

## The Glories of the Lord Jesus — John 1

Notes of an address by W. H. Westcott, 1921.

I propose to look at some of the leading glories of the Lord Jesus in John 1. In John 1: 1, He is spoken of as "the Word"; in John 1: 7, as "the Light"; in John 1: 18, as "the only-begotten Son"; in John 1: 29, as "the Lamb of God"; in John 1: 34, as "the Son of God"; in John 1: 41, as "the Christ"; in John 1: 49, as "the King of Israel," and in John 1: 51, as "the Son of Man." It is a very real thing that the Lord Jesus is our Saviour, and that we trust in Him. We love Him because He first loved us! Our sins were borne by the Saviour and our sinful nature has been condemned in His death; all that we were as children of Adam has passed under condemnation in the place that He took for us when He died. Moreover, we have been made partakers of His risen life in the sight of God; we have been given the Holy Spirit, we know that Jesus, our Saviour, is in heavenly glory; the Holy Spirit, dwelling in us down here, forms a definite link with Christ in glory; we can look up there and know that we are associated with Him — His Father, our Father; His God, our God; we are children of God and can say, "Abba, Father." In this chapter, the Spirit of God brings before us the greatness of the One who is our Saviour. One effect of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ in the greatness of His person, love and glory, is to make us love to own Him; to find out His people; to honour, worship and serve Him.

1. THE WORD. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Before the earth was ordered for man it had existence, because "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1: 1). However old this earth may be, it was ordered for man's dwelling place 6000 years ago; but when was the beginning? When God did begin to order the earth for man's dwelling place the earth was there. How did it get there? In the beginning, if 600 million years, really it does not matter. But if you could find out a beginning to things, we read, "In the beginning was the Word." The One who is your Saviour and mine, there He was. "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." So things had their beginning from Him. But He had no beginning, because "In the beginning the Word was." "What may the Word mean?" If you were to look at my face, naturally you would not be able to tell what was in my mind, or the secret working of my heart. But when I give you my word, it brings a good deal to light; of what was in my mind. In some such simple way we might understand John 1: 1. The One who is now our Saviour, was then and at all times, competent to bring out every thought in the mind of God.

We can bow reverently before Him in the knowledge that He is God, and spoken of here as the Word. Whenever the Godhead would express itself and tell out what the Godhead was doing, or about to do, the One in whom all the mind of the Godhead was brought to light, was the Word. The exact expression of all His wisdom was perfectly set out in this Person called the Word.

"All things were made by Him." Hebrews 1: 1, says that it was the Son who created all things, "God . . . hath spoken unto us by His Son . . . by whom also He made the worlds." So that we can think of Him as the Son. He is the same Person but spoken of under "the Word." He put into each thing a little expression of the glory of God. Therefore everything that was made carries with it an expression of the glory of God. In the grandest part of the creation you see all the beauty of the heavens. "The heavens declare the glory of God." If we understood the language of that wonderful creation it would tell us something of the glory of God, so with this earth. There is not a single thing that has ever been created but expresses the glory of God, because it was made by the One who is the expression of all that God is — "The Word." In the blue of the sky, the green of the vegetation, frost, snow, vapour, storm and wind; the sea, the mountains, beasts, flying and creeping things; if we knew how to interpret

them we should see some of the rays of the glory of God. Christ, who is the expression of all the mind of God, has put expression of God on every part of the creation; and although it is true we belong to a new creation, still the Lord takes pleasure in all His works. Every blade of grass might speak to us, of the mind of God; every leaf and twig, and all the sap that is drawn up from the ground into its outermost branches is an expression of the glory of God. Now the One who is your Saviour was and is God. He is competent to put some expression of the glory of God into every part of this wonderful universe. He must be a great Saviour!

2. "THE LIGHT." Then He is called "the Light"; John was sent to bear witness of the Light. If all this creation carries the expression of the glory of God, we might ask, "Well! think of the centuries of sorrow, do you mean to tell me all the things therein express the glory of God?" If we look at the condition of man today we must see that there is something wrong and that this state of things cannot be what God desires. This glorious Person, the everlasting Word, came down here and shone as the Light, representing what God was "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men." The Lord Jesus came here, and from the very start to the finish you can see a Man in the midst of all the surrounding evil who was wholly for the pleasure of God. The eye of God rested upon Him with exquisite delight! In that wilderness, what an oasis for the eye and heart of God! How joyous God was in seeing that every pulsation of His heart was according to His will; every word from His lips pure; every work of His hand and motives were absolutely pure! But then by that light we are able to take account of the awful background of man's sin. The Light shone here, and the purity of the Light showed up all the blackness, the evil of men. The coming of Christ was the great test which brought to light the awful condition of man. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." "He came to His own things" (neuter) and "His own people (masculine) received Him not" (not as in A.V.). He came to His own things in the land of Israel where He had the right to the throne of His father David; to the temple, to the priests and to where the sacrifices were offered; but in the midst of His own things, His own people, the Jews, received Him not. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born of God." So that His coming became the great test for the condition of the world. Those people that had been most privileged, and had information as to His coming in the written prophetic Scriptures, who ought to have known place, time and manner of His birth, turned against Him. His coming brought to light what was in man and the animosity of the human heart to God. This exposed the sin of man's heart as nothing else has. The One by whom the world was made, was given a stable at His birth, a gibbet and a borrowed grave at His death. So the light brought out the awful condition of sinful man. Our condition has been exposed, just Adam sinning against and hiding from God, and putting the blame on someone else; delighting to get rid even of God shewing Himself in grace.

3. "The Only Begotten-Son." "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 that brings in a third view of His glory. First, "The Word," then "The Light," now, "The only begotten Son" of the Father has been here to declare Him. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ not only exposes what man is, but He brought down into the world the full knowledge of what God is. So that, you have man declared, and God declared. All that man is in his sinfulness, his unsuitability for God, and his hostility to God, are brought to light; and on the other hand "The only begotten Son of the Father," He hath declared Him. Now that refers to His coming into the world. It was God's approach to man, and showed the way in which the blessed God sought to reach men and show them what was in His heart. We can see in the coming of the Word into the world as a babe, what is the end of it to us. God has approached man in such a way to take away their fears. When the angels spake to the shepherds their first words were, "Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." So, though they were frightened at

the appearance of the angel, the message he preached was calculated to take away all their fear. The only begotten Son has come here and has shown the character, the glory, and the heart of God in all His life, wherever there was pressure, or need, He acted in such a gracious way the people could see that He was there to do good. "He went about doing good, healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him." When He came to a blind man, his eyes were opened. That shows God does not like to see people blind. When He came across the paralysed man the Lord healed him. That means God is so good that He does not like to see people paralysed nor to see people suffering. So when He found a leper, the Lord instead of standing right at a great distance looked at him, saw all his misery, and actually touched him, and the leprosy departed instantly at the word of Jesus. God does not like people to have leprosy. So it was with every disease. When a sinner came to the Lord, as e.g., that paralysed man who at Capernaum, was let down through the roof, the Lord instead of being angry because the meeting was interrupted, looked on him and said, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." God does not like people to have their sins upon them. The woman of Luke 7 who came into the Lord's presence washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head; He said about her first of all, "Her sins which are many are forgiven"; and then He said to her, "Thy sins are forgiven thee. Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." That means again, that God did not want that poor woman to go on carrying her sins unforgiven. He wanted her to be saved and in peace. So it is, we find in all the ways of the Lord Jesus here, He is bringing out what was in the heart of God for man. And when we look at the cross of Christ we can see something of the unswerving truth of God, the righteousness and all the holiness of God brought to light there, because when Jesus went there to the cross it was for sin. He was there on behalf of the Godhead, very Man as Jesus was undoubtedly, yet when made sin He cried, "My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?" It tells us very plainly that God had forsaken Him. Oh! it is wonderful! God forsook Him so that there was no relief, no succour in that moment. It tells us as nothing else can the immeasurable holiness of God and the immeasurable awfulness of sin. We can see "The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." In that moment we can see, in the very way God did deal so thoroughly with the sin question, His great love for sinful men. See then these two things. He was the Light bringing out all that was in the heart of man in its wickedness, and He was the only begotten Son, bringing to light all that was in the Father's heart. Put these two things together — man's need and God's glory. Can these two things be reconciled?

4. "The Lamb of God." "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29). Now there you get the solution of this difficulty. I am sure it must be to you a very great delight to know that all you are has been examined and probed right down to the bottom, there is nothing in you nor in me that has not finally been brought to light; it has all been searched through and through. It has been searched out, measured and weighed up, on the one hand; and on the other hand all the glory of God has been taken account of; God's immeasurable holiness, His righteousness, all His claims, the sovereignty of His throne, the truth of His Word, all the pronouncement of His judgment upon sin, all that has been taken account of, as well as the love and grace in His heart. The Lord Jesus Christ has come as the Lamb of God to meet all that need in its awful exposure, and to meet all the glory of God at its full height and power. Being the Lamb of God, He would be One competent to meet all the glory of God and to sustain the whole weight of God's glory when it shone forth in that moment against sin. Then at the same time, "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" has come down to meet all the glory of God, and all the need of man. We can see the solution of this great question of good and evil in the cross and death and blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ. Here He is particularly represented as the Lamb; and only in this gospel do we read the story of how a soldier when Jesus had died, finding that He was

dead, took a spear and pierced His side, and when he did so there came out from the dead side of the Lord Jesus blood and water. John 19 refers to the blood of God's Lamb. He is the One whose glories are concentrated for us in John 1. When you read about that precious blood shed, it speaks of the blood of that One whose glories are so great. How precious that blood must be to God!

4. "The Lamb of God." You can understand that a father's heart in his deep love for his son, valued one drop of his son's blood. But God and God's Son! God's Lamb: and the blood of the Lamb shed! Do you not see this stupendous fact, the value that God must attach to one drop of His Son's blood — more than all the world. If all the world were to come at one time with a rush and make application to God for the pardon of all their sins, and to receive the blessing, because of the infinite value of that precious blood, God could and would receive them all. "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." It does not mean that all do come nor that all repent of their sins, or want to be blessed, but every one who does repent of his sins and wants to be cleansed, he, coming to God, finds there is value in that precious blood to cleanse away all his sin. So we find that our need is met; at the same time, the glory of God is maintained, and we can rejoice that our sins are pardoned, our sinful nature is condemned, our whole position has passed out of sight in the judgment of Christ for us; so that we should be linked with Him in resurrection in the sight of God. We can say, "It is right that God should do it. He has given His Son for that very object, He has maintained all the glory of God, and at the same time has met all our need."

5. "The Son of God." Now look a little further at what is said in John 1: 34. John the Baptist says, "I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." He has referred to Jesus as the One who was to baptise with the Holy Ghost. He says at first, "I did not know Him." "I only knew He would come. I knew He was to be made manifest to Israel, but I did not know Him, and I had a mark given to me by the very One who sent me." He said, "Upon whom you see the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and abiding on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. When he was baptising people the Lord Jesus came to him; sure enough the heavens were opened, the Spirit of God descended like a dove, and there came a voice acknowledging Him. John says, "I saw it, and bare record that this is the Son of God." Now have you ever thought of the Lamb of God bearing sin and its judgment? You have seen His blood shed as God's righteous answer to this. Can you not see Him now raised from the dead? Because He certainly is not dead now; but God has raised Him from the dead and given Him glory, and has sent down the Holy Ghost to us, because as the risen and ascended Man He had received of the Father the promise that had been given to Him (the promise of the Spirit); it was shed forth, as we read, at the day of Pentecost. There He is, the Lord Jesus, the risen Lord. He is there. The glory is just what it is; whether you see it or not. But what a grand thing it is when the soul can say, "I saw it." John says, "I saw it." It is just the moment in John's history, when the Person of Christ shone before him in all His majesty. In another sense, it was concealed; it was the glimpse of faith. To all appearance He was as other men, coming in the flesh. He says, "There standeth One among you, whom ye know not." There He was, Jesus of Nazareth, and John looked upon Him and said, "I saw it." You cannot see the Lord Jesus with your natural eyes. You see the ceiling with them; but with your faith-eyes you see taken out of death the One that bore all the judgment, and is now risen, and up there in the glory of God. Oh that the blessed Spirit of God might give you those faith-eyes. Christians, I mean, not merely sinners; but thank God for the day that a sinner's eyes are opened. But you who love the Lord, you know He died for you and put away your sins. How one would desire that you might be able to look up and to say in reality, "I saw it, and bare record that this is the Son of God." I tell you what it means. That by reason of the supremacy of the Son of God, He just supersedes every other person, He extinguishes every other object, and then you are entranced with Him. The day when the risen Son of God comes before the soul, you have your eyes upon Him, and you can see something of His glory, His

triumph, His majesty, all the Father's satisfaction in Him. When the Lord Jesus Christ simply outshines everything else, is a grand day in the history of your soul! What was the result? Well, he says the next day, "Behold the Lamb of God." Not so much now in connection with His work as His Person. And it says two disciples heard Him speak and followed Jesus. They had the temple in their eyes before, and the priests, the sacrifices, and the religious system as it had been originally set up of God, the earthly centre and the sacrifices and the ordinances, and the whole order of things connected with the temple before them, they had their eyes turned in that direction. But now that day there was a divine Person come down into their midst and they followed Him — set free from every entanglement; the Lord's free men set free from the religion of antiquity, and their interest in that attractive order of things, and attached to this living Person, the Son of God. The Son of God was competent to hold them and attract them to Himself.

6. "The Messiah." Now look at John 1: 41, "One of the two that heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, we have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." Messiah, as called by a Jew, was the Christ. He was called in Isaiah 61, and in Psalm 2, the anointed One. It brings before us the Lord Jesus Christ as the Man who God intended should be the Centre of the Old Testament, because you will see, all the way through the O.T., there was the promise of the Messiah: He was intended to heal Israel, and the nations of the earth for God. The promise centred round the coming of the Messiah, the seed of the woman, the seed of Abraham and David; He was to come to answer to God's will in all those Scriptures and hold every thing for God. So that when they said, "We have found the Christ," it meant that they had come to the Person who was competent to hold everything for God. But then that was only as far as they had learned it in connection with His place on earth. But, since He has died, risen and gone above, and God has made Him in resurrection both Lord and Christ, He is seated at the very centre of everything, in the midst of the throne of God; God has made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself that He would gather and head up everything in the hands of the worthy One, in whom we have obtained an inheritance. God in that way introduces us to Him not merely as the One who is supreme in God's eyes and the centre of His purposes, but as the Christ, who will hold everything for God. There is an illustration of it in natural creation. In the solar system the sun acts throughout the whole. Our planet, with all the other planets, are held in their position by the mighty attraction of the sun.

7. "The King of Israel." The blessed Lord Jesus Christ has been constituted God's Centre, and as the risen Man, the Christ, He will hold every part of the creation in right relations with God. You and I have been saved in order that we might have our part in connection with Him in the thoughts of God. We, who are Christ's, are to have a very peculiar place as associated with Him, just as Eve was associated with Adam. Now while that is so, it does not mean to say God is going to give up His promises regarding Israel. This same Person who is our Saviour, and holds all God's system of blessing together, is spoken of in John 1: 49 as "The King of Israel," He is the One who, in due time, will fulfil every promise of God in regard to the land and seed of Israel. He will free the land; He will take all in hand. He will come from heaven and will claim all lands; but He will claim the land of Israel specially, and then bring the people of Israel into it. People are going into it from political aspirations. They have gone into it under the auspices of the British Government. But, that is not in accordance with the mind of God. The Lord Jesus Christ will bring them into the land according to God; He will bless them, and all Israel will be saved; then blessing will go out to the nations. He will inherit all the rights of His father David, sit on the throne and rule. We shall rule with Him from above, but He will establish all the promises of God with regard to the earth.

8. "The Son of Man." The last verse says, "He saith unto him, verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." So we are introduced to the great moment when God will put everything into the hands of the Son of Man (Psalm 8); He will rule and exercise His beneficent sway over the whole of the creation.

Thus in John 1, if we consider it patiently and seek to take in the thoughts of the Spirit of God, we can see how very great our Saviour is. Those who simply know their sins forgiven and think there is nothing more that matters lose much real enjoyment. They little understand the vastness of the glories connected with Christ and how many interests He will serve; you and I have the privilege of entering into them with Him. We can look back into eternity and see Him glorious beyond telling there. "In the beginning was the Word." Then we can look on to the end and see the winding up of all human affairs, everything at last committed into the hands of the Son of Man. He is the First and the Last: in verse 1 "The Word," in the last verse, "The Son of Man." He has universal dominion. He is our Saviour. May God give us to value Him more, to honour Him, to delight in Him, and to esteem it a very great privilege to serve Him. If you had been living in those days you would have felt the judgment of those two disciples was right when they turned their back on the whole religious system of that day, even though it had been inaugurated of God. No religious system has been set up by God beside that one: all others are set up by men. But Christ came apart even from that one. He directed people to Himself apart from that, because all was going to be set aside. He is greater than all and will hold everything together. They heard John speak and they followed Jesus. Now that is exactly the place in which God puts us. If we do thus get set free from all entanglements, we find Christ sufficient to hold us together, we are gathered to Him. In keeping our eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ, He is sufficient to hold us together. When we get our eyes on one another we get cast down and lose courage: but when we turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, we find One who can certainly meet all our needs, and He satisfies all the affections of the heart of God. To this One we are brought, and He is sufficient to hold us together. The whole heavenly system will find its centre in the Son of Man.