

Behold, All Things Have Become New – Col 1:12-22, 2 Cor 5:16-21

The Gospel Age of Hope - #5

Introduction – Both of these passages address events which have taken place in individual souls; but both passages address these individual occurrences because of the cosmic occurrences which they also address. We are evangelicals and embrace the notion of the need for individuals to be born again. Regeneration is a necessity for eternal life, but we must not think of regeneration only in terms of individuals. Because Jesus Christ was born again from the dead, everything else can be born again from the dead. And this has a rich impact on our understanding of the world and age in which we live, the gospel age of hope.

Jesus Was Born Again – Re-generation refers to birth after death. We have this understanding of ourselves as Christians but the beginning of this is in Jesus Christ Who is Himself *“the firstborn from the dead”* (Col 1:18). Death came into the world because of sin; it became a condition of the cosmos due to Adam’s fall. But the second Adam was in a state of death having taken on our sin (2 Cor 5:21). Jesus took upon Himself the death which our father, Adam, had plunged us into and was born again in the resurrection. Psalm 2:7, quoted in Acts 13:33, is not speaking of an eternal generation of the Son from the Father, but of the resurrection of the Son from the dead.

We are Born Again Only Because Jesus Was Born Again – It is our union with Christ in His death which unites us with Him in His resurrection-life (Rom 6:5) and this is all appropriated to us by faith. But the point to see is that we can be born again only because Jesus was born again.

The World Was Born Again – *“He is the first-born from the dead; for in the resurrection there is a restoration of all things, and in this manner the commencement of the second and new creation, for the former had fallen to pieces in the ruin of the first man”* – Calvin. An outline of Col 1:12-21 shows us that Paul is talking about far more than individuals being saved. In 12-14 we give thanks for the work of salvation which is ours in the church through the blood of Christ. In 15-17 we are reminded that the One who has provided this salvation is the One who created all things and in whom all things consist. That is the One Whose blood was shed. This Redeemer is the redeemer of all His creation (vv19-20). In other words, when Jesus rose from the dead, the principle of new life was placed at the heart of the cosmic order and began to work its way out (consider 2 Cor 5:17, *“behold, all things have become new”*). Jesus was born into this world, a world He created; and Jesus brought new life through His resurrection into this world, a world He recreated.

Groaning – The creation longs for the culmination of this process (Rom 8:22). The creation does so in the same way we, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan (Rom 8:23). This is because both have been given the principle of resurrection life, new life, new creation, in us through Jesus. The gospel really has turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6).

Israel Was Born Again – When Jesus told Nicodemus that “unless one is born again” (John 3:3) there was an application to be understood for the individual. But when Jesus told Nicodemus, *“You (pl. – all) must be born again”* (John 3:7) He was addressing Nicodemus as a representative of all of Israel. And when He used the imagery of the flesh and the Spirit and the wind blowing, Jesus is amazed that Nicodemus doesn’t know what He is talking about. This is what Ezekiel so beautifully predicted for Israel (Ezek 36:25-28, 37:1-11). At Pentecost, this mighty, rushing wind came (Acts 2:2) and Israel was born again.

Regeneration Out of Control – We think of regeneration in terms of individuals and then cluster the individuals together as a group, rather than thinking of regeneration as a cosmic work of the Creator-Redeemer which of course has impact upon individuals. This misdirection keeps our concept of God too tame, and the God of scriptures is not tame. We think of “the wind” of regeneration like a man deciding to turn on a fan rather than like a windstorm ravaging a town. Or, if you were walking along a beach and got wet, think of it this way. It makes a difference with regard to the world around you if you got wet because someone squirted you with a bottle or if you got wet because a tidal wave was crashing down.

In Principle, Everything is New – Which does the scriptures teach? That Jesus came and nothing (or very little) changed (except for a few individuals), or that Jesus came and everything was made new? Are we to declare to sinners that the world has not been reconciled to Christ and therefore they need to be saved, or that the world has been reconciled through Christ and therefore they need to surrender to the invasion?