



This weekend a book that I now regard as the best fictional book I have ever read called, *The Sin-Eater*, by Francine Rivers. In a nutshell it's the story of salvation unfolding over a mountain clan. Sin, pain, lies and unforgiveness all get exposed as the truth rolls in. The truth will set us free! But to receive it, we have to admit we were captive. I don't know why that can be so hard to do, but I know it can. There is freedom here today. And my prayer is that you would let those old prison shackles go.

I. #43-BE BORN AGAIN

- A. Mental assent is not salvation. You can believe that Jesus came from God and that His miracles and signs are from heaven and still not be saved. You can believe Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead and still not be saved. To be saved, you must be born again. Isn't that amazing!

John 3

[3:1] Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. [2] This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." [3] Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." [4] Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" [5] Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. [6] That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

- B. God is everywhere. He's always interacting with us. He's always revealing Himself. The idea of being born again is found in the prophetic books... it's declared as a promise for new hearts and a new spirit. (Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 11:19, 36:25-27)

The Barclay Daily Study Bible describes this concept in this way: "There are two thoughts here. Water is the symbol of cleansing. When Jesus takes possession of our lives, when we love Him with all our heart, the sins of the past are forgiven and forgotten. The Spirit is the symbol of power. When Jesus takes possession of our lives it is not only that the past is forgotten and forgiven; if that were all, we might well proceed to make the same mess of life all over again; but into life there enters a new power which enables us to be what by ourselves we could never be and to do what by ourselves we could never do. Water and the Spirit stand for the cleansing and the strengthening power of Christ, which wipes out the past and gives victory in the future."

Mark 1

[1:1] The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

[2] As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,

*"Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who will prepare your way,*

[3] the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

*'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight,'"*

[4] John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. [5] And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were



being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. [6] Now John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey. [7] And he preached, saying, "After me comes he who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. [8] I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

John 1

[29] The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! [30] This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' [31] I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." [32] And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. [33] I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' [34] And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

- C. Even repentance and washing of sins is not salvation... it's forgiveness and the power of forgiveness and the release it brings from the past is miraculous to say the very least, but John brought this baptism and Jesus brings us something more than this. Salvation, being born again is both water and spirit. It's the old passing away and new being ushered in! It's both-and!!

2 Corinthians 5

[17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

- D. Being born again is both-and. It's more than repentance and renewal... It's a new spirit and a new heart operating within you... This is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and both parts, the old passing and the new coming are the very definition of being born again.

Acts 18

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. 25 He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, [d] he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. 26 He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

Acts 19

[19:1] And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. [2] And he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said, "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." [3] And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said, "Into John's baptism." [4] And Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus." [5] On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. [6] And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. [7] There were about twelve men in all.



- E. Repentance is the door to forgiveness! And it's a glorious door. But there's more than a door for you. There's a way! Jesus not only forgives you, but He will fill you! This is the Good News! Be born again. It's more than an opportunity to start over, it's starting over with His heart and Spirit.

II. #43-AWAIT MY RETURN

Matthew 24

[36] "But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. [37] For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. [38] For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, [39] and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. [40] Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. [41] Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. [42] Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. [43] But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. [44] Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

- A. Having an understanding of the end-times isn't optional; being ready for the return of Jesus is His command. We are commanded to stay away and to be ready. I went about 10 years in the church without ever hearing a message on the end-times. It seems to me that when there is no awareness of oppression our regard for the age to come is diminished exponentially. The persecuted church is preparing for the day of the Lord. The greatest hindrance to preparedness is probably the delusion of false peace.

[37] For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

- B. When is the last time you read the account of Noah? We need to look at this as a story of deliverance, even our own. Wipe your mind clean of felt figures and children's songs. The story of Noah is for us, and for our time!

Genesis 6

[11] Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. [12] And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. [13] And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth. [14] Make yourself an ark of gopher wood. Make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. [15] This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark 300 cubits, its breadth 50 cubits, and its height 30 cubits. [16] Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above, and set the door of the ark in its side. Make it with lower, second, and third decks. [17] For behold, I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life under heaven. Everything that is on the earth shall die. [18] But I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you.

Genesis 7



[7:1] Then the LORD said to Noah, "Go into the ark, you and all your household, for I have seen that you are righteous before me in this generation. [2] Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals, the male and his mate, and a pair of the animals that are not clean, the male and his mate, [3] and seven pairs of the birds of the heavens also, male and female, to keep their offspring alive on the face of all the earth. [4] For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground." [5] And Noah did all that the LORD had commanded him.

[6] Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters came upon the earth. [7] And Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the flood. [8] Of clean animals, and of animals that are not clean, and of birds, and of everything that creeps on the ground, [9] two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah, as God had commanded Noah. [10] And after seven days the waters of the flood came upon the earth.

[11] In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. [12] And rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights. [13] On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah's wife and the three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, [14] they and every beast, according to its kind, and all the livestock according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, according to its kind, and every bird, according to its kind, every winged creature. [15] They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. [16] And those that entered, male and female of all flesh, went in as God had commanded him. And the LORD shut him in.

- C. The Lord told Noah what and how to build. The Lord determined the time. What Noah built protected his entire family. The Lord shut Him in. Here are the other facts: The building of the arc took about 100 years. It had never rained before.
- D. When you read Matthew 24 through the lens He gives us, the story of Noah, then the context of Matthew 24 becomes clear. Let's go back to the text (Matthew 24). There are so many argumenst about pre, post and mid trib. And the biggest question is really not about theological maneuvering and debates, the question is really about how to be ready. I am unashamed to preach a post-tribulation doctrine. The story of Noah tells us that we will be saved in the flood of tribulation, not from the flood. And even if I'm wrong, I'd rather build a boat we didn't use than need a boat we didn't build.
- E. How can we be ready? Hear the Lord and do what He says. How can we be born again? Repent and be baptized! We will be forgiven and filled.

Acts 2

[37] Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" [38] And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.