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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 14 March 1926

John 1 v 14

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and
we beheld His glory, the glory as of the
Only Begotten of the Father, full of
grace and truth

The doctrine of this text which we had, as some will remember, last Wednesday evening, is vital. Without it, in every part, every word, every syllable, we must be lost for ever. It therefore behoves us - may the Holy Ghost help us - to heed the word narrowly. Do not think that, because it is a well known passage, therefore it is not of infinite importance in itself and of everlasting importance to us. In itself it is glorious. It sets forth a Person, it tells us what that Person became. It tells us that some saw that Person in respect of what He became and also in respect of what He is in Himself. They saw His glory. Further, some saw that He was full of grace and truth. Now since, unless this be known to us, unless we have some gracious knowledge and experience of it, there is no hope for us for eternity; we cannot be godly in this world; we cannot die well and stand before God in the next world with joy, how vitally important it is, if God will be gracious to us, that we should know what this solemn passage means. May God give us grace to attend to it, enable me to speak words of soberness and truth respecting it, and enable you to receive those words. I have sometimes said to you, and I say it now again, if you have come to hear a sermon you will go away disappointed. I have not learned how to preach sermons. But if you have come hungry for God, wanting Him, then if He should help me to say things concerning Him that are right, will it not be your mercy to receive them.

The Person spoken of is the Word. The "Word" and the word "Son" used in the same chapter of the same Person signify the very Son of God. Not an emanation from God, but the very, the only begotten, the essential Son of God. This is the Person; from Genesis to Revelation this Person is set forth. In different measures of light He is spoken

of. The first word concerning Him was spoken by God immediately after the fall. "The Seed of the woman" Jesus, the very Son of God incarnate was promised at that time. The relationships in the Trinity are not voluntary, not official; they are essential as far as revelation is concerned. We learn thus that the Father expresses an essential relationship, that the Son expresses a filial and an essential relationship, that the Holy Ghost also is a Person in the Trinity and His Name is an essential Name, expressing the manner or mode of His subsistence in the Trinity. Now this doctrine is essential to us. If the Name of the Son is not essential, you destroy the other Names. You invade the Trinity, the integrity, that is to say the very existence of the Trinity, as such is in the Scripture set before us in and under these particular Names. There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, (the same as in this chapter) and the Holy Ghost and these three are one. Now my beloved friends, look at this, and let us examine ourselves as to whether or not we know this glorious God. Not know Him by comprehending Him, not know Him by assenting to Him in the strength and light of our own reason, We have no reason that can reach God, and our reason is under a double blindness. Inability, a great, a natural inability, to enter into the mystery of the divine Being, and a second inability, a worse, a sinful inability, to understand divine things especially this, first of all, the mystery of God. But if we have received it by faith, if we have had any sight by faith of this great and glorious Being we do believe in the Trinity. Every Christian is more or less intelligent, and I use the word I think rightly; a Trinitarian. Every true child of God believes in the Father, in the Son and in the Holy Ghost. Take the third Person for a moment, the Holy Ghost, with respect to His office in the Church. That office, as you know, everyone, every child as it were, in the church knows from the Scripture, that office is to glorify Christ. This He does, according to the promise, by taking of Christ's things and showing them to them. The disciples are thus to know Jesus Christ. And can they know Jesus Christ without knowing the Father? No! "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also". So there, in the blessed work of the Trinity, the blessed, saving operation of the Spirit in the heart, you have the knowledge of the Trinity, for the Spirit is known by His dwelling in the saints and by His operations.

Now in the two important chapters which I read this morning (I read the 4 chapter last Wednesday and it will bear reading again and again and again) we have set before us several important matters. One is this, the spirit of antichrist. That spirit is a denial of the incarnation of the Son of God. "Hereby we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error". May the Lord set us well down in this truth, the spirit of truth is the Spirit that testifies and makes known Jesus Christ. The spirit of error is the spirit that denies the incarnation of the Son of God. Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is born of God, is of God. That faith is regulated by love. Not a general faith, but a faith that is accompanied and regulated by love. Love to God and love to the Saviour and love to the saved as they are made manifest. O it is a great thing to believe in Jesus Christ, a great thing to believe that He is the very Son of God; that you go to Him as a divine Person incarnate; that you go to Him as to that wondrous Person who came from the bosom of the Father to show to men, whom He came to save, what the Father's love is, what His own love is, and what the love of the Spirit is, and what the work of the Trinity is in saving the Church. Why sinner, every enlightening teaching that you receive from the Holy Spirit will infallibly lead you to the Lord Jesus in whom you will see all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. So I am not speaking of an unessential, when I say that the Son of God is the very Son of God in a way that no other person can be the son of God. God has myriads of sons in heaven, and many sons on earth by regeneration and by adoption into His heavenly family, but He has only one Only Begotten Son of His own substance, one Only Begotten Son who is equal in nature and power and glory with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Gracious meditation on this subject will lead us to realise our own ignorance and incapacity and also to realise how suitable is this Person, the Son of God, born of the virgin Mary, as to His human nature, to our case.

"And the Word was made flesh". A full word, the accomplishment of ancient promises, of beautiful types and shadows, the anti-type, and the Word spoken by Moses and by David, preached by the tabernacle and all the sacrifices. That Word in the fulness of time was made flesh. Think of what this Son did before His incarnation. He made the world. A son by office could not be said to have done that. Before He was incarnate He made the world, upheld it all the

generations that were from Adam to His own incarnation. He governs the world and always did. What an amazing mercy it is that God sent this Almighty One, one with Himself, becoming a poor broken-hearted man. Now the Apostle says, rather John the Baptist here says, we beheld the glory of this Man, this Incarnate Word. That is a great thing. You may have read the history of this good Man who went about doing good. You believed it, you believe it today, you rationally believed it. You believed there was a man, such a man as Jesus Christ who walked in Jerusalem, who entered the temple with a whip of small cords and overturned the tables of the money changers and cast out their merchandise, and said they had made the house of God, which was ordained to be a house of prayer, a den of thieves. You may believe that He was persecuted and hated by His fellows, His own countrymen to whom He came, but they received Him not. You may believe He was despised and rejected of them all, believe that He was crucified, and yet never see His glory. This is a particular thing, to see His glory. O to get a sight of what Jesus Christ is. It is a grand thing to get a sight of what He possesses as God. Dear friends, you must have what Solomon speaks about if you are to see His glory, the seeing eye the Lord hath made. The seeing eye is the eye of faith which the Lord makes, which He gives to a poor sinner for whom the Saviour shed His blood. Have you got that eye? An eye with light falling on it, directing it to an object is a seeing eye, and if you have the eye of faith and the light of the truth falling on it by the Spirit of God, then you will see Jesus and such a sight will that be as to attract you invincibly to Him, and the more you see Him the more you will love Him. The more you see what He is and what He came to do and what He did, where He is and what He is doing there, the more you will love Him.

"And we beheld His glory". Now I would like, if the Lord help me to speak a little of this glory that is seen. First of all it is the glory of eternity, the glory of an eternal Being who never began to be the Son of God but always in eternity past as in eternity to come He is the Son of God. What is that to do with me, says a poor sinner who seeks salvation. It has this to do with you if you are one of the Lord's and indeed in any case it has this to do with you, that this eternal Person in your own nature will be either your judge or your Saviour. It is not bare eternity I am speaking of, it is an eternal

Person. We can have no adequate conception of that but we may apprehend it by faith. Unchangeableness is here, unchangeableness, and what does that mean? Why, to the sons of Jacob it means salvation. "I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed". The "sons of Jacob" there will carry back the mind to the covenant. And I, says the Lord in Ezekiel, will remember My covenant with Jacob and also My covenant with Isaac and also My covenant with Abraham. The sons of Jacob are in the covenant. He is not a Jew that is one outwardly, neither is circumcision that which is in the flesh, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, whose praise is of God and not of man. The covenant of grace, made with the Head, Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, made in eternity, ordered in all things and sure. Now this is suitable is it not? Only an eternal Person could make an eternal covenant and obtain eternal redemption and bring in everlasting righteousness. This eternal Person incarnate then we have to do with. May He have to do with us in a way of grace, then it will be well with us; "well while time shall last and well when called to die". This is His glory then that He is the unchangeable God and it is written of Him "The eternal God is thy refuge" and "They that know Thy Name will put their trust in Thee". "For the Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in time of trouble". So here is the glory of the very Son of God that He who is intimately, eternally related to the Father did, in eternity, with the Father and the Holy Ghost enter into a covenant and ordered it in all things and sure. Now in this glory we have many beautiful blessed things, as for instance, the Father predestinated His children unto the adoption of children to Himself by Jesus Christ, and in Him He blessed His people with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. Behold His glory as the only begotten Son of God brought into an intimate relationship in the covenant of grace with poor lost sinners. O think of it sinner, and should the Spirit reveal this to you, as being lost in yourself and lost in a dead head, Adam, how wonderful it will be that God should have eternal thoughts of peace to you and bring those thoughts of peace out in the Person of Christ whom He sent into the world to be the propitiation for your sins; sent Him out of love that you might live in Him.

"We beheld His glory". Have you seen this Person, the Son of

God? "We", John and others of that day, comparatively a very few, "We beheld His glory". John got a sight of it. He said "I knew Him not but He that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, the same is He, and I saw and bear record". And what then? What did he do? Seeing Him, as only the eye of faith could see Him, he began to preach Him as he was sent to do, saying "Behold the Lamb of God". Why, sinner, even myself, poor as I am, may say this, and say it to you, "Behold the Lamb of God". I have seen this Man, I have seen this Person, the Son of God, and I say "Behold the Lamb of God". What a sight, O what a sight, God in human flesh, the very Son of God in human flesh. He took our nature, not to absorb it into the divine being, but to take it up into union that should never be dissolved, with His divine Person, and in this way He reveals His glory, for His essential glory, as the only begotten Son of God, is unseeable. "No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him". Now if you get your foot placed here, O sinner, you are on the Rock, and you will never be moved. Often moved in your feelings, never in your state. Oh to get your foot here. Every place that the sole of thy foot shall tread upon I have given thee, and if you get the foot of faith on this Person I say again you will never be moved. "On this Rock", the Son of God, "will I build My church". But you must see Him to believe it; you must see Him I say to believe it. Do you ask why I say that? I say it on this ground. Jesus Christ enquired of His disciples about the notions of men concerning Himself and they told Him of the various conjectures that were being made and He said to them "But whom say ye that I am?" and Peter said "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God". How came Peter to know better than others? How came Peter to a certainty of Christ when others were guessing? This and this only way. "Blessed art thou Simon Barjona for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee but My Father which is in heaven". Peter beheld His glory. Oh wonderful; blessed are the eyes that see Him. Blessed are our eyes if we see Him who said privately on one occasion to His disciples "Blessed are your eyes for they see and your ears for they hear". It was not a common sight. The Jews had a common sight of Him equal with His disciples as a Man, but they did not get a sight of Him as the Son of God, so they hated Him, they despised and rejected Him. Now I have got a place in my heart for Him and some of you have, have you not, a

place in your hearts for Him? And sometimes that place makes you say to Him "When wilt Thou come unto me?" You want Him, His presence, the knowledge of Him, His gracious power, His blessing. This is what the soul, seeing Him, desires. "We beheld His glory" then as the eternal God, no beginning, no end. I am the beginning and the end. I am the first and the last, before all creation. By Him all things consist who had no beginning. Now I have dwelt a little, perhaps long, on this though I have said nothing, only just hinted at things. It is so important, it is so important. "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us", tabernacled with us and we, having Him in our midst, have seen His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. He must dwell with you then if you see Him.

And secondly, there is the glory of His power. Omnipotence is His property. Whatever is proper to God, the Son of God has. There is nothing outside Deity that the Lord Jesus Christ would bring into Deity. There is nothing in Deity that He does not possess. He took into union with Himself our nature but He did not make God of it. Human nature in union with the divine Person remains, the Man Christ Jesus remains, in union, but there is omnipotence in this Person. This is evidenced in the Scriptures by the statement that He made the world and upholds all things by the word of His power. In this chapter it is said all things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made. Omnipotence - now what did this do in the Man Christ Jesus? How can we behold the glory of omnipotence in Him? You say, well we see it when we read the Scriptures. I am glad you can say as much as that, but that is not necessarily seeing this glory. Never may we doubt Scripture record concerning Christ and concerning His works, but there is one act that has in it omnipotence as well as love and it is this; it is mentioned in this gospel. It is said by Christ Himself "No man taketh My life from Me. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again". But how came He to do this? God gave Him a commandment. He had power to do it and this was not the mere power of His human nature. There was omnipotence in Him. Why, sinner, that means the atonement. Have you seen it? Seen the sin bearer carrying away sin into the land of forgetfulness? Have you seen Him pouring out His soul unto death, grappling with the powers of death? Seen Him bearing the curse of a broken law? Seen Him bearing all that flood, one drop of which would cast all of us into

destruction? This is His glory. O how He used His omnipotence. This will kill your infidelity, it will kill your carnality, it will kill your worldliness, it will kill every bit of opposition in your heart when you get a sight of it. It will kill your enmity and make you love Him, and you will understand a little of the feeling of Dr Watts who said

Did all the world my Saviour know
Then all the world would love Him too

O the beauty, the glory of His omnipotence exercising itself in our nature on the cross. Ah it was infinite pity and compassion and power that He exercised when He bore the sins of His people and when, knowing that all things were now accomplished, He said "It is finished" and dismissed His spirit. An interest in this, a sight of this, is heaven below. I think sometimes of what I saw when I was a young man in omnipotence, and what I feared it would do in me. I saw that God had power to cast body and soul into hell, and I greatly feared the exercise of omnipotence on me, a sinner. Then I remember sometimes that I saw that same omnipotence clothed in my nature, and that made me hope. Ah, infinite power can touch you and not destroy you, though a sinner, when it is exercised in the Man Christ Jesus, but that same omnipotence could not touch you, as a sinner, out of Christ and not destroy you. O the importance of this, how can I express it to you. May the Holy Ghost show it to you. That arm that holds the world up carried the load of imputed sin to Calvary, and there by dying, removed it for ever from the Church. Here is a door of hope for us, here is a plea for us, here is ground for us. O sinner, you could not breathe a prayer from your living heart that would not be acceptable to God when, confessing sin, you seek to be saved by the death of Christ. That blood that He shed brings sinners into the holiest of all. Blood affords a plea to the guiltiest of all. That says to a sinner, come to God. We beheld His glory, the glory of the very Son of God, coming and taking our nature, and in that nature bearing sin, bearing it away, so that it shall never rise in judgment against the people of God. Well do you want to see this glory? Can you say with Moses in a case of sin that was a bad case, "I beseech Thee show me Thy glory" and have you had the answer that He got when the Lord passed by him and proclaimed "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious,

slow to anger, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty". In no other way. "We beheld His glory". No sinner could bear very much of this. A sight of Christ crucified in the fulness of it would be too much for us. O, but what a thing it is to see it. What a wonder to see it and to hear the proclamation "I even I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions as a thick cloud and as a cloud thy sins". This is what Jesus Christ can say and what He can do in a sinner, because He is almighty God. How willing was Jesus to die, how lovingly He took the cup of wrath and drank it up. How lovingly He bore the sins of His people imputed to Him and laid on Him by His Father. "We beheld His glory". Here I would like to live and die, looking at this. I am sure some of you can say the same. "Here it is" one writes and we sing sometimes

Here it is I find my heaven
While upon the Lamb I gaze

It is a heaven that some of us know. I am not talking of a fable, a fancy, I know it is true. It brings a heaven into the soul, peace into the conscience, repentance into the mind and brings a sinner near to God. Happy the man who can say I long to know that.

Blest soul that can say Christ only I seek
Wait on Him alway, be constant though weak

Now think of it. Who did this? The very Son of God, the eternal, the only begotten Son of the Father. Did not the great Dr Duncan speak the truth when he said "Salvation is built on distinctions in the Trinity". That is true, distinctions of Persons in the Trinity. One God, three Persons; one love manifested by three Persons; one salvation administered by three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. My brethren if we know nothing more than this we shall know what will take us to heaven. Omnipotence did it, almighty God did it. He said "It is finished" and bowed His sacred head and dismissed His spirit. O the ignominious cross has the glory of Deity, the ignominious cross has all the beauty of God, all the glory of divine justice and holiness, the ignominy of the cross has divine peace in it, and there is a fulness in it that we can never here enter into only a little,

just a little. The cross, O it bears the fainting spirit up, it reconciles enemies to God, it lays down no conditions, it only says this "I have builded my house, I have hewed out my seven pillars, I have killed my beasts, I have mingled my wine, all things are ready" and now she sends out her maidens and she cries out in the streets O ye simple, poor simple people who do not know what to do with their sins, who can only say "God be merciful to me a sinner", turn in hither, eat of my bread, drink of my wine. O bless God for this refuge. I hope the Lord will teach us to love it. I hope He will graciously speak to us in this way. God has spoken to us, says Paul, by His Son a full gospel. I do not wonder that the Apostle Paul, being an Apostle and having so much grace, should say to the Romans "And I know when I shall come to you I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ." A poor sinner today, under the teaching of the Spirit and led, comes to a congregation in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ and he says, I cannot preach it as I want to do, but it is a full gospel, full blessing, full forgiveness, full justification, full sanctification, a full welcome, a blessed welcome to the vilest sinner, and all through this glorious God Man, whose omnipotence, with His love, brought Him to the cross to lay down voluntarily His life. God give us to see this. I must leave it now for the moment, but may it abide with you and abide with me, Christ and His cross, Christ and His glorious power, making an end of sin, and perfecting for ever them that are sanctified.

AMEN.