

Teaching 1: “The Word became flesh...”

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³ And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. [Genesis 1.1-3]

God called creation into existence by the power of his word.

As the Psalmist wrote:

⁶ By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth.

⁹ For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. [Psalm 33.6,9]

We worship the Lord God of all creation: he who speaks reality into being.

Now John tells us that:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. [John 1.1-5]

The Psalmist wrote: “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made.” John tells us that Jesus is the Word of God. All things are made through him.

We worship a Trinitarian God: in the beginning God created ... the Spirit of God hovered ... and God said. Through his Word all things were created. The Son is the eternal Word of God. He was not created. He is one of the Persons of the Trinity.

But at one moment in Creation - at one indescribable point in time and space - the eternal Word was born as a man.

In John’s first letter he tells us - in words that can barely contain his awe and wonder:

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. [1 John 1.1-2]

In his Gospel, John tells us that:

¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. [John 1.14]

And the author of Hebrews adds:

³ The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. [Hebrews 1.3a]

The man Jesus was the expression, in human form, of the eternal and almighty Lord God of all creation.

Now John tells us that Jesus said:

²⁸ I came from the Father and entered the world... [John 16.28a]

³⁸ ...not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. [John 6.38b]

And Paul tells us that:

⁸ When [Jesus] appeared in human form, he humbled himself by living a life of utter obedience to God, even to the extent of dying a criminal's death on a cross. [Philippians 2.8]

The man Jesus was completely obedient to God's will.

Through his obedience, God's will was done on earth as it is in heaven. Paul continues:

That is why God has now lifted him so high, and has given him the name beyond all names, [Philippians 2.9]

The name beyond all names:

¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. [Acts 4.12]

² [Jesus] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. [1 John 2.2]

Through that sacrifice, Jesus opened Heaven's gates. They stand open so that there's no obstacle to us approaching our Heavenly Father. As Paul puts it:

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

[Romans 8.1-2]

In [Jesus] and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

[Ephesians 3.12]

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, you have been adopted into the very family circle of God and you can say with a full heart, "Father, my Father". The Spirit himself endorses our inward conviction that we really are the children of God. [Romans 8.14-16]

The Word became flesh...

The eternal Word, through whom all things were made, took on human form.

Through the obedient sacrifice of the man Jesus, the will of God - the will expressed in his eternal Word - was done.

Heaven's gates were opened. NOTHING now stands between us and God. We can know the Lord of all Creation as our Heavenly Father.

The Word became flesh ... so that YOU can pass through the gates of Heaven into your Heavenly Father's presence.

Teaching 2: “...and made his dwelling among us.”

The Word became flesh ... and opened up the way for us to know the Lord God of all creation as our Heavenly Father.

For you are the children of God now; the live, permanent Word of the living God has given you his own indestructible heredity. [1 Peter 23]

And when Jesus opened Heaven’s gates he opened the way not only for us to approach God, but also for God’s Holy Spirit to come to us. He himself said:

Very truly I tell you, it is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. [John 16.7]

The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. [John 14.17-18]

His words make it clear that when we invite the Holy Spirit to indwell us, we are inviting Jesus himself to live in us. Jesus makes no distinction between them. “I will not leave you as orphans,” he says: “**I** will come to you.”

When the Word became flesh, he made his dwelling among us in one man at one time in one place.

But now, because of the unfailing obedience of that man, who so perfectly expressed in human flesh the nature of God, the way is open for his Spirit to dwell in each one of us. If we invite him, then the eternal Word will make his dwelling in us.

What does this mean for us? Well, we know that through Jesus - his Word - God speaks to us.

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. [Hebrews 1.1-3a]

No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known. [1 John 1.18]

And Jesus promised:

“the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” [John 14.26]

God speaks to us.

And his words reveal his will. They give us a glimpse of the world as he sees it.

That’s what he did for Abram: a childless old nomad.

He took him outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” He also said to him, “I am the Lord, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to take possession of it.” [Genesis 15.5,7]

When Abram looked up at the night sky, he glimpsed a vision of the world as God saw it: a world in which he was not an elderly, rootless man with no hope of an heir; a world in which he was instead Abraham - father of a multitude - and he believed it, even though it made no earthly sense.

Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness. [Genesis 15.6]

And that, of course, is what Paul described as faith.

Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen; it gives us assurance about things we cannot see. [Hebrews 11.1]

This is the example that was set by Jesus himself - “the pioneer and perfecter of faith”:

For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. [Hebrews 12.2]

He couldn't yet see the joy that was set before him, but he obeyed - he endured - because he believed.

Jesus knew, and Abram also somehow discerned, that God's words have prophetic power. The Lord says:

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. [Isaiah 55.10-11]

In the beginning, God called reality into being by the power of his Word, and he is still doing it today. When he speaks to us,

God calls into being things that were not ... summons the things that do not yet exist as though they already do ... speaks of the nonexistent things [that He has foretold and promised] as if they [already] existed. [Romans 4.17]

It might be through Scripture, through something someone says, through events ... when we invite the eternal Word to live in us, we can hear him speaking in various ways. And what he reveals is the world as God sees it. He takes away the earthly veil and shows us the heavenly reality: the things that do not yet exist on earth.

Why? Because God has given us an awesome part to play in his kingdom. He has chosen us to be the means through which he calls those things into being.

“You did not choose me,” says Jesus, “but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.” [John 15.16]

Because when we believe what we have heard - when we follow the examples of Jesus and Abram and all those other Hebrews 11 heroes of faith - and act on what we believe - that's when God's kingdom comes. That's when the glimpse of Heaven that he's given us is made real on earth.

Abram fixed his eyes on God's promise of land and an heir. Jesus fixed his eyes on the joy that God set before him. They saw the heavenly reality, and by accepting its truth they became the means through which it was made real on earth.

God calls us to do the same. He gives us glimpses of heaven and asks if we are willing, by our words and deeds, to bring them to earth.

He tells us not to worry, because he knows all our needs.

Do we trust him enough to be obedient to his calling, even when we can't see how it will pay the bills?

He tells us that he is God from everlasting to everlasting: the creator and Lord of time as well as space.

Do we trust him enough to be obedient to his calling, even when we can't see how we'll find the time?

He tells us that he goes before us and will never forsake us.

Do we trust him enough to be obedient to his calling, even when we can't see how we, of all people, are supposed to do it?

He tells us that he is the God who heals.

Do we trust him enough to ask him for healing - and to keep asking, even when we can't yet see his answer?

He gives us promises or pictures or words for our future.

Do we trust him enough to fix our eyes on that glimpse of heaven, and not on how the world looks through earthly eyes?

As Elizabeth said of Mary:

Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!

[Luke 1.45]

In the beginning was the Word.

In the birth of Jesus, the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

In his death and resurrection, Heaven's gates were opened so that we could approach our Heavenly Father and receive his Holy Spirit.

And when we choose to accept that gift, that's when we enable the eternal Word, today in this place, to make his dwelling among us.

Two thousand years ago, the eternal Word spoke and acted through the man Jesus.

Through his words and actions, the will of the Father was made real on earth.

Today, when the eternal Word lives in us, it is through our words and actions that the will of the Father is made real on earth.

When we are willing to be the means through which his Kingdom comes, that's when we can say, with Jesus:

"I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do." [John 17.4]