

05-05-Jn-Born of God

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11/09/09

INTRODUCTION

We like to think we're special. Even in prison this guy would like to know that he is at least a little bit special. Perhaps just one step above the King's pigs?

I think most of us take life for granted. We say that life is precious but in our culture we have made it ok to terminate a life as long as we do it before it passes through the birth canal. The world describes this thing within the mother as a blob of jelly. I think that if most people knew what was really going on inside the mother's womb they would never even consider destroying a life by abortion. One scientist talks about the early stages of the development of a baby, listen to his description...

In the first week the fertilized egg, is about the size of a period at the end of a printed sentence. It attaches itself to the mother releasing enzymes that eat away the walls of some of the mothers arteries so that it has a supply of blood which carries nutrients and oxygen to the egg.

In weeks two and three the structures that will become the heart and nervous system can already be identified.

In week four the heart begins to beat.

In week five the key organs are in place: liver, pancreas, thyroid. Beginnings of eyes dot the sides of the head. The embryo is still a mere quarter inch long.

In the sixth week the beginning of the central nervous system and the eyes are now clearly visible. The brain begins to enlarge. Arm and leg buds each sport five digits fully joined by webbing, somewhat like a duck's webbed feet.

In weeks seven and eight the cells of the web die, apparently so programmed in their genetic makings, and the fingers separate. Most of the crucial action is complete by the end of the first eight weeks— a transition from embryo to fetus having the beginnings of all the primary organs and limbs of the baby-to-be.

In week nine the arms and legs, hands and feet, and most of the body look clearly human. Eyes have begun to migrate from the sides of the head toward their human forward position.

That was a description by scientist Gerald L Schroeder in his book, *The Hidden Face of God*. Let me give you a theologians description of those first nine weeks of the life of a baby.

God, having brought together a man and a woman in love and passion, allows a very particular seed to be planted in a very particular egg and a new and very unique human life has begun. This little human being is like no other that came before it,

or any that will follow it for all of time. In the first week God scratches the surface of the wall of one of the mother's arteries and attaches the egg there so that it has a supply of blood which carries life sustaining nutrients and oxygen to the tiny baby. At this point the fertilized egg is about the size of a period at the end of a printed sentence.

In the second and third weeks God is busy forming several important parts for the healthy life of the baby. He forms a pump that will move fluids throughout the body. He forms the intricate web of the nervous system that will send the electrical pulses necessary for all of the functions of the proper working of the body. If you look closely they can already be identified.

Having these necessary parts in place God sends a gentle spark of electricity through the nervous system that starts the heart beating. It now begins to beat it's steady rhythm, pumping life giving blood to every single part of the baby. This is the blood that carries the nutrients and oxygen that come from the mother. Remember that scratch that God made and then attached the egg to the wall of the mother's artery? It has been about four weeks since God has started His work on this miracle of life.

In week five God works feverishly to get other key organs formed and in place: liver, pancreas, thyroid. Then God touches each side of the head to start the growth of the eyes which are very small dots at this point. The embryo is still a mere quarter of an inch long.

It is now the sixth week God has the beginning of the central nervous system and the eyes in place and growing at a steady pace, they are now clearly visible. God then begins to enlarge and develop the brain. From the sides and bottom of the body He pulls out arm and leg buds. Then, very carefully, on each one He forms five digits that are joined together by webbing, somewhat like a duck's webbed feet.

In the next two weeks, weeks seven and eight, God meticulously removes the cells of the webbing between the fingers and toes. God has finished most of the crucial actions by the end of the first eight weeks— a creative action bringing the fertilized egg to a fetus, having the beginnings of all the primary organs and limbs for this unique human child.

In week nine God has brought the arms and legs, hands and feet, and most of the body, from a small dot of an egg to the full form of what clearly looks like a human. Now God begins to gently push on the sides of the baby's head, just behind the eyes to move them toward the front of the face where they will be at birth. It has only been 9 weeks but God has been very busy giving this little baby all that is necessary for a long healthy life.

Now if God would take such care in the birth of each of the billions of children that have been born in the course of history, how much more care will He take for our spiritual life?

Spiritual birth includes several things:

- It starts with the prevenient grace of God. Prevenient grace is the grace that goes before, it is the voice of God speaking to the sinful heart to draw that heart toward Himself. It is described as conviction, a prick of the heart, a voice speaking against the sinful actions of an individual often referred to as our conscience. Prevenient grace is God drawing us toward Himself, an action which on our own we would never take because we are satisfied with the pleasures of sinfulness.
- Then when we are confronted with our sinful state we must make a decision to confess our sinfulness. It is not possible to remember all of our sins nor is it possible at this time to live a life without failure at this point. Here, we only need to believe and admit that we are sinners against God and against mankind. We must believe in the remedy for our sin which is found in the cross and empty tomb of God's only Son Jesus Christ. And then we must invite and allow the Spirit of Christ to dwell within. This is often referred to as repentance.
- When we do this with a sincere heart, God forgives us and His Spirit comes to live within us, we are born again. We have experienced a new birth, a spiritual birth. We are now children of God and members of the Kingdom of God.

This morning we want to look at some of the details of that spiritual birth. John uses the words belong and born to speak of entrance into the fellowship of believers and the Kingdom of God. Let's explore the answer to the question; "What does it mean to be born of God?"

BODY

What does it mean to be born of God? (Spiritual Birth)

Jesus makes a clear directive about entrance into the Kingdom of God:

Most of us understand the process of human birth but if our aim is to prepare for eternity or some kind of life or existence after physical death we must look beyond the physical. Jesus said that there is more in life than human physical birth. Remember what He said to the Pharisee Nicodemus who had come to him in the dark of the night?

John 3:5-6 (NIV)

[5] ...**"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. [6] Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit...**

Being born of God restores the Divine image in one's life.

We are created in the image of God.

Genesis 1:26-27 (NIV)

[26] Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." [27] So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he

created them.

Genesis 1:26 (NASB)

[26] ...Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...

The Greek word for image is **selem** h6754. It is a masculine noun meaning an image, a likeness, a statue, a model, a drawing, a shadow. The word means image or likeness;

The Greek word for likeness, used in the NASB, is **demut** h1823. It is a feminine noun meaning likeness. This word is often used to create a simile by comparing two unlike things, such as the wickedness of people and the venom of a snake (Ps 58:4 [5]); the sound of God's gathering warriors and of many people (Isa 13:4); or the angelic messenger and a human being (Da 10:16). Additionally, this word is used in describing humans being created in the image or likeness of God (Ge 1:26; 5:1); the likeness of Seth to Adam (Ge 5:3); the figures of oxen in the temple (2Ch 4:3); the pattern of the altar (2Ki 16:10). But most often, Ezekiel uses it as he describes his visions by comparing what he saw to something similar on earth (Eze 1:5,16; 10:1).

Think about what this is saying. A statue, a likeness...

Genesis 2:7 (NIV)

[7] the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Think about the picture this word projects. The hands of the artist have formed a statue similar to his own. He is pleased, it looks wonderful, it looks very much like himself. Then he does a very weird thing. Holding the statue carefully in his hands he raises it to his lips and blows a breath of air into it. The statue has become alive. Setting it on the ground he watches as the, now living, statue looks at himself. The statue holds his hands out and moves his fingers about. He looks to the ground wiggling his toes. He runs his fingers through his hair. He looks at his maker in astonishment. This is the first physical birth and although the first man and woman were created in this fashion all others would be born in a different way, but none the less in the image of the maker. Those who would follow would be born of water. Spiritual birth would come in a similar way. Jesus has been tortured and eventually dies on the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of mankind. He is dead. They put Him in the grave. But that is not the end of the story because three days later He comes out of the grave giving us the possibility of eternal life through spiritual birth. John describes how this happened.

John 20:6-7 (NIV)

[6] Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, [7] as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.

In Jn 20:6-7 when Peter entered the tomb of Jesus he found the grave cloth that had been used to wrap the head of Jesus when He was buried. It was neatly folded

up and separate from the other linens. God the Father had come down, opened the tomb, unwrapped the head of Jesus and breathed the breath of life back into His body. This is the same action God had taken after He had formed the man out of the dust of the ground. He breathed life into the vessel of clay.

That is a picture of what spiritual birth is. God takes the lifeless broken body of a man or woman who is tired and fed up with their sinful life, and He breathes His Spirit into that lifeless body. The man or woman is now born again.

As an author of several portions of the New Testament, John had more experience in the practical application and teaching of the Gospel message than any other New Testament author. History tells us that he lived to be about 95 years old and was the only original apostle of Jesus that did not die a violent death. The opening chapter to his Gospel account introduces his readers the possibility of being born of God, or spiritual birth. Listen to his words in John chapter one...

John 1:10 (NIV)

(Speaking of the Word John says...) [10] He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. (Now you have to go back a little and read verses 1-3 here to see why John makes the comment, "though the world was made through Him".)

John 1:1-3 (NIV)

[1] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was with God in the beginning. [3] Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

John 1:11-14 (NIV)

[11] (He, meaning, the Word, the creator.) He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. [12] Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— [13] children **born** not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but **born of God**. [14] (How does this happen?) The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. (The Creator became human John says.) We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

There are several important truths to note here:

- The source of everything, especially spiritual birth, is Almighty God, the Creator.
- The portal to this spiritual birth is to believe in His name.
- The source of truth is the Word who became flesh.

So there is an action of God, there is a reaction of man, and there is a source of truth to keep us from becoming confused or distracted. Distraction and confusion come from listening to that which is not truth and anything that does not line up with the truth of the Words of Scripture is a lie.

Being born of God infers a changed life.

A changed life is a life that follows after the voice of God. In other words being born of God we could say that we belong to God. Not only does John use the idea of being born of God, he talks about how we belong to God. For example in...

John 8:34-38 (NIV)

[34] Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. [35] Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. [36] So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. [37] I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. [38] I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father." ...

John 8:47 (NIV)

[47] He who **belongs** to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not **belong** to God."

There are many scriptures that talk about the changed life, the holy life we will live out in our daily lives if we are born again. In fact the New Testament is heavy with this teaching. But in our culture it is common to question anything we hear. How do we know this is true, how can we be sure that what the Bible that tells us about eternal life and how to be born again are true? I would like to let you know that there is one irrefutable confirmation that no one can deny or explain away. It is the conviction of God in your heart. God speaks to our hearts and we know and we choose to act on that proof or we choose to explain or excuse it away for our own convenience. But it is non-the-less overwhelming proof we must act on.

CONCLUSION

Make a practical application.

There is another proof that we can look at. It is the testimony of Jesus Himself. Jesus did what no one else could do. This is the sign for us, a sign of His divinity.

John 15:18-27 (NIV)

[18] "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. [19] If you **belonged** to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not **belong** to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you. [20] Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also. [21] They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the One who sent me. [22] If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. [23] He who hates me hates my Father as well. [24] **If I had not done among them what no one else did**, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. [25] But this is to

fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

[26] "When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. [27] And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning.

If I had not done among them what no one else did...

Mt. 20:1- 15 (vs7 no one else) The owner of the vineyard did what no one else had done, he paid all the same wage out of his generosity. The application here is that when we belong to God, when we are born again, we can expect to be surprised at the generosity and love of God.

Mk. 5:1-17 (vs 3 & 4) No one in the town could subdue the demonic yet Jesus heals him and the town comes out to see the demonic sitting calmly at the feet of Jesus. The application is the change that only Jesus can accomplish.

Jn 3:1-8 Jesus encounter with Nicodemus, no one does the works you do.

Jn 7.46 no one ever spoke the way He did

Jn 9.32 no one ever heard of someone opening the eyes of a man born blind

When you are born of God you become part of something that is different from the world and what it has to offer.

Spiritual birth is within your grasp this morning:

- It starts with the prevenient grace of God. Prevenient grace is the grace that goes before, it is the voice of God speaking to the sinful heart to draw that heart toward Himself. It is described as conviction, a prick of the heart, a voice speaking against the sinful actions of an individual often referred to as our conscience. Prevenient grace is God drawing us toward Himself, an action which on our own we would never take because we are satisfied with the pleasures of sinfulness.
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Let us pray...