



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

John 9:1-7

"The Healing of the Blind Man"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're turning this morning for our Scripture reading to John chapter 9 and reading verses 1 through 7 for the Scripture reading. And this, of course, will be the subject of the exposition that follows a bit later on. For those of you who came hoping to see the football game and thinking because you just knew I was going to the game, and therefore you would get off on time to get out there and see part of the first quarter and the rest of the game, we gave our tickets away today. And so I probably will go on past the hour in my customary way. [Laughter] And I'm sorry. If you get up and leave at twelve we'll understand you want to get out there to see part of the first quarter, and that's perfectly all right. We will be happy for you to leave at that point.

John chapter 9 verse 1 through verse 7 and this is the first of a couple of messages on the healing of the blind man.

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day (Many of you no doubt are reading other versions, modern versions. And you notice that instead of "I" the fourth verse begins with

"we." 'That's probably more accurate and that Jesus did, it is probably that he did say, "We must work the works of him that sent me while it is day.) The night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) (This word is related to the Hebrew word for "to send" which is *shalak*, and Siloam means sent. So this is not so much by way of interpretation as by way of translation.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word.

The subject for this morning in the exposition of the Gospel of John is the "Healing of the Blind Man." And there is hardly any question, so students of the Gospel of John would say, that this is one of his most vivid and complete portraits of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. And there is no doubt that of all the men in the New Testament, this man, the man born blind, would rank as one of the most colorful. And therefore the study of the healing of the blind man in John chapter 9 is of special interest.

Many years ago there was a Scottish evangelist by the name of John McNeal. He was very well-known, particularly among the Church of Scotland and Presbyterian circles, because he had a lot of meetings in a lot of different churches all over the western world. He was in great demand. He was a man of unusual character. His sermons were always of interest. He was an evangelist. And like most evangelists he only stayed in one place a relatively short time. When I was very young living in Birmingham, Alabama, he was the supply for the pulpit in the South Highlands Presbyterian Church for a few months. That was about the end of his ministry, because like most evangelists he had thirty or forty sermons and that was the end. But when you are an evangelist you can use them for the rest of your life. Get thirty or forty sermons together and that's all you need. So you can travel around preaching those same sermons, because you preach them to different people. It's a

little more difficult to stay in one place and every Sunday have to come up with something that is a little bit new and different.

Well, this was well-known, and of course it's characteristic of evangelists. But he was a very colorful man himself. And one day he was playing golf on the golf course in Scotland and he happened to hit an errant shot that landed in a rather deep bunker. And so he went down into the bunker, and he began to attempt to extricate his ball from that difficult location. He was swinging at it about a half a dozen times, and he was playing with some fellow preachers. And finally one of them yelled over to another preacher and said, "It looks like McNeil has finally got a permanent position." [Laughter] Well Mr. McNeil, I say, was a very colorful man, too, and in one of his sermons he imagines the blind man of John chapter 9 speaking with the man who was a blind man whom Jesus healed described in Mark chapter 8. And he was speaking of this in the context of denominationalism. He himself was in the Church of Scotland and a Presbyterian.

He imagined in his sermon that these two men met one day and they began to converse. And the man born blind in John chapter 9 said that Jesus had healed him of his blindness. The man from Mark 8 said, "Yes, I was blind too, and Jesus healed me of my blindness." And then the man from John 9 said, "Well how did you feel when he spat on the ground and took up that little piece of mud and put it on your eyes?" Well the man from John 8 said, "I don't remember anything like that at all. He did not do that. He spat at me, but he did not take up mud from the ground or clay and put it on my eyes and heal me." He said, "You don't remember how he spat on the ground and took that clay and put it on your eyes?" He said, "No, I don't." He said, "I'm asking you how did you feel then?" He said, "I didn't feel anything, because he didn't do that with me." And they kept going until finally the man from John 9 said, "Look here, I don't believe you've been healed at all. You must still be blind. If he didn't put clay on your eyes and heal you, then you're still blind." And then Mr. McNeil said, "That was the beginning of two denominations [Laughter] the Mudites and the Anti-Mudites." [Laughter]

Well this chapter in John chapter 9 is founded upon two things. First of all, there is the saying about light in verse 5, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." And of course, there is the sign performed by the Lord Jesus, the healing of the man born blind. Now, these two things, the statement of our Lord, "I am the light of the world" and the sign about blindness reveal the power of the Lord Jesus first of all, to save; and secondly, to judge.

Now notice in John chapter 12 and verse 46 the Lord Jesus says, "I am come a light into the world that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." That is his power to save. But he goes on to say, "And if any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not. For I came not to judge the world but to save the world. He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words hath one that judgeth him. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." So the Lord Jesus came to save. He came to sentence. Or to use the words that we have already expounded a bit in John chapter 3, verse 19. The Lord Jesus there says, "And this is the condemnation that light has come into the world and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

We've been expounding the 8th chapter, and in the 8th chapter the Lord Jesus has exposed the sin of the Jewish men who have been conversing with him. In the 9th chapter in that same general context, though not chronological context, he reveals the grace that he is able to give. If we were looking at this chapter from the standpoint of its principle point, we would say that this chapter is another of John's attempt to demonstrate the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus. Because you see, one of the signs of the coming of the Messiah would be that he would open the eyes of blind. In fact, in the Old Testament in passages like Isaiah chapter 29 and verse 18 that's one of the things that the Messiah would do when he was to come. Isaiah wrote, "And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness." And then in chapter 35 and verse 5 in one of the great Messianic passages of the Old Testament, the passage in which we find the words, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them,

and the desert shall rejoice and blossom like a rose," there are these words, "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped."

Now also, in Isaiah chapter 42 and verse 7 it is stated that as the servant of Jehovah part of his ministry will be to open the eyes of the blind. "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." When the Lord Jesus began his Messianic ministry in Nazareth that was the text to which he referred. And in Luke chapter 4 in about verse 18 he said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind." He closed the book and he said, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears."

Now there are two things that are interesting about that, and the first, of course is that it is the sign of his Messiahship. He performed the thing that pointed him out as the Messiah. The second thing that is significant about it is that in the Old Testament the opening of men's eyes is connected with the ministry of the Lord God. So we find two things then in this sign, an evidence of the fact that he is the Messiah. And secondly, confirmation of the fact that the Messiah is himself the Lord God. So this is a very important miracle definitely identifying him as the one for whom Israel was waiting.

This morning when I finished the message at 9:30 and I was walking out one of the members of the congregation said, "But you omitted to say one thing that we all wanted you to say." I often do that, of course, because I don't know what you are thinking in the pulpit. But she said, "We were all singing the words of Handel's *Messiah*, "And the eyes of the blind be opened." Well, of course, that's where Mr. Handel and the other who worked on that particular piece got the idea. It comes from the word of God. It is the identifying sign of the Messiah. The Messiah when he came was to open the eyes of the blind. And so we looked then at this marvelous miracle that identifies the Lord Jesus as the true Messiah and the Lord God and through whom alone there is the forgiveness of sins.

Now, I have a simple outline of this section. It's not nearly as good as the outline of the country preacher who said that when he came to this passage he had three points. His first point was "The man was blind." His second point is, "The man was stone blind." And his third point was, "The man could not see at all." [Laughter] So that's the point. Here's a blind man. Now the passage begins with the words, "And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth." Well, we do not know whether this incident occurred chronologically close to the incidents described in John chapter 7 and 8. It's probably somewhat unlikely. It seems that it's better to connect it with the events that followed after described in chapters 9 and 10 and the first part, well chapters 9 and 10 specifically. Because chapter 10 is connect with chapter 9 very clearly. And we do read an account of the time in chapter 10 and verse 22 where we read, "And it was at Jerusalem the Feast of the Dedication, and it was winter." The chances are then this was an incident that occurred somewhat after the incidents described in John chapters 7 and 8. There occurred at the time of the Feast of Dedication or Hanukkah, which incidentally took place about this time of year, November, December around that time. So it was around that time. The people involved in the incident are, of course, the Lord Jesus, the Messianic King, the man born blind, and then the disciples.

Now, of course, the man born blind illustrates for us the natural condition of all of us. For we are all born blind. The Scriptures make that very plain. They say, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness to him." We are blind. We have hard hearts. Our emotions are corrupt. But we cannot see the truth. That's why we often sing in the words of the Psalmist, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things out of Thy word." In order to understand it is necessary that our eyes be opened by God. When Paul preached and Lydia was in the audience, the Scriptures say, "And the Lord opened her eyes," so that she was able to understand the things that the Apostle Paul spoke. The disciples on the Emmaus Road could only understand when he opened their eyes to understand the things found in the Scripture. We cannot, we are unable to understand apart from divine enablement. So the man born blind is a living, visible illustration of that wonderful truth."

Now the conversation that follows is very interesting. As the Lord Jesus is passing by he may have hesitated for just a moment, looking at the man who had been born blind. He probably was a man who was very well-known, because the chances are he was out on the streets all the time, and everybody knew about him. The Lord Jesus stopped and he must have hesitated and looked at the man. And that's the occasion of the disciples' response. "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Now, they had the view, and this was very common in that day, and specifically in Israel. One of the rabbis, for example, said, "No death without sin, no suffering without iniquity." Obviously a person born blind has suffered from the time of his birth, so there must be some iniquity or sin that lies back of it. They had the view that all suffering came from specific sin.

Well, that's understandable generally speaking, but what about a person who was born blind? How can a person who was born blind commit a sin that might make him responsible and thus be born blind? So this was a question of theology. And the disciples, of course, look at him as the subject for theological analysis. It's very understandable, because that was what they had been taught. There were several theories that men used to explain this. For example, in those days it was common to believe just as in our day in reincarnation, or metempsychosis. That is not a modern idea. It's an ancient one.

By the way, I have a friend, he's an excellent preacher. I wish one day he could preach in Believers Chapel. He's an excellent preacher. He's a professor of New Testament at a theological seminary. He has a good sense of humor. And whenever we get together, we usually get together once a year. He always tells me the latest stories that he's heard. And last year in June I was with him. He said, "I've got a couple of good stories for you." And he told of a story of a man whose name was John and his wife was named Jane. And as the time came the latter years of their lives, and they faced the fact that they would ultimately die, they made a little agreement. And it was this, that the one who died first would seek to make contact with the one who was still living one year later.

Well John died first and he sought to make contact with John. A year later she got ready for the meeting, she went into the room, pulled the shades down. It was rather dark. She lighted a candle, put it on the table. She had bought a little incense. She thought that would be appropriate so she began to burn the incense. The room got a little smoky. And finally she got up the courage and she said, "John." There was no answer. "John." And then the words came, "Yes, John." "John, where are you?" "Oh, Jane, I'm in the most beautiful place. I look out and see snowcapped mountains, magnificent, beautiful, lush green grass all around me, a lovely mountain stream flowing down in the valley." "Oh John, heaven must be wonderful." "Heaven, Jane? I didn't say anything about heaven. I'm an angus bull in Montana." [Laughter] Well, my preacher friend said, "You can use that when you come to the subject of reincarnation." I said, "Yes, I'll take that down John, and I'll use it on my congregation." And now Scripture has been fulfilled. [Laughter]

But it was common for men in that day to believe in reincarnation or metempsychosis. That's very common even today. When I was much younger we had a very well known case of metempsychosis or claimed reincarnation. Back in the fifties, in the mid-fifties there was a woman who had, she was very susceptible obviously, but she made claim when she was being hypnotized for recognizing and even speaking in the language in her childhood in another appearance on the earth. Her name was Bridey Murphy. Now it so happens that this woman's real name was Virginia Tighe, but nevertheless when she was hypnotized she would speak as if she were Bridey Murphy. And it made such an impression on people that many began to accept the testimony as being true. And in fact, a Jewish man by the name of Bernstein wrote a book which was a bestseller in which he gave the evidence for reincarnation because she could speak with an Irish brogue. She could also dance Irish jigs.

And so when she was under hypnosis she did seem to fall back into this previous existence until finally a preacher in Chicago vaguely remembered having had some contact with this person and then did a little research and found out that she had lived across the street from a woman who was named Bridey Murphy Corkell and that she had also gone with Bridey Murphy Corkell's son

whose name was John, I believe. And after a great deal of research exposed it all as being false, that what had happened was that she had been very fond of this woman who had come from Ireland. And as a five-year-old she had been often told stories of Bridey Murphy Corkell in the Irish brogue and had also been taught to do Irish dances. And so what happened was simply she fell back into doing what she had been taught as a child. It's amazing the things that people will believe, but they will believe things like that. And you will often hear people tell stories of individuals who give some kind of pseudo-evidence for life in a previous existence.

Well you can understand that that might be an explanation of how it is that this man is blind from his birth. In a previous existence, well he committed some kind of sin then. Because you see, it was the view of those who believed things like that that in a previous existence you might have done something that caused you to pass through certain experiences on to ultimate purification. You probably know that in Buddhism this place to which people are moving is called nirvana. Transmigration is believed, and according to this general belief the soul passes from one body unto another until it is purified. Then it returns to the dwelling place of its God, nirvana, or to eternal peace. Brahminic Hindus say that the soul joins Brahma, the universal power. And the idea of the return of the soul to Brahma is founded in the idea of Karma. That is the idea that what a person does decides his destiny. If he lives like an animal, well he will return to the earth in the body of an animal.

This morning when I got [to] this point in the sermon suddenly a cricket jumped out of the pulpit. Believe it or not a cricket jumped out of the pulpit, and I commented on the fact that the cricket has jumped out of the pulpit and then said to the congregation, "I wish that this could happen at eleven o'clock. I'm sorry it has not happened, I looked around for him. [Laughter] He is not here. I tried to stamp on him, but he probably was James Arminius in a previous existence and escaped my Calvinistic foot. [Laughter] And I left him here, but he has vanished like Arminians frequently do when the text of Scripture is expounded.

But anyway, it's possible, you see, for people to explain how this man was born blind in that way. So that was a possibility. Still others said -- I'm not serious, incidentally. Some of you look mad at me. It's all right. [Laughter] We welcome Arminians here. We want Arminians to come. As we say, we're all born Pharisees. We're born again as Arminians. And the work of sanctification is to bring us to Calvinism. [Laughter] So some of us have passed through a stage or so of this, and so we want you here. We want you to feel at home. And incidentally, seriously, we don't think that you should feel that we don't love you in the Lord. We do. There are many things about us that the Lord is still working on, be sure of that.

Well, there is something in the Bible that would suggest that perhaps that a law of heredity might be the occasion for it, because remember in Exodus chapter 20 it is said in verse 5 that the sins of fathers may be visited upon their children to the second or third generation. So one might say he was born blind, because one of his ancestors had sinned, and he's suffering for it. And still others have said perhaps it was prenatal sin. For after all, did not Jacob and Esau struggle within the womb of their mother and did not that indicate some fighting of themselves even before they were born. Would that not perhaps explain a man born blind?

Now the Lord Jesus' explanation is much better, much more theological, much more significant. He answers their theological question by saying, "Neither hath this man sinned." He doesn't mean he's not a sinner. He means simply that he has not sinned to produce the blindness. "He has not sinned nor his parents but he is in the state that he is in that the works of God should be made manifest in him." In other words, this man is in the condition that he is in because God has brought him to this condition in order that the works of God might be manifest in him. What a magnificent experience to be the means for the revelation of the power of God in giving sight to a man born blind. What a tremendous work for a person to do, to be that. And Jesus said the explanation is found in the sovereign determination of God who has this man at this very place for this very specific purpose. And he adds, "We must work the works of him that sent me while it is day. The night cometh when no man can work."

You will notice also that the Lord Jesus was interested in this man right from the beginning. And so we have to answer the question, "Did this man sin or his parents that he was born blind?" No, he is to be a monument to the marvelous power and grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is in his condition that the works of God might be manifest. What a difference that makes if we realize the experiences that we have when they are not the result of our positive acts of sin, are the things that God has brought to us in order that his grace might be manifested. And of course, some of those may issue in that as well. But it's so helpful to remember that our experiences, if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, are experiences that divine continuing sovereign providence has brought to pass.

Mr. Spurgeon in one of his sermons, I don't remember if it was in a sermon [on] this particular chapter or not, used to tell of an aged Christian who was born blind and yet a very happy Christian. And when he was speaking with another believer he once said to him, "You know, I have a whole lot more to give thanks for than you have." And the other Christian said, "What more than I? I've been able to see for years." And the one born blind said, "Yes, that's true, but you've had so many things to see which were very disagreeable. You've seen disagreeable and distressing things. You've seen faces that were unkind and angry and unholy. But the first face that I shall ever see shall be the face of my blessed Savior who loved me and gave himself for me." So he said, "I have more to be thankful for than you." What a wonderful attitude and I think a good scriptural attitude too.

Now Jesus said, "We must work the works of him that sent me." He must give diligence while he is alive. That's incidentally, a good text for us who are believers, too. It's important for us to remember, whether young or old, that we have just one opportunity to be faithful to our Lord, to accomplish things for him. And it is now. This is our opportunity. And incidentally, if your life is almost up humanly speaking, he still has a purpose for you. You're here for a purpose, and the purpose is that in your life you may glorify him. It's all optimism as long as you're breathing. God evidently has a distinct purpose for you. He said, "I'm the light of the world as long as I am in the world." That's a special statement of his ministry.

And it's illustrated now in what is going to happen. "When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground." He reached over. He took up the little lump of clay with the moisture. And he walked over to the man who had been born blind. And he put the mud on the eyes of the blind man. And he said to him, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam." A lot of discussion has taken place over why Jesus did something like that. Why did he put clay on the eyes of the blind man? It wasn't necessary for him to do that. He could have just looked at him and said, "See," and he would have seen. Some have said that he wanted to impress upon the man that the healing power came from himself. But he could have done it by a word. Others say, "Well in the ancient world they believed in the healing qualities of saliva."

Now, that is a well-documented fact. And in fact, in English we have an expression that is derived from it. We say, "He is the spitting image of his father." Did you know that expression comes from that belief, that there is power in saliva? And in fact there is a French expression that he is his father. And the words *tout crachez* are used. I'm not sure I pronounced to the satisfaction of French speaking people, but nevertheless that expression *c'est son père*. So the idea of the healing power of saliva. And in fact in ancient times there are various illustrations of people who said that they wanted to have some contact with the spittle of some famous person thinking that it might have some power upon them. So it has been said that the Lord Jesus accommodating himself to that particular custom or belief did that. But I doubt that that is true myself. There is no way one can prove or disprove that.

Perhaps he wanted simply to symbolize the fact that man was made from the dust of the earth. Well, there may be something in that, but we cannot be sure. We do know that he did take of the spittle, mix it with the clay, and mix it or smear it over the eyes of the blind man. Perhaps that symbolized a creative act, because when Adam was created in the Garden of Eden he was created out of the dust of the ground. And maybe there is some significance in that. Commentators have discussed it. And even sober commentators like Leon Morris have said there may be some truth in that; perhaps symbolizing the creative act, the Lord taking humanity to himself also.

One thing we do [know], he said to that man, "Wash in the pool of Siloam." And it seems more likely that this has some significance, because the man later on, when he describes what happens to him, he repeats that. He said, "He told me to go wash in the pool of Siloam." Now, Siloam does mean sent. The pool of Siloam is also used in Scripture, very significantly in the 8th chapter of the Book of Isaiah, the pool of Siloam or the waters of Siloam are referred to. They are referred to, remember, when Isaiah is trying to strengthen the courage of Ahaz, and he's trying to keep Ahaz from leaning on heathen kings and asking him to lean on the true king, the Lord God. And he contrasts the spraying of Siloam, the waters that flow gently from Siloam, with what might be called the strong waters of the brute force of the foes of the theocracy of Israel.

Now in the pool of Siloam, one can see the pool. But the pool is fit, you know, it is on the side of the temple area. The spring that feeds the pool of Siloam is on the top of the temple mount, suggestive, of course, of the presence of God. The water flows in an underground tunnel into the pool of Siloam so that when one sees the pool of Siloam he sees the results of the flow of the water, but he does not see actually the water flowing into the pool. Now, since it means sent and since one of the characteristic statements of the Gospel of John is that the Lord Jesus is the sent one, and also since one may see in this an illustration of the hidden sources of our Lord's true personality and yet also the visible outward man. And thus a picture of his humanity in the visible pool, and of his deity in the source of his person is invisible, one may have an illustration of the sent one. And there may be some force in our Lord's statement directing us to that. "Go wash in the pool of the Sent One." And John's translation, which is by interpretation, sent might suggest to us that he sees some symbolic significance in the washing of the pool of Siloam. Sent, well we cannot be sure about that. One would not want to make too much over it. It's a very interesting thing. At least it would connect this with the New Testament and the Old Testament and illustrate our Lord's ministry as the Sent One.

It also would illustrate him as the deity who has the hidden source of divine life as the second person of the trinity and who took to himself a human nature at a particular time and lived

among men. And when they looked at him he looked as if he were a man. Maybe the meaning ultimately of what he said was, "Go wash in the word of the Sent One who is eternal and the source of life."

Well the response of the blind man is very interesting. What a difference between the response that Naaman made when Elisha said to him, "Go wash in the Jordan River seven times." You remember that when Naaman the leper went to Elisha and Elisha gave him the message how he reacted. He really blew his top when Elisha said to him, "Go wash in the Jordan River seven times." Not surprisingly he was the general who came from Syria. He had come down to the prophet because had been told the prophet might be able to heal him of his leprosy. And so Elisha didn't even want to see him at first and finally he said, "Go tell Naaman to wash in the Jordan seven times and his flesh shall come again to him, and he will be clean." Naaman was very mad when he heard the message. He went away. He said, "Look, I thought that that prophet would come and he would surely stand and call on the name of Yahweh his God. And he would strike his hand over me and heal me of the leprosy." In other words, he would do something dramatic at least. "He wouldn't even see me. He just sent a messenger, 'Go wash in the Jordan River seven times.' Imagine me, Naaman, important man in Syria go dip myself in that dirty little stream seven times. It's ridiculous. It's fantastic." And so he just went away.

And finally one of his servants who had more sense than his master said, "Look here, if he told you to do something big, dramatic, you would have done it wouldn't you?" Well look, he told you something very easy to do, all you have to do is just go over and dip yourself seven times in the Jordan River." And so finally, I can just image Naaman saying, "oh well, okay." But that was some faith at least. So he went over and he got down in the dirty little stream, and he dipped himself one time, looked at himself; two times. And you can just imagine each time, six times, getting a little discouraged maybe. But finally the seventh time, and he comes up, and he looks down. His skin, the Old Testament said, was like a little baby's skin. That's the way God heals incidentally. No charismatics heal like that. This is the way God heals. His skin was like a little baby's.

Well notice how the blind man responded. When Jesus had thus spoken he spat on the ground. He made clay of the spittle. He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and he said, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam." And we read, "He went his way therefore." No questioning it seems, he just turned and went to that pool. And he came seeing. There was obedience when obedience was not easy. "Why, I've been born blind. I've been blind all my life. Go over and wash in that pool?" It's possible he had even washed in it before. And furthermore it looked like a fantastic and grotesque kind of way to heal a person of blindness, to wash off that clay and spittle that was on his eyes and expect to see. But he went and he came seeing. It was, of course, a miraculous sign.

It's one of those things that men cannot do. Now, I must tell you something. When I was growing up, when I was still relatively young, one of the greatest magicians of the 20th century died. He was a man by the name of Houdini. Most of you are so young you've probably never even heard of Houdini. What a wonderful name that is, Houdini, for a magician. He died on Halloween. What a nice time for a magician to die. I wish all of them would die on Halloween. [Laughter] At any rate, he died on Halloween. And he had promised that, like my friend John promised to his wife John, that he would make an attempt to communicate with those who were his friends. And so every year a vigil was kept at his grave. And they expected Houdini to speak from the life beyond the grave.

Now, it's been fifty years or so since Houdini died. And no whisper has been heard from Houdini yet. But a couple of years ago they decided to have a special anniversary kind of celebration. So a group of people came together at Magic Town in New York City. And there they had a seance, fog flowing from the garbage filled with dry ice. Dorothy Dietrich was wrapped in a straight jacket for an escape attempt. She got out in two minutes, seven seconds. That was the preliminary. Then seven magicians, including Houdini biographer Milbourne Christopher, Dick Brooks, Presto Johnson, and Ms. Dietrich were all taking their seats. And they joined hands. And Brooks who was the editor of *Hocus Pocus* magazine, do you take that magazine? [Laughter] That's one of the ones I

don't take, but I imagine it's very interesting. Anyway, he was there, and he was going to be the master of ceremonies. And so, in the midst now, as things moved toward the climax and everybody got quiet and they were holding their hands, he said, "Oh Houdini, we are gathered here to ask for a sign if it is possible for you to return." On the table were candles, a crystal ball, four padlocks, two pairs of handcuffs. Brooks had said Houdini was supposed to open one of the padlocks if he was able to do so. "Give us a sign," he said. Sweat was beading on his upper lip, according to the account that I have here.

And then he continued, nothing happened of course, "Please give us a sign, oh Houdini, we are all here. One sign, one time." Nothing. I couldn't help but think of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. They arranged the sacrifice and the prophets of Baal began in the morning, "Oh Baal, hear us. Oh Baal, hear us." Along about lunch time they're still shouting, a little hoarse now, "Oh Baal, hear us." They began to go into the second degree of their false teaching. They began to cut themselves and the blood was flowing freely and on until the late afternoon until the time of the evening sacrifice, the time of the day when Jesus died, incidentally. And they finally give us. Elijah's scornful of them now. He said, "Perhaps your God's out hunting." That may be, Mr. Prier, one reason why some are not here today. This is hunting season. Anyway, perhaps out hunting, perhaps he's on a journey. Maybe he went to Nashville yesterday. Or perhaps Elijah said the reality of the prophets, "Perhaps he's gone to the bathroom."

And the Elijah said, "Bring out the other animal, the other bullock." He prepared his sacrifice, the wood; put the animal on top of the wood. He said, "Now we want to let you know how God performs miracles. Get a barrel of water. "So they got a barrel of water. They poured it over the wood. He built a trench around so the water would stay there. Another barrel poured another barrel over it. Still one more, so there'd be no question. Poured it again, the whole thing is swimming in water. He has a little prayer, quite a bit different than preacher's prayers on Sunday morning. Something like this, "Lord, let them know how great you are. Let them know you are the

true God. Answer." Fire came down from heaven, struck the sacrifice, burned it all up, licked up all the water around." People said, "We believe Jehovah's the true God." No wonder.

You see, that's the kind of miracle Jesus performs. Go wash in the pool of Siloam. He washes in the pool of Siloam. His sight is there. He doesn't have to go to the oculists or the optometrist or whatever to be fitted for glasses afterwards. His eyes can see. This is the kind of miracle that God performs. This is the Messiah. This is the Son of God. He came to see; magnificent picture of hopelessness. What a favorable opportunity for a divine work. This fellow didn't need new glasses, the new glasses of reformation. He didn't need to correct his vision, the correction of education or culture. He didn't need eye salve, the eye salve of religion. What he needed was new eyes. He needed the new eyes of the new birth. You must be born again, Jesus told Nicodemus. You must be born again. Don't wonder at it. Don't be surprised at it. The new birth is no marvel, you must be born again. And what a picture of a seeking Savior. Here is a man who probably didn't even know Jesus was passing by. And it was our Lord who seeks him. That's grace. The Lord was interested in this man long before that man was ever interested in the Lord Jesus. And he saw him, and then he said to him, "Go wash in the pool of Siloam."

It's a picture of an omnipotent Savior, master of human fate, able to heal, able to give forgiveness of sins, able to save to the uttermost those that come unto God by him. And when he touches the eyes of our blindness we sing, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see." May God help you to recognize your blindness and to come to him who heals both the physical blind and the spiritually blind. Come to Christ. Believe in him. Trust him only. Stop trusting in the things that cannot save, your church, your religion, your good works, your culture, your education, all of the things in which we naturally lean. Come to Christ, believe on him.

[Prayer] Father, we are so grateful to Thee for these magnificent incidents in the life of our Lord. We often wonder how it is possible for a person to be exposed to the ministry of Jesus of

“The Healing of the Blind Man” by S. Lewis Johnson
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Nazareth and not know that he is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God who saves to the
uttermost...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]