

REBIRTH: BEING MADE NEW

VIDEO TWO

Rebirth stories focus on wicked individuals who are forced to face the darkness within. As they're exposed, we expect a tragedy but instead we witness transformation. Something happens that has such a profound impact on them that they are changed forever.

Stories of transformation fascinate us. Chiefly because they make us wonder: could my darkness be transformed too?

Luke records a rebirth story that happened in Jericho. In the life of a short but wealthy tax-collector named Zacchaeus.

Zacchaeus' job meant he was despised. Not only did he collect taxes for the oppressive Roman regime, but he took extra to line his own pockets. He was hated, but also feared. Using his power for personal gain.

But he wants to catch sight of Jesus. So, he runs ahead of the crowds and perches himself in a tree. But it's not long before he gets more than he bargained for.

Because Jesus stops. And calls up –

“Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.”

Imagine Zacchaeus' heartbeat. Caught like a child, up a tree, all eyes on him.

We might find Jesus' self-invitation rude but, in Jesus' day, to invite yourself to someone else's home was a sign of honouring them.

He's saying “I want you to be my friend”.

Which the crowd can't believe! They mutter, “He has gone to be a guest of a sinner.” But Jesus isn't deterred.

But Zacchaeus gladly agrees. And as he spends time with Jesus, we witness this once greedy man suddenly declaring that he'll pay back all those he's cheated!

Can one grand gesture undo his past?

Jesus explains what's going on.

“Today salvation has come to this house”.

Salvation is a loaded term. Put simply, it's when a thoroughly helpless person is rescued from their ruin.

And Jesus says – that’s what’s happened here. Because *I’ve* come to this house.

Jesus says transformation has occurred because *of me*.

Like Henry, Zacchaeus has encountered someone who is truly on his side... and it’s life altering.

We might be tempted to want to cancel people like Zacchaeus. But the same self-interest, compromise, and greed lurks in us. Away from God – we’re characterised by darkness, powerless to change ourselves and facing a guilty verdict.

So how can experience such a transformation?

It’s the power Jesus wields at the cross. Love drove him to die our death. He stepped into the tragedy of our rebellion against God, and defeated our sin, so that it needn’t have any claim over us.

As we encounter Jesus’ love we experience his power to transform us from the inside out.

It was costly for Zaccheaus to turn from his wickedness – he gave up a lot. But in its place he found true life with the living God.

Rebirth stories speak to our fears. We don’t want to be exposed. Deep down, we know there is darkness inside of us.

But they also cause us to hope. That transformation is possible.

A transformation that Jesus alone can offer.

Every story we tell speaks of this life we long for. And so every story we tell points us to our longing for Jesus.

The question is – will you come to him and receive new life?