christian, is it truly. This can give peace. At the same time it would be good to seek this mark in our lives. Do we have a love to the true children of God? Why is that? Is it because they are such ‘nice’ people, or because they know God? Only the latter counts. Another important question, is there a love to all God’s children? Thus despite country, language, church, or background? If we could truly answer this question with yes, that is a good sign.

The last one is that someone is “begotten [or born] again unto a lively hope” (1 Pet. 1:3). What is then that hope? That salvation can be found in the Lord Jesus. That one can receive eternal life. Also, that one can be delivered from sin and evil. The annotations on the Dutch Statenvertaling say, “a hope that is awakened and secured and overcomes all difficulties.” Deep down there is a hope anchored that will never vanish. Even though there can be much doubt in the believer, that hope comes back every time again. It is also a living hope, because it rests on the living Lord Jesus. Do we know this hope in ourselves? Or do we still try to be saved by our own works, tears, and prayers? In this is no hope. However, there is an established hope for salvation in the Son of God. This makes that regeneration is necessary. Without being born again, there is no eternal life.

Necessity of Regeneration

In daily life, birth is necessary for a child to live. Of course, it is about nine months in the womb of its mother. But after that it needs to be born. If that does not happen, something is seriously wrong and it can give health issues. Amniotic fluid becomes less. The placenta operates less effective. A baby can get infections. A baby *must* be born to remain alive. This is spiritually true as well. Even stronger, without regeneration there is no spiritual life at all. It is of utmost necessity that one is born again. The Lord Jesus gives the following answer, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). A bit later, He emphasizes, “Ye *must* be born again” (John 3:7). In other words, without spiritual birth, no one enters into heaven. He cannot belong to God, because He is spiritual and heavenly. Man by nature is earthly and flesh.

Biblical Keyword - Regeneration

Be sure that even as with a normal birth, regeneration is passive. The person to whom this happens, undergoes it. He is passive in the process. He does not do anything about it. We never read in Scripture that someone causes himself to be born again. In fact, John does even exclude this, “Which were born, *not of ... the will of man*, but of God” (John 1:13). No, it is always about “being born again.” Something passive. Does this mean that one only has to ‘wait’ until this might happen? Because he cannot do anything about it? No. If one stands before God, the question will not be, “Did you regenerate yourself?” Certainly not. Regeneration is the immediate work of God. Even though a man cannot add to it, he still needs to use the seed. Also, prayer is necessary. Why? Regeneration is in normal cases connected to the use of means. The person can ask God to regenerate him. He can go to church and listen to the seed of regeneration. That is the preaching. In this way, God *wants* to regenerate sinners. On the day of Pentecost a large crowd was regenerated. How? By listening to the sermon of Peter. The Holy Spirit used that to prick their hearts. Then they received that gospel word. On the one hand is regeneration necessary. At the same time it is possible. No one is excluded from this beforehand, except one has committed the sin against the Holy Spirit. As long as there is life on earth, there is hope. That is good to realize.

The question to us is, do we do, humanly speaking, everything to be regenerated? If that is not the case, you have to know that this has consequences. Do not rest before it happened to you. You will not regret it. However, it could be different with us. Then we are worried because of our sins. Then I can only give you one advice: flee with all your need in prayer to the Lord Jesus. Only behind His blood there is safety. Or do you know for sure that you are born again? Then it is true what the Lord Jesus says. Once you will enter that eternal glory forever.