

# The Work of the Holy Spirit in Salvation

What do you think a miracle is?

What do contemporary Christians expect to see when they look for miracles or signs and wonders?

Have you ever witnessed a miracle?

## THE HOLY SPIRIT AND REGENERATION

### Why is regeneration necessary for salvation?

According to the Bible a person can only become a Christian by the work (or activity) of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who brings a person to trusting faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord. This work of the Spirit is often termed 'regeneration,' which means bringing to new birth. Christians often forget that an amazing miracle, worked by the agency of the Holy Spirit, happens when a person becomes a Christian. In order to understand why regeneration is necessary for salvation we need to appreciate the spiritual situation of a person who is not a Christian.

A person who is not a Christian is spiritually dead  
Ephesians 2v1-3; Colossians 2v13

A person who is not a Christian cannot understand the gospel message  
1 Corinthians 2v14 (cf. also 1 Corinthians 1v23)

A person who is not a Christian has been blinded to the truth of the gospel  
2 Corinthians 4v3-4

A person who is not a Christian needs to be rescued (to be saved). Such a person is incapable of saving him or herself. Salvation is a work of God. (See, for example, John 1v12-13; 1 Peter 1v3; James 1v18.)

### What does it mean to be regenerated?

*Read: John 3v3-8*

Who was Nicodemus?

Why did he come to visit Jesus?

According to Jesus, who will see the Kingdom of God?

Why did this surprise Nicodemus?

How does a person come to be born again?

At an evangelistic meeting a speaker might say something along these lines: 'If you want to be born again, just say this prayer...' Is this true?

*Read: Titus 3v3-7*

What does Paul say these Christians were like before they were converted?

Why has their situation changed?

What role did the Holy Spirit play in their salvation?

What does 'renewal by the Holy Spirit' mean?

### **How does the Holy Spirit bring about regeneration?**

The Holy Spirit brings personal conviction of sin and of coming judgement  
John 16v8-11; Acts 2v37; 1 Thessalonians 1v4-5

The Holy Spirit brings understanding of the gospel message  
1 Corinthians 2v12

The Holy Spirit enables a person to confess Jesus Christ as Lord  
Romans 10v9; 1 Corinthians 12v3

### **What are the consequences of regeneration?**

Regeneration brings new spiritual life  
Ephesians 2v4-5; Colossians 2v13; 2 Corinthians 5v17

Regeneration brings about a new relationship with God  
John 1v12-13

### **What part do Christians have to play in the regeneration of others?**

God regenerates people who are not Christians through his word  
1 Peter 1v22-23; James 1v18

People will only be saved if they hear the gospel  
Romans 10v14; Ephesians 1v13 (See also: Galatians 1v11; 1 Thessalonians 1v5, 2v4 & 13; 1 Peter 1v12)

What implications does a proper understanding of regeneration have for evangelism?

## **THE HOLY SPIRIT AND ASSURANCE OF SALVATION**

Many people who have become Christians experience times when they doubt that they are really Christians at all. Such doubts are commonly prompted because they have failed God by disobeying him in some way, or because they are facing very difficult circumstances. At such times the Holy Spirit brings assurance that a person belongs to God.

*Read: Romans 8v12-16*

In what way does the Holy spirit bring assurance to Christians?

Why will Christians need such assurance?

*Read: 2 Corinthians 5v1-6*

How does the Holy Spirit bring Christians confidence for the future?

Why is such confidence needed?

*Read: Ephesians 1v13-14*

When is a Christian sealed with the Spirit?

What does it mean to be sealed with the Spirit?

How does the fact that a Christian is sealed with the Spirit bring assurance?

## Summary

It is all too easy for Christians to forget that conversion is a great miracle. When a person is converted to Christ he or she is raised from spiritual death to spiritual life (cf. John 5v24). Whilst Christians bear a responsibility to preach the gospel, only God can save. In **John 14v12-14** Jesus tells his disciples that 'anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.' It is highly unlikely that this means that the disciples will do 'greater' miracles than Jesus, in the sense of more dramatic demonstrations of his power. In the context, which refers to the sending of the Holy Spirit (14v15-24), it seems best to understand Jesus as saying that after he returns to the Father the disciples will take the gospel to the world. It is the world-wide scale of evangelism which is 'greater' than the work Jesus did in his earthly ministry.

### For Further reading:

Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth*, IVP, pp 181-191

D A Carson, *Showing the Spirit*,

Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, IVP, pp 699-708

J I Packer, *Keep in Step With the Spirit*, IVP, pp 67-91

Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, IVP, pp 115-138