



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 3:4-8

“Born of Water and Spirit”

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are reading today John chapter 3, verse 4 through verse 8. John chapter 3, verse 4 through verse 8. This is the second part of the interview that the Lord Jesus had with Nicodemus and we read in verse 4 after the Lord Jesus has said, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

“Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. (Now let me make one comment here, in the original text in that phrase, ‘Of water and of the Spirit,’ there is no article with the word ‘Spirit’, it is literally, ‘Of water and Spirit.’ And furthermore, there is no second preposition ‘of’, just one preposition ‘of’ and then the two nouns connected by the word ‘and’, ‘of water and Spirit.’ Now that will be of some interest in the light of what I will say later on so I want you to notice that. If you have a King James Version, for example, you notice the second ‘of’ is in italics which means it’s not in the original text. But some of the other versions have both the article before ‘Spirit’ and an ‘of’. Those things represent interpretations and we need to remember that interpretations may not necessarily be correct. All translation is interpretation and so consequently translations may reflect wrong interpretations. In this case, ‘Born of water and spirit, he cannot enter

the Kingdom of God.) That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. (That, incidentally, that word ‘must’ is a word of logical necessity, not a word of moral necessity. Logical necessity, ‘You must be born again.’ Then our Lord explains with an illustration,) The wind bloweth where it willeth, (the Authorized Version has an old word that we don’t use anymore, ‘The wind bloweth where it listeth,’ but the word means ‘to will’. ‘The wind blows where it wills,’) and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell where it cometh, and where it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.”

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Our subject for today is Born of Water and Spirit, and we continue the study of the ruler who needed a redeemer. He thought well of Christ, for he thought of him as a teacher, but he did not think well enough. He is more than teacher, he informs Nicodemus, he is savior. And ultimately the one who brings us through the spirit the new birth.

We have been told in our last study as we considered verses 1 through 3 of chapter 3, that one birth is not enough. One birth fits us for a physical and mortal life but we need a new birth. We need a resurrection spiritually, a regeneration. Jesus had said in answer to Nicodemus’s implicit question, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.”

What is regeneration? What is new birth? Well to put it simply we could say that regeneration is the divine act of instantaneously communicating spiritual life to men. Now if it is a divine act and if it is an instantaneous communication of spiritual life then it should be clear that man is a passive individual in regeneration. Furthermore, this is a non-experiential thing because it is something that happens instantaneously. It is also a supernatural work, but let’s think first about it as a passive work. Now we know that it’s a work in which man is passive because in the New Testament we are told that we are naturally dead in trespasses in sins. The Apostle Paul makes that statement very plainly in Ephesians chapter 2, in verse 1. Later in that same chapter he says that,

“We have been quickened together with Christ.” So it is clear from that that we are regarded as dead naturally so far as spiritual life is concerned.

In the 10th verse of that same chapter after the apostle has set forth these details concerning the way of salvation he says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.” So all of the Bible testifies to the fact that man is passive in the work of regeneration. If we are dead that’s obvious, a dead man cannot assist in his own resurrection. There are some people who think that it is necessary for us to receive truth before we are born of God, before we are regenerated. But that is an unthinking observation. Let me just say this in connection with it, truth cannot be a means of regeneration because the Scriptures say, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.” So it should be clear to us that as long as we are men in the flesh we cannot receive the things of God. Therefore there must be a work that precedes our reception of the truth.

The Bible says, “The mind of the flesh is enmity against God.” Now if the mind of the flesh is enmity against God it should be obvious that the flesh cannot cooperate with God. The mind of the flesh is at enmity with God. The mind of the flesh with its enmity cannot cooperate with God in his loving mercy and kindness to us. There must be a transformation of the individual. He must be born of God. Then having been given divine life, then as the message comes to him, he has the capacity for response to it. Now he inevitably will respond to it. He will respond to the message that comes and he will show his life by the faith that he manifests in the message that comes to him.

When Jesus Christ healed the blind man, for example, when he said to the blind man described in Luke chapter 18, “Receive thy sight,” there was no receptivity in the individual, for seeing but with the word there came the communication of the receptivity to respond. So there was the receiving of the capacity and then the response of the sight. So in the new birth we are born of God and as the message then comes to us and these things happen, of course, in close conjunction with each other. We are talking about logical order of things, not chronological order. Then he responds, so far as the observation of others is concerned in the context of the preaching of the

word there is the response of faith, the regeneration having taken place, and they inevitably respond but they occur in the same context. Now this is what we mean when we say regeneration is the divine act of instantaneous communicating spiritual life to men. We could say to men who are dead in sin. So the first thing is to be born of God, to be regenerated, to be given life that inevitably issues in faith.

That’s why John the apostle says in his first epistle, “Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ has been born of God.” Everyone who believes whether yesterday, a month ago, ten years ago, when he believes he has been, perfect tense, has been born of God. So everyone who believes, no matter to what time we may refer the faith, everyone at that point has been born of God. The New Testament is plain in its teaching. Unfortunately sometimes we don’t investigate the New Testament as closely as we should. Now this is a supernatural work. Henry Clay said once he didn’t know what Christians were talking about when they talked about regeneration and being born again. He said as far as he was concerned he never had had that experience, whatever that was, that he had seen Kentucky family feuds of long standing healed by religious revivals and that whatever could heal a Kentucky family feud was bound to be more than human. Well that is regeneration; regeneration which gives new life. Why is regeneration necessary? Well, we are dead in sins. The mind of the flesh is at enmity with God. As we’ve been saying last week and before, if we went to heaven as we are we would wreck the place. We are not ready for heaven. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God,” the Apostle Paul says. There must be a transformation of men. That transformation begins with regeneration.

How is it accomplished? Well ultimately, of course, we cannot explain it any more than we cannot ultimately explain everything that happens in the first birth. There are many things that obstetricians can tell us about the first birth but they cannot really, ultimately explain the first birth. That is something that is hidden in the wisdom of an omniscient God but, nevertheless, there are certain things we may know about it. The same thing was true of this second birth: we cannot explain all that is involved in it but in the Bible we have some revelation of things that pertain to it.

Evidently there is the implantation of the seed of new life and the word of God applied by the Spirit of God is heard then by the individual who has received this life and the new birth is manifested in a response of faith.

Peter says that we are born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible through the word of God. Now it is striking that when Peter says we are born of incorruptible seed he's not talking about the Bible, he's not talking about the word of God, he's talking about the activity of God in implanting life in an individual. But he says that implantation of life, that incorruptible seed, is implanted through the word of God. So in the context of the word of God, implantation of life takes place and life responds in faith. And the evidence of the new birth is the sound that is made, the sound of the response of faith.

Now later John will tell us in his epistle that a believer cannot go on living in sin because his seed abides in him and he's speaking, it seems to me, of the divine seed. So he's saying he cannot go on living in sin because the divine seed, the divine life, abides in him. We are different after the new birth. We have a different kind of life and so therefore we cannot live the same kind of life that we have lived before. There has to be change.

Now, of course, the work of sanctification will take a whole lifetime. Sometimes we will look at a believer and we will see little if any difference between the believer and the unbeliever but there will be, inevitably, change. And in time the believer's growth in grace must be manifested. We may not see it all but it is there.

Now if you were looking for an illustration where would you look? Well, of course, you would look in the Bible. That's the greatest source of illustrations because they are Scriptural illustrations. And since it's the Apostle John who speaks of new birth more than anyone else in the New Testament, you might suspect that the illustration of the new birth that would be most perspicuous would be in the Gospel of John and I think it is. When we come to the 11th chapter of this gospel, in the climactic sign of the Gospel of John, Lazarus is raised from the dead. Now of course Lazarus does not receive a resurrection like Jesus Christ's because Lazarus did not receive a

glorified body, but the term raised is used of him. Just to speak theologically we would say Lazarus is restored to life, for Lazarus lived on out his life and died again. Lazarus is one of the men who died twice but nevertheless who will be in heaven. Most men who die twice are going to be in another place.

But anyway, Lazarus was dead. He was four days dead. The Lord Jesus waited so there would be no question about Lazarus’s death. Jews had ideas that on the third day there were still hovering spirit beings about an individual but on the fourth day all hope was gone. And so he waited until Lazarus had been four days in the grave and then he came. And he stood outside the grave and he said, “Lazarus, come forth.” We’ll talk about that later on. I just want to point out the application of this to regeneration here. He spoke the word.

Now Lazarus could not hear the word of our Lord. No one who is dead can hear the word of our Lord. You cannot hear, if you’re a dead man, the voices of living people. But Lazarus heard. Why did he hear? Because there was communicated to Lazarus through the word of our Lord the power to hear. The power to hear came first, the life came to Lazarus and the first words that he heard were, “Come forth Lazarus,” and he came forth, still bound in his grave clothes.

So Lazarus was dead, he could not hear. He was made alive in order that he might hear the command. Incidentally, he could not while he was dead cooperate with that message either. Some people like to think of our salvation as a work of cooperation; that is, God does his part and we do our part. All that is ruled out by the doctrine of divine regeneration. Lazarus could not cooperate, Lazarus could not respond but by the word of God there was implanted in Lazarus life, he heard and he came forth in response to the message. Now that seems to me precisely what the New Testament teaches us concerning regeneration; God implants life, we respond in faith, but the life comes first and the faith and repentance next in logical order. We may not be able to distinguish the chronological order but we can distinguish the logical. Chronologically these things may occur so far as we’re concerned in the same meeting. I may be speaking this morning and preaching the gospel to

you and someone responds in faith and say, “I was saved.” You may even explain it in a way contrary to the Bible, for people often do.

But the fact is that you have received life and you now are a believer in Christ. So far as the Bible is concerned, the logical order and the correct order as taught by Scripture, not simply logic, but taught by Scripture which always is in harmony with good principles of logic, for God is a logical God, he’s not an irrational God, if he were we couldn’t say anything about God if it was all irrational. There are a lot of people who say, “Well the Bible is not rational. Oh, how foolish. We couldn’t say anything. I would like to say to that person, “How can you say a statement like that because you’re using logic in the saying that God is illogical.” Stupid. At any rate, we may distinguish the logical order for it is taught in Scripture and it’s in perfect harmony. The difficulty is we often do not investigate the Bible. The Bible’s plain, we just have difficulty understanding because we do not pay enough attention to the word of God.

Now Nicodemus asked three questions, one of them is implicit. Our Lord answered him before he could get his question out, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest.” I think he wanted to say, “What good thing shall I do that I may see the Kingdom of God?” Our Lord saw the line of his questioning and said, “Nicodemus, except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” That was his first question. How does one enter or see the Kingdom of God.

The next question is in verse 4, “How can a man be born when he’s old?” And the third of his questions is in verse 9, “How can these things be?” These are the three questions around which this interview is gathered and we are looking at the second one now in which Nicodemus says, “How can a man be born when he’s old, can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

Now Nicodemus has difficulty because this concept of the new birth to him as put by our Lord seems to be something new. “How can a man be born when he’s old?” I don’t think that Nicodemus was angry, I rather agree with those who say this is a rather wistful question. He has

come for spiritual information. And mind you, this was quite a thing for Nicodemus. He was a ruler of the Jews. He was a man of the Pharisees. Later on in the 10th verse Jesus will say to Nicodemus, “Are you a teacher of Israel and don’t know these things?” Now in the original text it’s not, “A teacher,” but, “The teacher.” It’s almost as if Nicodemus is the preeminent Bible teacher among the Pharisees. Are you a teacher of Israel and you don’t know these things?

In other words, “Nicodemus, if you’re a teacher of Israel and we acknowledge the fact that you are a highly respected, perhaps the preeminent expounder of the truths of the word of God, how is it that you don’t understand this thing which is the fundamental fact of spiritual existence in life?” So I must confess, I admire Nicodemus, he was an old man now, an old man has a very difficult time moving to anything new. We say about old people that they are set in their ways. I hope when I get old I will not be like that [Laughter], but nevertheless that is characteristic of old people. They think they have learned, they’ve been through many experiences often which have taught them a great deal. And they do sometimes tend to be inflexible. Young people are impetuous, older people sometimes are petulant. I hope I will not be a petulant old man, offended by everything that is said to me.

I admire Nicodemus. He was a man who though a respected teacher had a position in Israel, had been there for a long time, had gone through a great deal, still there was something about this young teacher in Israel, not one of them in the sense that he had not graduated from their schools, who seemed to have something that was different from the things that he was acquainted with. And furthermore, it seemed to be right and so he was coming to him and asking a question concerning spiritual things and as we know, he was open for later this gospel gives us a very plain indication that Nicodemus, this ruler of the Jews, the man of the Pharisees, came to a personal trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Identified with Joseph of Arimathea and the burial of our Lord.

But here he comes and he’s confused by the idea of a second birth or a new birth. How can a man be born when he’s old? He cannot enter, can he, (the Greek text suggests,) he cannot enter, can he, the second time into his mother’s womb and be born.” Can a leopard change his spots?

“Can an Ethiopian change his skin?” the Prophet Jeremiah asks. Can a man be born a second time? It seems an impossible thing.

Now let me say a word about this word “born again”, the word “again”. This word “again” is a word that in Greek is a word derived from an adverb that means above so that again may mean simply “from above”. In fact, it occurs again in this chapter in the 31st verse, “He that cometh from above is above all.” That has the force of “from above” or “from heaven” is the idea, from above. Now it makes good sense to give it that sense here, “Except a man be born from above he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” Of course that would be a second birth, to be born here on this earth physically and then to be born from above would be a second birth. It seems that Nicodemus understood it simply as another birth. Our Lord probably had in mind from above because in a moment he will say, “So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

“How can a man be born when he’s old? Can he enter in the second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” So he doesn’t really quite understand what our Lord is talking about. A. T. Robertson, one of the greatest of the Baptist theologians of a generation ago has said, “The learned Pharisee is as jejune in spiritual insight as the veriest tyro.” And then he adds something that I think is so true to life, “This is not an unheard of phenomenon.” That is, that a learned theologian should not understand the simplest things of spiritual truth. Here is a man learned it in the theology of his day and he doesn’t understand this fundamental fact of the new birth. By the way, that expression, “Can he enter his mother’s womb when he’s old,” suggests that Nicodemus was the old man and that’s why I regard him as such in the exposition.

Now the Lord begins the next reply to Nicodemus with two adverbs, “Verily, verily.” We sometimes pass these adverbs over because they’re so familiar to us but let me remind you of something concerning them, if you don’t know this already; we do not have any illustrations of anyone in ancient times prefacing their remarks by, “Verily, verily.” As the Greek says, “I mean, I mean.” “Verily, verily,” there may be one illustration, a recent illustration in the Qumran literature, but beyond that this is something absolutely unique. It was our Lord’s way of suggesting the

authority that stood behind his words. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.”

So he is in effect saying, “Nicodemus, I want to say something to you by way of authority but I want to get your undivided attention,” and so it’s, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee.” What does he mean by, “Born of water and Spirit?” Now in a moment he will say, “So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” So we must not come to any interpretation contrary to that. But what does he mean by, “Born of water and Spirit?” Well we could discuss this for a lengthy period of time because many interpretations have been put upon it. Some have said this means to be born through the waters of baptism whether by baptismal regeneration itself, that is the water itself regenerating us, or the water being simply the means by which regeneration takes place. Against this would be other teaching of the New Testament which suggests that faith alone is the term by which we are saved. Furthermore, if water baptism is in view here then we would know whence the Holy Spirit’s activity comes and therefore the words of our lord would not seem to harmonize with it. When speaking of the new birth he says, “The wind blows where it wills and you hear the sound of it but you cannot tell from whence it cometh.” But if men are born in the waters of baptism, if they were born in the baptistry such as behind us, we wouldn’t know from whence the saving activity of God comes if that is the meaning.

But it’s obvious that that is not what is in our Lord’s mind because he says, “You cannot know.” But what is most damaging to that interpretation is that Christian baptism was at this point not yet instituted and so consequently the Lord Jesus when he says, “Nicodemus, you’re a teacher in Israel, you should have known these things,” Nicodemus could simply have said when he found out the truth later on, “How could I have known these things, Christian baptism wasn’t not yet even instituted.” So it’s very unlikely that that’s the meaning, birth by the waters of baptism. The dying thief forever refutes that interpretation for Jesus said to him who had never been baptized, nor was ever baptized, “Today thou shalt be with me in paradise.”

Now if someone should say, “But the message was different then,” Paul tells us in Romans chapter 1 that the gospel that he preached is the gospel that was proclaimed before him in the age of the old covenant. Others have looked at this and said what he means is birth by natural means and birth by spiritual means. Is not a child carried in its mother’s womb in water? And consequently when we he says, “Except a man be born of water and Spirit,” is he not speaking of natural birth and then spiritual birth? It’s rather startling that this kind of thing is rarely if ever referred to in ancient literature but another rather startling thing is, the male semen is frequently in ancient literature referred to under the figure of water, rain. And so some have said that that is probably what is in mind here. “Born of water and of Spirit,” would be a reference to the implantation of the semen by the male, the natural birth, and then of Spirit, the new birth, new spiritual birth.

It is perhaps a little obscure and furthermore, we don’t have any other indications in the New Testament of this and so perhaps that interpretation should be put on the shelf, considered in case some further light comes that may give more credence to it. We do know he says, “Born of water and Spirit,” and he uses one simple preposition which governs the two nouns, water and Spirit. We know that water is figurative of cleansing in the Gospel of John, and also in the New Testament and furthermore, it is symbolic of cleansing, in Ezekiel chapter 36, an Old Testament passage, to which our Lord probably refers later on.

Further, we know that the word “spirit” is also a figurative word in the sense that the term “spirit” means both wind and spirit. In fact, the name of the Holy Spirit is holy wind, for the word *pneuma* in Greek is a word that means both wind, it also means breath, and it means spirit, referring to the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament the Hebrew word *ruach* is a word that refers to the Spirit of God, it also refers to the wind. In the Latin the word *spiritus* is a word that refers to the spirit but it also refers to the wind. In Syriac the same double meaning is found so this is a very common thing. It’s possible that he is really saying, “Except a man be born of water and wind,” two figures, but the two figures suggest cleansing activity of the Holy Spirit. Now if that’s true then that would harmonize with what is said in a moment, “So is everyone that is born,” not of water and Spirit, but

simply of the Spirit. Now, as you can see, that’s the interpretation to which I lean. I think that this is the meaning of, “Born from above.” To be born from above is to be born by the cleansing Spirit, by water and Spirit. It is to be born of the Spirit.

Now that means if we have been born of the Spirit then we become citizens of the kingdom and not simply spectators. It is an event John writes in such a way that this new birth is an event, it’s not a process. It occurs at a moment in time just as conception in the natural physical sphere occurs at a moment in time, so in the spiritual life it is an event, not a process. He’s not talking about being altered, about being influenced, about being reinvigorated, about being reformed. He’s talking about being anew, born from above.

Now to explain our Lord says, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Human nature produces human nature and divine nature produces divine nature. Consequently, if we are born of the flesh, flesh is the product. If we are born of the Spirit, spirit is the product. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. We cannot possibly be anything more than flesh. Human flesh, human beings. What we need is a supernatural change.

Now he says in the 7th verse, don’t marvel at this, this is not something to be surprised about. The new birth is no marvel, you must be born again. Incidentally, the Lord says, “You must be born again,” he does not say, “We must be born again.” Because he does not need any new birth. You must be born again. I say to you this morning, you must be born again. This is an essential, it is a logical necessity. He’s not talking about simply a moral necessity as if your life is so bad you need to improve it, but he’s saying it is logically necessary because you are flesh and you need to be changed and transformed. You need to become spiritual and that can only come by new birth. You need a new birth.

Now the illustration he uses is the illustration of the wind. He says, “The wind blows where it wills.” In other words, the wind is sovereign in its activities. It blows wherever it wills. Now,

meteorologists will tell you, I think if they are honest, that ultimately we cannot explain the wind. It is sovereign.

Years ago I had a meteorologist in the congregation, we have one now, or two, perhaps two, I don't know, but at any rate this man who is not in the congregation today was in it and one time I was referring to this and so I thought, well I'll just ask him if that's still true. And he had just graduated from one of the universities in the state of Texas, I said to him, “Is it true that the wind blows wherever it wills and we hear the sound of it but cannot tell from whence it cometh and whither it goeth?” He said, “Well ultimately that's true. We do not understand the will in the sense in which our Lord speaks of it here.” It is an independent activity.

Now that is what our Lord means when he says, “The wind blows where it wills and you hear the sound of it, you cannot tell from where it cometh or where it goeth, and thus is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” In other words, the activity of the new birth is a sovereign activity on the part of God. We cannot understand why he singles out certain individuals for his activity. Why did he choose Paul and why did he not choose some other members of the Sanhedrin or of the Pharisees? We know he chose Paul. He acted sovereignly in the case of Paul. He passed by others. We do not understand these things, we shall not understand them probably fully until we get to heaven, if we understand all of that then.

Jacob have I loved, Esau have I hated; he worked in Jacob, the Holy Spirit blew upon Jacob and brought forth new life and faith in that crooked man but he passed by Esau so far as we know. So this is a sovereign activity on the part of God. He uses the word of God as an instrumentality after he has brought life and he can use the most feeble instruments for the conversion of individuals. But always involved as the word of God. He can even use a dumb creature in the salvation of man.

W. T. P. Wolston was a very famous Bible teacher in Scotland some years ago. Mr. Wolston was an Englishman, he was born down near Dartmouth in Devon or Cornwall, I've forgotten which one of the counties that's in. But he was born near Dartmouth about four miles away from that little

town. He said that there was a noted infidel in his community who one day was out walking on Sunday. He had members of his family who were Christians and Sunday in those days was always a rather dismal day for a person who was not a Christian. And so he was out wandering in the fields and that afternoon he wandered over to his own field where he had a few cattle out there and he walked over and he leaned up against the fence and he was just thinking. And he said one of his cows came up to him and licked his hand and he said his mother had taught him the Bible when he was young and he said as that old cow came to him and licked his hand he said the text of Scripture that his mother had taught him when he was a child came to him, “The ox knoweth his owner and the ass, his master’s crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” And he said he looked down, well upon my word the Scripture is true. It is true. The ox or the cow knows me but I don’t know God. And with that, according to Mr. Wolston, he turned to the Lord and was converted.

So the Lord sovereignly uses some strange means of conversion. But where the wind blows, we don’t know. We just know it does blow. It is, I think, in this illustration taught that the Holy Spirit acts independently. It is also irresistibly effective. Wherever the wind blows you hear the sound. Now wherever the Holy Spirit works in the life of an individual they will inevitably be the results. Now we may not hear them individually but they will always be there, those definite results. Jesus said, “Thou hearest the sound thereof.”

We all know, at least we amateurs, that when a child is brought into this world by an obstetrician that he must cut the cord, he must -- well I don’t know if whether they must because I’ve never seen a birth. I think I’m alive [Laughter] but I don’t remember anything about my birth just as I probably cannot explain my spiritual birth, but anyway I’ve seen pictures of doctors spanking the rear of a little infant in order to communicate, not communicate the life but to get it going. And I read an interesting article a few years ago by a French professor who was an obstetrician. Now he said that we have been bringing children into the world in the wrong way. We bring them into a room full of lights and said when they come out they cannot see, it hurts them. Furthermore, we

manhandle them a bit, we slap them. He said, “And those kids come out with their hands (those infants) come out with their hands like this, they are imploring us.”

Now the professor of gynecology and obstetrics at the University of Edinburgh, one of the leading men of his day, said, “That’s not the reason that kids come out with their hands like this,” he said, “They come out with their hands like this because they are clenching them as fists in rebellion at what’s happening to them.” In other words, right from the beginning, this professor said at the University of Edinburgh, there is manifested in the way they come into this world the rebellion and anger and sin that is a part of the human race. But this French professor says they come in imploring, “Turn out the lights. Be nice to me.” And that if we -- now this is really a serious thing -- he said if, when we bring children into the world, we brought them into this world in darkness and also if we took them out and immediately put them on mother’s stomach to establish a relationship and if we talked nicely and sweetly to them then we could cure humanity’s problems. We would not have any more problems. Violence would be gone. Everything would be nice.

Well, I don’t know. Evidently our Lord was used to a different method. He says, “The wind bloweth where it listeth, thou hearest the sound thereof, canst not tell whence it cometh, whither it goeth, so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” He associates sound with new birth because sound is associated with birth. That is associated with birth and we know that when a person is born again there is going to be a sound. When the widow of Nain’s son came by and the Lord Jesus stopped that funeral procession and laid his hand upon the bier and called forth that young man, it says that he raised up and do you remember what the first thing that he began to do? He began to speak. There was the sound. And the physical restoration and resurrection was designed to illustrate the spiritual. There is a response.

But it is incomprehensible, this activity of God. The source and the goal are unknown, all we know is it is the work of God, the Holy Spirit. Well, let me sum up by saying the Lord Jesus has said, “Ye must be born again.” He says that when the new birth takes place there is an inevitable response, a sound. Is ours a breeze, a roar, a dead calm? As far as the methodology of the new birth

is concerned, well we may understand the methodology of it but in the ultimate sense the Scriptures say men are born of God. We are born of God as the author, we are born of the Spirit as the agent, we are born through the word of God as the instrumentality by which the Holy Spirit brings conversion and salvation to the person who has been regenerated. We know that by the effects.

Let me say to you this morning, there is such a thing as the new birth, it is conveyed by God sovereignly. It comes to those who hear the word of God concerning the Lord Jesus Christ who has died for sinners, who is offered the atoning sacrifice, and as God the Holy Spirit sovereignly works he brings men to faith and trust to Christ. I cannot say to you that you shall be born again, only God the Holy Spirit can perform that activity. Only he knows of those in this audience who shall ultimately be born again and who shall not be. But Jesus said, “You must be born again.”

We know the effects, the effects are faith. The effects are the joy in the Holy Spirit. And so we invite you to come to the Lord Jesus Christ and exercise trust in him who has offered the atoning sacrifice for sinners, acknowledge your sin, come to Christ. Receive the offer of the free gift of eternal life. As he called out to Lazarus, “Lazarus, come forth.” And in the message there came the enablement ultimately for Lazarus to come forth. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. In response to that message you shall know the experience of the new birth. May God help you to come.

[Prayer] We thank Thee Lord for this wonderful work, the work of the new birth. And we thank Thee that there is a wonderful land of beginning again. And if there should be some here who are burdened by sin, desire deliverance, O God, through the Holy Spirit...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]