

## The Word Became Flesh John 1:6-8, 19-28

As we approach the observance of Christmas and prepare our hearts for the celebration that Jesus came and will come again, we explore the fact that Jesus came as the Word of God that became flesh to teach us about God and to save us from our sins. To understand John the evangelist's teaching we must understand that to the Jew a word was far more than a mere sound; it was something which had an independent existence and which actually did things. As Professor John Paterson has put it: "The spoken word to the Hebrew was fearfully alive. ... It was a unit of energy charged with power. Because the Jews saw words as powerful, Hebrew speech has fewer than 10,000 words compared to 200,000 words in Greek speech.

The words of Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone and Raccoon John Smith started a religious movement on the American frontier that has moved people around the globe, to seek God from the words of the New Testament writers. Their words did things to people. In the days of the French Revolution it is said the words of a song sent men marching to revolution. The words did things. Franklin Roosevelt was a man of powerful words, and he rallied his country together during the Great Depression and the Second World War. The words did things.

Words were powerful in the time of the writing of the Old Testament, and continue to be so in the East. To the eastern people a word has power which does things. It is said that some Middle Eastern persons gave a blessing to a stranger and were distressed when they discovered he did not believe as they and they asked if they could take their blessing back. We remember from the story of Isaac, when he had been deceived into blessing Jacob instead of Esau, nothing he could do could take that word of blessing back again (Genesis 27). The word had gone out

and had begun to act and nothing could stop it. In particular we see the word of God in action in the Creation story. At every stage of it we read: “And God said ...” (Genesis 1:3, 6, 11). The word of God is the creating power. Again and again we get this idea of the creative, acting, dynamic word of God. (Psalm 33:6; Psalm 107:20; Psalm 147:15). “So shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11; Jeremiah 23:29).

Everywhere in the Old Testament there is this idea of the powerful, creative word.

For the Greeks term for word is Logos; which means word and reason and wisdom. Therefore when we speak of Logos we speak of Jesus coming to this earth and being for us the Word of God and the Reason of God, and the Wisdom of God. So it was wisdom and the word who were God’s instruments and agents in creation and who brought the will of God to the mind and heart of mankind through Jesus Christ.

Jesus is that Logos come down to earth.” “The word,” said John, “became flesh.” We could put it another way—“The Mind of God became a person.”

So when John the gospel writer was searching for a way in which he could commend Christianity he found in his own faith and in the record of his own people the idea of the word, the ordinary word which is in itself not merely a sound, but a dynamic thing, the word of God by which God created the world, the word which expressed the very idea of the action of God, and the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament which was the eternal creative and illuminating power of God as found in Scripture. So John said: “If you wish to see that word of God, if you wish to see the creative power of God, if you wish to see that word which brought the world into existence and which gives light and life to every person, look at Jesus Christ. In him the word of God came among you.”

However, there is more to this Jesus than being the Word and Mind and Wisdom of God. You see Jesus fulfills our needs. There are at least four essentials for human life: light, air, water, and food. Jesus, the word that became flesh, is all of these! Jesus is the Light of life and the Light of the world (John 8:12). Jesus is the “Sun of righteousness” (Mal. 4:2). By the Holy Spirit, Jesus gives us the “breath of life” (John 3:8; 20:22), as well as the Water of life (John 4:10, 13–14; 7:37–39). Finally, Jesus is the Living Bread of Life that came down from heaven (John 6:35ff). Jesus not only has life and gives life, but Jesus is life (John 14:6). And those of us who believe on Christ are the “sons and daughters of light” (John 12:35–36). Just as the first Creation began with “Let there be light!” so the New Creation begins with the entrance of light into the heart of the believer (2 Cor. 4:3–6). The coming of Jesus Christ into the world was the dawning of a new day for sinful man and women (Luke 1:78–79).

You would think that the world would welcome the light, but such is not always the case. The coming of the true light and word brought conflict as the powers of darkness opposed it. They didn’t want the true light 2000 years ago and many don’t want to light now. We think it’s going to mess up our fun. We think, one day when I’m finished with what I want to do I will get around to accepting the light, the living Word of God, but not know.

John the Baptist was sent as a witness to Jesus Christ, the Word, to tell people that the Light had come into the world. The nation of Israel, in spite of all its spiritual advantages, was blind to their own Messiah! John the Baptist was one of many people who bore witness to Jesus, “This is the Son of God!”

Jesus is the “true Light”—the original of which every other light is a copy—but many are content with the copies. The Jews had Moses and the Law, the temple and the sacrifices; but they did not comprehend that these “lights” pointed to the true Light who was the fulfillment, the completion, of the Old Testament religion.

Jesus came to His own world that He had created, but His own people could not understand Him and would not receive Him.

John the Baptist had the special privilege of introducing Jesus to the nation of Israel. He also had the difficult task of preparing the nation to receive their Messiah. He called them to repent of their sins and to prove that repentance by being baptized and then living changed lives.

But John was not the light. He was not the word of God. John the Baptist is one of six humans named in the Gospel of John who gave witness that Jesus is God. The others are Nathanael (John 1:49), Peter (John 6:69), the blind man who was healed (John 9:35–38), Martha (John 11:27), and Thomas (John 20:28).

John gave the record of four days in the life of John the Baptist, Jesus, and the first disciples. He continues this sequence in John 2 and presents, as it were, a “week” in the “new creation” that parallels the Creation week in Genesis 1.

On the first day (John 1:19–24), a committee from the Jewish religious leaders interrogated John the Baptist. These men had every right to investigate John and his ministry, since they were the custodians and guardians of the faith. Their interest was very natural, because John was the son of Zacharias, and Zacharias was a priest (Luke 1:5). In Judaism the only qualification for the priesthood was descent. If a man was not a descendant of Aaron nothing could make him a priest; if he was a descendant of Aaron nothing could stop him being one. Therefore, in the eyes of the authorities John the Baptist was in fact a priest and it was very natural that the priests should come to find out why he was behaving in such an unusual way. However there were others who were emissaries of the Pharisees, members of the Sanhedrin. One of the functions of the Sanhedrin was to deal with any man who was suspected of being a false prophet. John was a preacher to whom the people were flocking in hordes. The Sanhedrin may well have felt it their duty

to check up on this man in case he was a false prophet. They asked him several questions and he clearly answered them.

“Who are you?” was a logical question. Was he the promised Messiah? Was he the Prophet Elijah who was supposed to come before the Messiah appeared? (Mal. 4:5) Great crowds had gathered to hear John, and many people had been baptized. Though John did no miracles (John 10:41), it was possible the people thought that he was the promised Messiah.

John denied being either Elijah or the Messiah. John had nothing to say about himself because he was sent to talk about Jesus! Jesus is the Word; John was but “a voice”—and you cannot see a voice! John pointed back to Isaiah’s prophecy (Isa. 40:1–3) and affirmed that he was the fulfillment. John had a special mission to go before Jesus and announce his coming. John the Baptist was sent for people’s benefit to be an additional pointer to the truth of Jesus, the Revealer of the Father. People in sin are in such darkness that they need someone to tell them what is light. John’s goal was that all people might come to trust in Jesus.

Having ascertained who John was, the committee then asked what he was doing. “Why are you baptizing?” John got his authority to baptize, not from men, but from heaven, because he was commissioned by God (Matt. 21:23–32). The Jewish religious leaders in that day baptized Gentiles who wanted to adopt the Jewish faith; but John baptized Jews!

John explained that his baptism was in water, but that the Messiah would come and baptize with a spiritual baptism. Again, John made it clear that he was not establishing a new religion or seeking to exalt himself. He was pointing people to the Savior, the Son of God (John 1:34), who is God, who will give us a relationship

with God.<sup>1 2 3</sup> John the Baptist made it clear that he was only there to introduce the speaker; he was not the main attraction.

Jesus Christ was and is the light and the word. And it is Jesus who reveals God to us (John 1:18). We can see God because God is invisible to us (1 Tim. 1:17; Heb. 11:27). But we can see God revealed in nature (Ps. 19:1–6; Rom. 1:20) and in God’s mighty works in history; but we cannot see God Himself. Jesus Christ reveals God to us, for He is “the image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15) and “the express image of His person” (Heb. 1:3). Jesus is the one who explains, unfolds, and leads the way to God. Jesus Christ explains God to us and interprets God for us. We simply cannot understand God apart from knowing God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus is still the light and the word because he is “the Son of God” (John 1:34, 49; 3:18; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 19:7; 20:31). Today scripture continues to point us to Jesus and Lord and Savior; as the light; as the Living Word of God; as God’s Wisdom. Jesus is not only the Son of God, but Jesus is God the Son. (Mark 3:11; Luke 4:41). The Light is still shining! Jesus is still the Word of God become flesh! Each of us must personally receive the Light and Word and become a child of God and walk in God’s light.

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<sup>1</sup>Wiersbe, Warren W.: *The Bible Exposition Commentary*. Wheaton, Ill. : Victor Books, 1996, c1989, S. In 1:4

<sup>2</sup>Walvoord, John F. ; Zuck, Roy B. ; Dallas Theological Seminary: *The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Wheaton, IL : Victor Books, 1983-c1985, S. 2:272

<sup>3</sup> Barclay, William, lecturer in the University of Glasgow (Hrsg.): *The Gospel of John : Volume 1*. Philadelphia : The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975 (The Daily Study Bible Series, Rev. Ed), S. 25