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Sermon preached by Mr J K Popham at Galeed
Chapel, Brighton, on Wednesday Evening
10 March 1926

TEXT: JOHN 1 verse 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".

This divine, this blessed chapter, is full of that mystery which God hath ordained for our glory. That mystery of which the Apostle speaks to the Corinthians - "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained for our glory." In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The Word and the Son of God are the same in this chapter and in the beginning, in Eternity, before all created things were, the Word was, a Person, the Son of God, and the Word was with God, God the Father, with Him in His nature, of the same essence. A person with the Father, and the Spirit inspires this; there are three there. The same was in the beginning with God. The distinction of persons in the Trinity is a remarkable thing much to be observed. May the Lord make us good Trinitarians in experience. A good Trinitarian in experience is one who is instructed by the Holy Ghost in the meaning of the Scriptures, when they speak of the Trinity, and who has some gracious belief in, and apprehension of, each person in the Trinity. You may not make great progress, who does, in this day. No learning this mystery, but a little knowledge of it will establish you greatly. Let me early in this speaking now exhort you who fear the Lord, to ask Him to make you good Trinitarians, to give you a good experience of this glorious Being who reveals Himself as subsisting in three co-equal, co-eternal persons, whose essential relationships are expressed in the names which they bear, essential relationships, not

official, not relationships coming into being with the covenant, but relationships which give birth to the covenant. A good minister, a good Scotch minister, said many years ago this. Salvation is built on distinctions in the Trinity, and if you follow that, if you take the word of God and examine that statement by the word of God, you will see the truth of it. There is the distinction of the Father in election in the covenant; there is the distinction of the Son in being elected to be the servant of His Father and the Saviour of His body, the church; there is the Holy Ghost distinguished from them both in coming and begetting the human nature that the Son of God was to take up, and inhabit, and to fill that Lord Jesus without measure, and then to come from Him, being sent by Him and sent also by the Father to be the quickener of the election of grace and to lead every person born again into a knowledge of God. If you would be sealed, if you would know God, if you would fix your hopes in Him, if you would more and more apprehend Him, do ask Him to teach you, and ask Him to teach me the knowledge of the Trinity. And the Trinity expresses Himself in Jesus Christ very emphatically. The Father put His name in His dear Son; gave the Spirit without measure to His Son. When Philip was made aware of his ignorance by the word of Christ, "I go to My Father", and when that disciple said "Lord show us the Father and it sufficeth us", Christ instructed him in this knowledge of His essential relationship to His Father and of the Father dwelling in Him. "He that hath seen Me, the only begotten Son, hath seen the Father also". Did we, any of us, ever get that sight, with a spiritual intelligence, and some humble, humbling realisation of that truth "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father also" You will never see the Father outside the Son, yet He is distinct from the Son, but He shows Himself in the Son, in the Word, in the Son incarnate "All things were made by Him", by the Word, the Son of God, "and without Him was not anything made that was made" and you will remember that Solomon in the 8th chapter of Proverbs, that mysterious and blessed chapter, tells us of this Son rejoicing with His Father, and the Apostle John tells us that everything

was made by Him who came and was seen by the Apostle and in the Hebrews he tells us that God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the Fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son whom He hath appointed heir of all things by whom He made the world and who upholds them by the Word of His power. This is the Creator of heaven and earth, and He is before all things being the beginning of the creation of God for they were all called into being by Him. He is an antichrist who denies this. Blessed be God if we are believers in the incarnation of the Son of God. And the incarnation is a wonderful mystery and a mercy. Think of it - A real Man is Jesus Christ. The children, being partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise took part of the same. He is their brother and they are his brethren. The children, the brethren among and in whom the Lord Jesus sings the praises of His Father and declares and reveals to them His righteousness.

Incarnation. The very Son of God came in what Paul to the Galatians calls the fulness of the time that God had ordained; came, made of a woman, here declared to be made flesh. Flesh here means just human nature, without sin. The children, being partakers of flesh and blood, that means their human nature. Here, the flesh means without any sin, being born of the Virgin Mary. This mystery is, as I said, a mercy. The deepest depths of what is knowable and communicable and to be communicated of God is in the incarnation, in the Man Christ Jesus. The highest heights of mercy and love, are found in Jesus Christ, and the greatest stretch and the broadest reach of all that God will show to, and give His people, He has put in His dearly beloved Son. Now if this is true, and it is as far as I know the Word of God, if this is true and we are under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, what will be His teaching in us? If we are being led by Him, where is He leading us to? The answer is to Jesus Christ. He loves Him, that Holy Spirit loves Him, and loves to glorify Him. Where is He to glorify Him? Christ tells us - "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." So we are brought to this point here - that if we are under the teaching and leading of the

Spirit, He is teaching us the knowledge of Christ, He is leading us to Him. This means something else. It means what none of us like, but what we must come to and thankfully come to in time if we are Gods, namely, that the Holy Spirit will see to it that we are empty, empty vessels to be filled out of that wondrous fulness that Jesus Christ has. If we are to hear Him speak to us the words which He heard His Father speak in Eternity; if He is to speak to us with those gracious lips into which grace was poured, must not we be in a case to hear Him? What is the case we must be in? Sinners, sensible sinners, exercised sinners, troubled sinners, needy sinners, poor disciples. Ah we shall reach what seems out of our reach if we are under the Spirit's guidance; we shall get to where we seem not able to get, if we are being led by the Spirit. Sometimes the Holy Ghost gives a view of the infinite depths of grace in the incarnate mystery, the infinite love in that mystery, the infinite wisdom of that mystery, the infinite power in that mystery, and the kind and infinite loving purposes of God in that mystery. Heaven in that mystery, heaven for pieces of sin and hell. Life for dead things, light for dark things, and the dark hearts of poor sinners, and purity for the polluted and heaven for the lost. O what has God done my dear friends in sending His Son into the world that we might live through Him. What has He done in sending His only begotten Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Five minutes of a view of this will affect the heart, draw it after Christ, make sin more bitter than you can express and make holiness so attractive to you as that you pant to be holy in that way that God has ordained. Not to be holy by any efforts of yourself, but by receiving the spirit of holiness from Jesus Christ - And the Word was made flesh. Who made the flesh for the Word to take up? The Holy Spirit. O the union of the Trinity in the incarnation of the Son. Just think of it. The love of God to you who are His, in making His Son flesh, a person in the Godhead becoming a Man by taking up that human nature that God prepared for Him. This is what is meant by the Word being made flesh;

not a conversion of the Godhead, the Person of Christ into human nature, but the assumption by Him who is God, the Son of God, of that nature prepared for Him by the Holy Ghost. Jesus, the Son of God, said to His Father "A body hast Thou prepared Me" That body He took up, that body He has now in heaven; that body had no sin in it, but to Him who was made flesh, sin was imputed. The love of this O it is a swelling up love, bottomless, without shore or bound, and yet a love that pours itself into the hearts of afflicted sinners from time to time by the Holy Ghost. I wish we might know this more. I am sure it would settle, establish and strengthen us. It would do us great good to be led into the truth of the blessed, the eternal love, the interest and the connection of the Trinity in the incarnation. And there is this also, O how sweet it is to find it, when you can get near to God, it is through the mystery, the incarnation of His Son. "I am the Way" I, the Son of God, the Son of Man, am the way to the Father. O man, you lost your way when you turned from God in Eden. You lost your way, and being expelled from Eden, you wandered, everywhere, anywhere; now I design to bring you to My Father and I am the way to Him. You are to enter into the Holiest by My blood. You are to stand just before and with God in My righteousness. You are loved with an everlasting love, even the very same love wherewith the Father loves Me. You are to recline on My bosom, even as I have been eternally in the bosom of My Father, and as I learned obedience by the things which I suffered, you shall be made known to be the children of God, partly by being chastened of Him. Therefore may we enter into this mystery. I want to be established in it myself and I want you to be established in it. The Word, the Eternal Word - "Who was with God and was God" Distinct from, and yet intimately and eternally related to the Father, by having His substance. This Word became flesh, was made flesh. We cannot understand it; it is an un-understandable truth, but it is a believable truth and it is in the house of God, the church of the living God, a believed truth. Some people do believe it though everyone believing it, says he does not understand it. I cannot. No man can. Now think of this mercy. I have

been looking a little at it, thinking a little about it. Think of this God in His glorious essential Being, His unapproachability, we cannot see Him. He dwelleth in the light that no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see. No creature, angel or men could look on Deity abstractly considered. Very solemn. The unveiled light of God's Being would strike every created eye with blindness. What a solemn consideration is the Being of God and yet He will be seen, He will be known, He will be loved. How? In the Person of Jesus Christ. He comes to make Him known, He veils the light of absolute Deity in that flesh which He took, He veils it to mildness and bearableness. He says "Come to Me". You want to see God - I am God in your nature. You want His love - I am that love in your nature. You want reconciliation to Him - I am the propitiation. And the Father sent me to be the propitiation for your sins. Jesus Christ is not repellant; He is attractive, unspeakably attractive. I know it in a little measure, and so do some of you. He does draw the chosen race. He does give them to see His glory a little. That beautiful word of the Apostle in the Corinthians, may we understand it experimentally "And we all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image, from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord." There, is where you can see the glory of God, without being consumed. There is where you can see that glory so as gazing upon it you will receive the very image of it. The naked gaze on God is impossible, but a gaze by faith is a blessed privilege, a saving mercy. And dear friends, that sanctification that some of us long for comes this way. He is made of God sanctification to His people. We know that we cannot stand before God in our filthiness, that filthiness that makes us sorry, that filthiness for which we are given repentance from time to time, but repentance does not remove it. Repentance never washes it away. How than can it be removed? By that holiness which Christ is and has and which is given to them. "Who of God is made unto us sanctification." One of the most wonderful benefits then is that Jesus Christ, the incarnate

Son of God can make the polluted holy and fit them in His own holiness to stand before His Father.

And another benefit is this. We are weak. "How weak is thine heart". We repent of sin one hour and do that sin the next. We sink under burdens and cannot rise. We faint under tribulation and cannot bear tribulation. We rebel, we fret. O what fools, what weak fools we are, and yet God will have His people strong and He says to them in His word that the people which do know their God shall be strong and do exploits. How can this be? How can one who is weakness itself be strong and do exploits? The strength of Israel comes to him. Who of God is made unto us strength - strength to pray, strength to believe impossibilities, strength to believe that God will bring you honourably through, to believe that His love is in the severest trouble that comes to you, in the sharpest rebuke that is administered to you; to believe that chastening He sends and administers is a sign of your sonship, a token of His love. This is the strength of a christian. His own strength is withered. This is the strength of a christian. Here he believes, here he waits, here he watches, here he confesses, here he leaves sin, here he submits to the will of God, here he becomes a docile disciple to learn the acceptable and good and perfect will of God, all through Incarnation. Here it is he sees what is to be had, even at the end of time. Help in time. Help in trouble, grace to draw on the soul after more than has been received. "God was in Christ" and He invites His poor people to come to Him in His Son. "And the Word was made flesh" O if in your mind you can for a moment think of the Trinity, the Eternal self-existent God, subsisting in three persons in the divine essence, but each person distinct from the other; the Trinity in unity; the Trinity in council. This glorious Being coming to open His council in the Person of Christ, and blessing the church with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him, predestinating them to the adoption of sons, in His Son giving that wondrous pattern of Sonship. O brethren, if I could by the mercy of God at all adequately express the blessing of incarnation I should say some things that

seem to me impossible to me to say. It is wonderful. All God in the man Christ Jesus. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; therefore, all Eternity, all Eternity, Majesty, Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence, Justice, Honour, Glory, Purity, all divine, in the Man Christ Jesus. We are silenced here; living tongues are dumb at best. O love divine in incarnation. O grace divine in the incarnate Word. Poor sinner come to this fountain; you will be filled. Hungry soul, here is the bread of life. Thirsty soul, here is the water of life. Dark sinner, here is the light of life. Weak creature, here is omnipotence; everything that can be needed, everything that can be asked and more than can be asked or even thought, God has put into His Son incarnate. Well, what shall I say. The word says "And dwelt among us" The tabernacle of God is with men. The tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them. A tabernacle ordinarily speaks something that is transitory; pitched to-day, taken down tomorrow. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened" Here we have no continuing city, no abiding. There is no abiding here. That means the tabernacle as applied to us. But when it is said - The tabernacle of God is with men and He will dwell with them, it means something permanent. Jesus is for ever and ever the same. The man Christ Jesus will never be divested of His humanity. What then He will dwell with us.

And dwelt among us. And this dwelling among us is not to be confined to His thirty three years sojourn here. No. He said it is expedient for you that I go away. I will give you something better than My bodily presence. O if His presence on earth were confined to His body how few could see Him; with how few could He dwell, but He says - I will give you My Spirit and I will come to you by My Spirit and in My Spirit. I will come to you; I will dwell with you. Now here is something for us to look at. Does He dwell with us? O my brethren, is He with you? Is He with you in your troubles to sanctify them? Is He with you to make the will of God acceptable, good and perfect, even acceptable to you in your afflictions?

Perfect in your view, the view of your faith in your troubles; good to you in the taste of it in your afflictions. O what a wonder. He shall dwell with you. He dwelt among us. They saw Him, that is the great testimony of the Apostles, twelve Apostles. That which we have seen and heard, that which our hands have handled, which our eyes have looked upon, declare we unto you. They had seen Him, therefore they were competent witnesses. They had looked on Him, they had handled Him and says He "I will dwell with you!" "I will come to you. If a man love Me he will keep My words and My Father will love Him and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Did you ever ask Him to do that? Make His abode with you. O if you ever have that wonder in your experience, what spiritual people you will be, what spirituality of mind you will have. How little will the world be to you. How little will your own things be to you. How bearable will be your troubles. How drinkable will be the bitter cup. No curse in it. O you will take your cross up and follow Him, for He will be with you. And then as the hymn has it

No fatal shipwreck shall I fear

But all my treasures with me bear

But all my treasures and the treasures of all treasures; the riches of all riches, Jesus Christ in you the hope of glory. Dwelt among us. When He dwelt among people in the days of His sojourn what did He do. He went about doing good. And this is one testimony, and healed all them that had need of healing. Poor sinner, did you ever get a healing touch? Was ever any lust, in the fire of it, quenched by Him? Any feverish, rebellious thought put down by Him and brought into subjection by Him? Ever any of your wandering ended by your being brought to His footstool? Any broken bones set? Any darkness removed from your mind? He healed all them that had need of healing. God walking among men, speaking kindly to men, touching, with a healing touch, men. And that is what He does spiritually. He walks among His churches. He tells them where they are wrong, and puts them right. He heals them. "Heal my soul" they say, "for I have

sinned" and He forgives their sins and heals them and though they may think at times that their wound is incurable, it is not so, for He does bring health and cure as He promises - "I will bring it health and cure" and everything of this kind we owe to the incarnation.

"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" What is a church without Him? What are our poor souls without Him? What should we do without Him? How can we live without Him? How can we be gracious? How can we believe? How can we submit to the will of God without Him? You must have Him if you are right. If you are to be an overcomer, you must have Him. If you are to have union and communion with God, you must have the incarnate mystery with you. "And dwelt among us" I do want Him. I do desire Him sometimes.

One word more, then I close a most inadequate discourse. The word is this - Peace. Now how can God be at peace with you, you at peace with Him, for there is a quarrel between us by nature; we are always quarrelling with God. Adam began the quarrel and we keep it up. How can this be ended? Well, the mystery is here - and this Man shall be our peace. This Man in whom the Godhead is in all its fulness. This Man shall be our peace. Peace by His blood; peace by His righteousness; peace by His Spirit; peace in His presence. The peace of God which passeth all understanding. People are well set down when they are set down here. It is good to be here. Here is a standing, a standing for peace, a standing in peace. Here is that which will do us good my friends. Peace in trouble; peace when you are afflicted; peace with the will of God. Peace with holy, wise, though afflictive providence. Peace, divine peace. And we owe all this to this mystery. I want to keep that before you. Every good gift and every perfect gift and this last that I have mentioned - the peace of God - cometh down from above, comes from Jesus Christ. This Man, He made peace. Peace by the blood of His cross, so that a sinner comes sometimes to say he has no quarrel with God and he believes God has no quarrel with him. Did you ever notice that word - "That He may present

you holy, without blemish or spot or wrinkle or any such thing." What a word. Think of our spots, our blemishes, and many other things and then to believe not one single thing of that kind shall attach to us, and that we shall be without these evils, not in our own judgment, but in the very judgment and in the very eye of God Himself. "To present you holy, not to yourselves, but to the Father, without blemish, blame, spot, wrinkle, or any such thing." How can these things be? When Christ taught Nicodemus, Nicodemus though a master in Israel said "How can these things be?" He knew much, much that was earthly, but he did not know what was heavenly at that time. "How can these things be?" You may say - How can I be born again? How can I be holy? How can I be righteous? How can I be pure before God? And the answer to every question of that kind comes this way "The children being partakers of flesh and blood He likewise took part of the same, that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil." Ye know, says the Apostle John that He was manifested to take away our sins. You know that by the teaching of the Spirit, and if He takes away sin there will be no trouble left, and that is what every saint will know when he reaches heaven. There will be no sin, and therefore there will be no trouble, no night, because no sin, no pain because no sin, no tears because no sin.

Now how shall we praise this great God incarnate. May the Lord help us to sing a song of praise to the Trinity and all our songs centre in this - Worthy is the Lamb. The harpers in heaven harp with the harps and they sang as it were a new song before the throne and the song is this - Worthy is the Lamb. Do you say it? Does my heart say it? Worthy is the Lamb. Why do we say it? Has He come to us and blessed us? Yes. Some of us can say that. Yes He has blessed us, blessed our souls, blessed us by giving us access to His Father and by communicating something of His mercy to us. Therefore may we together unitedly say - Worthy is the Lamb, honours rest upon Him.

Immortal honours rest on Jesus' head

May these observations, so inadequate, have some influence, some moving influence upon our hearts, and though what I have said is infinitely beneath that blessed One, still if the observations should have the effect of making any of us say - Lord set us down in that mystery and let the blessings of that mystery, the greatness and the glory of that mystery come into our hearts in some measure then I shall not have spoken in vain.