

The Wicket Gate Magazine

A Continuing Witness



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- Sermons preached by Dr Needham and Mr Seaton
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The Everlasting Word

The purpose of the gospel according to John, in John's own words, is to enable us to "believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God," that, "believing, we might have life through his name."

At the very outset of his gospel, then, he is at pains to place before us the absolute uniqueness and Divinity of this Son of God, so that those who do come to believe in His name may know Who He is and, therefore, may be able to comprehend something of what the Lord requires of them. The "description" of our Lord Jesus which the apostle John employs in his gospel is one that is almost exclusive to that apostle, in the fullest sense of the term, and it is this: "***The Word***" "in the beginning was ***the Word***," says John in the very first lines of his gospel. And although it's a term that has meaning that probably only eternity itself will reveal in all its fullness, nevertheless, the immediate application to all our hearts is clear: Christ is the One who reveals the Father in heaven. Further down in the gospel we find the truth stated that "No man hath seen God at any time," but, it goes on to say, "the only begotten Son, (Christ) which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." He has "proclaimed Him," if you like – He has spoken Him forth. This He has done, because He is "The Word of God." "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son." In this immediate sense, Christ is "***The Word***" of God: He tells forth God.

However, it is not so much in the "Activity" of Christ, as the Word of God, that I want us to centre our thought for the moment but in the "Person" and the "Being" of our Lord Jesus Christ under that title. And John tells us three things about our Lord Jesus which form the very heart of the doctrine of the Deity and the Divinity of our Saviour. First of all, he tells us, ***when*** the Word was; then he tells us ***where*** the Word was; and finally, he informs us ***who*** the Word was.

(1)

“In the *beginning* was the Word,” says John. And to the questions, *when* was Christ? *When* did Christ begin to exist? John, by the Holy Spirit of God, supplies us with the answer: Christ *never* began to exist! And the reason for this is that he *always* existed. “In the *beginning*,” says the apostle. And take that beginning for whatever you like – the beginning of time – the beginning of the heavens – the beginning of creation. Whichever way you want to interpret “beginning” – whatever the beginning, or whenever it began – the Word of God was already there. The Holy Spirit doesn’t say, “*From* the beginning was the Word:” as though the beginning took place and from then on Christ appeared on the scene. No, no; He says, “*In* the beginning ...” Whenever the beginning began, to accommodate it to our poor fallen minds, says the Lord the Holy Spirit, the Word was already there: “*in* the beginning ...”

He goes on to say, “In the beginning *was* the Word.” And that’s very important. You’ll see that this word “*was*” is used many times throughout this first chapter of John’s gospel; yet is used in two very different ways, because there are two very different words in the Greek language in which the New Testament was given by the Holy Spirit of God in the first place. In verse 6 we read these words; “There *was* a man sent from God whose name was John;” that is, John the Baptist. Again, in verse 14 we read, “And the Word *was* made flesh and dwelt among us.” But, the “*was*” of the first verse is very far different from the “*was*” of the sixth verse, or the fourteenth verse. The word that is translated “*was*” of in verse six and in verse fourteen is a Greek word pronounced “Egeneto”, and it means this; it means “began to be”, or “became”; and it is absolutely straightforward in the case of this man John the Baptist – “there *began to be* a man sent from God whose name was John.” But, “Egeneto”, isn’t the word used in verse one where it says, “In the beginning *was* the word;” that’s an entirely different word; a word pronounced “En”, which means, not “began to be”, but, “already was.” The word of God *already was* in the beginning. Verse fourteen uses the same word that is used with regards to

John; but again, this is absolutely straightforward, “And the Word *began to be* flesh, and dwelt among us...” In God’s appointed time, “The Word was – egeneto (began to be) made flesh, and dwelt among us.” But, “In the beginning was – en (already was) the Word.”

Our Lord didn’t begin His existence at Bethlehem: “Before Abraham was, I am,” He said. Nor yet did He only appear at the creation of the world, for, says He to His Father, “Glorify thou me with the glory that I had with thee *before the world was.*” Nor even when the devil and his host rebelled in heaven, for, He says, “I beheld Satan fall as lightening from heaven.” Paul sums up the whole doctrine in the first chapter to the Colossians: “He was *before all things*, and by him all things consist.” *When* was the Word? The Word was *always* – “from everlasting to everlasting.”

(2)

John also tells us – *Where* the Word was. “In the beginning was the Word,” he says, “and the Word was *with God.*” And in case we haven’t grasped that truth of the eternal co-existence of the Son with the Father, he repeats it for us in the next verse: “The same – this same Word – was in the beginning – this same beginning – *with God.*” That’s where our Lord is pointing us in that verse just mentioned when He speaks about “the glory” that He had with the Father “before the world was.” In heaven’s glory, He was worshipped with the Father long before the worlds were called into existence. They worked together – “Let *Us* make man in our image.” They governed the universe together, “Let *Us* go down ...,” you remember at the tower of Babel. “The word was *with God.*” “Then was I with him, as one brought up with him,” says our Lord through the word of prophecy; and from the Father’s side, we have that great verse in Zecariah where the terms of our redemption are drawn up: “Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd,” says the father, “and against the man that is my fellow.” Literally, “against the man who is face to face with me.” When God drew up those plans of redemption and decreed that “without the shedding of blood” there would be no remission of sins, and

when He declared that “There was none other good enough to pay the price of sin,” and not only delivered “the good shepherd” who would give His life for the sheep, but “bade His sword awake against that shepherd” – it was not only against the shepherd, but against “the man that is my fellow” – “the man that is *with Me.*” **When** was the Word? The Word was always – Christ was *always*: “In the beginning was the Word.” **Where** was the Word? “The Word was *with God* ... the same was in the beginning with God.”

(3)

He tells us plainly, too, - **Who** the Word was. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God *and the Word WAS God.*” That’s the very heart of the gospel. “Whom do men say that I am?” Oh, say the cultists, John simply means that Jesus – the Word – was “a” god; “and the word was *a* god.” How futile this is; the apostle John was an orthodox Jew even before he was a Christian. Any thought of “another” God would have been unthinkable to him. He had learned the Shema; “The Lord thy God is *one* God ...” But, even allowing the cults their interpretation, they still have to answer, “What kind of a God, then, was this Word? For, it doesn’t say that “The Word *was* – egeneto (became a) God;” no, no; it says that “The Word *was* – en (already was) God.” If therefore, this Word is such a God that never had any creation, and, therefore, uncreated, then, surely, it is worthy to be called the only true God!

And, of course, it is the question of the creatorship of the Word of God that was from the beginning that much of the argument for His Godhood lies. That this Word is the creator is quite beyond argument. Verse three: “All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” And Who is it that “can create and can destroy?” The prophet Isaiah gives us the answer: “Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the *creator* of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?” Whatever creates, then, is “the everlasting God, the Lord ...” And, says John, “All things were made *by Him* ...” – The Word – Jesus. Who can create, but God?

And Who is *eternal* but God? Yet, we remember, “In the beginning *was* the word ...” The Word then, is both eternal, and creator of all things. Remember the creation text: “Let *us* make man in *our* image.” And so “God created man *in His own image.*” What does it mean when it says “*us*”? It means that eternal power and Godhead existing in Three Divine Persons – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – one God blest for ever. In simple theological terms, the Lord Jesus Christ – the Word, of Johns gospel – is co-eternal, co-existent, and co-equal with the Father in heaven.

“In the beginning was the Word”	- His co-eternity
“And the Word was with God”	- His co-existence
“And the Word was God”	- His co-equality

“This, This is the God we adore.”



Gleanings In the Psalms

(Psalm 48)

Verse 1 “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised ...”

According to His nature should His worship be. It cannot be too constant, too earnest, too reverential, too sublime. There is none like the Lord, and there should be no praises like His praises.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Verse 2 “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.”

“*Beautiful for situation.*” Jerusalem was so *naturally*, and was so styled the Queen of the East. The Church is so *spiritually*, being

placed near God's heart, within the mountains of His power, upon the hills of His faithfulness, in the centre of His providential operations. The elevation of the Church is her beauty. The more she is above the world, the fairer she is. ***"The joy of the whole earth is mount Zion."*** Jerusalem was the world's star; whatever light lingered on earth was borrowed from the oracles preserved by Israel. An ardent Israelite would esteem the holy city as the eye of the nations, the most precious pearl of all lands. Certainly the Church of God, though despised of men, is the true joy and hope of the world. ***"On the sides of the north, the city of the great King."*** It was the glory of Jerusalem to be God's city, the place of His regal dwelling, and it is the joy of the Church that God is in her midst. The great God is the great King of the Church, and for her sake He rules all the nations. The people among whom the Lord deigns to dwell are privileged above all others; the lines have fallen into them in pleasant places, and they have a goodly heritage.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon

Verse 3 "God is known in her palaces for a refuge." As the walls, houses, and palaces of Jerusalem were not the strength of the citizens, but God was her strength, as they had learned by experience; so worldly strength is not the confidence of God's church, but God only, who defendeth her by His power. "God is known in her palaces for a refuge."

David Dickson

Verse 4 and 5 "For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it ... and hasted away." They were many and powerful; "Kings" – and a plurality of them. They were confederate kings, for "The kings were assembled." Forces united are the most powerful. But all the endeavours of those confederate kings came to nothing. "They passed by together," - together they came, and together they vanished.

William Nicholson

Verse 7 "Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind." It is only by her Lord that the church gains "the *true* riches." When

she enters into traffic with the world, and takes the means of the world for her resources; when she trusts in her wealth, in her political power, and her earthly cunning to make merchandise, the Lord will “break” her “ships of Tarshish with an east wind.”

From - A Plain Commentary on the Book of Psalms

Verse 10 “... thy right hand is full of righteousness.” All *temporal* mercies are the mercies of God’s *Left* hand, which He gives to many whom He will put at His left hand at the Day of Judgment. *Spiritual* mercies are the mercies of His *right* hand, and mercies in His right hand. Let us be earnest petitioners for those mercies, which whomsoever has shall be placed at the right hand of Christ at the Day of Judgment. Let us see that we make temporal mercies as so many footstools to raise us up to higher mercies. Let us not make these mercies our God, but bridges to lead us over to God.

Edmund Calamy

Verse 13 “Mark ye well her bulwarks ...” The appointment of Jesus Christ to be King of the Church, King of Zion, is the first and great bulwark of Zion. The second bulwark of Zion is the promises of God, which are innumerable. The third is the watchful providences of God over the Church, while another is God’s special presence in His church, for he is present in an especial manner there. The last bulwark unto which all others may be reduced, is the Covenant of God: “For this God is our God.”

J. Owen

Verse 14 “For this God is our God for ever and ever ...” What a portion then is that of the believer! The landlord cannot say of his fields, these are mine for ever and ever. The king cannot say of his crown, this is mine for ever and ever. These possessions will soon change masters; these possessors will soon mingle with the dust, and even the graves they occupy may not long be theirs. But it is the singular, the supreme happiness of every Christian to say, “This God is my God for ever and ever, and even death itself shall not separate me from His love.”

G. Burder

[Christ's Church on Earth – weighty comments for consideration](#)

Martin Luther.

The Doctrine of Justification by faith is the article of a standing or a falling church.

Charnock.

Apostasy in a church is followed with a removal of the gospel; and the removal of the gospel is the saddest judgment that can possibly happen either to a church or a nation.

Dr. Cummings.

This is the best church that does best the duty of a Church.

Dr. Guthrie.

The presence of Christ alone consecrates and constitutes a church. There cannot be a living body without a living head; a man dies if you deprive him of his head. So deprive a church of its Head, and it is dead. There cannot be a court without a king, and there cannot be a church without Christ in it.

Professor Vinet.

Every church that does not confess its faith has no faith to confess.

Dr. Davies.

The Church is the light of the world, and Christ is the light of the Church.

H. W. Beecher.

The Church was built to disturb the peace of man; but often it does not perform its duty for fear of disturbing the peace of the Church.

Spurgeon.

The cold water of persecution is often thrown on the Church's face, to fetch her to herself when she is in a swoon of indolence or pride.

Boys and Girls

Dear Boys and Girls,

If one of you children follows Jesus Christ so closely that others see in you the spirit of Christ, and the expression of His will, then you will be “A living epistle.” If the memory of your life and words live on because they give help to other lives after you have gone, then those words might be said of you, “He being dead, yet speaketh.” Here is a little story that I read recently which might help you to understand more clearly, what I mean.

The story is about an old man named Phocas, and he lived at a place called Sinope, on the shores of the Black Sea. It is a long time since Phocas lived, but his memory is so rich that he, “being dead, yet speaketh,” and is, indeed, “a living epistle.”

It was toward the end of the third century that Phocas died; at that time the Roman emperors were pagan, and to be a Christian was certain death if you were found out. However, Phocas never hid that he was a Christian, and would quietly speak about Jesus when he could. One evening when the old man was seated in his garden, three men came up to the garden gate, and because they looked tired, he invited them into his cottage, and asked them where they were going? “We are out on the Emperor’s business in search of one named Phocas; it is reported that he is a Christian, and when we have found him we have to put him death.” Phocas calmly replied, “If you will wait until the morning, I will bring you Phocas.”

So the men went to bed, but there was no rest for Phocas, he rambled out into his garden to think: “Should he fly for his life? No, he couldn’t do that; he had made his promise, and to run away would be unfaithfulness to his Saviour.” In the morning he called the men and said, “Now, friends, I am Phocas.” The men were stunned. How

heavy were the hearts of those men as they looked at the old man, who they had grown to admire, and even love. Seeing them hesitate, he urged them on. One gleam of the sword and the lovely head was severed from the body.

In Venice there is a picture of the old man in his garden with just his spade in his hand, for he was a gardener. Many visitors who look at the picture are told the old man's story and of his great love to the Lord Jesus, and in this way Phocas is still "a living epistle read of all men."

If we will but follow Christ closely, and serve Him faithfully, we too, may join with other Christians, such as Phocas, and be "living epistles, known and read of all men."

Love,
Mrs Seaton



Jesus! My Shepherd, Saviour, Friend;
My Prophet, Priest, and King;
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End:
Accept the praise I bring.

(John Newton)

The Fourth Gospel



From the Introduction to
John's Gospel by Arthur Pink

In keeping with the special theme of this fourth gospel: -

It is here we have the full unveiling of Christ's Divine glories.

It is here that we behold Him dwelling with God before time began and before ever the creature was formed.

It is here that He is denominated "The only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

It is here that we read of John the Baptist bearing record "that this is the Son of God."

It is here that we read "This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and *manifested forth His glory.*"

It is here we are told that the Saviour said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

It is here that we learn that "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."

It is in this gospel we hear Christ saying, "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."

It is here He affirmed, "I and my Father are one."

It is here He testifies, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."