

“The Word Made Flesh”

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“And the Word was made / became 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” (John 1:14)

God in the Flesh

We have already learned that the Word was in the beginning with God, “and the Word was God” (John 1:1). Therefore when we are told that “the Word was made flesh” we know that it is the same as though it said, “God was made flesh.” This is most sacred ground, and no one should presume to think of it, much less to speak or write of it in any other language than that of the Scriptures itself. Untold evil has resulted from the attempt to define and explain God in human creeds.

Which Flesh?

“All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds” (1 Cor. 15:39). Of course there is no chance for thought that the Word was made any other flesh than that of men; but the point to be noted is that there is but one flesh of men, so that when the Word was made flesh, He took a nature common to all men, high and low, rich and poor. He was “born of the seed of David according to the flesh” (Rom. 1:3). He is “the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

The Nature of the Flesh

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like” (Gal. 5:19-21). No man has any reason to despise another. Whenever we hear of a brutal crime, or see a man grossly degraded by sin, we may know that it is simply the natural working of the flesh which we share in common with him. It needs this view before us, to enable us to comprehend the wonderful love that would lead the pure and holy God to come into such flesh. But this was the very flesh which the Word was made.

“Yet Without Sin”

Although the Word was made flesh, even our own sinful flesh, He was “full of grace and truth.” He was “in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). God made Him “to be sin for us,” yet He “knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21). He was made to be sin, yet He “committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His

mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). It is these two things combined that make Him a sympathizing Saviour, in whom we may freely confide. No one can sympathize with another's failings, if he has not been tempted in the same way. Moreover, those who are guilty of any sin are the quickest and fiercest to condemn others for the same sin. Sinners excuse sin, but have no sympathy for fellow-sinners. It is only those who are cleansed from sin, who can exercise charity for the erring. Christ was tempted to the uttermost, and was always pure from the slightest taint of sin; therefore we may trust Him as one who knows and who cares.

Able to Help

"Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted" (Heb. 2:17, 18). And "He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him" (Heb. 7:25).

People sometimes imagine that because Christ never sinned, He cannot so fully sympathize with us in our sin; but that is just why He can. He knows the strength of temptation as no one else does, for He felt all the power of Satan. The one upon whom the enemy exerts all his power in vain, knows the extent of that power more than the one who yields to it. The man who pulls against the tide knows its strength better than the one who floats with it; and the man who successfully breasts the current knows its strength better than the one who is swept back by it. So Christ not only knows all our need, and cares for it, but He is able to deliver.

For Whose Benefit?

It is quite commonly assumed that the Word was made flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth eighteen hundred years ago, in order that He might learn man's condition and needs, and thus be able to sympathize with and help them. That this is a mistaken idea can be seen by a moment's reflection, as well as by plain statements of Scripture. The Psalmist says, "For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust" (Ps. 103:14). Again, "O Lord, You have searched me and known me. You know my sitting down and my rising up; You understand my thought afar off. You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether" (Ps. 139:1-4). It is He upon whom men must depend for a knowledge of themselves. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind" (Jer. 17:9, 10). "O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23).

All this was as true eighteen hundred years before Christ as eighteen hundred years after. God knew men as well, and sympathized with them as much, four thousand years ago as He does today. When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, "in all their affliction He was afflicted" (Isa. 63:9). The prophet could say of a truth, seven hundred years before Christ, "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isa. 63:4). God was in Christ, not that He might know men, but in order that man might know that He does know them. In Jesus we learn how kind and sympathizing God has always been, and have an example of what He will do in any man who will fully yield to Him.

Still in the Flesh

"Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God" (1 John 4:2, 3). To confess Christ, it is not enough to believe that He once lived and suffered and died and rose again. We must confess not merely that He did come in the flesh, but that He "is come in the flesh." He is a present Saviour. As in all the afflictions of the Israelites of old He was afflicted, so now "we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses" (Heb. 4:15). He still feels everything that touches us, for He is still in the flesh. Even in the heavenly places. He is still "the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). He is our forerunner, one of the brethren who has gone before to prepare a place for the rest. When He comes again, He will come in the flesh for His flesh did not see corruption and the same flesh that went into the grave also ascended to heaven. "He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things" (Eph. 4:10).

In Every Man

The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, literally, "tabernacled in us." But since all human flesh is the same, and Christ took the flesh common to humanity, to show how closely God is identified with the human family, it follows that He is in all, just to the extent that any will allow Him. Remember that "the life was the light of men," and that it "lights every man that comes into the world." "He is not far from every one of us," which means that He is very near to every one of us, so near that "in Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:27, 28). The demonstration of the fact that the Word is in all flesh, is seen in that all know themselves to be sinners, and that even the wickedest men have at times pricking of conscience, and desires and even determinations to live better. This is the work of the Spirit, Christ's representative, striving with them.

STILL further, we have the words of Moses, in Deuteronomy 30:11-14, quoted by the Apostle Paul in Romans 10:6-8. From these two texts we learn that "the Word" of

which Moses speaks is Christ, the same Word of which John writes. So we read, "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (Rom. 10:8). This is not spoken to those who are perfect, but to those who are being exhorted to hear and do the commandments of God. "But the word *is* very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it." (Deut. 30:14). It is not there because we have done it, but in order that we may do it. Therefore it must be in every man, since God is no respecter of persons, desiring that all shall repent and live.

YET again we read, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified" (2 Cor. 13:5). The disqualified is the one who is rejected as worthless. But God does not reject anyone who has not first rejected Him. He will never leave any man who has a desire for His presence. He does not leave men to themselves until they drive Him away. Christ, therefore, the Word who is God, is in every soul that comes into the world, lingering there until ordered out.

Confessing Christ

We have read that every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. Now read once more Romans 10:6-8, which tells us that the Word, even Christ, is very nigh us, in our mouth, and in our heart, and read onward, "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). To confess Christ, therefore, is to acknowledge that He is in us with power, even the power of the resurrection, and that He has a right to be there, having purchased us by His death; and that means to yield ourselves to Him fully (for He will not use any force), that His life may be manifested in us in its perfection, and not fitfully in the intervals when we do not repress it. "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Prov. 3:6). Then we may say, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal. 2:20).

Free Course for the Word

We have read that the Word is very nigh us, in our mouth and in our heart, waiting for recognition. What is wanted is that Christ may dwell in the heart by faith. (Eph. 3:17). "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). If we hear the Word and believe it, then Christ, the Word, dwells in our heart by faith; and in those who believe, it works effectually. But in spite of the fact that the Word is living active, and powerful, it can do nothing in us contrary to our will, because it is love. Therefore upon us depends whether or not the Word shall

work effectually in us. So the Apostle Paul asked the brethren to pray for him and his companions, that the Word of the Lord might have free course and be glorified, even as with them. (2 Thess. 3:1). The Word is living water, and must be allowed unhindered flow, or else it ceases to be life to us.

Holding Back the Word

In Rom. 1:18 we read of men “who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” That does not say that they merely have the truth in unrighteousness, but that they hold it. It ought to be allowed to run; they hold it back. If that repressing is persisted in, the Spirit of the Word will finally be driven out, and the light that is in them will become darkness. But if we confess our sins, as the Word shows them to us, the Word of God will grow mightily, and prevail. (See Acts 19:18-20).

The Practical Result

We have seen that Christ, the Word who is God, is inseparable from the written Word. If we believe the Scriptures, Christ dwells in the heart by faith. The mystery of God made flesh is to be repeated in us. “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27), is the mystery of the Gospel. Since Christ is in the Word [as the Word], when it is received in faith, we have the Word made flesh, even our flesh, by yielding ourselves to all the requirements of the Word. Christ said, “I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart” (Ps. 40:8). He is “the same yesterday, today, and for ever” (Heb. 13:8). Therefore if He dwells in our heart by faith, He will render in us the same obedience to the law that he did of old. The righteousness of the law will be fulfilled in us. We shall be doers of the Word, and not hearers only; its precepts will be things of life, vitalizing our flesh; and we shall live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.