

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

John 1:1-18

Intro: Verse 14 of John 1 makes it clear that the expression, "the Word," is a title, or even a name, of our Lord Jesus Christ. He could have had no one else in mind when he wrote, "And the Word was made," or became, flesh. That is, He became what He had not been before: a Man!

This was what was happening when the Lord Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary, and born in Bethlehem of Judaea. The Word had become flesh. We are told of His birth in the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke, but John declares the same truth in a very different way. He said, "And the Word became flesh..." That statement could not possibly describe the birth of any other person.

But that raises a question: Why is our Lord called, "the Word"?

There have been many attempts to explain this title philosophically, but we are interested in its Biblical, its theological meaning. Why is the Lord Jesus called "the Word"?

To answer that we need to understand the meaning of that title. It lit. means a speaking. It means not only that the Lord came to give a message, but it means that He is the message. There is no question but that this title of our Lord is related to one of the titles given to the Scriptures. It, too, is called the Word of God. It is God's message to man. It is God not only making known His truth, but God making Himself known. And the fact that the Lord Jesus and the Scriptures have the same name is an indication that there is an intimate relationship between Christ and the Bible. The Bible is the written Word; the Lord Jesus Christ is the living Word. In both God has spoken, and more than anything else, He has spoken of Himself. So we can say that the Bible is a revelation of God, and the same is true of our Lord Jesus Christ: He is the greatest, the final and complete revelation of God. Christ is called the Word because God has spoken in Him. Others have revealed God by their prophecies and by their works, but no one has revealed Him more than the Lord Jesus has revealed Him. God has spoken through others, but He has spoken more fully in His Son than through any other.

We sing of Christ as the Word in one of our most familiar Christmas carols. The stanza goes like this, and I know you will recognize it right away:

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning:
Jesus to Thee be glory giv'n;
Word of the Father, Late in flesh appearing:
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him,
Christ the Lord.

So in Christ we have a message from God which we not only need to hear, but which we need to understand, believe, and in which we need to place our trust. Christmas ought to be a reminder to us that God has spoken, and that the message which He has sent to us in Jesus Christ, His Son, is the most important message that has ever been given.

But before we think of the message, let us think of how the Lord Jesus Christ is qualified not only to give the message, but to be the message. Let me call your attention to verse 1 of this first chapter of John's Gospel.

I. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF OUR LORD TO BE "THE WORD" (John 1:1, 2).

We have three statements in this verse

- 1) "In the beginning was the Word."
- 2) "And the Word was with God."
- 3) "And the Word was God."

Nobody can really understand the coming of Christ into this world unless he understands these three terms. There is much more involved in the birth of Jesus of Nazareth than most people know.

A. "In the beginning was the Word."

This tells us that Jesus Christ did not begin to exist when He was born of the virgin Mary. That is one reason that verse 14 says that He "was made flesh," or became flesh. He existed before He became the baby Jesus. His birth marked the commencement of an existence that He did not have before.

Well, you say, how long had He existed before He was born in Bethlehem? The answer is here: "In the beginning was the Word." That is, go back to the beginning of all things and you will find not only that the Lord was there, but that He had always existed. As the Word He did not have a beginning. He is eternal!

That may be more than we can hope to explain, but we are not asked to explain it; we are simply asked to know it, and believe it. Every other person who has ever lived began to

exist at creation (as in the cases of Adam and Eve), or at conception. But not so with our Lord; He is eternal.

Let us notice the second statement:

B. "And the Word was with God."

This statement means that God and the Word are not the same Person. They are two different Persons. The Apostle John was recognizing here two Members of the divine Trinity. The Holy Spirit is the third Member. God and Jesus Christ and (let me add) the Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons.

But this statement also means something else very important. It means that there was an equality between God and the Word, or between God and the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that God was not any more Deity than the Lord Jesus Christ was. Every attribute, or characteristics, which God has, the Lord Jesus has also! There are no different degrees of Deity in the Members of the Godhead. And this is very important when we consider one of the main reasons that the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth.

So I hope that you are keeping these things in mind about our Lord.

C. "And the Word was God."

Therefore, it is not surprising that the Apostle John added that third statement: "And the Word was God." Jesus Christ is Deity. He always has been Deity. He always will be Deity. He has the same divine nature as the Father even though He and the Father are two distinct Persons. This is basic theology that I am giving you today, and how important it is for us to know what the Scriptures teach about our Lord, who is here called "the Word."

In order to stress the importance of what he had written in verse 1, the Apostle John emphasized what he had said in verse 1 by repeating part of it again in verse 2: "The same was in the beginning with God."

Now let me go on to my second main point:

II. THE BIRTH OF THE WORD (John 1:14).

Now it is very important to notice that when the Apostle John spoke of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth he used the same title in verse 14 that he had used in verse 1. What does this mean?

It means that the truth declared in verse 1 remained unchanged when "the Word was made flesh." In other words, when the Lord Jesus was born, He did not cease to be eternal. He did not cease to be equal with God. He did not cease to be God in any way. He became the God-man. He became Deity in human flesh. All of His divine character was joined with all that it meant for Him to be a true man, and yet in no way did He cease to be God! He was truly God and truly man, yet one Person. This is what Paul later called the first part of "the mystery of godliness"--"God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16).

Again, we may not be able to explain it, but we need to believe it so that we can profit from it.

Read the rest of verse 14, and then read verse 18 as well.

Now let me take these verses to go on to the third and last part of my message. I have called it:

III. THE MESSAGE OF THE WORD (John 1:3-18).

I am not going to try to go through these verses, verse by verse, but I want to pick out the main parts of the message that our Lord came to deliver to people on the earth. There is a unity to His message. You cannot accept only part of it. You must accept it all, or none of it will really be profitable to you.

From what I have been saying about verses 14 and 18, the first part of our Lord's message is:

A. He came to reveal God (John 1:14, 18).

The writers and prophets of the OT did this, i.e., they revealed God. But none did it as thoroughly as our Lord Jesus Christ did because He not only revealed the Father by what He said, and by what He did, but by what He was! In fact, His revelation of the Father was so complete, and so perfect, that He said to Philip (and you will find His words in John 14:9), **"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."** Moses never said that. David never said that. Isaiah never said that. The Apostles Paul, Peter, and John never said that. But the Lord Jesus said that because He was Deity, full Deity, in human flesh.

Therefore, let me say very emphatically today, on this Sunday before Christmas, if you want to know God, you can only know Him by getting to know Christ! He is the complete and perfect revelation of God. And this was a major part of our Lord's mission to the earth when He became a man.

Cf. Heb. 1:1-3.

Now issuing forth from that, let me point out three other very important aspects of the message that the Lord Jesus Christ came to bring to the world in His role as "the Word."

B. The Lord came as the Creator (John 1:3).

Genesis 1:1 tells us, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," and this is the truth. All of the Members of the Godhead were active in creation, but it is here declared that nothing was created but what our Lord had a part in it. And many of the miracles of the Gospel of John demonstrated His creative powers.

But I do not think that this is the only purpose behind this verse. The Lord Jesus came as the Word to confirm the truth that the earth and the heavens and all that is in them, including and especially man, are the creation of God.

What a difference it would make in the lives of countless numbers of people if they only knew and believed this part of the message of Christ. We did not make ourselves. We are not the result some evolutionary process. We are God's creatures, and, as such, are all responsible to Him! This is not our world; it is God's world. We have no right to live any way that we want to live; we are responsible to glorify God and to do His will. And failure to recognize our place in relation to God will only result in the most dreadful consequences for all eternity. When teachers in our schools and parents in our homes deny that God is the Creator of all things, they are leading those they teach right down the path to hell as fast as they can. If there is anyone here today who does not believe that God and Christ and the Holy Spirit created the heavens and the earth, then I say to you, "Wake up! You are headed the wrong way as fast as you can go."

But now let me help you a little from this early part of John's Gospel.

C. The Lord came as the Life and the Light (John 1:4-9).

If the Lord were the Creator (and He was), then He has life in Himself, and gives life. Even the Greek poets recognized this truth, and the Apostle Paul quoted them. They had said about God, "For in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28a).

God not only gives us physical life, but we have it only as long as He continues to give it to us. You and I would not

be able even to "move" without the continual provision of life from God.

But, as John makes it so very clear in this Gospel, there is another kind of life that we need. That is spiritual life, eternal life. But we are spiritually dead. We live in spiritual darkness. Only Christ can give us Light and Life. And it is in His life that we see light.

So I can say to you today that if you want to understand what your real need is, then listen to the message that God has given in His Son. The more you learn of Christ, the more you will see your own need. And there is no better place to get acquainted with Jesus Christ than in the Gospel of John. The message of God is to be heard and seen in Christ, the Living Word. As long as people are ignorant of Christ, they will remain in their ignorance of God and in their ignorance of what they need from God.

But let me say one more thing about the message God would convey to us in Christ, in the incarnate Christ, in the One Who was born in Bethlehem almost 2,000 years ago.

D. The Lord came as the Savior (John 1:10-13).

The Lord Jesus came into the world as its Creator. He came into the world as its Life and Light. But how thankful we can be that He came into this world as a Savior.

The verses in this section tell the message of salvation. The details are not all given here, but we are told that no one is a child of God who does not receive Christ, or, to state it another way, who does not believe on His Name.

The Lord Jesus came into the world not just to live and to minister for a little over three years, but He came to die. Most people do not know, and will never understand unless they hear the message of Christ, that salvation is a divine work. The message of the coming of Christ into the world is not a message telling us what we need to do in order to become God's children, but His very coming tells us that salvation is a divine work, and we need to seek that work of God in our hearts by which we are born into the family of God.

(Read John 1:10-13.)

Concl: People at Christmas time are inclined to think about the star, or the shepherds, or their sheep, or the angels, or the wise men, or the manger, but they miss completely the message of God through Christ. May it be

different with many this year. God spoke when Christ was born, and He has been speaking ever since through Christ. If you have not heard the message, focus your attention on the Living Word as you see Him in the written Word, and ask the Lord to give you eyes to see, and ears to hear, and a heart to understand. If you hear and understand and believe the message, it is because God has made you hear. And it is God alone Who can make you understand that there is no other way to heaven, no other way to have your sins forgiven, no other way to become a child of God, except in trusting the Lord Jesus Christ to be your Savior.

Come to Him today. Put your trust in Him. He will save you. That is why He came. The message that God has for you today is all in Christ.

CALL HIS NAME "JESUS"

Matthew 1:18-25

Luke 1:26-38

Intro: The two passages before us tonight have one thing in common: They both speak of the naming of our Lord. The difference is that Matthew's account has to do with how Joseph was told about Mary's son, and what His Name would be; Luke's account tells us about how the news was made known to Mary. Obviously it was given to Mary first because it was not told to Joseph until after Joseph found out that she was with child.

Both were told by an angel, but here again there was a difference. Mary was told when she was wide awake; Joseph was told when an angel appeared to him in his sleep. The truth of Heb. 1:14 never had a greater application than it did to Joseph and Mary. Speaking of the angels, the Apostle wrote,

Are they not all ministering spirits,
sent forth to minister for them
who shall be heirs of salvation?

And so we know that angels are messengers of God. Therefore, it is clear that it was God Who chose the name of His Son. The angels did not do it, nor did Joseph or Mary. Our Lord's human name was given to Him by His heavenly Father. And this is what gives it supreme significance. This was not the only name that our Lord was to have (as we shall see in the Matthew account, and could see also in other passages), but it was the name that He was to carry throughout His life here on earth, and the name which indicated the purpose of His coming to earth as a Man.

And so, first of all, let us consider together:

I. THE MEANING OF HIS NAME, "JESUS."

Historians tell us that this was a very common name. Many parents named their sons Jesus. The NT tells us of others who had that name. So it was no mark of distinction that our Lord was named JESUS.

On the other hand, we learn from its meaning that it was a very sublime name, a very noble name, a majestic name. It is the Greek equivalent of Joshua in the OT. It is a name which speaks of salvation. Many grammarians say that it should be explained as meaning Savior. However, it is not just Savior, but, as one writer has said, "With reference to Jehovah as its author" (Alexander, Joseph Addison, The Gospel According to Matthew, p. 13). And so our Lord was given a name which

indicated that His mission on earth had to do with salvation, a salvation that would be initiated, carried out, and completed by the Members of the Godhead.

I have told you repeatedly that the word salvation is the all-inclusive word for the work of God in our souls. It includes justification, sanctification, glorification, reconciliation, propitiation--all of the great words of the Bible that have to do with our salvation. And so we should not be surprised to learn that the word, "save," means primarily to preserve and to keep save, but it also includes the idea of one who actively is involved in rescuing sinners and delivering them from their sins.

Therefore, the angel's announcement that our Lord was to be called "JESUS" because "he" would "save his people from their sins" was far-reaching in its meaning. It meant that "his people" would be rescued from from their terrible plight of being under the judgment of God, would be preserved throughout life from the power and temptation of sin, and would be brought finally to heaven where they would never be able to sin again.

It was to Joseph that this explanation was given.

But we see another interesting thing here in Matthew's account that gives even more meaning to our Lord's name and to His mission. It is Matthew's reference to Isaiah 7:14. There we are told that the promised Redeemer would be called "Emmanuel."

Now we have no record that our Lord was ever known by this name. No one ever called Him, "Emmanuel." Possibly some day He will be called by that name, but so far that has not been the case.

But we can be sure that Matthew would not have raised the question if he had felt that this was a case where prophecy was not fulfilled. In fact he said that it was fulfilled! But he related its fulfillment to the name that was given to our Lord: "JESUS." What are we to learn from this?

We are to learn exactly what Matthew said we should learn. The naming of our Lord as "JESUS" was a fulfillment of that prophecy because nothing could have been greater proof that "God" is "with us." He may have been speaking in a secondary way of our Lord's presence on earth as a Man, but the primary meaning was that He appeared as One Who is on our side, One Who came to meet our need, One Who came to do for us sinners, "his people," what we could never have done for ourselves regardless of how long we might have to work on it.

The birth of Jesus Christ was evidence that the Son of God had arrived to take sides with His people by delivering them from their sins and keeping them for that heavenly kingdom. It is like Paul said in 2 Tim. 4:18. He was telling Timothy how the Lord had delivered him even when all had forsaken him. And then he added:

And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work,
and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom:
to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

This is salvation.

One thing we as Christians never need to worry about is whether or not God is with us. He proved that when He sent His Son. And Paul brought that great truth out in a most wonderful way in Rom. 8:31b, translating it as it ought to be translated, "Since God is for us, who can be against us?"

But now let us consider:

II. JOSEPH'S FAITH.

Among the godly men of Scripture we do not usually here Joseph, the husband of Mary, mentioned. But he ought to be. He was obviously one who was looking for the Redeemer to come. He had no idea that the one whom he was to wed would be the mother of the Messiah. He must have been crushed when he discovered that Mary was pregnant. But in order to protect her as much as possible, he planned to break their engagement as quietly as he could, never thinking that he was seeing prophecy fulfilled.

But the Lord had prepared his heart. And apparently without asking the angel any questions, he took Mary as his wife but did not act as her husband until after the baby JESUS was born. And then he did what the angel had told him that the God wanted him to do: He named Mary's baby, "JESUS." What an amazing story of faith this is. It truly illustrated Rom. 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Now let us consider:

III. THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE TO THE VIRGIN MARY (Luke 1:26-33).

I said a moment ago that the name "JESUS" has its humble side, but it also has its glorious side. In Matthew 1 we see the humbling of our Lord Who came to provide salvation from sin for His people. In the revelation given to Mary nothing was said about salvation from sin (except as it was to be seen in the name JESUS. In the revelation given to Mary we see the glory side of our Lord's mission on earth. The message to

Joseph had to do with our Lord's first coming; the message to Mary had to do with our Lord's second coming.

— The Lord came the first time to provide salvation; He is coming again to "reign...for ever." When He came the first time, His glory was veiled; when He comes again it will be revealed for all to see. And the significant thing is that He will still be bearing that name that is both common and lofty, "JESUS." He will come to inherit the throne of His father, David, and the world will then see Him as King of kings and Lord of lords.

What an amazing message to give to a lowly virgin who was preparing to get married to a carpenter! What was her response?

IV. MARY'S RESPONSE (Luke 1:34-38).

At first she had a question. See it there in verse 34--a very reasonable question.

Then the angel gave her the answer--and this was something that no woman had ever experienced before, or since!

— Mary was also told about Elisabeth. And then she was reminded of a truth that every devout Jewish woman knew when it came to the birth of children: "For with God nothing shall be impossible" (v. 37).

Then we see Mary's faith in verse 38. Like Joseph later, Mary's faith rested on the Word of God delivered to her by the angel, as impossible as it must have seemed to her at the first.

Concl: Let us be careful as we have considered these two accounts that we do not give exalt Joseph and Mary for their great faith. Instead, let us see that they believed because of the power of the Word of God upon their hearts. We can rejoice that they trusted the Lord, but the glory belongs to God, not to them.

— Instead, let us think of the far-reaching consequences of that event which took place almost 2,000 years ago. It was then that a Savior was born; it was there that the coming King of Israel and of all the earth was born. He was not born because anyone asked for Him to come. He was born because of the mercy and grace and love of God for "His people." Let those of us who know the Lord spend some special time at this Christmas season in thanksgiving, not only that our Lord came, and will come again, but that God in His mercy has opened our eyes to see our need of Him, and

that tonight we are trusting in Him.

It may be that there are some here tonight who are not saved from their sins. You have known about Christ, but you do not know Him. You are not trusting Him as your Savior. The Lord continues to call for sinners to come to Christ--not so you can do something to save yourself, but so that you may receive from Him the forgiveness of your sins, and the gift of eternal life. Come to Him, if you are not saved, and He will save you.