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SILVER STAR BIBLE SCHOOL 1994

NO MAN EVER SPAKE LIKE THIS MAN

Speaker: Bro. Colin Hollamby

Study #2

Confounding the Jews; Christ's Discourse with Nicodemus

Reading: John 3:1-13

Brother Chairman and Our Dear Brethren and Sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's true to say that the more faithfully we describe the enemy, the more likely we are in being successful in overcoming him. And it has a very great bearing, brethren and sisters, on the subject which we were talking about yesterday morning, and which we would just like to conclude in the first few moments of our class this morning.

Sometimes, we do not hear very well, and the reason for that is, that all of us are very likely to be able to agree with the Bible, when the Bible agrees with us. We're all like that brethren and sisters, and we've got to open our ears. We've got to, as our Bro. Dev has been labouring, we've got to listen well, because there are people who have ears, but they do not hear; and we can have eyes and we may not perceive; and we have all hearts, but we may not understand. Brethren and sisters, it is very easy to learn that God is One and not Three. It is very easy to know that the devil is us, in a very glib way, and not a personal, immortal being. It is very easy to consent to the idea, that the kingdom of God will be on the earth, and it won't be at least in heaven, or that there is such a thing as eternal fire in hell. Those things are all very easy to accept, but to understand what they mean is another dimension altogether.

It is very possible that we know the truth, but the truth may not have hold of us. It can very easily be seen to be a clinical thing, a very academic thing; the truth is not an academic thing, it is a live and vibrant power. It is the power of God unto salvation, to them that believe. And there are a lot of things, brethren and sisters, that we can know, that we do not believe! And the whole burden of the gospel of John, the whole burden of the Deity, ever since He formed man on the earth, was to get men and women to believe. And to believe, to get us to believe, brethren and sisters, takes far more effort than to create an universe.

The universe has been in existence for a long, long time, it's so far taken the Deity 6,000 years to get enough people to fill it with His glory. And He hasn't done it yet, and it's telling us that the greatest expenditure of effort that the Deity ever makes, is to move a man's mind, and the scriptures are the only power that can do that. It is the Bible

received into a honest and good heart, that makes the difference.

I want to quote the words of a brother, who we probably all have known or heard of, Bro. H.P. Mansfield, and he said this to me one day, and I have to tell you, brethren and sisters, I was very careful how I heard, because I didn't believe what he said. He said this, 'You will find that when you visit different ecclesias, and it was just before I came on a visit overseas, he says, you will find that it doesn't matter whether an ecclesia says it agrees with the B.A.S.F. or not. It will be a matter of the policies that they adopt on the basis of firm, blooded consent to that statement of faith'. And I've used that as a measuring stick in my journeys to different ecclesias; very apprehensively because I didn't believe it, but I came to find, brethren and sisters, that he's absolutely right. He's absolutely right, and it's only a matter of how we understand those doctrines and how they ought to work in our lives, that will make the difference between life and death.

Now, Bro. Dev has been saying this morning, how that there are people in our movement, who are bent on destroying it, that may not be their intention. We're not to judge their intentions; it may not be their intention, but the serpent didn't design to deceive either, but he did! And look at the results. Terrible results, because he deceived. It wasn't his intent; he just simply deceived because that's really all he could do. But, not with malicious intent, and so, brethren and sisters, we have got to be able to hear well, and above that, we must understand, and hearing is an exercise. When we stretch forward in our seats, brethren and sisters, to listen to a brother as to what he has to say, straightaway, our heartbeat increases and our blood temperature rises. It's an activity. We can hear all sorts of things, even outside of this auditorium we may be able to hear things, but we're not listening to them, and it's only when we engage in listening, the activity of listening, that we will be able to come to understand. And that's our objective; it is to understand, because this is life eternal to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.

Now, brethren and sisters, you will all have realized that yesterday morning, as we developed the ideas and the principles that are contained in that vital incident of the Lord's temptation in the wilderness, that we were presenting the fact, that somebody was there, to cause those thoughts to come into the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a vital truth! and it's a vital truth because we are defending His divinity. And His divinity means that He was a total reflection of His Father. And we would just like, for a moment, to concentrate on the principles that are governing His behaviour, while He was being severely put to test in the wilderness, because the real issue of that whole procedure, brethren and sisters, IS, DID HE SIN OR DID HE NOT? And can we really come to a definition of sin, that will help us understand, how and why that man, did what He did, during that wilderness temptation?

It is said to Him in the second temptation, 'that if He simply bowed to whoever or whatever was making the offer, if He simply bowed to them, then they would be able to give Him all the kingdoms of this world'. And what are the kingdoms of that world? Well, if we take out a book, called The Last Days of Judah's Commonwealth, and we read it, and we understand it, and we understand the basis of the reasons why Bro.

Thomas says what he says, we will find that the world of those days, began in the days of Moses and concluded in the days of A.D.70, when the Jewish world was completely broken up; when its heavens were rolled together as a scroll, and the elements that were on earth were burnt with fire. And our Bro. Dev has told us about that this morning, in his right exposition of the seed that suddenly grew among the wheat. They were burned with unquenchable fire in the city of Jerusalem, as it was destroyed by divine decree. That world, brethren and sisters, was the Jewish world, and to understand further elements of that temptation, and to understand the issues that are going to come forward to our attention, when the visitation of Nicodemus occurred, we must really understand the background upon which Jesus lived. Because, many of the things that He said, can really only apply, and to a far greater extent apply, to the days in which He lived.

We've got a great furore of expectancy throughout the whole nation. They all knew the prophecy of Daniel chapter 9, that Messiah was coming, and they knew about the time when that prophecy was given, and they knew therefore, that 490 years after the prophecy was given, Messiah would be on the earth, and there was a tremendous expectancy throughout all of Israel that they would all accept Messiah when He came.

And if we turn to the 21st chapter of Matthew, we will find that this is true. In the 21st chapter of Matthew and beginning at verse 33, the Lord is giving a parable. It's a parable about a certain householder and he planted a vineyard and hedged it round about, and let it out to husbandmen.' And we know what happened to the various servants as they were sent forth by the householder, so that he might receive of the fruits of the vineyard. And finally, in verse 37 it says, 'that last of all, he sent unto them, his Son, saying, They will reverence My Son'. Now, did they reverence His Son? They didn't; but, brethren and sisters, that's what the Father wanted. And, brethren and sisters, that's what all the Jewish people wanted. They all wanted to reverence the Son; every mother's son of them wanted that, but, as Bro. Dev as quite clearly shown, they wanted it, so that they might be together with Him, in establishing the power of Israel, as a political kingdom on the earth again, and to get rid of their Roman overlords. And when we understand the gospels of our Lord Jesus Christ, the parables, the discourses, His messages, His actions, on the basis of that, brethren and sisters, things will leap into light. Things will mean something; we will understand why He said what He said. We will come to grips with the issues that were facing him, that were quite different from those that sometime face us, and yet the principles are no different. There's no new thing under the sun! And so when we understand, brethren and sisters, that He is working on the backdrop of the fallacious idea that He was coming to immediately set up the kingdom, then we will begin to understand a lot of the things that He said, far more clearly, than we ever have. And we'd like to commend to you again, the little booklet called 'The Last Days of Judah's Commonwealth' by Bro. Thomas. It is an excellent work. It is a very perceptive work, because it looks at the Jewish commonwealth, at it's establishment in the days of Moses and it's dissolution in the days of A.D.70, and they were the things that immediately concerned the people of those days.

So, that when the Lord was promised 'all the kingdoms of this world', He was promised rulership of the 12 tribes of Israel. And, what the person, who was making that offer was saying was, 'I just wish you would collaborate with me'. I just wish that you could see that I am the divinely appointed adjudicator, the divinely appointed chairman of the kingdoms of this world. Why don't you cooperate with us? Why don't we join forces together and get rid of the Romans? and if you do that, I'll relinquish my position. You can have it!' And further, brethren and sisters, when we consider that third temptation to which He was subjected, the diabolos because they were making no inroads, into the stance that the Lord made, they began to quote the scriptures, to put Him to the test.

And they quoted Psalm 91 and verse 11 and 12, and they put those verses into a context which is quite outside the legitimate understanding of it, and we'll turn to Psalm 91, because these are the words that the diabolos quoted to the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby they were going to put His credentials to the test. In Psalm 91 and at verse 11, the verses that were quoted to Him in the wilderness, 'For he shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.' And what did diabolos make out of that verse? They said, 'Let's imagine that we are at the pinnacle of the temple. We are that great high wing that stretches out over to the edge of the valley of the son of Hinnom. Now, throw yourself down from there, and if you come up unscathed, we will know that you are the Son of God. And they quoted these verses and said, 'There is your guarantee of safety', if you are the Son of God? These verses, brethren and sisters, are not talking about any deliberately foolish action. But, the diabolos was tempting the Lord with a 'deliberately foolish action', and these verses are clearly saying that 'if you dash your foot against a stone, if you are accidentally injured, then the angels shall bear thee up', and it's taken those verses and it's given to them a meaning that has never been intended by God to have been given. The diabolos in Matthew chapter 4, deliberately twisted the scripture. And the apostle Paul says to Timothy that those who are unstable, and unlearned, 'wrest the scriptures to their own destruction.'

Now, brethren and sisters, we want to look at something else, before we conclude this matter. If we turn to the 8th chapter of Romans, we learn another principle, we learn another teaching which has a very great bearing, on the wonder of the mind of our Lord, as He is put through these very severe and torturing tests. Remember, how would we feel, brethren and sisters, if the training that was offered in a company, was the same for the chief executive officer as it was for the janitor? Here is the training for the chief executive officer; and the training for the chief executive officer demands that he never, ever, ever, makes a mistake. HE NEVER SINS! Now, what then is sin? Well, it's disobedience to the commandments of God, that's true, but, sin is a lot more than that. The Law of Moses condemned actions, but the Law of Christ condemns a lot more than that, and now as we look at Romans chapter 8 and verse 7 it says, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God:' Did Jesus have one? Did He have a carnal mind? Was He ever at enmity against God? The bible says, 'The carnal mind is at enmity against God'. But, that's not really a very good translation of the words that are there. It really does say according to the Greek language, 'that the thinking of the flesh is enmity against God'. Now, what Jesus received in common with all other mankind, as a result of His

descent from Adam, through Mary, was a diseased mind, and a diseased body. So, that they came to be impregnated in the mind, in the flesh, because our brain is flesh; there came to be impregnated in the mind of man after sin, those three lusts. None of which were removed, when Jesus was born. It's not wrong to have a carnal mind, but it is very wrong to let it think. IT IS VERY WRONG TO LET THE IMPULSES GO; that's why James says, 'Every man sins, when he is drawn away. He's defiled already; so Jesus never did allow those impulses to grow in His mind. It's not wrong to have that brain flesh; that brain flesh we are being told here, in verse 5 to 7, thinks. And the particular capacity that the Lord received as the Son of the ever living Deity, was a capacity of mind which far more readily receives the teaching that are divine, and understands them. He was made of quick understanding in the fear of Yahweh, and it was that tool, brethren and sisters, that enabled Him to be sinless; if He was just the son of a man and a woman, He'd be no different to us, and He would have done exactly the same things as us. The very vital link, in the success of our Lord Jesus Christ, overcoming completely diabolos, was His begetting of the Holy Spirit, under the hand of His Father, so that He might be the real Son of God and so that He might really be equipped to deal with diabolos, and to strike it a death blow in the head.

We'd like to illustrate this, brethren and sisters, by the reading that we took today, in Mark chapter 3, because in Mark chapter 3 there is a very powerful illumination, as to how we are to be involved, in the same kind of warfare that our Lord undertook. And in Mark chapter 3 and at verse 22 it says, 'That the scribes that came down from Jerusalem said, 'He's got Beelzebub', and by the prince of the devils, He casts out devils'; in other words they were saying that He is in collaboration with the prince of the devils, and since He's in collaboration with the prince of the devils, well, when they get together, they agree among themselves, that certain of the devils will be dispossessed and cast out. And Christ very wisely says, 'How can Satan cast out Satan?' How can there be a kingdom, that it divided against itself, but it has a design to stand. Any kingdom that is divided against itself, cannot stand'. So then, He says, 'well, if you want to enter into a strong man's house, and you want to bind his goods, well, you've got to find somebody stronger than the strong man'. And what He's saying now, brethren and sisters, in a real interpretation of that, is this, 'That up here, sitting on our shoulders, is a bastion of a strong man, and he's called the 'flesh'; he's called the 'thinking of the flesh'. He's called that flesh that thinks. And if you want to bind that strong man, it's no use going up there with something that is only as strong as the strong man. You've got to take somebody stronger! And He's telling us, brethren and sisters, that you cannot overcome the thinking of the flesh by will power. We cannot overcome the thinking of the flesh by will power, it has to be complete, and utter resignation to a stronger power. And that's what the Lord did! There was complete and utter resignation to a stronger power; and He said in every way of life, 'Not my will, but Thine be done'. He was conscious, brethren and sisters, that the passage that was marked out for him, was totally opposed to the things that may come out of His mind. But, they never got a foot hold, because the thinking of the flesh, is at enmity with God, and He was never at enmity with God. Those ideas, brethren and sisters, did not originate with Him. They originated with the serpent, and the serpent was constantly coming to Him, during His ministry, and saying, 'Let's do this together; let's do that

together; just give us a sign and we'll follow in it with you'. And they came to Him on numerous occasions, brethren and sisters, and as the record in Luke, quite rightly says, and we'll turn to Luke to close our considerations on this matter this morning.

In Luke chapter 4 and in verse 12, when the diabolos had misquoted the scripture to Him, and given Him, brethren and sisters, that very severe test, because He could have thrown Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, and He could have caught His ownself by the power that was under His control; Jesus answered and said unto him, 'It is said, thou shalt not attempt to draw over a line, Yahweh, thy Elohim'. There's no possibility of Me being engaged in that, because that is asking the Deity to do something that He's never guaranteed that He will do. That's tempting Yahweh; that's asking Him to do something that He has never guaranteed that He will do, and there are many things in life, brethren and sisters, that He has never guaranteed to do for us. He's never given us any more guaranties than to give us an opportunity to know the truth, and to have enough to live so that we might faithfully, prosecute the responsibilities that are laid on us. Nothing more has He guaranteed. We've all got more; but it's not a guaranty from Him, as to why we got it.

And so the next verse says, 'And when the diabolos had ended all the temptation, he departed from Him for a season'. For a season; to come back to Him, time and time and time and time again, brethren and sisters, to try to get Him to collaborate with them; so that together, they might own the kingdoms of this world and they might again, raise their head of political strength, and completely overthrow the Romans, who were at that time, their overlords. And so, when we understand that that's really what it's all about, brethren and sisters, we can look at many of the discourses of our Lord Jesus Christ, with a new understanding.

And when we come to the one that we are to consider for a few moments this morning, in John chapter 3, the meeting of our Lord with Nicodemus, we meet exactly that necessity, if we have not seen that that is the background upon which Nicodemus comes to the Lord Jesus Christ, we will be struggling to understand and fill in the gaps that are obviously there. Let's just read some of those verses down to verse 3, and read them very carefully and see if we can see, what Nicodemus is saying, and why the Lord would answer in the way in which He answers, 'Never man spake like this man', brethren and sisters. He was given the tongue of the learned, but, before looking at that, we want to show something out of the latter part of John chapter 2, because John chapter 2 is a very important connection with the early verses of John chapter 3.

In John chapter 2 and verse 23, it says, 'Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because He knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man'. And we generally take those verses, brethren and sisters, and we say, 'There you are, Jesus was like us, He understands us; because He knows what the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life is. That's not what that is saying! It's saying that in a sense, but in it's very real meaning, it can only be unraveled by having a look at one of

the words that the Lord Jesus Christ is using, or one of the words which is used of Him. When it says, that many believed in His name when they saw the miracles that He did; but Jesus did not 'pistis' Himself unto them. He didn't 'faith' Himself unto them; He didn't trust them; He didn't trust them, because He knew the level of their belief. And, brethren and sisters, just to put this in its right context, let's come over quickly to John chapter 6.

In John chapter 6 and at verse 26, after the miracle of the loaves and fishes, Jesus said to them, 'Verily, verily, ye seek me, not because you saw the miracles, but some believed because they saw the miracles, but these people here didn't even believe Him because of the miracles He did; they only believed Him or sought Him because their stomachs were filled. But, neither of those things are what the Lord wants; and so you can see, brethren and sisters, throughout the gospel records, we are looking at at least three levels of their acceptance of Him. Some of them accepted Him because their stomachs were filled; some of them said He was a wonderful miracle worker, we want to see more of this; others believed, and they were few and far between. And so when it says in John chapter 2 'that many believed in His name when they saw the miracles that He did', He knew the level of that belief. He knew that it was a very low level of acceptance of Him; so He won't trust Himself with them. He didn't align Himself with them. That's what our Bro. Dev has been showing, hasn't he, out of the parables? That there were just a few people who understood the parables; there were just those who were immediately around Him, to whom it was given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. But, to them, it's not given, because they weren't really listening. They didn't understand, they didn't use their hearts to perceive and to see and to understand, what the principles were that were governing this man's life and His discourses. But, while He didn't trust Himself with the crowd, He's giving Nicodemus a very private audition.

And that tells us something, brethren and sisters, that tells us that He knew what was in that man! And so, look at the way now, in which the Lord deals with this man. This man is coming to Jesus by night; we are not even going to try to look at the other two occasions, when Nicodemus appears in the gospel records. We know that there was development in that man, and finally, he was one of the two people, who really, it seems, publicly came to grips with the death and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. He became a very outstanding man in Israel, and when the apostles forsook him and fled, there were two men there; Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus. A wonderful testimony to the growth of this man. But, look at his attitude now!

'The same came to Jesus by night and said unto Him, 'Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God'; On what basis did they know that? 'Because no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him'. Now, brethren and sisters, you concentrate on that. Here's a man that comes to the Lord and he says, 'Rabbi, (teacher) we know that thou art a teacher come from God, because no man can do the miracles that thou doest, except God be with him'. Look at the answer, does that have any bearing at all to do with the introduction that Nicodemus makes to the Lord Jesus Christ? There's a tremendous leap in between verse 2 and verse 3, and the Lord is getting right to the very heart of the issue, because the issue is the kingdom of God.

And this man is obviously coming to the Lord and he's saying, 'You're a man of God; we know that by what you do. Who's this coming One that we're to expect? What's your program? When are we going to see fire called down from heaven to destroy the Romans? No!, that's not what you need to know Nicodemus about the kingdom of God. That's got nothing to do with Me. I'm all about the kingdom of God, but I want you to know Nicodemus, that the kingdom of God is completely excluded from anybody, except those who are born again. That's the qualifications you need to be in the kingdom of God.

Now, brethren and sisters, this man was an outstanding man. It is testified of him in verse 1, that he was a RULER OF THE JEWS, a ruler of the Jews. And the Greek word, is the Greek word 'archon'; it means the 'first, the 'principle'; he's not just any old leader of the Jews. Here's a man, brethren and sisters, who is a bright, illuminating light, in the Sanhedrin. He's not one of the tailenders; he is a leader of the Jews. He's the first, he's the 'archon', not the high priest, we know that, but underneath the high priest, it is almost certain this man would have wielded tremendous authority and respect in the Sanhedrin. And if we go over to John chapter 16, which I imagine our Bro. John (Ullman) is going to do, you find that that very term is used to describe the 'Prince of this World', and the apostle Paul says that the 'princes of this world knew nothing about the crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ, and if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory'.

He, is a man, brethren and sisters, who is a representative of the highest authority of the land, and he's coming to the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Lord Jesus Christ because He does know what's in that man, and He does know what that testimonial means, 'that we know that thou art a man come from God, because no man can do the miracles that thou doest, except God be with Him'. He's asking Him, are you the King? are you Messiah? are you the One who's going to take away the power of the Romans, and establish us? Because that's what we're waiting for! No, He says, 'you must be born again, because if you're not born again, you cannot see the kingdom of God'. And it's obvious, brethren and sisters, that the whole thrust of Nicodemus was, what's wrong now? What's the program that you are going to bring to bear? We want to see evidence that you are going to throw the Romans out, and you're not showing us any. We know you're a teacher come from God, and He's speaking obviously on behalf of the Sanhedrin; they couldn't deny that, and so, He begins to instruct him about the way in which a man will see, the only way in which a man will see, the kingdom of God.

Now, brethren and sisters, we are at a very serious disadvantage, aren't we, in trying to teach people about the kingdom of God, and the things concerning the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ? Here's a man who goes right over all the obstacles, and He gets right to the very centre of the issue. NO MAN SPAKE LIKE THAT MAN! He was given the tongue of the learned, and sometimes, brethren and sisters, we think that we know how to handle people. We don't know how to handle people; but this man knew how to handle people. He was given the tongue of the learned, so that He might be able to speak a word 'in season' to him that is weary. And He's a very, weary man. He's a leading light in Israel, but He's a very, weary man. He's the bruised reed; He's a bruised

reed that's going to be strengthened and stiffened and mollified by the ointment of the Word of God, poured in richly at the voice of this man, Who Was the Word Made Flesh. He's just a little bit of smoking flax that the wisdom of our Lord, is going to fan into life, and that's what He was all about! His fan was in His hand, and he was fanning those smoldering embers of the last dregs of spiritual life in mankind, in the last days of Judah's commonwealth, because they were the last days of Judah's commonwealth. He'd just come in time, brethren and sisters, to save the light going entirely out, and to bring a new light to them; a new vision, a new strength and a new power, that they might be band into the life that nobody knew about before this, because when He spoke to them and He talked about the blessedness of the people of God, it was anything but, like the Scribes and Pharisees. They were flabbergasted at His doctrine.

And so, what does He say? Look at the level of the mind of Nicodemus. And, brethren and sisters, we are not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think; we may have said the same as Nicodemus, but he is a man who believes in the unity of God. He is a man, brethren and sisters, who believed rightly that the kingdom of God would be restored to Israel. There's not many people who think like that anywhere in the world today. And we would perhaps look at this man and say, 'well, he believes the truth; he's got a spiritual mind; he did believe certain tenets of the truth. He believed a lot of them; and he knew the bible, probably better than anybody in this room. They knew every jot and tittle of the law, did these men; so skilled and so studious were they. And what's his answer? Nicodemus said, 'You mean to say to me, that a man who is old like me, has to enter again into his mother's womb and be born again? We might have a little chapel, brethren and sisters, but that's deadly serious. Fancy a mind so low as to say that! That is an extremely low mind, no wonder John called these people 'a generation of vipers'. They were just so low in their mind, and they're the leaders of Israel.

And so, the Lord says, 'well, I want you to know Nicodemus, truly, truly, do I want you to know, 'that except a man is born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God'. And, He's only made it worse. Here are words that are totally confusing this man. Now, we wouldn't ever thing to do that to an interested friend; we would never, ever, think to give them words that they would have to struggle to understand. But that's what the Lord did! His methods, brethren and sisters, are very different from our, but His methods work, and sometimes we don't give anybody credit for having any brains at all. And it's true that we have got to treat an interested friend as if they knew nothing about the bible, but, with a little bit of explanation, they will be able to understand things, a lot more than what we think sometimes, like our little children have. And here's a situation in case, where the Lord said, 'well, I want you to know Nicodemus, not only must you be born once again, you've got to be born twice again. You have to be born out of water and out of the spirit. And, here, now this man is confronted with three ideas; he's confronted with birth natural, he's confronted with birth out of water, and he's confronted with birth out of spirit. What a consternation this man was under! He didn't have the foggiest notion what the Lord was talking about, and yet the Lord is able to bring him around, because, brethren and sisters, the Lord Jesus Christ was wonderfully adept at making people think.

And one of our problems is this, that we hardly give one another the credit to be able to think. And we really do need, brethren and sisters, and we do need, because we are not given to thinking, we need it to be laid out on a platter, step by step by step by step, or else we don't understand. Look, at what the Lord did! Did He lay it out step by step? He went right to the centre of the issue, and He simply said some very confusing words. Now what do they mean? Well, before us, brethren and sisters, there are three kinds of birth. There's birth natural, there's birth of water, there's birth of spirit; and the Lord Jesus Christ is saying to Nicodemus, that the kingdom of God and participation in it, is the subject of the same kinds of phrases that are seen to be in natural birth. There's first of all a conception, even before that, if we may say that, if we want to split some hairs, even before that, there is begetting by the Father; and as the seed is received into the womb of the mother, a little germ begins to live; and then around about 4 months, the quickenning process begins. As every mother knows, as every person knows, who knows anything about childbirth, there are a number of stages along the way, that go to the production of the little baby. And around about 4 months the quickening process begins, and then there's movement in the womb. And it's been growing all that time, but there's been no outward sign of it, and suddenly there begins to be a different shape to the woman. Suddenly there's begins to be movement in the womb, and life is being created. It is evident that certain processes that are taking place that are becoming visible to the eye, but there are still a low of things that can happen along the way, as sadly some mothers experience. There may be a still birth; there may be a lot of things that happen, even to the mother along the way. So, the Lord Jesus Christ is saying to this man, 'It's just like that, Nicodemus, you're thinking about birth natural; that will help you to understand what I mean, but what I mean when I say a man must be 'born again', I mean that he must receive seed from God in heaven. He must be sown with the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, that it might germinate in an honest and good heart, and that it might gradually bring forth fruit; some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold, and that eventually, when it comes to a successful end, there having been people who have laboured and travailed in toil over the production of that seed and over it's gradual growth in life; there will be people like the apostle Paul says in Galatians 4, 'I've laboured and I've travailed over you until now, so that the seed that He had planted in the minds of those men, brethren and sisters, might grow and bring forth fruit to the glory of the Father, whose seed it was, and that, it might therefore, produce a seed, which is like its Father. And the Lord Jesus Christ is saying, 'that the phases, the phases which must be undergone, to qualify for entrance into the kingdom of God, is not just merely baptism, birth that is of water; it is birth out of spirit as well. And there are very real equivalents, in Old Testament scripture, brethren and sisters, when we know, that the children of Israel were baptized twice, before they got into the promised Land. They were baptized as a nation as they went through the Red Sea, and they became the body of Moses as they were baptized under the cloud, and in the sea. And then there were very many experiences of life which they must necessarily undergo, so that the seed which the Deity planned in them, might have an opportunity to germinate and to bring forth fruit. And in those people that it did not bring forth fruit, fell, in the wilderness. Their carcasses perished at the condemnation of the Deity, because they had produced no fruit. And a new generation went in, and

they were again washed in Jordan, as they crossed that river and became baptized of the spirit.

Typically speaking, they became participants in the Divine immortal nature. And that's what the Lord Jesus Christ is saying to Nicodemus here, He says, 'unless a man undertakes birth of water, and he is also the subject of a birth of the Spirit, in the day when the Lord comes to judge the quick and the dead at His appearing; he will not enter into the kingdom of God.'

And there's one little thing that we'd like to close on, in considering these words, and it comes out of Numbers chapter 19. Numbers chapter 19, brethren and sisters, is the forerunner upon which the Lord obviously basis these words. Numbers 19 is a very involved sacrifice which we call, 'the offering of the red heifer'. It was an offering which it is said was a purification for sin, when actually no sin had occurred. NO SIN HAD OCCURRED; there were two particular aspects of this offering, which are described for us at length in Numbers 19, but which we have not got time to look at now, but one of the specific cases under which this offering was made, was, if a man had buried one of his relatives. They became contacted, they became defiled by contact with death. Now, that was a matter of 'deliberate contact with death', but there was another case in which it was said, 'well, if you happen to live in a tent, and a man dies in the tent next to you, you, also, become defiled'. There's no sin in either of those things, but, they're both said to be 'a purification for sin'. So, it's telling us that there is an inseparable connection between 'sin' and 'death'. And the way in which men were cleansed from either of those particular cases, was that there should be ashes of the heifer gathered up, mixed with running water, and then they were to go to the priest and he was to, on the third day of their uncleanness, sprinkle them with the water of purification. And on the seventh day, they were to undergo the same sort of purification, ritually as expressed in this law.

And the record specifically says, that if they were not cleansed on the third day, then, it didn't matter how well they were purified on the seventh day, it would be of no avail. And it's telling us, that cleansing from contact with accidental death, which was entirely the case of our Lord Jesus Christ, or cleansing from deliberate contact with death, which is our case, because we sin and we deserve to die; the same process is the matter by which each person is cleansed. They must be cleansed on the third day, in the waters of baptism; they must be cleansed on the seventh day, by a change from mortality to immortality. And that's the way the Lord said to Nicodemus, a person will be in the kingdom of God. We're not worried about calling 'fire down from heaven'; we're not worried about getting rid of the yoke of the Romans; we want you to understand Nicodemus, that though you are a master in Israel, you haven't got the foggiest notion of heavenly things. And the Lord went on to further confound that man, by saying to him in verse 12, 'so far, I've only talked to you about earthly things. What's your reaction going to be, if I start to tell you of heavenly things?' And He told him of heavenly things in verse 13.

It would be nice, brethren and sisters, if we had the time to consider that, but we

haven't. And so, when we try to draw the threads together, we can see, that it is absolutely essential that we can see the background upon which these events occurred. We can begin to appreciate the mind of our Lord Jesus Christ; why He seems to make so many gaps, why He, with that spirit of wisdom and understanding that He was given from His God, that great capacity which He had, to take in the wisdom of the Deity, by which He was growing and growing and growing until He reached the age of 30 years, when it was finally put to the test, under the most trying of circumstances, and He came through, brethren and sisters, because the Deity really couldn't lose that battle. THE WORD MADE FLESH COULDN'T REALLY LOSE THAT BATTLE, because if He lost that battle, then God might just as well, have obliterated the earth, right there and then. But, ever since that time, ever since the day, brethren and sisters, when the diabolos was completely ejected from the mind of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it touched some very soft spots, it touched Him in the softest spot in which it could touch Him. It's no temptation to us, but, it was a bitter one to Him. **AND HE OVERCAME**, and ever since that time, there's really been no looking back. There was a vessel, that at 30 years of age, was so filled with the wisdom of the Deity, that not another wit of wisdom could be packed into a human body. And it was put to the test, and it came through the test with flying colours, because, **IT WAS THE WORD MADE FLESH**, and it was so filled with divine wisdom, that when they made a thrust against Him, it was parried with the Word of God. And we've got to follow that same example, brethren and sisters. We have to be so filled with wisdom that the thrusts of the enemy outside and within, because they do arise in us, very, very frequently, and when we do receive those thrusts, with the polished quiver of Yahweh's Word, might we repel every dart, that the wicked might throw upon us. And then we'll be able, we'll be fitted, brethren and sisters, to teach others also as the Lord went to teach others also; that we might come to grips with their difficulties, and that we might through the wisdom of the Word of God, may help in resolving them, and slowly but surely, with the tongue of the wise that giveth help, with the power of the tongue, in which there is life and strength; and it's like a golden and a silver thread; a golden and a silver treasure, brethren and sisters, might we have our tongues well equipped, to be able to convince the gainsayings of the adversary.