

Our Divine Heredity and Destiny

by Tom Macartney

The new birth is an act of God that gives us eternal life and makes us like Christ, enabling us to reign with Him.

Topics: "New Birth", "Union With Christ"

Description

Tom Macartney preaches on the profound truth of 'Christ in you, the hope of glory' from Colossians 1:27. He emphasizes the wonder of the new birth, highlighting how it marks the beginning of the Christian life as a miraculous act of God that leads to an incredible destiny of becoming heirs in union with Christ. Macartney delves into the special relevance of the new birth in our current day, addressing the confusion in the church regarding true Christianity and the challenges posed by modern thinking on the nature of man. He concludes by exploring the wonderful goal of the new birth, stressing the importance of being conformed to the image of Christ and the high destiny of believers to reign with Him.

Transcript

"Christ in you, the hope of glory." Col. 1:27

The Wonder of the New Birth

The Christian life begins with a major miracle, by which we are born of God. This is an act of God by which we receive eternal life and become His children. This miracle leads on to an amazing destiny, for He wants us to grow up and become His heirs in union with Christ (John 1:12, 13; Rom. 8:14-17). Peter begins both his letters with the wonder of new birth, because he had once despaired of himself but now knows what it is to be born anew to a living hope and become a partaker of the divine nature (1 Pet. 1:3; 2 Pet. 1:4). Paul's letters are full of this too; "If anyone is united to Christ, he is a new person, in a new creation" and, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you? You were bought with a price." At the heart of Paul's gospel are these amazing words: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Redemption through the blood of His cross and new birth are at the centre of the gospel (2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:20). But both Paul and Peter also heavily underline the great purpose of new birth, the high destiny to which Christians are called. This is often forgotten or marginalized by us so that only part of the gospel is considered. The goal of new birth is that we be conformed to the image of His Son. God is seeking to bring many sons to glory. The Father wants (and needs) grown-up sons like His beloved Son. What a wonderful goal! What a glorious destiny (Rom. 8:29; Heb. 2:10; Phil. 3:14; 2 Pet. 1:5-11).

Before considering further the wonder and goal of new birth, and that we may see its glory yet more brightly, let us next consider...

The special Relevance of the New Birth in our Day

The significance of what we are considering is high-lighted by two things: 1) The confusion everywhere in the church as to what it really means to be a Christian, and 2) The increasing militancy of modern thinking on the nature of man himself, and the infiltration of this into every area of life. (Of course, the new birth bears upon many other matters into which we cannot digress.)

1) In the church, viewed as including all who claim to be Christians, there is almost total confusion regarding the new birth, the matter being constantly misunderstood or bypassed. Thus we have the tragic situation where millions, mistakenly, think they are Christians and are not even truly 'born again'. Jesus said, "Unless a man is born again from above he cannot see ... or enter ... the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, 5). This is the first lesson Jesus gave in His teaching. Nicodemus had to start with lesson 1', that His kingdom cannot be understood or entered without new birth. But lesson 1 is largely omitted today.

2) Speaking generally, in the West, from about the middle of the century, there has been a decisive swing against what we may call the old views and values, and we are now reaping the consequences. While the West (and its influence is worldwide) has never, of course, been 'Christian', in the sovereignty of God in history over the centuries it has had something of a Biblical base through the influence of the gospel. This has now been rejected by modern man, who thinks he knows better. There is really nothing new about this rejection except its scale and militancy - this is our point. By modern man we mean, primarily, the influential minority, the liberal intelligentsia, the experts in every field of knowledge (including many church leaders), whose views are continually projected and inevitably influence the majority of ordinary people. Hence the menace of the media today, especially the television. Through it the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4) is brainwashing and so controlling the thinking and actions of millions.

Briefly, this modern thinking includes the rejection of:- the existence of a personal God and Creator - Jesus Christ as the unique Son of God, and only Saviour - the Bible as the Word of God - the Biblical view of man as, a) created in the image of God, and, b) fallen and facing judgment - moral absolutes of right and wrong (everything is now grey and relative) - personal responsibility - and so on. Thus, general attitudes to everything are affected. The rejection of God, revealed in Christ, inevitably leads to the ruin of man himself through the undermining of the very foundations of human life and society. Let us now focus briefly on just two ruinous ideas connected with our theme:- (1) that man himself is no more than a superior animal, and, (ii) its corollary, that people are not really responsible for their actions.

(i) We are told that man (that is, everyone) may be explained by bio-chemistry, that he is no more than the product of evolution and his inherited genetic constitution, and that death means extinction. Evolution is continually presented (in school and the media) as fact instead of as a changing theory. Creation is dismissed and derided; the evidence for it ignored or suppressed. (Of course, we are not suggesting that all scientists take this position; we are thinking of the consensus of selected opinion. Note, by the way, the unease of many scientists when the awkward matter of the paranormal is raised.) The general public is being influenced to think that science has proved that God is dead and shown that man is simply the chance product of evolution, and people are largely denied the opportunity of hearing the other side.

The Bible's view is clear. Man was and is created in the image of God. This likeness lies supremely in the mysterious gift of self-conscious and self-guiding personality. It includes a spiritual faculty which man

alone has (the human spirit, 1 Cor. 2:11); this makes possible contact with God (and the spiritual world) just as the faculty of sight enables us to see the material world. One of its features is conscience. Man is not the product of evolution, but made in the image of God. God is involved in the mystery of everyone's creation. But, of course, man is fallen, so the likeness is badly marred and may, it seems, even be destroyed. It is possible to harden one's heart irrevocably and to cauterize one's conscience (John 8:44; 1 Tim. 4:2. Consider Ahab, 1 Kings 21:25). But mankind in general retains something of that likeness.

(ii) If the prevailing modern view of man were true, then, of course, no one could be held responsible for his actions, for there would be no such thing as morality or right and wrong, for all our thoughts (including atheism!) and actions would be the result of chance and heredity. The unwillingness and/or inability of governments and the authorities to control the growing breakdown of law and order are rooted in the lie that people are not really responsible for their actions, and must be viewed as sick or deprived, and so on. Every possible excuse must now be found to justify and free the guilty.

Again, the Bible's view is clear. Apart from the insane, we are all responsible for our actions: "Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (Heb. 9:27). And, here and now, it is the duty of governments to uphold good and punish evil (Rom. 13:3, 4). It has been well said, "Be heredity what it may, the man is so himself that he, not his ancestry in him, has each moment to face, for himself, the mysteries of right and wrong."

The wonderful Goal of the New Birth

Redemption includes many things, but we are here focussing on our heavenly calling or destiny, the amazing purpose of new birth. For salvation involves the fulfilment of God's original purpose in creating man, which was never reached in Adam, but has been in the Lord Jesus, the only perfect Man. It is this amazing gift of a new nature and heredity through new birth that makes possible our high destiny of 'sonship', that is, 'likeness to God's Son' in nature and character, for our calling is to be heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and to share His throne.

We use these words nature and character here, not loosely as synonyms, but to emphasise two aspects of likeness to Christ, one of which is little understood. When we say, "God is love," we speak of a moral quality in His character, but when we say, "God is spirit," we speak of the intrinsic nature of His Being. In 1 Cor. 15:45, we read, "The last Adam (the Lord Jesus) became a life-giving spirit." This means (among other things) that, unlike Adam, even before he fell, He lived His life and fulfilled His ministry, as Man, in the energy and under the government of the Holy Spirit. So, likeness to Christ means for us, likeness to Him in this respect, as well as in the more obvious one of character. Learning to live in the energy and under the control of the Holy Spirit and not in our own strength and according to our own ideas is a matter of huge importance. Consider Paul's words, "To this end, I wrestle and toil with all His energy mightily at work in me" (Col. 1:29).

In our creation, we received an individuality through which God desires to reveal something of Himself, His likeness, but we are flawed by sin through our heredity. Even our so-called good points, on close examination, are flawed by self-centredness. We need to see this difference between our good points (of which we are so proud!) and the genuine, flawless character of Christ reproduced in us by the Holy Spirit.

In redemption, we are not only given a status of forgiven sinners, but a divine life and heredity; we become partakers of the divine nature, so that the life, nature and character of God in Christ may be revealed through our redeemed, cleansed and renewed personalities.

What a destiny is ours through union with Him - "Christ in us, the hope of glory.": The most important single issue in a Christian's life is the formation of His nature and character in him. Everything else flows out of this, including our usefulness to Him in sharing in the government of His Kingdom. Likeness to Christ and reigning with Christ are closely linked (Gen. 1:26; Rom. 8:14-17, 29; 2 Tim. 2:11, 12; Rev. 3:21).

It is God's grown-up sons who will reign with His Son. Of course, many sons will be needed to express and serve Him. Our personal conformity to His likeness will only be a small part of something much greater: His glory revealed in His church! So, God's wisdom in the gospel answers at every point the foolishness of this world's ideas. May it not be that the particular follies we have been considering are a crucial part of the last desperate attempt of the deceiver of the whole world (Rev. 12:9) to undermine faith, and stir up lawlessness in the world, before Christ comes to reign?

We are not mere playthings of chance and evolution, the product of our heredity and fallen environment, but sinners though we are, through new birth into God's family we may receive His life and heredity, live in the transforming environment of a new creation (His church and kingdom), be conformed to the image of His Son and reign with Him. We are not heading for oblivion, but on the pathway to glory. We are not caught in the cruel riddle of a vast, meaningless and heartless universe, but created, and re-created in Christ, for a destiny of overwhelming wonder!

The Christian knows and rejoices that he has received this new life, heredity and destiny, that Christ is in him, and his hope of glory to come!

"Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our true life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." (Col. 3:1-4)

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/tom-macartney/our-divine-heredity-and-destiny/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net