

Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham  
at Galeed Chapel, Brighton  
on Sunday Morning 30 November 1919

Text: Matthew 2 v 13

"And when they were departed behold the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream saying - Arise and take the young child and His mother and flee into Egypt and be thou there until I bring thee word for Herod will seek the young child to destroy Him"

There are two kings mentioned in the text and by implication two kingdoms. Under one of these two kings we are. To one of these two kingdoms we belong. A middle way there is not. The first king, Herod, was a cruel, unspeakably cruel man, and yet, one with all the Jews, for he built a magnificent temple for the Jews, and when he was perturbed about the birth of the second king, he not only sought the wise men, respecting the star they had seen, and the journey they had undertaken, but also he sent for the Jews, sent for members of the Sanhedrim, doctors and lawyers, and enquired of them what time and where this child, this promised king, should be born. He may be taken, this wicked Herod, to represent the devil, the god of this world, and all wicked men who rise up against the Lord and His anointed. Why do the heathen rage? Why do kings set themselves together and in their union, say, "Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us". Now this kingdom of the devil - the devil is, as you know, called the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience - this kingdom is doomed to fall. Oh what a fall it will be. What a fall. What Herods there are; men against Christ; doctors, lawyers, scribes, pharisees, enemies to truth; wicked ministers, transformed into angels of light, deceiving, God only knows. But there is a sad kingdom of darkness in the world; indeed the world is a kingdom of darkness where Satan holds the sway, corrupting the minds of corrupt men, still more

and more corrupting them; stirring up their pride, pride of knowledge, and bending the arrows of their criticisms against God and His Christ. Saying, in the spirit, not acting it, continually, - Let us break their cords asunder, let us cast away the restraints of the Bible and of religion; let us cast away all these restraints. Let us believe, and let us act as if we did believe, that our tongues are our own. They are saying - who is Lord over us? This is an awful thing, but alas, too common. It is a kingdom that the Lord God permits to continue; it is a kingdom that embraces all sorts and conditions of men, from Paganism to Rome, which is only Paganism refined in name and certain practices, down to the critic and the spiritualist, and the men, who, ignorant of their own hearts, are Aminianists. All of them are against the Lord and His Christ and it is a solemn thing. Herod, sought, as the Lord said he would, the young child to destroy Him. Hypocritically he asked the wise men to return from Bethlehem to let him know when they had found the child, that he also might go there and worship Him, which was nothing more than an intention to rid the earth of this blessed child. And when he was foiled in that by Almighty God, then he sent and destroyed in that village and all the coasts about there, all the young children from two years old and under to make sure that he had destroyed the young child. A very solemn, hellish business, that, but no more solemn and no more hellish than men have, ever since then, moved by Satan, been engaged in, and are engaged in now. To destroy the kingdom of God in men is the aim of Satan and he has set up various means to do it. And he is seeking, by various means, to do it today. We know not what that spirit in the air is, the spirit of the god of this world, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Principalities, powers, thrones, dominions, all conspire against the Lord and His Christ, and this is a very great matter for us to consider because God has said He will laugh at them. The permissions of God in respect of sin are most mysterious; how he will turn all the machinations and doings of Satan and Satan's agents to His own glory and the advancement of that religion and increase of that kingdom they seek to destroy. we cannot understand. But if the scripture is true, it is so, that the things which turn against, apparently, the kingdom of God, the things that are

aimed at Jesus Christ to destroy His name from the earth, are used by the Lord to further His own designs, to work and bring to pass His own glory among the children of men. And I may with all propriety and truthfulness ask your very strict attention to this horrible black kingdom, this kingdom of darkness. And why? Because you are in it, and I am in it by nature. Born in sin, shapen in iniquity, we are children of wrath, even as others; Members of this black, hellish, doomed kingdom; under the government of the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. Different by nature, in disposition, and of certain things, we may be, one from another, but as to our real state before God, there is not a bit of difference. There are degrees of wickedness, but there are no degrees of death. There are differences as to desert, and there will be differences in punishment, many stripes and few stripes, but the kingdom is one, and the king is one, the god of this world. How he rules in them, how he stirs up their enmity against the light that shines in dark places, how he, and all his subjects, hate the light, cannot bear it. It tells them of a God they would not have to rule over them if they could help it. It tells them of Christ, who died to save the lost, and they hate Him. It tells them of a Bible that is true. Because that Bible, so true, divinely true, shows them how they are, what they are, and where their works will end and bring them, they hate it. And this kingdom, I say, we are all the subjects of by nature. There is no man, no son of Adam, exempt from this awful rule of the wicked one. He works so subtely that he even does not mind that he should be denied, that his very existence should be denied by some. How he laughs at the delusions which hold men, as in chains. How he laughs at men who deny eternal punishment, knowing that he has them in his hand and under his rule. Ah, but how, when you come closer, how pleased he is when men are pleased with their own religion; when men are pleased with themselves; when they think that they are righteous; when they think that their courses are right and all the while they are against Christ. They think they are not, they speak of him, they may even say they want Him, but His rule, which crucifies the flesh, which brings the flesh into the dust, his rule that brings men to deny themselves - not to deny something that they have to give away

without inconvenience, but to deny themselves - this is different. Herod sought the young child to destroy Him and this is what Satan and wicked men are always doing. This is his kingdom, his rule over men, in men's minds. Hence their hardness and their bitterness and their wrath, their enmity boiling over against Jesus Christ. As Christ is the beginning of the creation of God, the first-born of every creature, the maker of heaven and earth; as He is above all things, and in all things has the pre-eminence, so He is the one main object of man's enmity, even though they think it is not so. He is the one object of the devil's spite. That that fallen spirit should be subject to the man Christ Jesus, own His sceptre, is more than he can brook. Therefore he uses all his stratagems, all his energies, all his permitted power, to destroy the young child.

Where is the young child, to speak spiritually? Is he not in the hearts of His children? Is He not here in some? He is. There is His blessed, tender fear, and the kingdom of darkness works against that. There is His sincerity - "Peace with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity".- a sincerity that He Himself gives to them, and all the moving of the wicked one is against this. A sincere man wants to come to the light, and to come Christ and not to be deceived, and the enemy does his uttermost to keep a man from the light and from Jesus Christ. The grace of God produces humility, and the enemy puffs up with pride and works against that blessed grace of the Spirit. The young child in his life, in his heart, moves him heavenward, moves the heart and all its warmth and desire toward God and Christ, and Satan and men, uniting with him in his work, make their uttermost endeavour to turn the desires after other things. Christ walked in a path of tribulation and men despise that path, and will walk in a way that soothes and pleases and flatters them. And this has been the case in all ages. Not only has the Pope persecuted the saints, but much persecution has come from other sources. This is then a little of the way in which many Herods, many devils, have sought and are still seeking to destroy the young child. Some of you may be too well aware of what it is to have opposition of science falsely so called in your minds against Jesus Christ. Many objections, many prejudices in your

hearts against Jesus Christ, and unless there is a mighty moving of His grace, these things work so sadly and grievously that at times it may appear to you as if they must prevail. Christ is God, and human nature says, how can that be? Fallen reason denies it, and so there is an aim in that particular against the kingdom. This awful king, Herod, has lived in his spirit, in his intentions, ever since he rose up against Christ. He himself died, as you know, an awful death. God most signally visited him and marked him, putting the most distinct and terrible evidences of divine vengeance on his poor corrupt body, visiting him with a loathsome disease, and I say a type of destruction that shall come and visit all and destroy all who are in this kingdom and never delivered from it.

Now there is another king, King Jesus, in the text, the young child, and this is remarkable. The young child, Almighty God. Blessed faith that penetrates the weakness of that child, penetrates the limits of that human nature, penetrates the dependence of that young child on its mother, and sees divinity, eternity, an eternal relationship to the Father, even that of the Son. O blessed faith that does not doubt that that young child was also true, almighty God. "Dost thou believe on the Son of God"? This is perhaps one of the most severe tests to which faith can be brought at times, next to that of believing that He who died that ignominious death on the cursed tree was, at that moment, in that death, acting, Almighty God. "I am that I am" in the babe; "I am that I am" on the cross. This is the king, the king of the Jews, the King of kings and Lord of Lords, set up on the holy hill by His Father. "I have set My king on My holy hill". This is the King, honoured, revered, obeyed by every true born child of God more or less; loved and followed, adored and worshipped and trusted by every true believer; looked to by faith, where sin abounds, that grace may much more abound. Faith brings the guilty to this dear and wondrous King, who in dying opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness, for that blessed cleansing; looks to that righteousness which this dying King brought in by death for justification; looks to His fulness for the supply of all needed grace and goodness, for all meetness for heaven and for a title to heaven. True faith will labour to get

at Christ. True faith looks to Him in all His kingly authority whereby He can bind sin from overflowing, the devil from destroying. This kingly authority is exerted in every child of God more or less distinctly from time to time. And He has a kingdom. A King implies a kingdom, a throne, authority, rule. It implies everything that belongs to Almighty God in our own nature. But it is an unknown kingdom to all but the subjects of it, unseen. There is a visible church, but there is a kingdom within the church, visible, that is unseen. Paul speaking of himself and the people of God says "Unknown" - "As unknown, yet well known." This King is unknown to the world, yet well known. Unknown to professors, but well known to the people of the living God. Approved of His Father; He set Him up. Approved of His subjects, who see Him and worship Him and trust Him and desire to follow Him. He has a kingdom. And where is it? Not of this world. "My kingdom is not of this world." If it were my servants would fight, that is they would defend the kingdom. They would seek to defend and support their King. But it is not of this world. It is a kingdom that comes into this world, into the hearts of God's children, - "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation" The king is crowned, not with observation. The laws of this kingdom are diverse from all human laws. When our king was crowned, there was much observation. The whole nation watched and myriads saw the ceremony. When our glorious King Jesus is crowned, it is not with observation; it is in secret. O many a time has He been crowned by His people on their beds. Many a time has He been crowned by them when they have found Him and held Him and would not let Him go in the wilderness. He is crowned. The kingdom of God is within you. The kingdom of God says Paul is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. And he that in these things serveth Christ, his King, is approved of God and acceptable to men, to good men. This kingdom within is a wonderful kingdom; it begins with the impartation of divine life to the soul. The Son of Man comes, this King, and in His authority He commands death to depart, and gives divine life. "The hour is coming and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and they that hear shall live." And that is authority my friends; that is power. Who can do it but this

blessed King, this young child. It is great to have a kingdom within you. "The kingdom of God is within you". It forbids sin, willful sin; it discovers our bondage to sin; it shows us there is a foreign king who has usurped, and been permitted to usurp for a time authority, but now that wicked king shall prove the truth of the Lord's words in another case. "I will overturn, overturn, overturn till He come whose right it is". And when one is born again He has begun the overturning. It shall go on until Christ shall come whose right it is to rule. O what an amazing thing it is to have in you the kingdom of God. Now in the kingdom, the subjects of it do not like a foreign king, and pay no obedience to his laws at all. No foreign, potentious laws can reign in our kingdom. We look to our own king; we are His subjects; I hope we shall all, always be loyal subjects. So, with our Lord Jesus Christ, our King. His subjects look to Him. One said in obedience, the obedience of faith, "Unto Thee O Lord do I lift up my soul". That is what every one does who knows he has a soul and feels the worth of it, and wants to be saved. I lift up my soul to Thee. He said in another place "Show Me the way wherein I should walk for I lift up my soul unto Thee". O bring me into the narrow way of truth and life. Make me right, make me Thy subject, cause me to be Thine. The kingdom is within. It forbids deliberate sin; it forbids walking in ways that are contrary to the scriptures wherein the will of God is revealed; it brings men to lie, as they may be led, at the footstool of mercy.

And some of this King's wonderful words may be looked at for a moment; as first of all, the power that this wondrous young child has to forgive sins. Sin is our master; our sins, as we may have grace, are our plague. Their working is our trouble and distress; their guilt is our burden and our death. Who can remove sin in its guilt;? who can subdue sins in their working? Only one. He is exalted at the right hand of God. What for? To give repentance unto Israel and forgiveness of sins. Were you ever at His footstool? Did your heart ever own Him as King? And were your prayers ever sent up to Him for the forgiveness of your sins? Some may say, O yes, we have sought that of ourselves at times for years, yet the thing we have sought is not done. The

King is a sovereign. Sovereignty is great; the sovereignty of Christ in forgiving sins is very great. He not only forgives them, but He forgives them in His own time. He forgives them just when He will; He pours in a mighty forgiveness just at His own time. There is a set time to favour Zion. And one of the marks of God's children is that they, in patience, possess their souls, waiting on Him. He in His exalted power and grace and love shall put away their sins. This kingdom is wonderful in this particular, for when sin is forgiven, then comes to pass in the heart that scripture "And the peace of God shall keep your heart and mind by Jesus Christ." Then comes to pass a fulfilment of that promise, that wonderful promise in Isaiah "And of the increase of His kingdom and peace there shall be no end". He shall establish it; He establishes His grace when He forgives sin; He establishes His kingdom when He exercises this kingly authority and applies His atoning blood to the conscience. That is one of the acts of our King. Now the devil comes to destroy this and working by sin, as a giant he often destroys the peace, as to our feeling, but never, never the peace as it is in Christ, the fountain. There shall be no end of this peace. We need grace to make the distinction that is necessary between peace here as it is in Christ, the fountain, and the peace which is in us sometimes, as a grace. In the fountain it will ever remain as a grace; it sometimes ceases to be felt; it ceases to be enjoyed, and it would be to your comfort and to my comfort if, when we are brought low, we could make such a distinction. May the Lord help us to do it.

The kingdom of Christ within a person then is very great in this particular, that He does forgive sin and send His blessed peace. And when He has done that, then also love is known and felt. I love the Lord. Says the Apostle John "We love Him because He first loved us". If He has let you know, has let you feel, that your sins are forgiven, you then, as the woman in the parable, you will find it, being forgiven much you will love much. John says "We love Him because He first loved us". Now this greatness of Christ as a king is seen in this, that He does let out His precious love to sinners. One may, left, even with the life of God, may lift up his hand against the Lord and His

Christ in dreadful rebellion, and he may think it well he does it. Poor Jonah said he did well to be angry, and you may think you do well, when God in some providence displeases you, to be angry. Christ has a wonderful way, a reprovng way; He has a wonderful way of winning loyalty, of winning the whole heart and affection to Himself. You have it expressed in Isaiah, one very remarkable passage as I have often thought, "For the iniquity of His covetousness I was wrath. I hid Me; I smote him. And you, some of you like myself, may have a painful understanding of that scripture. I smote him. What then? Was he cured? No. He went on frowardly; still persisted and said, as in Hosea, as in another case it is related "I will go after my lovers for it was better with me then than now" Now what does Christ say in that passage in Isaiah? "I have seen him; I have seen him wayward; I have seen him determined to have his own way; I have seen him smarting under my smiting; I have seen him resolved still to go on in the frowardness of his heart; I have seen him. And now what? I will smite him more? No. He might do. What? Will I leave him? No. What then? I will heal and restore comforts unto him. O what an amazement to one who gets it. I will heal him. This wayward one, this silly, foolish creature, like a dove without heart, like a cake unturned, I will heal him. This king works so, and all the while the enemy has been seeking to destroy the kingdom by rebellion. Rebellious thoughts and rebellious determinations within, and now Christ comes and rebukes the enemy, throws down his building, and becomes king more than ever before, winning loyalty, and gains the affections more than ever before. But do not expect, you who are subjects of Christ's kingdom, to miss Herod's endeavours. Do not think you can avoid his arrows; do not think you shall escape all moving of his soldiers. We need grace, indeed we need grace, to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; to be continually submitting ourselves unto Him. As it is written "Submit yourselves" Oh how we need grace for this. Christ has a wonderful way then of doing His blessed work, even of smiling and shedding abroad His love and power in His healing balm, so as that the heart loses its hardness, and the spirit foregoes its determination and the will and affections are brought into the most wonderful submission to Him, and He, made King of kings and Lord of lords. It becomes

some of us to say this very morning, to say, "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, unto Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen." Now this kingdom is called an everlasting kingdom. It is never to be broken up. There is no earthly kingdom that shall survive the ruin of time brought about by means of sin, but there is a kingdom, this kingdom, that shall survive all sin and all the devil's aims, and all the gates of hell, and live for ever and ever before and with God, in His holy habitation. Now I conclude with one word in the form of a question. My beloved hearers, have you any knoweldge of which kingdom of these two you belong to, under which of these two kings you live, whose rule it is, whose law, you obey? Search, and look into the matter. See if you are enabled to find out. May God help those of His who fear, greatly fear, to wait for Him and His own testimony, that we may be enabled to say in the spirit of one of old who said to king David when the whole of the nation of Israel was brought under David's rule - one of the captain's said to him "Thine are we David and on thy side thou son of Jesse." God grant it may be so.

AMEN.