

10451

SILVER STAR BIBLE SCHOOL 1993

DEITY MANIFESTED IN FLESH

Speaker: Bro. John Knowles

Study #5

Beloved, Now are We the Children of God'

Reading: 1 John 4:1-21

Well, as we have intimated earlier in the week, this outstanding and very wonderful subject of God Manifestation progresses as we develop these studies to, obviously, a very exhortational climax. Something which can start with what appears to be a mechanical and technical form of exposition, as we may look at the name and the titles of Deity, and say, 'Well, so what? Do we really need to know all these Hebrew words and that sort of thing? We begin to see that God in His wisdom has deliberately chosen various titles. He has chosen this particular name, the name of Yahweh, in order to embody all of the concepts of Deity, before manifestation in flesh, manifested in flesh and, of course, the ultimate to which we all desire to attain, Deity manifested in Spirit.

Now, because of course, in this second series of talks, we're looking at what we might call 'the present tense' including, of course, the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is perhaps obvious that, in many respects, these talks may be more exhortational than the others. I simply say 'may' because I haven't heard bro. Graham's and I have missed some of bro. Colin's. But it would seem logical, wouldn't it, that we are looking now at our responsibilities in this day and generation?

And so to just repeat once again that in our first three studies we looked at the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. We saw him as the 'representative man', we saw him as the manifested Deity, and we put the two of these together and we saw how that he was the 'Author and Finisher of faith'. And we particularly picked up those symbols, the symbols from Revelation chapter 1, of the way in which 'the mystery of godliness', as bro. Thomas says, has been apocalypsed, manifested as the word 'apocalypsed' really means, in symbol. And so we've come now to the final three studies, The Glory In A Multitude.

Yesterday, we looked at it, in a sense, in principle. We wanted to look at the structure of this family, so that we can see the way in which God desires that Deity might be manifested in flesh, multitudinously now, as we appreciate what goes to make up this

family.

This morning we want to pick it up from there, and we want to look at the practical outworkings of it. These practical outworkings will be considered in two studies, today and tomorrow. We want to see though, today, what it means to be 'children of God'. What are the privileges of this great fellowship that we have; what are the obligations that go with it; and, what are the problems and the solutions to the problems that we may have as part of this family. And so that's what we want basically to look at this morning.

As you know, we are taking the material in a general sense from Eureka. And once again we read this morning by way of introduction, some words from Eureka, vol.1, commencing at the bottom of page 103 of this edition, by which I mean the last line and going over to the top of page 104, where bro. Thomas says, 'Behold, what great love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of Deity,'. There it is, that's our title for this morning, 'Because the world knew him not, therefore it doth not know us. Beloved, we are now children of Deity'.; and he's put it in italics and as we know from Bro. Thomas' writings, when he puts something in italics he means it's emphasized. The only emphasis that can be greater than italics is when he puts something in capital letters. The whole word in capital letters and that sort of doubly emphatic. He says, 'Beloved, we are now children of Deity; but it hath not yet appeared what we shall be;' and of course, he's quoting John here, 'nevertheless, we know that when he may appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every one having this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure'. (1 John 3:1-3) And we could have very easily read chapter 3 this morning; or chapter 4; or, for that matter, chapter 1 where we're going to spend most of our time. But he says, 'We are now', the word now is in italics, 'we are now children of Deity. He is manifested in them through the truth affectionately and righteously believed. If 'the truth as it is in Jesus' be in men thus, Christ, who is the truth, is in them; the spirit of Christ is in them; for 'the spirit is the truth; 1 John 5:6: which comprehends the exceeding great and precious promises given to us, that by these heartily believed, they may be partakers of the DIVINE NATURE' - 2 Peter 1:2-4.

And he goes to show that there is a sense in which we are 'partakers of divine nature now', using it in the moral sense of the term. And so, isn't it wonderful the way in which we see how that this subject is all embracing. Do you know what it does apart from anything else, brethren and sisters? it causes us not to be too microscopic in the conclusions in which we come to, when we analyse certain verses.

I worded that very carefully, we should be microscopic in our study, that's very good, it's very good to take a verse and examine it microscopically, but having analysed it microscopically, we then stand back and we say, 'but is there only one fulfillment or application of this verse? Now, we know, don't we?, that in the prophets there are frequently a multitude of applications, quite commonly an application, say, to Christ and his first advent, and also by extension, his second advent. Or you might like to take a quote, like Hosea 11:1 which says, 'Out of Egypt have I called My Son', and without

trying too hard I think I can think of six applications of that verse which are all correct.

So when we come to read Peter which says, 'that we are partakers of divine nature', I've heard brethren and sisters arguing, 'But is it now?, or, Is it in the kingdom? And it's both, because you see, the truth is mental, moral and physical. Now, I don't know if the other speakers have used that term before, but we've all heard that. But brethren and sisters, that's our chart again, isn't it? What Colin's been dealing with has essentially been mental, hasn't it? - Deity before manifestation in flesh; moral - Deity manifest in flesh; physical - Deity manifest in spirit. And therefore, most scriptures appertaining to this subject, can be used with equal importance and equal emphasis to all aspects of it.

So when bro. Thomas says, 'now are we the children of God', we know that we haven't yet been 'born of the spirit', in the truer sense of the term. And for myself, I would not use the term 'born of the spirit' in this present, particular order of things, just to come back and remind you of what we put on that chart that we've seen over the last few days, and then go to another one which breaks it down in more detail.

You might remember how we've divided up the 'earthly elements of the family' bearing in mind the apostle Paul who prayed, 'that the whole family, in heaven and in earth, might one day be united in one'. We've said that the term 'children of God' refers to the mortal saints in the present dispensation. We're going to just enlarge on that term in a moment. But when the Lord Jesus Christ returns, and immortality is granted to the saints, they become the 'sons of God' on earth, the immortal saints. Now, really, we are talking about English words and English words don't have the same power or significance as, say, does the original words, because we're quoting the New Testament here, we'll talk about the Greek words.

What is the difference then between 'children' and 'sons' as far as the scripture is concerned? Well, there are two different words. There are two different Greek words, one is 'teknon' and the other is 'huesos'. And we've alluded to it in the past, but now we look at it in more detail.

The words are quite different, but they are frequently, and I should say unfortunately, translated interchangeably as 'children' and 'sons' in the authorized version. So the first thing we should do, if we want to follow this subject up, is get out a concordance and check to the translation because, in fact, our very title, 'Beloved, Now Are We The Children of God', if you look at the authorized version it says, 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God'. And in fact, what we are going to endeavour to show is that we are not the 'sons of God' yet, but we are the 'children of God', if we are going to argue about the English words.

So, back to the Greek then. It is important, therefore, to understand the difference. The word 'teknon' [Strong's 5043] means a 'child', from the verb 'tikto' [Strong's 5088] to beget, and it is used both literally and figuratively in the New Testament. The word, 'huios' [Strong's 5207] signifies the relation of offspring to parent, and is often used metaphorically of prominent moral characteristics. If I was to quote, say from Vine's

expository dictionary, Vine says this, 'teknon' [the word which we are going to identify with children], gives prominence to the fact of birth; the moment the child comes into the family, it is 'teknon'. The child had nothing to do with it, through no fault or virtue of its own, it becomes a child, whereas 'huios' stresses the dignity and the character of the relationship.

And I guess most of us would be familiar with the traditions, Bible traditions of the Jewish family, in which the son in the family had to attain to sonship and it was from about the age of 12 or 13 at the bar mitzvah that he was permitted to engage in certain activities associated with the temple, and then when he reached a certain age, if he proved worthy and if he was the oldest son, then he got the title 'firstborn'. He was truly then the son in the family. Vine actually goes on to say, 'the difference between believers as 'children of God' and as 'sons of God' is brought out in Romans chapter 8', and if we were studying Romans we would actually put up a transparency which deals with the word 'spirit' and these words in Romans 8. But he [Vine] points out that 'the spirit bears witness with their spirit that they are the children of God, and as such they are His heirs and joint-heirs with Christ'.

This stresses the fact of their spiritual birth. On the other hand, as many as are led by the spirit of God, these are the sons of God. Their conduct gives evidence of the dignity of their relationship and their likeness to His character. And in fact, whilst it's nice to put everything into pigeon holes, (Do you have pigeon holes in Canada? You do? or, the figure of speech?), it's nice to put things into little boxes. But we've got to be careful that we don't seal that box up to the point where we don't allow a certain room to manoeuvre. And whilst I have very nicely put 'children' there as mortal and 'sons' there as immortal, there is a sense, there is a sense even in Romans 8 where when Paul says, 'if you are led by the spirit of God, truly, then you are already showing the moral attributes of son ship. But of course, it's Paul that says in Romans, 'that there's a sense in which we can speak of those things that be not as though they were, and that we are really waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God'.

So if we can put it in another way, to use a chart which is based upon, really, the Lord's discussion with Nicodemus, in which the Lord says to Nicodemus, 'that if you are going to be in the kingdom, you need to be born of water and of spirit'. We find therefore, that there are, in fact, two stages of this birth. It is a little unfortunate that we're not going to be able to spend a lot of time on this transparency [TWO SPIRITUAL BIRTHS], and like all charts they do have weaknesses. Once again, I don't want anybody to just take this chart and take these quotes and tie them down so tightly, that we start saying, 'Well, couldn't we use this quote over here and this quote over here? The answer is quite likely 'yes', there's a fair bit of overlapping, but the general idea of the chart I think is clear and I think it is important.

TWO SPIRITUAL BIRTHS

Water Spirit

Begettal	1 Peter 1:23	1 John 2:29
Quickening	Ephesians 2:1,5	John 6:63 & Romans 8:11
Birth	Romans 6:111 Corinthians 15:44	
The Mother	Galatians 4:26 (Hope of Israel)	Psalm 87:5-6 (Born in Zion)
The Result	child of God (teknon) (child) 1 John 3:2 John 1:13	son of God (huios) (son) Romans 8:19-23

We have just said that there's a difference between the word 'children' and 'sons'. That's the first thing we've got to know. For those who aren't aware of it, and I think probably that many of you are, but for those who aren't, we also have a problem with the word 'born'. And this is why I think, at times, some people get into arguments over 'are we born of the spirit now or are we not born of the spirit now?'

Well, let's have a look at this word. The word 'born' is the Greek word 'gennao'. I was very proud to find some Greek font on my computer, so I used it there. It's 'gennao' from which, of course, we get the word Genesis, genetic, generate, all of those sorts of things. But the thing is this, this one Greek word can mean two different things as far as you and I are concerned. It means to 'beget' when it's used in reference to a father, but it means to 'bring forth' or 'to be born' when referring to a mother.

We won't look it up, but in Matthew 1:16 we have that, 'Jesus was born of Mary, but Mary was begotten by Jacob; Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus'. That's what it says. Jacob beget Joseph, Jacob being a man, the word was 'gennao', he beget it. He set in motion the process, the begettal, the conception. But it was Mary who brought forth Jesus and it's the same word. So you see, you can have the same word doing justice to the beginning of the process and the end of the process.

Well, you see, once again, if we stand back from the thing you say, 'Well, it doesn't matter. The whole process is one thing, but to us we sometimes want to know, what's the beginning and what's the end.' Well, okay, I think it's only right that when we read expressions in the Authorized Version like being 'born of God', you usually find, in fact, I think I've found it in every case, I don't think I've found an exception to this, that bro. Thomas will always translate it 'begotten of God' because God is the Father.

Now, doubtless, you've been looking down the rest of the chart and saying, 'what does all that mean? Well, it's an attempt to try and put some things into boxes, providing we don't just make them hard and fast. And what we're saying is that there are, in fact, two spiritual births and this is what the Lord said to Nicodemus, 'If you want to be in the

kingdom, Nicodemus, you've got to be born of water and born of spirit'. And therefore, the proposal is this: that there is a begetting, there is a quickening, and there is a birth; as with the natural so with the spiritual.

When we pass through the waters of baptism it is as a result of a 'begetting of that spirit word' (1 Peter 1:23). We won't look it up, but it speaks about that incorruptible seed - we've been begotten again by the word of God. So it has begotten inside of us a new form of thinking, a new creature. And that's the beginning of the process, when the word of God starts to change our thinking.

And can we say once again, brethren and sisters, that perhaps for some of us, perhaps for some of us that started this week, perhaps for some of us we're experiencing something that maybe others of us experienced in similar circumstances some years ago. Yes, we were baptized, but suddenly we realized that it was all about God Manifestation, not human salvation and we swung around through that figurative 180 degrees, for which for those who forgot their geometry of school days, was the angle of a straight line. In other words, instead of going that way, we're going that way.

What has happened? All of our knowledge of the scripture has suddenly born fruit. It's germinated the beginning of a new type of thinking. Remember the head of the overhead projector? Well, it was a different overhead projector Saturday night, but it doesn't matter, it's still the head of the overhead projector. We've been looking at it from that point of view. We've learned a lot of facts and then suddenly, we've been begotten again as we started to see it from the other side. We'd started to see it through God's eyes. Ideally, and we don't want to try to put this into some sort of particular order, but ideally that begetting should take place as we approach the waters of baptism. Some of us might get worried and say, 'I was baptized ten years before I knew this.' Um, that would have just about been true in my case, about ten years I reckon. What do we do? Do we go back and get re-baptized? I don't think the Father is asking that of us at all. He understands that at least when we were baptized we appreciated that we were acknowledging the righteousness of God in a sense, perhaps an immature sense, but He knows we've got to grow and He knows we're not going to be perfect this side of the judgment seat. But that begetting is when that incorruptible seed of the word starts to germinate and we start to think like the spirit.

In some form or other, I guess, like with the natural process of the development of a child, there's a quickening, it starts to come to life, and therefore, we see the need to be born of water and baptized. Because people say, oh! perhaps they don't always say, or perhaps they don't always think about it, but, you know, if there is going to be a birth there's going to be a mother, isn't there? She brings us to the birth, and the mother of course, in the first case, is Galatians 4:26, 'Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all'.

We've taken upon ourselves the 'hope of Israel', haven't we? Elpis Israel, 'for the hope of Israel I'm bound with this chain'. Now, just let me say once more, and I won't repeat it again, don't take those too mechanically, have a look at the quotes though and see how they apply in a general sense, to these sort of things. 'You have He quickened',

you know, 'who were dead in trespasses and sins', so as a result then of this 'begetting of spirit' and 'birth of water', we become children of God the 'teknon', we are born into the family on earth as mortal saints. That's why in our previous chart we sort of summarized all of that and we've just put it down as a heading, 'The Children of God Now, Mortal Saints On Earth'.

But you see, there must also be a 'begetting of spirit' and what we're saying then, that as a result of this, we start to grow and this is where the chart may have a few weaknesses, when we say, 'Well, at what stage does this 'begetting of the spirit' take place?' Well, I'm not going to try to define it, but we want it to take place don't we? And there is no subject that can help it to take place better than God Manifestation. And if we haven't thought of God Manifestation before, then that's the one subject that's going to generate this process by which we are developing spiritual thinking. And so, in general terms that we say then, there must ultimately be a birth of spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:44, 'this mortal must put on immortality; it was once an earthy body, it becomes a heavenly body. It was once a corruptible body, it becomes an incorruptible body. It was once a natural body, it becomes a spiritual body'. And that's when the true birth of the spirit takes place.

Psalm 87:5,6, 'It will be said of this man, he was born in Zion', and I believe that Psalm is speaking then of the manifestation of the 'sons of God' in power. So, if ever you get into a discussion of 'are we born of the spirit today?' try not to be too rigid and drive people into corners, because very often, the other person may not fully understand what they mean by the term. But for myself, I would say, 'This is how I see it.' For myself I would say, 'We are born of water at baptism, we should be begotten of the spirit now, but that we'll not be born of the spirit until immortality is granted.'

Well, that's the background, brethren and sisters, to our theme of God Manifestation as we're looking at it in this particular talk, 'Beloved, Now Are We The Children Of God'. So we're going to be looking at the family of God, our godly character.

The family of God, our godly character. Now look at that sub-title, seven words in that. I know that you can count them out, but there are seven words. Which word do you think I'm going to emphasize this morning? Well, I didn't want to call out, but if the answer was easy, it would have been easy. Do you know the word I'm going to emphasize this morning? It's the word OUR, which of course is related to family. But the thing that I want to emphasize in the remainder of my talks is, BRETHREN AND SISTERS, WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER.

We're going to be considering the practical outworkings of God Manifestation, not in my life as I walk out of here as an individual, but in our lives as we walk out of here, as part of the family of God, as part of the Deity in Manifestation in a multitude, and never, ever let us think of ourselves as being separate from the body. I know we have problems and we've got to deal with problems, and some of those problems at times involved things like withdrawing fellowship, and we all know that that must be a last resort. We

want to talk about the positives. We want to talk about thinking of ourselves as part of the body of Christ. And yes, we are, Peter, going to talk about the family and I'm going to emphasize this word, OUR godly character, and tomorrow, OUR work for Him, the edifying of the body in love.

So, what we want to do then is: I'd like to turn to the first epistle of John chapter 1, I said a moment ago we could easily have used this chapter as our reading for this morning because I'm going to use this as a base. Perhaps just to give you some idea of how I'd like to work through it, I've divided the chapter up into three parts. I divided up into verses 1 to 4, which I've called the 'privileges of fellowship and how to enjoy them.' In fact, it's probably not a bad idea to write that down. I perhaps could have written it on a transparency but I didn't, perhaps I should have. Anyway, it's the privileges of fellowship and how to enjoy them, verses 1 to 4. The second section, I'm calling the 'obligations of fellowship and how to live them, verses 5 to 7. The obligations of fellowship and how to live them, and in writing this I sort of had the word PRIVILEGES in capitals and ENJOY in capitals. The word OBLIGATIONS in capitals and the word LIVE in capitals. And finally, verses 8 to 10, the PROBLEMS (in capitals) of fellowship and how to resolve them, verses 8 to 10. Now, of course, other people might like to divide the chapter up differently, but that's the way we want to deal with it. The privileges of fellowship and how to enjoy them, the joy of fellowship. The obligations of fellowship and how to live them, the necessity of walking in the light. And the problems of fellowship and how to resolve them, what do we do when we sin? And don't forget, we means ALL OF US, you and me, not just what we do when I sin, but what do I do when I sin, but what do I do when you sin, what do you do when I sin, how do we handle sin; because there was one word that was common to each one of those sub-headings, wasn't there? It's the word FELLOWSHIP.

And there it is in the 1 John 1:3, 'that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ'.

Brethren and sisters, if we're talking about a family, we're talking about fellowship. You know and I know that it's the most sensitive and most delicate, and in many ways, the most difficult issue to handle in ecclesial life. But if we can go away from this week seeing it through the concept of God Manifestation, we may not be any more successful in solving the problems, but perhaps it's going to do a lot more for us, as we endeavour to solve the problems in developing a character.

And what do I mean by that? Well, I think that perhaps as an aside we can say, when we stand before the judgment seat, are we going to be granted a place in the kingdom on the basis of: how many problems we've solved in life; how many positives we were able to achieve as distinct from how many negatives; or, is it going to be that we present there a character, a character that's been developed through suffering; through trial; through tribulation; and through, at times, failure? And did we perhaps have more achieved for our character development through our failures than through our successes? And I believe the answer is 'yes', and therefore, that's one of the reasons

that John will say in his epistle that 'we should have confidence in the day of judgment', because it's going to be the answer of a good conscience towards God.

And so therefore, we want to talk about the fact that fellowship consists of the way in which we view our relationship one to another and our responsibilities to God and to each other, because God, The Father, Jesus Christ, the firstborn, and you and I are all in this together, 'as thou Father art in me and I in them; I pray that they all may be one in us'. So our responsibilities go in all directions. No one denies that the responsibility must be to the Father first. No one denies that, but you know at times we can sort of say, 'My responsibility is to God and that means I can wipe off my brethren'. You've got to be very careful about that.

Well, someone comes along and sees a problem and they say 'I stand up for a principle', the principle meaning something they've read in the scriptures which they take as a principle, and though you can separate principles from people, you can't. That's why this word OUR is so important. There is nothing that I'm going to say in this talk that I want to be interpreted as meaning that we are going to play down standards, that we're going to sweep things under the carpet, that we are going to condone error. We're not going to condone anything. We're not going to condone even one little sin, because God doesn't. But God, who can't condone sin, can accept the sinner. And that's what we've been learning about.

When the sinner is prepared to uphold the righteousness of God, then God can accept the sinner while never condoning sin. And so, if we worry at times about the toleration of error, never let's forget either, that there's a word called 'longsuffering' which some might see as being similar to toleration and yet Peter tells us that it is 'God's longsuffering that is our salvation'. So see how every day of life were going to be balancing these things out. Is longsuffering a toleration of error? Well, if it's true of godly longsuffering, it's not. It's one of the divine attributes of Exodus 34, 'merciful, gracious, longsuffering'.

Well, we could talk for a long time about this, couldn't we, but John is going to talk to us in these first 4 verses about the privileges of fellowship. I'm going to read a note from my margin, because if I don't tell you I've written it in my margin, you might think I just prepared it for the study this week, but it was written in my margin a long time ago. I didn't write it on the basis, as I said, of the Bible School theme at Silver Star, but listen to it. 'An introduction just to the first epistle of John and the first verses. The basis of true fellowship rests upon the appreciation of the fact that Jesus Christ, who came in the flesh, was in reality the Word of Life. That he was a vessel prepared with an unmeasured quantity of the spirit granted unto Him, causing His mind to bring His flesh completely into subjection. He was therefore, the complete manifestation of the Father in flesh, and as such was the One through whom Yahweh will save, picking up His name, Jesus, and in whom is fellowship with God. All those who are in Christ are thus in fellowship with one another and experience fullness of joy.'

That expression 'fullness of joy' of course, we pick up from verse 4, where John says,

'and these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full'. Just consider, brethren and sisters, how great is this privilege of fellowship, and I'm going to appear to over-emphasize it because, I think, to many of us, the word fellowship often has negative connotations, especially if we've come from a controversial environment.

It is one of the greatest tragedies of our life in the truth, that the word fellowship gets used about who's in, who's out, or worse still, which fellowship? You know, one wonders what's it going to be like at the judgment seat, don't they? when you get this fellowship and that fellowship and the other fellowship and our fellowship, and someone who was in fellowship and is out of fellowship, all there arrayed before the judgment seat of Christ. And I'm not going to say brethren and sisters, we've done wrong things necessarily, but I'm sure we're going to see the whole subject through different eyes when, in God's mercy, we're granted spirit nature, we'll realize at times perhaps how small minded we've been. And when I say we have to be broad minded, I don't mean we play down standards, not at all. But we've got to take in the whole picture of things, and that really is going to be tomorrow's study from Ephesians chapter 4 essentially.

But at the moment, do we appreciate the privilege of fellowship and can we even now experience in some measure, the joy of that? I can't think of any place, where we could've experienced better than here this week. I really do think that the atmosphere we've had here this week has been, to my mind, one of the greatest experiences I've had in a community coming together, essentially of one mind, all appreciating the joys of God Manifestation and seeing it, as a real joy and seeing the practical outworkings in our lives.

You know, Paul spoke about it in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 where he wrote to an ecclesia where some were saying, I'm of Apollos; someone saying, I'm of Cephas; someone else said, I'm of Paul, and the real pious ones would say, well! of course, I'm of Christ. And you know, here they were all divided up, 1 Corinthians 10:16 and 17, Paul says, 'the cup of blessing [for] which we bless, [or praise God, that's the Diaglot translation, as I recall it] 'the cup of blessing for which we [bless, the word bless there means praise or give thanks to God], is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread'.

Now, brethren and sisters, we are one bread and one body when we all appreciate God manifestation. But we do know, don't we, that there are many brethren and sisters out there that don't understand it. Perhaps through no fault of their own, perhaps some came there this week, not knowing much about God manifestation and they're going to go back and try to impress others with it, and that's not easy. So in that true priestly attitude that we saw yesterday, (yes, we are going to have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way), knowing that we also are encompassed with infirmity, and we're going to try to be like the priests and educate, knowing that we also need to be educated. But true unity only comes when we understand the concepts of God manifestation, and that's what fellowship is all about.

So back in the first of John, chapter 1 and verse 3 which we read before, we are told there in that verse that we have fellowship with the two most important beings in the universe. And of course, if we like little pictures to remind us of what we are talking about, and then of course, it has to be that chart once again, doesn't it, of the divine family? Think of the privilege that we have. What have we done, to deserve the privileged position of fellowship with the Father and the Son? Do we appreciate it, do we find it the greatest joy in life, or do we go along to our meetings, sometimes thinking, oh! I wish I didn't have to go, I'm not looking forward to it this morning? You say, yes, that's alright, but there's problems. I know there's problems. Is it unfair to quote James? Is it? 'Count it all joy when you fall into diverse trials.'

Not easy, is it? Of course it's not easy, but if we can appreciate that the trials of life are for the development of our character then, of course, it is a good thing. And deep down there can be joy when, even if we're in the midst of ecclesial strife, we can stand back from it and say, 'Think of the joy I have with the Father and the Son. If only each of us in the ecclesia could see it the same way.'

So we keep trying and we keep trying and, so, because John talks in absolute terms, John doesn't very often deal with the sort of in-between, he simply says, 'we got fellowship with the Father and with His Son, and these things we write unto you, that your joy [might] be full'.

Now, he says, 'that's my purpose', we've come here this week, brethren and sisters, and in this series of studies, to talk about Deity manifested in the flesh, that we might come to experience 'the joy' of God Manifestation in Flesh.

Let's go back to John chapter 4. That's the gospel of John chapter 4. Remember the story of the incident with the woman of Samaria? She'd asked the Lord, 'Where do you worship? do you worship in Mount Gerizim, where the Samaritans had set up their worship, or do you worship back at Jerusalem? And of course, we see the contrast here with John chapter 3.

In John chapter 3 there had been that man Nicodemus, the Jew, and he'd come along and he wanted to know the truth, and the Lord said, 'Whosoever believeth, shall be saved'. See he was a narrow-minded Jew, who had to have his thinking broadened. And he [Jesus] says, 'They that worship God must worship in spirit. You've got to be born of the spirit.' So the narrow-minded Jew had to have his thinking broadened to understand God manifestation.

When he [Jesus] met in chapter 4, now, the broad-minded Gentile, and she said, 'Do you worship in Mount Gerizim or Jerusalem?', he says to her in verse 22, 'Salvation is of the Jews'. Just think what would have happened if he had said to Nicodemus, 'Nicodemus, salvation is of the Jews'. Nicodemus would have gone away and he would have learned nothing about God manifestation. You see, Nicodemus as the Jew, the teacher of Israel, one of the top three men in the nation; the high priest was one, the teacher of Israel was the other, and the one, I think, who administered the

functioning of the temple was the other.

This man was ostensibly the most learned man in the scriptures, and he came along to the Lord and he had to be told that, as the Lord said, 'whosoever believeth shall have eternal life'. Doesn't matter if you're Jew or Gentile, Nicodemus. And Nicodemus went away and he learnt God manifestation. And we know, when the Lord was crucified, he was one of the first two to come along and ask for the body. Before the apostles.

And so there it was. Nicodemus, the narrow-minded Jew, to understand God Manifestation, had to learn that he had to be born of spirit, and 'whosoever is born of spirit will be in the kingdom'. Now a broad-minded Gentile woman comes along and says, 'How do we worship?' and so he has to narrow her thinking, he says, 'salvation is of the Jews', but he also says 'you must worship in spirit and in truth'. So you see, both of them had to learn what it was to develop the spirit. And so we have to likewise have our thinking broadened, narrowed, narrowed, broadened and so on, as we endeavour to balance this out.

Well, let's take the case of the disciples. They went away into the city to get him some food to eat. When they came back from the city, they said in verse 31, 'Master eat, [this is John 4 by the way] but He said unto them, 'I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus said, Look, my food [meat] is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish His work.' Now he says, 'Don't go around saying there's yet four months and then cometh the harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together'.

How do you understand that verse? Is he saying that, the more gospel proclamation work you do the more points you gain towards your salvation? Actually, someone quoted that verse to me in that context once, many years ago. He's not saying that at all. He said, 'you look out on the fields, for they are white to harvest'. What was he looking at? He was looking at these people that were coming back now from the city, the woman had gone to get the men, 'Come out and see this one; he's the Messiah'.

It was interesting wasn't it? He actually told this woman he was the Messiah. The Lord didn't very often do that. He told Peter not to tell anybody. He certainly didn't tell Nicodemus, but he was able to tell this woman because he thought, 'well, she's not a Jew, she's not likely to rush off and suddenly cause some ferment, so bring these men back. And she's bringing these men back.

And so the Lord's undoubtedly pointing at them and saying, 'Look, there's the fields, what are you going to do with those fields out there? He says 'it's all prepared for you. Everything's prepared and he thanked justice on the side. This is based on the statements you'll find back in Joshua 24, when Joshua brought the children of Israel into the land. They stood there at Mount Gerizim, Joshua said, 'As for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh and we will serve Him in sincerity and in truth', which the Lord

picks up as 'in spirit and in truth'. And Joshua said, 'you're now going to the land, and you're going to partake of fruit; you never planted the trees, grapes, you never planted the vines; it's all there for you'.

John 4 is based on Joshua 24, so the Lord now says to the disciples, 'here, it's all coming, all you've got to do is go in and reap it. Go in and take it and in so doing, you're going to get a reward. What's the reward? You're going to get a reward because the reward is that you are gathering fruit unto life eternal and your reward is a present reward now, 'that you may rejoice together with those of like faith'. So the reward of preaching the truth was the joy of fellowship.

Turn over to John chapter 15 and verse 11. John 15:11, 'These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full'.

And one final reference, and this time it's from Paul in the first of Thessalonians chapter 2 and verses 19 and 20, 'For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?' You are our glory and our joy! Brethren and sisters, that's what John is talking about in the [1st] John 1:4 when he talks about the 'fullness of joy' to be experienced in fellowship. Unfortunately, we have to say we will not experience it in the truest sense, this side of the kingdom. But, having said that, we should never, ever use that as an excuse for not continuing to try. At what stage do we give up trying? The answer really must be, must be in effect, NEVER!, unless a person just totally declares the fact that they've left, and that. But I wonder at what point do you ever give up trying?

So, inasmuch as we're going back then to John, and we recognize that John talks in absolute terms, and we're going to get some examples of that now in these next verses, 'you're either in light or in darkness'. Brethren and sisters, if we've been enlightened on God manifestation this week, that's going to unite us as a group here, when we walk out of this school this week, in a way like it has never done before, because we appreciate what it is that unites us; it's God manifestation and that's what gives us this experience of the true joy of fellowship. And of course, as John chapter 4 showed us, back in the gospel, there is no greater joy than bringing other people into an appreciation of this same concept. And when you've got an ecclesia or a community, or even a family, who all appreciate this, there is oneness there. A oneness that you can't define in statements of faith, and constitutions and unity booklets; all of which have become necessary over the years, but, what's the use of the booklet, if we can't experience that joy? That joy can only be experienced through the understanding of God manifestation.

I think, brethren and sisters, I'd be prepared to go on record and say, 'if we don't understand God manifestation then that joy isn't there', because if we don't understand God manifestation in the terms that the speakers have been talking about this week, then our relationship together is a fleshly one. However, we might sort of garnish it over with Bible readings and Bible study, it really is a motivation of human salvation, rather than God manifestation.

Well, back in the epistle of John then, those opening verses, the first four verses, show to us that there is the greatest privilege of all, and that privilege is 'fellowship with the Father, and with the Son and with each other', and we can enjoy it when we appreciate what John has said. And look what he said, would we have understood this some weeks ago? Verse 1 again [1 John 1:1], 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it,)'. You know, the Word made flesh, an understanding of that is the joy of fellowship.

Well, onto verses 5 to 7, the obligations of fellowship, and how to live them. You see, if we start to expand this idea of fellowship and we start to think about 'we must love everybody' and humanism starts to take over a little bit, then we lose sight of the fact that whilst fellowship is a very embracing thing, it is also at the same time, very restrictive. That's why we don't go out and just fellowship anybody and everybody who says, 'I think I love God' because verse 5 says, 'This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all'. So fellowship is predicated upon 'being in the light', constitutionally being in the light, being baptized, but also 'walking in the light', because verse 6 says, 'If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin'.

So there's a need to 'walk in the light' in order to ensure true fellowship with God and each other. If we are walking in darkness, then we're lying and don't do the truth, but if we walk in light we have fellowship one with another. Now that starts to restrict things, doesn't it? and we start to say, 'who amongst us is truly walking in the light? And the answer is, (if we're going to take John in absolute terms, and that's the way John writes), then none of us are fit for fellowship, are we?

Where do you draw the lines between big sins and little sins? Are there such things as big sins and little sins? Actually, no, sin is sin. Probably the difference between big sins and little sins is in the area of the affect they may have on other people. That's why when David sinned, his sin was a BIG sin. Not because murder is worse than stealing, although I guess most people would say it is. But not so much because of that, but because of his position and of the affect it had upon the nation and all of that sort of thing. But really, any sin will keep us out of the kingdom. God cannot look upon sin. Anybody who broke one little commandment of the law, broke the whole law.

So having then said in verses 5 to 7, 'we're only in fellowship when we walk in the light', suddenly all our joy has almost collapsed. But don't worry, because verses 8 to 10 says this is how you handle sin. So, he says then in verses 8 to 10, and I've got there the heading 'the problems of fellowship and how to resolve them', and of course I mean in the first instance, the problem of 'my fellowship with God'; the problem of your fellowship with God; the problem of our fellowship with God; the problem of our fellowship with each other.

And let's talk in the con talking about the fact that something's gone wrong. Someone isn't walking in the light. Someone has come short of the glory of God. What do we do about it? Well, John puts before us three proposals; two of which are wrong, one only of which is right. Why does he put before us three proposals? Because human beings left to themselves will handle sin in one direction or the other. So that gives us two options and he's going to show to us that both of those are wrong. But God Manifestation says that there is only one way to solve the problem. Verse 8 and verse 10 gives to us the two human ways of trying to handle sin; verse 9 gives us God's way.

So let's get rid of the human ways first, verse 8, there's was a sort of person who might say 'We have no sin'. Well, says John, if you say that you're self deceived and the truth just isn't in you. I suppose someone could retort and say who would actually go around saying we have no sin? Well, I think when you contrast that verse with verse 10 which says, 'if we say that we have not sinned', John obviously has two different types of people in mind. So, going back to verse 8, who would be the sort of person that might say, 'We have no sin?' Well, I think it could well apply to those who talk about the inherent goodness in human nature and deny that the flesh is potentially sinfully inclined and prone. And you know the doctrine of the churches, the doctrine of substitution, the doctrine of the atonement, as they understand it, is based on that principle.

Brethren and sisters, unfortunately at times in the brotherhood we've had people who only go half way to substitution. Frankly, they're dishonest, they should take it the whole way. And they go for the doctrine of clean flesh; and, the doctrine of clean flesh is based upon the principle that human nature is essentially good. Put it in a good environment and it will be all right. And I've heard that from the mouth of a person who preaches that doctrine (That person is essentially saying that we have no sin.), 'Ah! that person wouldn't say he hadn't sinned, but he'd say: you people talk too much about the sinfulness of human nature, why don't you talk about the goodness of human nature.'

And I can recall many years ago saying to the brother, 'That's a very dangerous statement.' He said, 'Well, well,' and as he backed away, because he had to go, I think, he said, 'I've written an article and you'll see it published in the magazine in the near future, and see what you think about it there.' I didn't get that magazine but I did go and get it and when I read the article he hadn't said quite as much as what he meant to say, and therefore the editor had put it in and probably people didn't see the point of what he was getting at. But he was saying 'human nature is not sin prone, it's in fact inherently good and you've only got to put it in a good environment and it'll be good.'

And you know, there are people who will tell us there will be no revolt at the end of the millennium, because if Jesus Christ has been reigning for 1000 years, then how could there be a revolt? because the environment will be just so good, there couldn't be a revolt. In other words, they say, 'put flesh in a good environment and it'll be good'. That's not true either, is it? It'll help, but we've got to realize that we have a sin prone nature and when we are baptized, apart from anything else, aren't we declaring that to God?

Some may say that baptism is merely for the forgiveness of sins. Why was the Lord Jesus Christ baptized? He said, 'Thus it becometh us, to fulfil all righteousness.' And that, as much as we know that he had not sinned, as the representative man, of course, he recognized that as a descendent of Adam, God had said, 'all in Adam must die'. And of course, baptism figuratively represents that death, and Jesus Christ was declaring the righteousness of God when he says, 'as a representative man I acknowledge that God is right in declaring that we are all going to die, because we're mortal, and furthermore he recognized that he had the same propensities to sin as everybody else. But we won't get into that aspect of the subject. Human nature, therefore, is prone to sin. So, if we think we're going to solve our problems by just drawing on the goodness that's inherent there, we're not going to find any. The only goodness that's there is what comes from without, from God's word. So that's self-deception.

Verse 10, 'If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us'. Now this seems to be talking, doesn't it, about the actual practicing of sin? In the first century, you had two different groups of people, by which I mean, in the Jewish community, who had the Pharisees and Sadducees; in the Gentile world you had the Stoics and the Epicureans. The Sadducee said 'enjoy'. The Sadducee was what they called 'Hellenistic', they followed the Greek culture. The Pharisee of course said 'abstain; touch not, taste not, handle not. In the Gentile world the Stoic said,'abstain'; the Epicurean said 'enjoy'.

So, I think, in taking this in the broader sense of the term, in John's days there would have been people like the Epicurean who said, 'Well, God gave us this flesh, indulge in that flesh, you're doing the right thing; eat, drink and be merry', in other words, the flesh is inherently good.

On the other hand, the Stoic said, 'No, deprive the flesh and it'll be good'. Well, depriving the flesh doesn't of itself make us good either, it can help, ah! yes, we're saying that we've got to control it but the fact that we have not touched, not tasted and not handled a certain thing, does not of itself make us righteous. That gets back to what we've been saying earlier, we don't conquer sin by will power. Will power can help create an environment which can be helpful, but it does not of itself conquer sin. If we do overcome something by will power, then what have we done? We've actually elevated the flesh, we've actually said,'I've done it at last, I've got over that problem'. No! it's God working in us, and so if we ever get to the stage of saying, 'we have not sinned by will power, by a judoistic or stoical approach, then of course, we are making God a liar, because God says, 'ALL HAVE SINNED and come short of the glory of God'.

So what's the answer? How can we experience the fullness of joy in fellowship? Whilst we would desire to walk in the light at all times, we know we sin. What do we do? Well, it's there in verse 9, and on the basis of what has been said in times past, we don't have to say much about this verse, although the verse deserves to have a lot said about it. Verse 9, 'if we confess our sins'. There it is, confession of sin, is

tantamount to declaring the righteousness of God. We all know that Psalm 51, David's prayer, said, 'Thou only art righteous'. He declared the righteousness of God, 'Thou only art the just One'; I'm confessing my sin, to declare God's righteousness'.

Paul picks it up in Romans 3 and quotes it. Then David writes Psalm 32 to point out that confession of sin is tantamount to declaring the righteousness of God, and Paul picks it up in Romans 4. So when we understand God manifestation and when we come to God in prayer and say 'I am wrong', God knows that we're saying 'You are right'. And if that sounds too simple, I'm sorry brethren and sisters, we can't make it any more profound or complicated, because that's what it's all about. That's what it's all about, providing we understand the base we're coming from, God manifestation, as seen here beautifully epitomized in this chapter.

We are trying to walk in the light. We know we are sin prone. Yes, we try to create an environment by will power in which things will be better, but we know we can't overcome sin by will power and by the will of the flesh. When we come to God and say, 'I am wrong', God knows that we are saying, 'You are right'. In Bible language, we're declaring the righteousness of God, so confession of sin is tantamount to declaring the righteousness of God.

You know, it may have been, that for years we've come to God and we've prayed to God to forgive us our sins, is that wrong? It's not wrong if we are coming at it from the angle of God manifestation, but if we're not coming at it from the angle of God manifestation, then forgiveness of sins might well only be a fleshly desire - I don't want to die. You go out and ask the people wandering around outside there, who aren't the Christadelphians, if they want to die? Probably the majority of them will say 'no'. Perhaps some today do want to, but the majority of people say, 'I don't want to'. So, if we say 'I want to be forgiven so I can be in the kingdom', is that necessarily a spiritual virtue? Notice I say 'necessarily'. Nothing wrong with asking God to forgive us our sins, providing we are doing it on basis that we are declaring His righteousness and we're confessing our sins. So, verse 9, 'If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just (or righteous), He'll forgive us our sins; He will cleanse us from all unrighteousness'.

We're going to conclude there, we haven't finished the subject; it's really finished, God willing, in tomorrow's talk. But let's just take two quotes from John, which will serve as a conclusion, but as a bridge to tomorrow. 1 John 3:23 and 24, 'And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the spirit which he hath given us'.

And what's that spirit? It is the spirit of the Word, and the spirit of the word is the spirit of God Manifestation. And what does that do for us? It draws us close to God.

Chapter 4:16, 'And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love

made (complete), that we may have (confidence, openness) in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world'.

If we have opened ourselves now before God, confessing our sins, declaring His righteousness, then when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, we can do no more, and God asks no more. Baptism, Peter says, 'not merely the washing away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God', because, 'there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear; because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us'.

So, brethren and sisters, that brings us to the end of our talk, 'Beloved, Now Are We The Children Of God'. We've considered the family of God, our, 'OUR' godly character, as it's seen manifested in our fellowship with God, with the Son, and with each other. But what is it that's really going to bind us together? The practical outworking, the greatest of all virtues is love. And so, God willing, tomorrow, we will conclude with the theme, 'The measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, our need for the edifying of the body in love, the greatest work that we can do for God.'