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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Sunday morning 7 April 1918

JOHN 18 v 37

"Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art thou a king then?
Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this
end was I born, and for this cause came I into the
world that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that
is of the truth heareth My voice"

These are the words of Him who only hath immortality, who, in His time, shall show who is that blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords, who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see. He is naturally in His own divine Person and inalienable right, King of kings and Lord of lords. By Him kings reign and princes decree justice. In Him we live and move and have our being and it is under His providence that the solemn things which are afflicting and affecting us all so seriously, are. He is ordering, ruling, guiding, directing every movement to the accomplishment of His own glorious purposes. And the day will come when it will be seen - in the light that shall put out the eyes of unbelieving men and open them yet in another way and cause them to understand - that He, whom they had despised, has been on the throne all the time. And happy is he who is led by the Spirit of Christ to receive this truth concerning Christ, for every knee shall bow to Him and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. This Jehovah Jesus has sworn by Himself that to Him every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. O happy the sinner who bows his knee and confesses with his tongue that Jesus is Lord; Lord in and over his own heart and conscience. But the kingdom of which Christ is particularly the King, in our text and the context, is not of this world. If it were, said Christ, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews. I should not be in this condition and this position voluntarily; My servants would take up the sword for Me. But My kingdom is not from hence; of this world. I am a King over men's hearts and consciences; I am a King to rule in men. And that is how you must, if you ever come to self-examination,

examine yourselves. What King have you? Who is King in your hearts? Who rules your consciences? Who sways the sceptre of authority over your wills? And Pilate, ignorant of this Christ - though he saw the Man; ignorant of His nature, His divine Person and of what He was in the world for; anxious to please the Jews, yet probably also having some anxiety not to punish an innocent man, for he found no fault in Christ - asks this question: "Art Thou a King then?" Thou hast spoken of a kingdom; "Art Thou a King?" Thou hast said, Thy kingdom is not of this world. Art Thou really a King? If it were asked us - Is Christ a King? what could we say. If we were asked who is the King of our hearts, what answer could we give? There are enemies, sins, lusts, deep depravity, enmity, every kind of evil within us, over which we have no power. Do they reign, or are they put under? If they are put under, under whose hand are they? Who is our King? The god of this world, or Jesus Christ? To whom would we - were the privilege bestowed upon us, the grace given to us to go to Him and open our hearts, as a throne, - to whom would we go but to Christ and say, humbly say: "Reign o'er us as King". He is a King. I will, God helping me, proclaim His royal prerogative and authority. He is a King. The wise men of the east knew this; they went and enquired: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" This same King said, by the prophet Hosea: "I will be thy King; where is there any other that may save thee?" O, if He says it to us, we shall need eternity to bow before, and adore, and thank Him for being our King. And faith does respond and say: "Reign o'er us as King"; goes to Him, as Peter and the disciples did: "Lord, to whom else shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life". Doubts, fears, bondage, misery, guilt, death, devils, world, troubles, everything must be under this, our King. And faith goes to Him and says, Lord, put all the things that I have, my wickedness, my weakness, my guilt, my tempers, my passions, my wrongs, my troubles, my ruin; put them all under Thy hand. Be my Saviour, be my God, my everlasting King. So, were one to say to us, is Christ a King? we should, blessed be God - at least some of us - be able to say, yes. Sometimes to say, without a faltering voice, without the least hesitancy, Christ is our King. He, who is King immortal, invisible, the only wise God, He is our King. He has won our affections, He has enchained our hearts, and our wills, and our minds, and our understandings to Himself. He is our King and we will own no other.

The kingdom of Christ is diverse in its nature and in its laws from all other kingdoms. It is not opposed to the kingdoms of this world. O, No, there is no horrible Socialism in the kingdom of Christ, no levelling, no undoing of right things in the kingdom of Christ. He says: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" and also He says: "Render unto God the things that are God's". The two are distinct.

And "Jesus answered, thou sayest that I am a King". He did not contradict, but took what Pilate said and took it as in the affirmative. Pilate asked the question and Jesus, as it were affirmed that He was a King by saying to Pilate - thou sayest it. Thou hast spoken the truth; "To this end was I born". But if Christ, in His own divine and eternal right, is a King, why was He born to this? Did He come into His kingdom by virtue of His being born into this world as to His divine Person? No. A kingdom, over all, belongs to Him. All gods, kings, magistrates, all in authority amongst men, devils, the god of this world; these are under His hand, His authority. But as His kingdom is in the hearts of sinners - that He may undo their sins and purge away their guilt and remove from them their pollution and turn out the god of this world, and get their hearts and affections, and confidence, and trust - He must be born and be a Man. But was He born only to be a King? He was born to be a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. He must go through death to His kingdom. He must pass through a felt hell of suffering to reach His throne. Before He can be a King in any sinner's heart, He must atone for that sinner's sins. Before there can be a place fit for Him, He must open a fountain for sin and uncleanness and remove from them all that dreadful pollution that belongs to them. So He was born for the adversity of His people, born to be a Man of suffering and of sorrows, to go to the cross, to be crucified through weakness, to be unable to save Himself, be under a solemn obligation to suffer the curse of the law, and to fulfil its every commandment. And O, this was very, very heavy for Him, bringing a need of the comfort and consolation and strength of the Holy Ghost in His soul. A Man of sorrows, was Christ. A Man living in deep poverty, having nowhere to lay His head, that His children, through that, His poverty, might be made rich. If we look at Christ - subject to His Father, subject to the law, subject to all

that the law has in it, both of prospect and of curse; if we look to Him as in the covenant of grace, the suffering Surety of His children, and look at His inability to save Himself, and follow Him in His tears and prayers and strong cries to His Father for help - O what a sight will be presented to faith. And, as the Spirit of God leads us into those things, we shall see what a hateful thing sin is, and it will become hateful to us, and it will work in us a willingness to suffer, to follow, by and in suffering, a suffering Christ, and it will make these passions and evils that are in our nature, very abominable to us, since they brake the guiltless heart of the Lord Jesus. He was born to humility, to humbling Himself unto death, even the death of the cross. Ah, it is a great thing to look at the crown you hope to wear, but it is a great thing also to look at the crown that was put on His head by His enemies, a crown of thorns. It is a great thing to think about His exaltation, but it is an equally great and glorious thing to be enabled to believe in His humiliation, and to contemplate what brought that humiliation to Him, even our sins, for He, Himself, bore our sins in His own body on the tree. And to this He was first born. "To this end was I born". But not to be only a suffering Man was He born, but a King. He must have subjects. One subject that was to be under Him was death. "O death, I will be thy plague". Either Christ plagued death and destroyed it for us or death will sieze and hold us for ever and ever. Nothing but the death of Christ will deliver us from our death. No religion that we may take up will do it. Sin will be the master if Christ did not overcome sin for us. What a mercy it is if Christ had, for a subject for us, even death; to subject it to Himself. "O death I will be thy plague". "O death", says the Apostle Paul, "where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Paul felt the death in himself as he describes it in the Epistle to the Romans, and, as you are exercised, you enter into that. Now, says Paul, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Is there a King to do this for me? Yes, cries the Apostle: "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord". He is my King, He is king over my death. It shall not reign over me, for He reigned over it on the cross. And this brings a child of God to know the Lord for his King, and praise Him for becoming his King. Yes, He is King over our mortality, to swallow it up in life. Our mortality is sin-procured; immortality is given. The immortality of the gospel, the life of Christ, this is given freely. Christ has this, and to this end He was

born, to overcome His children. How sweet it is, when you find your sins overcome; when you find that you are a willing subject. Well, you feel, O Lord, do take me, reign in me, reign over me. Let no iniquity have dominion over me. Ah, He says to death, "I will be thy plagues"; I will plague you. Bless God for a King who can do it. Let a man set himself to watch himself, to watch his sin. Let him think that he will try to hold in this and curb that, and overcome the other. He could as soon do it as these poor soldiers could have kept Christ in the grave when the moment of His resurrection had come. You cannot overcome sin; it overcomes the man who thinks he can manage it. But when one says, I am a captive; I am led into captivity; I am led of death; I am held of sin; then comes the Holy Spirit, leads him to this Lord Jesus Christ, teaches him how to pray to Christ and how, as it were, to open his poor, distressed heart, and invite this Christ in, and say to Him: O, do come and reign in me. And not only our death and reason, but also our troubles, are to be under this Christ. In the prophet Isaiah, (chapter 3) we find, in a time of famine, some coming to an elder brother saying: "Let this ruin be under thy hand". O, no, he said, I cannot. And if you go to a poor creature like yourself with your troubles and say, do help me to bear them, he must say, I cannot. I sympathise with you, but I cannot help you. Then the Holy Ghost may take you to this King on the throne of His heavenly grace and teach you to come to Him for grace to help you in time of need. Ah, you will find He will be to you just what He was to Paul. Paul had a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him. It pricked, it pierced, it wounded him. Then said he, three times over, do remove this thorn. I cannot serve Thee as I would with this irritating, piercing thorn. It provokes my temper; I am in danger by it; do remove it. What a proper petition it would seem to us to be. Some of you may say - Lord, this trouble does provoke me so. I know not how to bear it; it brings out the worst of my nature. What shall I do? Do remove it. No! The King could remove it if He would, but He has a wiser and more gracious manner of dealing with you and reigning in you. He said to Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee", that can help thee, that shall help thee, that shall make the pain painless; that shall take the burden off, that, though you carry it, you shall not carry it as you have done. And such was the power of it in the Apostle's heart, that he was quite turned round, and, instead of wishing to be rid of the thorn, he embraced it and all the pain of it,

and said: "Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmity, that the power of Christ may rest upon me". Here was the King; here was His willing slave. Here was the subject who had no will except to glorify the King. Here was the servant looking to his King and saying, O I will glory in this infirmity, that Thy power may rest upon me. And so you can say the same in your measure and your manner. When the Lord comes and enables you to take up your cross and follow Him; when you feel that your trouble is sent for a wise and merciful purpose; when you believe that the King of kings and Lord of lords is with you, and will be with you to the end to do you good; then, I say, you can rejoice and glory in your infirmity. He was born to this end, my friends. This is the kingdom that cometh not with observation. This is the kingdom of God which is within His children. This is the kingdom that attaches their souls and their consciences and their wills and their affections to Himself so irresistibly, so sweetly, that they, for the time, can say their wills are in the most comfortable unison with His will, and their minds are brought to lie straight with the mind and the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. "I will be thy King". O, that He would honour us in this way, by coming to be our King. "I will be thy King".

He is born a King to fight all the battles of His children. It was merciful to Israel, when their King would bring them out of Egypt, that they should have no weapons and military training, no prowess of their own, no conduct at all suitable to their position. Then, when their enemies were dead, then they sang unto Him who reigned gloriously; unto Him who had caused the water to be as granite walls and the bottom like a solid pavement, while Israel passed over. And afterwards these waters should return and be a grave to the Egyptians, and so Christ will fight your battles, my dear friends, who know Him. The devil, the world, the flesh, these are our enemies, and these are more than a match for us, always must be. But, says Christ, "I will be thy King". "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle". The battle is the Lord's, not yours. God is your King. "A Man of war", they said of old, the Lord is. "The Lord is a Man of war". Now that is part of the kingdom. Christ won the victory on the cross first; then He wins the victory in the hearts of His children.

And in the next place, so to speak on the other side, look at

this, our King, in some of His great acts in His children. First of all, He is the King of peace. The King of peace, a crowned Priest to give peace and maintain it in the conscience. And what has this peace respect unto? This peace has respect to God. It is called "the peace of God" and it is "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ". My friends, the world knows nothing about peace today, and perhaps it is not likely that it will know anything about peace for a long time to come - that, God knows - but there is a spot, there is a kingdom in this world where peace is. It is called "the peace of God which passeth all understanding". No man can understand it; a sinner, a child of God, cannot understand why he, being a sinner and such a sinner, with such violent eruption of sin sometimes coming to trouble and distract him, why he should have peace. O, it is too much for him he says; too great a blessing for such a person to have the peace that he has. Even his wicked thoughts cannot destroy the peace. His dreadful thoughts which have distracted him at times, now are still, and cannot disturb his peace. He is near his God, at the footstool of mercy. The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is shown to him. He looks upon this peace and feels this peace; feels it permeating him. It is all pervasive; it pervades his whole spirit and mind and conscience, and, as it were, goes into his troubles, and he says: I am at peace. There is nothing here to account for it, nothing in my circumstances, nothing in the world, yet he says: I have peace. What is it? Yes, Israel went to Moses with some of the manna, on the first day of its falling, and they said "What is it"; what have we gathered. And Moses said: "This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat". And you may say, what is this that I feel? And God will bear His witness in your own heart. This is the peace of God, procured by the death of the Redeemer and brought by the Holy Ghost to your soul. And what a wonderful thing this is. Here is our King and He does not allow guilt and sin, devil and world and trouble to disturb our peace. What a beautiful religion this is - a sinner blessed with God's religion; a sinner blessed with God's holy, heavenly peace; a sinner, so quiet, so serene in his mind, so calm and peaceful in his conscience, as that he says - "I will lay me down and sleep". The Lord giveth His beloved sleep. The King is here. There is the world^{which} would like to come in and the King forbids it. There is the devil who wants to come in and distract, and the Lord forbids him. Here is trouble on the soul, on the person, in the family, in the

circumstances, and the Lord says: No, do not trouble My child. This is the blessed work of our King. I can tell you - I will tell you, as God may help me - there is such a beauty and glory in this, that no tongue can express. I know what it is. "The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your heart and mind by Christ Jesus". You say, blessed hour. O,

Sweet the moments, rich in blessing
Which before the cross I spend

Everything is right now, everything is straight; the King is here.

Happy moments!
When King Jesus is in sight

He was born for this; He was exalted for this. He is at the right-hand of God to give this. When the Assyrian shall come into our land, this Man shall be the peace.

Peace by his cross has Jesus made;
The church's everlasting Head
O'er hell and sin has victory won,
And, with a shout, to glory gone

And this is spoken of in this way in the Scripture. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ". When you have felt this, you can truly say, nobody can understand it but those who feel it. I can understand even your relations, not having the same mercy, looking at you, and even saying, why you are unnatural. This trouble does not trouble you. There is a secret in this. Christ said to His disciples He had meat to eat that the world knew not of. His meat and drink was to do the will of His Father. And so the child of God can say, I have meat to eat that even my friends did not know of. I have a peace in my soul, a satisfaction in my heart and conscience. God is my Friend; He has reconciled me to Himself. God is my All and in All. And, though I suffer, though I lose, though I be troubled, I have peace in my

soul

Thrice comfortable hope

one sings

That calms my stormy breast;

My Father's hand prepares the cup,

And what He wills is best

And Christ was born for this; this is a part of the destruction of the devil's work. He came to destroy death and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. O blessed be God for this reign of our King. Blessed be God for this divine sceptre swayed in our souls at any time. O, bless the Lord for His great peace, His powerful peace; peace which, at times, nothing can disturb for "When He giveth quiet, who then can make trouble." May the Lord bless us with this.

"To this end was I born". One word more on this point. He is to swallow up death in victory. He is to do it, and He will do it, not only in the soul of His children, not only as to their very sore and dreadful sins, but also every kind of death He will swallow up. It may not be long before our graves close upon us, and what then? Is that the death of all hope about the body? O, No! Adam's body is to come again; the bodies of all who sleep in Jesus are to come again. God will bring them with Him. Think of it! All are to come. Abraham, Isaac, the fathers, the apostles, and the martyrs of Jesus, all their bodies are to come again, and yours, who die in the Lord. O, what a King is He to command the graves to open and the sea to give up her dead. And the very body that Adam had, in which his soul lived for over 900 years, shall come again, and that man, our father Adam, will be in Christ and wear the image of Christ, and so will you who fear God and die in Christ. O, what a prospect. And this is the thing He was born for; this is the kingdom He is to have in the conscience first, in the whole soul, by His invincible grace, by His precious blood, by His divine righteousness, and by the sweet sceptre of His blessed peace. And then, the body too; it shall share in the grace of Christ; it shall appear in the image of Christ. "We know not what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is".

Is He thy King, O sinner? Has He ever conquered thy will, thy

heart's affections? Has He ever brought thee to His footstool? Ever taken hold of thee and raised thee up as He raised up the young man who was dead and being carried to his grave, and restored thy soul to more than its original beauty and glory, even to a new creation in Himself, after righteousness and true holiness? O then, He has accomplished so far, the great end of His being born. "To this end was I born". May we come to know this, and all the rest will follow in the Lord's time.

AMEN.