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SILVER STAR BIBLE SCHOOL 1993

GOD MANIFESTATION - PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Speaker: Bro. John Knowles

Welcome Meeting Address

Reading: 1 Timothy 3:1-16

Good evening brethren and sisters and our dear young ones.

Brother Skip (Bartholomew), I think, has introduced the subject admirably. There is absolutely no doubt whatsoever that the subject that we are going to join together and consider this week, both in the adults and at a certain level with the teenagers, is in fact, the greatest subject in the Bible. There's no doubt about that. In fact, it's even underestimating it. It's not sufficient to say it's the most important theme of the Bible, it IS THE THEME OF THE BIBLE. It is the whole theme of the Bible, because without an understanding and an appreciation of the subject of God manifestation, all other Bible knowledge, is really meaningless.

One is almost tempted at this stage to be a little bit historical, in the sense, that many of us here, would be able to think of a time in our life, when probably there was a major turning point. A major turning point when we came to realize that we are not the most important people in the world, GOD IS. And as far as our young ones are concerned, that's what God manifestation is all about.

You know, it's very true, isn't it, that the Bible says, 'he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved'. But it's also very true, as has often been said, 'that if we were baptized merely that we might be saved, then there's every possibility that we might never be saved'.

Let me explain briefly what I mean by that, in case some of our young ones are getting a little worried. What we are saying is that, the desire to be saved from death is not necessarily a spiritual characteristic. It's just a natural characteristic that people don't want to die. Therefore, to say that I want to live for ever, is not necessarily the result of spiritual thinking, it might just be a reaction of the flesh. And, therefore, I'm sure there's many of us who can look back on our lives, and say, 'when I was baptized I didn't really, fully appreciate that it's not me that's the centre of God's purpose, it is GOD.'

And it's only through God's grace that we have been called to be part of this wonderful family. And really, brethren and sisters and young people, and we will hope that

tonight's address, in a large measure, will get down to some of the very youngest here, God manifestation in all its simplicity is telling us that God is a Father. The Lord Jesus Christ taught us to pray, 'Our Father which is in Heaven', and that our Father which is in heaven is developing a family, and that family one day will see its completion, when the words of the prayer of the great apostle Paul will be fulfilled, that he says, 'I bow my knee before the Father, of whom the whole family in heaven and in earth, is named'.

Now the family in heaven, of course, are the angels, the Elohim. We are part of the family on earth, and we are developing now as children in that family, a theme which will be developed during the studies this week, waiting for the time when we will be manifested as 'sons of God in power' to reign with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that's what God manifestation is really all about.

But you see, there's more to it in practical terms. And I'm sure that all of the three speakers this week will endeavour to make their talks as practical as possible, because God manifestation really means that everything we do in life is going to be made on the basis of a decision, that we have endeavoured to see things through God's eyes.

I mean, we can take any object, we can take the head of that overhead projector, and I'm looking at it from a particular viewpoint here, and I can see things on that head that you can't see. I can see a mirror here set at 45 degrees; I can see a lense which is horizontal and supported by a bracket going across; you can't see that but we are both looking at the same object, aren't we?

And so, when we look at life, we can look at life from two points of view. When we're born we look at it purely through the eyes of flesh; I want, I need, I feel, I think, I desire, I, I, I, I, isn't it? That's the way it is. And whilst you wouldn't say that our babies are sinners in the strictest sense of the term, they are the most selfish little things that we've ever come across, because from the moment they are born: they say, 'I'm hungry', therefore they cry because they're hungry; they want to be changed, so they cry because they want to be changed; then, sometimes they cry just because they feel like crying, because they feel like crying. They are not the least bit interested in whether mother is able to help them at that time, whether father is asleep, or what it is.

Now I know that sounds almost facetious, it sounds amusing but, brethren and sisters and young people, when we stop to think about it, the root of all sin, is selfishness. And as we say, we're born into the world as people, as creatures who are self-centred. Now, of course, as we grow older we start to indulge more in things which suit us. And so it could well be, that if we continue to be, totally selfish people, then we do become sinners, because we say, 'I will do, what I want to do, when I want to do it, how I want to do it.' And of course, we know that the world today is made up of a lot of people who are selfish and, in God's eyes, they are sinners. What they've done is, they've looked at the subject of life, be it that overhead projector top, or whatever it is, through their eyes.

Now God manifestation means that we start to look at life through God's eyes. We say,

'Look, this life is not an end in itself, this life is a means to an end.' And the end is, that we want to be part of that great family that's going to fill this earth. What do we have to do to be part of that family? And what we have to do is to believe God and to honour Him, in thought, in word, and in deed. In other words, we serve God, not because there's a reward on the end of it, but because we love God. We think that the most wonderful thing in life is to see the fulfillment of His purpose in the earth, and that there is nothing we would want more, than to see the kingdom of God established, for GOD'S GLORY.

Now, that's not easy to do that, because we can come to a Bible School like this, and I've no doubt that by the end of the week, if all goes well, and it should go well, that we're all going to go away saying, 'from now on I'm going to look at life through God's eyes'. And we'll leave here, perhaps on Friday, God willing, and Saturday morning we'll wake up, and already our minds will have started to go back to the old way of thinking. That's our problem, and so it's only to the extent then that we're keeping taking in that word, that we're able to remind ourselves of God manifestation.

So, might we say then, brethren and sisters and young people, once again, that we study the Bible for one reason, and one reason only. It's not to learn facts; the facts are incidental. We study the Bible that we might come to 'know God; to think like God; and therefore, to the best of our ability, this side of the kingdom, to act like God would want us to act, to act like the way His Son the Lord Jesus Christ acted.' Now that's what God manifestation is all about. But, those of us who are a bit older know that it can also be a very profound subject and, therefore, we are going to endeavour at this school to deal with it in various levels. And of course, the adults will be considering terms which are found in books like the book of Revelation and passages like that. Possibly, many of you have realized already that the three themes, or, I suppose you'd call it, the three subjects, we've got three speakers anyway, and they're speaking on three aspects of the theme, that those three titles taken from Eureka vol.1, our title tonight is taken from page 87 of this particular edition, which is entitled 'The Mystery of Godliness Apocalypse in Symbol', which is picked up from our reading here in the 1 Timothy 3, and then immediately following that we've got three sections.

The first one is entitled Deity Before Manifestation in Flesh, and we notice here on the chart before us, that we've got here a progressive revelation of God's purpose to man. That right in the centre of that chart is The Word Made Flesh. And we all know, don't we, young ones know as well, that that's the Lord Jesus Christ? Now, before Jesus Christ was born, God revealed Himself in the Old Testament in various symbolic passages like: Daniel 10, that beautiful vision of the man of the One; Ezekiel chapter 1, the cherubim and so forth; certainly at the burning bush. And that was the way in which Deity manifested Himself in what Bro. Thomas styles, Deity Before Manifestation in Flesh. And our Bro. Colin (Hollamby) is going to deal with that in the first study on each occasion.

The second section in Eureka is entitled Deity Manifested in Flesh, and that then directs our attention to the Lord Jesus Christ as the first individual in which that manifestation

was revealed to perfection, and by extension, how Deity can manifest Himself in us today. And that will be the subject title for the second series of addresses, which I've been appointed to deliver.

And in the third, and the culminating and the greatest of all of the sections, is the one that our Bro. Graham (Harding) is going to take, and that is called Deity Manifested in Spirit.

I don't think there's very many addresses that I start in which I don't somewhere or other, end up referring to this quotation from bro. Thomas, but I really don't have to apologize tonight, because this is the subject for which it is absolutely the most appropriate. A quotation from the Herald of the Kingdom of 1858. And there, in the words of bro. Thomas, we have the statement that 'men were not ushered into being, for the purpose of being saved or lost. God manifestation not human salvation was the grand purpose of the eternal Spirit.'

Notice what he says there. He says 'that God manifestation NOT human salvation'. Some people at times want to qualify that and say, 'Can't we put down God manifestation and human salvation? Well, we could put down anything we like. I suppose we could put that down and it won't exactly be wrong, but in the context in which bro. Thomas was writing, it is quite correct. When God put man upon this earth in the first instance, human salvation wasn't an issue. I know man wasn't created immortal. We know that. But neither was he in the strict sense of the term, what we would call, mortal. He was not at that stage subject to death, therefore, salvation was not an issue in Genesis chapter 1 [or] in Genesis chapter 2, in the strictest sense of the term.

Now, don't misunderstand me. Man was not going to live for ever and ever. Salvation became an issue after man brought sin into the world, and so from the very beginning, it was always God's purpose that He was going to reveal Himself in a family. So bro. Thomas continues, 'the salvation of a multitude is incidental to the manifestation. It was not the end purposed. The eternal spirit intended to enthrone Himself on the earth and in so doing, to develop a divine family, from among men, everyone of whom shall be spirit because born of the spirit. And that this family shall be large enough to fill the earth when perfected, to the entire exclusion of flesh and blood.'

Now, brethren and sisters, young people, boys and girls, is there anything that we would want in life more than being part of that family?

Well, have you ever worried about this rather high sounding term, God manifestation, The Mystery of Godliness Apocalypsed in Symbol, and all sorts of terms like that? Don't worry about it at all. All that it is saying is that God has revealed Himself to us in the Bible. But He has revealed Himself to us at various depths, and as I've said before, in our studies this week we going to study it at various depths.

Now for the next few minutes, I want to direct my remarks, I guess, to the top level. So

the boys and girls, listen carefully, you may find some of these things have some big words in them, but don't let that worry you, because I'm going to quote from Eureka. This particular section, entitled 'The Mystery of Godliness Apocalysped in Symbol', found [on] pages 87 to 89, introduced to us some terms, which I think we need to come to grips with. Now, tonight's talk is not intended to be a study, it's not intended to be a long one. I'm going to try to keep it short because many of you have travelled a long way, but in a sense, tonight's talk is the hardest, because the talks actually get easier and easier as the week goes on. And I haven't hear bro. Colin or bro. Graham speak on this yet. Perhaps they've never spoken on exactly these titles before. I haven't, but I know this, that it's going to get easier because we get use to the terms. So if tonight sounds hard, it's only because, maybe, there's some new terms there.

Now, listen to what bro. Thomas has to say, I'm quoting from page 87, 'The Apocalypse being a revelation of the mystery hidden in the prophetic writings, it is to be presumed that it would certainly not omit to exhibit that cardinal element thereof, styled by Paul 'the mystery of godliness', which he says is 'great'.

We find it, therefore, introduced to the attention of the reader in such terms and phrases as God' (that's not difficult), 'Jesus Christ' (that's not difficult), 'He who is, and who was, and who is coming' (now that one's not so easy). Another term is, 'the Father of Jesus Christ, the Seven Spirits which is before his throne, (And someone says, that's ungrammatical. That's correct, but we'll deal with that in due course), the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and ending, the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is coming, the Almighty, I am the First and the Last, and the living one, and was dead, and behold I am living for the Aions of the Aions.'

Perhaps the boys and girls can say, yes, that is a little bit hard to understand, but God has deliberately, quite deliberately chosen expressions like this, and they are taken principally from the last book of the Bible, because in the last book of the Bible God manifestation is concealed in symbol. And in reading this section you appreciate we're reading from a book which was designed to explain to us about the book of Revelation. But during the course of the week, we're going to come to realize why it is that God hasn't always put it in plain simple language. Why has He at times concealed it in terms which we might say, 'Ah! that's rather difficult to understand'. You might say, 'That's ok, I can understand that that was speaking about God'.

He goes on to say, 'There is One who speaks of himself in them as "I" and he saith of this "I" that he was 'the First', 'the Alpha', 'the Beginning', 'the Lord the Almighty'. And we say 'Alright, there's no difficulty with that.' But says bro. Thomas, 'when we come to read the Apocalypse, we find the same terms applied to the one who saith, 'I am the First who was dead.'

Now you see, if we were to put up on the screen, just so I don't walk so far over there to point to it, a representation of that same chart, we have no difficulty in saying, 'Well, if this represents the beginning over here, and this is what we might call God or Deity, and we have no difficulty in saying, yes, this is the One that says, 'I am the First, I'm the

Almighty,' but how could he say, 'I was dead'? He never died, but the One in whom He manifested Himself in flesh did die. I don't think we'll go to much further on that this evening, because we will start to perhaps get too deep too soon. But the subject of God manifestation really means that in the beginning was God, God was 2000 years ago manifested in the flesh of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God does desire to be manifest in the flesh of us today, and He will be manifested, if we continue that chart through, in spirit beings in the kingdom to come. But, IT'S ALL GOD. That's what God manifestation is all about.

I'd like to read something which I hope will make it sound a bit simpler. I'm going to read from Phanerosis, and I can almost sense some brethren and sisters saying, 'uhm! going to Phanerosis to make it simpler'. Well, yes, I think so. Bro. Thomas says on page 34 of this particular edition, and I think the page numbers are different in different editions, but this is the 1949 one, and then there was one which came out in 1969 in which the page numbers are a bit different, so it's on page 34 of this edition, and he says, 'The Deity delights in stimulating the intellect of His creatures.'

God delights in stimulating our intellect. You see, if every day we came together, we just read over and over again the simple expressions of the truth, human beings as we are, we would start to get tired of it, so we need stimulation. And of course, the longer we're in the truth, so in a sense, the stimulation needs to be deeper, and God delights in stimulating our intellect. 'In revealing Himself therefore, to them, He manifests Himself mysteriously.'

Now the word 'mysteriously' there isn't used in the sense that the world might use mystery today. As well, you know how they use the word 'mystery'; He means in a 'secret'. He has couched certain things in symbols and in language that we really have to study to understand, but when we study it, we come to learn more about God and God has done it deliberately. So wherever we find a section of the Bible difficult, don't in a sense, accuse God of giving us something that we can't understand, but rather, tackle it positively, and say, 'Now, this must be a wonderful principle because it's really stimulating my intellect, I'm having a lot of difficulty understanding it, therefore, once I have understood it, there must be a wonderful lesson on the end of it.' And that's right. And there was no way that Skip (Bartholomew) was overstating when he said tonight that this in fact is the subject of the Bible. It's the one he enjoys most. I'm sure it's the one that all of us enjoy most, because it doesn't just stimulate the intellect, it brings us close to God. 'This is life eternal, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.' And that's why it's across the top of that chart, because we come to know God.

I'd like to read though a couple of other extracts from Phanerosis because I think this helps us to understand how we are going to tackle this in a practical sense this week. Bro. Thomas says, 'This intellectual comprehension of the true God is renewing, and capable of developing the likeness of His moral or spiritual image, in the illuminated.'

I think most of us would have grasped that. Boys and girls, what he's saying is that as

we come to have our minds stimulated, so we are able to develop a character like God. That's what he's saying. So he's saying, He's stimulating our minds, not just so that we might learn more facts, but so that we might come to know Him the better. So he says this intellectual comprehension of the true God is renewing and capable of developing the likeness of His moral or spiritual image in the one who is illuminated. He says concerning these people, 'they have put off the old man with his deeds and put on the new, made new again, by the exact knowledge, after the image of Him creating him.'

Here then are two characters, two characters or what he styles moral natures, in relation to one and the same animal man. Now I'm going to put a chart up in just a moment which I hope will explain this. In fact, it does I'm sure, explain it very well and very simply. But this is something, brethren and sisters, that I'm not sure that all of us have really come to grips with, and yet it is very simple. Listen to what bro. Thomas says, he goes on to talk about the fact that there are two moral natures that stand related to this 'one Man.' He says concerning this one man, 'the old man of sin's flesh cannot be converted. His destiny is destruction. For this purpose was the Son of God manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil, or the works of the flesh, which are the same things.'

Now what he says is this, if the old man cannot be converted, 'AB' may. Now what's this 'AB'? Well, here's what bro. Thomas is endeavouring to tell us here: the individual is called 'AB', and I've never yet found anybody who can tell me what 'AB' means, I think it is just 'AB'. Some say it means 'a brother' or 'anybody' or say the other one which we often use in ecclesial life, about AB's. But, 'AB' stands for the individual.

Now when the individual is born into this world, he is born into this situation. He's born with a form of thinking which the Bible calls the 'old man'. Now this 'old man' is just the ordinary human nature which says, 'look after yourself', 'serve yourself'. It might even be the nature that says, 'I want to be saved'. It might be; it could be the old man that says, 'I want salvation'. That's what we have to be very careful about.

The Bible talks about being 'in Adam' but you see, this 'AB' stands related to another man called the 'new man'. Now this is what bro. Thomas is saying, he says, you can't convert the old man and make it a new man. Follow what he's saying? You can't convert the old man. He's got to be destroyed. AB can be converted, but the old man can't.

You see, the old man is the 'thinking of the flesh' and there are many people who believe that they are following religion today and all they're doing is taking the thinking of the flesh and they are dressing it up with an external appearance of being very pious and very godly and maybe very kind and philanthropic or something like that, but it's the old man just disguised. Some of us say 'look, if only I could conquer sin; if only I could do this; if only I could do that; and what we do is we end up spending a lot of our time trying to convert the old man.

God manifestation you see, is all about putting on the new man. You know, in

Ephesians it says, 'there is a putting off and a putting on'. We must put off the old man and we must put on the new man. Here is the way, and bro. Carter makes the comment, he says, 'it's not so much a 'putting off' and a 'putting on', but it's a putting off by a putting on'.

So you see, God manifestation is all about the positive things of the truth, which when developed and when seen through God's eyes, will of themselves, commence the destruction of the old man. So that's what bro. Thomas says, he says, 'if the old man cannot be converted, AB may be converted. Our friend AB may 'be taught of God', not by direct spirit-affiliation according to the old man's theology, but by the direct operation of the heavenly ideas upon his brain-flesh.' Here, then, are two men, each of whom set up rival claims to AB; the old man of sin's flesh, or the Devil, and the new man, the spirit or the likeness of the image of God'.

Now, I really think we've said enough for tonight, but that's setting the basis of what we want to talk about this week. We want to see the old man destroyed. We're 'in Adam', we want to be 'in Christ'. When we're baptized there is a sense, of course, in which we are constitutionally in Christ. The old man has the thinking of the flesh; the new man the thinking of the spirit. The old man - 'blind feelings govern thoughts'; the new man - 'godly thoughts control feelings. See the difference? The old man is a sinner; the new man is a saint, and we're using that in what we might call 'constitutional terms' in the first sense; but we also desire to see it in a 'moral sense' as well. The old man is in darkness; the new man in light. The old man is dead; the new man is alive. The old man is living in fear. FEAR! Fear of what? Fear of everything. Fear of God, and I use the word 'fear' there in the sense of being 'afraid', not the sense of reverential fear. Afraid of the judgment seat; that's the old man. It's like Paul says in Romans chapter 8, 'we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear', because that's what the law did, it made them afraid. Because the law, although it was holy, just and good, concentrated very much on the flesh. It kept saying, 'you're a sinner, you're a sinner, you're a sinner.' And if a person living under the law was unable to see outside of that law, he found himself very much living in a state of fear and bondage, but the new man lives in confidence, not self-confidence but a confidence in God.

Can we then conclude with two quotations. The first I'd like to take from Malachi chapter 3, because one of the fundamental principles of 'The Mystery of Godliness as concealed in the Scripture' is that God has declared this in His Name. That's the basis of that chart and I think will be a large part of bro. Colin's opening remarks and by extension also, the opening remarks of my studies as well. And, therefore, when we read Malachi chapter 3 :16 we see how important it is to understand the principles of God's Name and how God manifestation is embodied in it. Malachi 3:16, 'Then they that feared Yahweh' (and of course, that's not the afraid part, it's that reverential, honouring, respect of Him) 'then they that feared Yahweh spake often one to another; and Yahweh hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared Yahweh, and that thought upon His name.'

And doubtless that chart, with the name appearing so prominently on it, is going to form



a fundamental base of much of the studies. We're going to think about that Name and how God has revealed Himself in it. 'And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.' Yes, we're going to be part of that divine family. And what does it mean that we are going to be His sons?

Well, let's turn to our second and final quote, and that's the one in Romans chapter 8, which shows to us what is the great climax of our hope and the climax of God's purpose with the earth. Romans chapter 8, and picking it up from verse 18, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the [creation] waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the (creation) was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by Him who hath subjected it' (and that's bro. Thomas's translation of those words) 'in hope that even the creation itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.'

And so we're going to consider, God willing, this week, how even now, we have become children in that divine family, but we are waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, in power and glory. Our glory? Yes, in a sense, but principally and fundamentally to the glory of God; and surely then, it's going to be our desire, that when we leave this school, the very simple but very profound words of the apostle Paul will be very meaningful to us, 'let us do all to the glory of God'.