

"We beheld his glory"

John 1: 14

N. Anderson.

As occupying ourselves with such a theme we are in good company. the Psalmist said, "My meditation of Him shall be sweet" (Psalm 104: 34). The remnant of Malachi's day were distinguished in the Spirit's record as being those "that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His Name." The remnant of early incarnation days had an Anna who "spoke of *Him* to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2: 38).

What a blessed occupation! The two disciples of John 1 enquired "Teacher, where abidest Thou?" How blessed to be *taught by Him*. How much more so to *abide with Him*!

We thank God for the example of disciples who said to him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6: 68). We remember, too, the woman of Samaria who declared, "Come, see a Man, which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?" Or the man of John 9 who exclaimed in answer to the question, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God? Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" Then, too, we have the Greeks of John 12 who said to Philip, "Sir, we would see Jesus." Listen to the words of the converted Pharisee, "That I may know Him" (Philippians 3: 10). Let us join the lonely exile of Patmos who, as he contemplated the firstborn from the dead as the Prince of the Kings of the earth, burst forth into praise crying, "Unto *Him* that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood . . . to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen" (Revelation 1: 5). Harken to the question asked of the hypocritical Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He?" (Matthew 22: 42). Let us take this question to ourselves and answer with Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16: 16).

In such a spirit we would enter the pages of John's Gospel. Let us remember that this Gospel was written towards the close of the first century of the Assembly's history. Can we imagine almost sixty years without John's Gospel! Does it matter whether we accept this presentation of our Lord or not? Such a question is answered in 1 John 4: 6, "We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us." Also the solemn word in his second epistle, verse 9, "Whosoever goes forward and abides not in the doctrine of the Christ has not God. He that abides in the doctrine, *he* has both the Father and the Son. If any one come to you and *bring not* this doctrine *do not* receive him into the house, and greet him *not*; for he who greets him partakes of his wicked works." How can a man *bring* the doctrine if he does not believe it?

Immediately we enter John's Gospel we are carried back before the beginning of everything which did begin. He had no beginning — He stands distinct from all creation — superior to all. "In the beginning was the Word" — His eternal existence; "The Word was *with* God" — His Personal distinction; "The Word was God" — His deity; "The Same was in the beginning with God" — He was eternally distinct in His Person. He has greater glory than all creation in virtue of the fact that He created everything — "All things were made by Him." As the Word, He is not only the Revealer, but He is what is revealed. When He was asked, "Who art thou?" He replied, "Altogether that which I also say to you" (John 8: 25, N. Tr). His word presented Himself.

In connection with this wonderful revelation as to distinction of Persons in the Godhead, there is also the manifestation of Personal Relationships. If these relationships are personal then they are eternal, for the Persons are eternal. Hence we learn that "The Word *became* (*He* was not made) flesh

and dwelt amongst us . . . full of grace and truth" (John 1: 14 N. Tr.). John reflecting in the power of the Holy Spirit upon the wonder of the incarnation said, "And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." He *was* — indeed He *ever is* — the unique Son. Five times in the writings of John He is called the Only-Begotten. This is the glory of His relationship (verse 14). Then in verses 18, the sweet intimacy of the Father's bosom belongs to this unique relationship. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only one of His kind — unique in relationship and in the sweetness of the affections proper to that relationship. This is the thought conveyed in the Name, Only-Begotten Son. There is not thought of birth or generation, the word is descriptive of unique relationship and love.

Five times, too, in the New Testament He is called *Firstborn*". Here again, it is not the thought of order of birth, but of rank. In Psalm 89: 27, God speaking of David His anointed king, said, "and as to Me, I will make him *firstborn*, highest of the kings of the earth." Evidently *firstborn*" is a title signifying distinction of rank, not of historic birth.

In Romans 8: 29, He is to be "*firstborn* among many brethren." In Colossians 1: 15, He is "*firstborn* of all creation." Having created all, coming by incarnation into His creation, He takes precedence over all. In verse 18 of the same chapter He is "*firstborn* from among the dead." In Hebrews 1 when He was brought as *firstborn* into the habitable world, the hosts of angels are commanded to worship Him. Again in Revelation 1: 5, He is "*firstborn* from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." So whether it be Creation, Resurrection, His brethren, the angelic hosts, or the kings of the earth, *He* takes the first place, "in all things He might have the pre-eminence."

Thus as the Firstborn — He is the chief, first in rank.

As the Only-Begotten — He is the Unique Son of the Father's love.

He became flesh, but He never became Son. As we ponder the glory and grace of His incarnation, let the Word of Truth, in the power of the Spirit of Truth, convince us that we are not beholding "Sonship by incarnation," but we are beholding "the incarnation of the Son." Thus, as the Word — and He is the Eternal Word — He is the revelation of God. As the "Only-Begotten Son" He is the Declarer and Manifester of the Father. He has brought to light the relationship in the Godhead with the affections proper to them.

Three things at least command our attention in the Gospel; the glory of His Person, the glory of His power, and the glory of His love. The miracles recorded in this Gospel have the character of signs. Whatever dispensational features come before us in them, and they are rich in such instruction, let us ever remember that their prime intent is to engage us with, as manifesting it to us, the glory of our Lord. "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name" (John 20: 31).

As we think of His glory let us remind ourselves that it comes before us in personal, moral, and official features. When we speak of personal glory, we think of who He is; when we think of moral glory, we think of His character, His conduct, His ways; when we speak of official glory, we think of the positions He fills.

He is presented to us in the course of the Gospel as the Shepherd of the Sheep (and this approximates to the truth of His Headship in Paul's writings). "There shall be one flock, one Shepherd" (John 10: 16).

He was amongst His own as the Comforter, the one who fully undertook for them (for He spoke of the coming Spirit as *another* Comforter"). He is The Bread of Life; He is The Door; He is The True Vine; He is The Son of David; He is The Son of Man; He is The Son of God; He is The Baptist with

The Holy Ghost; He is The Resurrection and The Life; He is The Light of the World; He is The Light of Life; He is The Last Adam ("He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" John 20: 22); He is The Feet-washer; He is The Coming One; He is The Administrator of all Things, for the Father so loves Him that He has given all things into His competent hands; He is The appointed Judge. The Father has committed all judgment to Him for two reasons.

First — "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father . . . which hath sent Him." Secondly — "because He is the Son of Man" (see John 5 verses 23 and 27). He is The Opener of the eyes of the Blind; He is The Conqueror over death and the grave; He is The Resource of His own in barren desert or in raging storm; He is The Ascended Man.

In these varied lights the Gospel presents Him. Wherever we view Him, morally or officially, we are constantly reminded that these things are predicted of *Him* who said of Himself, "Before Abraham was, *I AM*". He is God in the glory of His Person, however lowly He has stooped in the charm of His grace, or how else could we understand the words, "No man hath ascended *up to* heaven, but He that *came down from* heaven, even the Son of Man which *is in* heaven." (John 3: 13)? He speaks here of Himself under an official title attaching to Him on the side of His humanity, yet predicates of Himself that which attaches to Him on the side of His Godhead. Hence the danger of attempting to separate Godhead and Manhood in our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Let us distinguish without ever dividing; ever confessing that One Person subsists in both natures. He is God; He is Man; He is both God and Man.

This blessed conclusion is impressed upon us as we meditate upon Him as presented by the Spirit throughout the Gospel of John, and as we draw our meditation to a close we are reminded of three wonderful scenes at the close of the Gospel.

1) Thomas, convinced before Him anticipates the nation in his individual confession, "My Lord and my God" (John 20: 8, see also Isaiah 25: 9).

2) The disciple whom Jesus loved (love is of quick discernment) saith unto Peter, "*It is the Lord*" (John 21: 7), A fitting epitome for this Gospel which the Spirit inspired him to pen.

3) Peter in the moment of his thorough humbling, the Lord dealing with him for his full recovery amongst his brethren, said "Lord, *Thou knowest all things*; Thou knowest that I love thee" (John 21: 17).

Do we join him, dear brethren, before our glorious Lord of whom we read, "having loved *His own* which were in the world, He loved them to the end" (John 13: 1), and do we say in sincere confession to Him, "Lord Jesus Thou art omniscient, and although it takes omniscience to discern it because of its comparative smallness, we tell out our love to Thee — we dearly love Thee"?

His glory increases before us, but instead of affrighting, it attracts us, because it is the glory of Him who loves us with an eternal love and, "we love Him because He has first loved us."