

CHRIST—THE LIVING WORD OF GOD

Message 1

Christ—the Eternal Word of God and the Living Word of God

Scripture Reading: John 1:1-3, 14; 14:2-3; 20:22; 1 John 1:1; Rev. 19:13

- I. Christ is the eternal Word; the Word is self-existing, without beginning—John 1:1-2; cf. Heb. 7:3:**
- A. John 1:1 says that the Word was in the beginning; this reveals that the Word is eternal.
 - B. The Word is the definition, explanation, and expression of God; hence, it is God defined, explained, and expressed; God is mysterious; as such, He needs the Word to express Him.
 - C. Christ's deity is eternal and absolute; from eternity past to eternity future, He is with God, and He is God.
- II. The creation came into being through the Word—John 1:3; cf. Heb. 1:2:**
- A. This simply means that apart from Him nothing has existence; one day, through the Word, so many things came into being; we may say that, in a sense, God did not make anything, for there was no need for Him to do anything; He simply said, "Being," and everything had being—Psa. 33:6, 9.
 - B. The principle is the same in the new creation (cf. 2 Cor. 4:6-7); although we are men of the old creation, the Bible tells us that we must become men of the new creation (5:17):
 - 1. It does not require very much work at all; it is accomplished through the Word, which is Christ—Rom. 10:8-9; cf. Mark 4:3, 14; 1 Pet. 1:23; 2:2; Eph. 5:26; 2 Tim. 3:16-17.
 - 2. If a man will say, "Lord Jesus," he becomes a new man even before the words have escaped his lips; by simply saying the word "Lord" something not being comes into being—Rom. 10:12-13.
- III. Life is in the Word; life can only be found in the expression of God; the Word, which is the expression and explanation of God, contains God as our life; when we receive the Word, we receive the life within it—John 1:4.**
- IV. The very Christ who was the Word was incarnated for our enjoyment—1:14, 16-17:**
- A. To be incarnated means to be consolidated; as the Word before His incarnation, Christ was mysterious; however, when He was incarnated, He became so real to us—cf. 1 John 1:1.
 - B. When the Word became visible and touchable, He was full of grace and reality—John 1:14b.
- V. The Word is living, a divine Person, Christ the Son of the living God—Rev. 19:13.**
- VI. God's economy as the universal story is fully embodied in the Word; this Word is revealed and developed in the writings of John:**
- A. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Word, and He is also the living Word—John 1:1; 1 John 1:1.
 - B. As the story of the universal economy, the Word is the embodiment of the Triune God; the Triune God embodied in the Word is explained, defined, and expressed—John 1:1b; cf. Col. 2:9.
 - C. According to John 1:14, the Word as the embodiment of the Triune God became flesh; this flesh is the tabernacle, God's dwelling place:
 - 1. In the four Gospels we see a portrait of the tabernacle in motion.
 - 2. However, no one was able to enter into Him, because the way had not been prepared and the entrance was not open.
 - D. For this reason, after thirty-three and a half years on earth, He suddenly told His disciples that He was going away; through death and resurrection, the Lord opened the gate and prepared the way for us to come into Him—14:2-3; cf. Heb. 10:19-20.

- E. After dying to accomplish redemption, the Lord changed His form and in resurrection became the pneumatic Christ, the life-giving Spirit; this makes it possible for Him to enter into us—1 Cor. 15:45; John 14:20; 20:22.
- F. Now the Triune God in the Word, the Word in the tabernacle, and the tabernacle through the Lamb with the Dove may enter into people to regenerate them and transform them into precious stones to be built up together as God's house—1:1, 14, 29, 32, 42, 51:
 1. God's house today is the church—14:2; 1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:19-22.
 2. But the consummation of the church will be the New Jerusalem, the tabernacle of God in its consummation, in eternity—Rev. 21:2-3.
- G. This is the story of God's economy, a story that is altogether wrapped up with the Person of the living Word.

VII. We need to let the word of Christ inhabit us—Col. 3:16:

- A. We are containers of the word of Christ, not of philosophy or religion; we need to be emptied of all such things in order to be filled with the word of Christ.
- B. The word of Christ includes the entire New Testament; we need to be filled with this word; this means that we should allow the word of Christ to dwell in us, to inhabit us, to make home in us.

Focus: Christ as God's eternal Word is the definition, explanation, and expression of the mysterious God Who was incarnated for our enjoyment. He is also the living Word as the divine Person of Jesus Christ, and the story of God's economy is altogether wrapped up with this Person.

Hymns: 56, 57, 58 (tune: 116), 812

Excerpts from the Ministry:

The Word is the definition, explanation, and expression of God.... Although God is a mystery, Christ as the Word of God defines, explains, and expresses Him. Thus, this Word is the definition, explanation, and expression of God. Eventually, this Word is God Himself, not God hidden, concealed, and mysterious, but God defined, explained, and expressed. The Word is not the invisible God, but the very God who is visible. In the beginning this Word was with God; it was not separate from God, but always had God in Him.

John 1:1 says that the Word was with God, and verse 2 says, "He was in the beginning with God." The Word was always with God and always had God in Him; He was never separate from God....Never think that this Word was separate from God. No, this Word was and always is with God. When the Word comes, God comes. When the Word is present, God is present. The Word is with God.

The last clause of 1:1 says, "The Word was God." Never try to understand the Bible merely according to the black and white letters. This verse says that, as the Word, Christ was both with God and was God.... Just accept the word. "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." Although we cannot reconcile all the clauses in this verse, we should simply accept this verse as God's Word. Christ's deity is eternal and absolute. From eternity past to eternity future, He is with God, and He is God.

The creation came into being through the Word...What does it mean that all things came into being through Him and that apart from Him nothing has come into being? It simply means that apart from Him nothing has existence. One day, through the Word, so many things came into being. We may say that, in a sense, God did not make anything, for there was no need for Him to do anything. He simply said, "Being," and everything had being. According to our human concept, creation requires a certain amount of labor. However, in God's creation there was no labor, only speaking. When God said, "Let there be light," light came into existence.

The principle is the same in the new creation. Although we are men of the old creation, the Bible tells us that we must become men of the new creation. According to our human concept, this type of change requires

a great deal of work. However, it does not require very much work at all; it is accomplished through the Word, which is Christ. If a man will say, "Lord Jesus," he becomes a new man even before the words have escaped his lips. By simply saying the word "Lord" something not being comes into being.

Now we come to the most important point: life is in the Word. "In Him was life" (1:4). The "Him" in 1:4 denotes the Word who was God and through whom all things came into being... Life can only be found in the expression of God. The Word, which is the expression and explanation of God, contains God as our life. When we receive the Word, we receive the life within it... When we hear the Word, we realize that God is expressed and explained; when we receive the Word, we receive God's very content as life and are thereby born of God and become the children of God. (*Life-study of John*, msg. 2, pp. 20-24)

How can we enjoy Christ? By His incarnation... By becoming flesh, He became solid, real, visible, and touchable. When Christ was in the flesh with the disciples, they not only saw and touched Him, but they also enjoyed Him. If you could have asked Peter and Mary why they loved Him so much and why they liked being in His presence, they would have said, "We simply cannot put it into words. As long as we stay with Him, we have a certain enjoyment. No words can utter it. But we can all testify that it is so sweet to sit in His presence. There is such enjoyment and reality. We don't know how to explain it or define it, but we know for sure that we enjoy it." What did they enjoy? It was the Word in the flesh, full of grace and reality. (msg. 3, pp. 29-30)

God's economy as the universal story is fully embodied in the Word. At the beginning of both his Gospel and his first Epistle, John speaks concerning the Word. As the story of the universal economy, the Word is the embodiment of the Triune God. Although the Triune God is mysterious, He is nonetheless embodied in the Word. The Word denotes the definition, explanation, and expression of God. The Triune God embodied in the Word is explained, defined, and expressed. Therefore, the Word is the definition and expression of the mysterious and invisible God.

According to John 1:14, the Word as the embodiment of the Triune God became flesh. This flesh is the tabernacle, God's dwelling place.

While the Lord Jesus was on earth as God's tabernacle, no one was able to enter into Him, because the way had not been prepared and the entrance was not open. For this reason, after thirty-three and a half years on earth, He suddenly told His disciples that He was going away. It seems that the Lord was saying to them, "If do not go away, I would only be here among you. You would not be able to enter into Me, and I would not have a way to come into you. Therefore, I need to go away through death and resurrection to accomplish redemption for you and to open the way for you to come into Me." Through death and resurrection the Lord opened the gate and prepared the way for us to come into Him as the living, moving tabernacle, the very God embodied in the flesh.

Furthermore, after dying to accomplish redemption, the Lord changed His form and in resurrection became the pneumatic Christ, the life-giving Spirit. This makes it possible for Him to enter into us. Therefore, in John 14 the Lord also seemed to be saying to the disciples, "On the day of My resurrection you will know that I am in the Father, that you are in Me, and that I am in you. Today I am still the tabernacle among you, but outside of you. You are outside of Me, and you have no way to come into Me. Neither is there a way for Me to enter into you. This is the reason that I must die to accomplish redemption and open the way that you may enter into Me as the tabernacle and that the Triune God, embodied in Me, may enter into you. Then where I am, there you will be also (John 14:3; 17:24). You will know that I am in the Father, that you are in Me, and that I am in you."

On the day of His resurrection, the Lord appeared to His disciples. Then He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). In this way He entered into the disciples.

The tabernacle is the embodiment of the Word, and the Word is the embodiment of the Triune God. Now the Triune God in the Word, the Word in the tabernacle, and the tabernacle through the Lamb with the Dove may enter into people to regenerate them and transform them into precious stones to be built up together as God's house. God's house today is the church. But the consummation of the church will be the New Jerusalem,

the tabernacle of God in its consummation, in eternity. This is the story of God's economy, a story that is altogether wrapped up with the Person of the living Word. (*The Fulfillment of the Tabernacle and the Offerings*, ch. 4, pp. 45-47)

In [Colossians] 3:16 Paul continues, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." We need to allow the word of Christ to inhabit us. We should not be filled with Jewish tradition or Greek philosophy, but with the word of Christ. We are containers of the word of Christ, not of philosophy or religion. We need to be emptied of all such things in order to be filled with the word of Christ. If we allow the peace of Christ to arbitrate in us and if we are filled with the word of Christ, we shall have the new man in a practical way. One day the Christ who is our life will appear in glory, and we shall appear in glory with Him (3:4). But today we need to live by Him. We care for Him as our life and as the constituent of the new man, not for our background, culture, opinion, and judgment. We want His peace to arbitrate in us and His word to fill us. (*Life-study of Colossians*, Msg. 35, p. 300)

References and Further Reading:

1. *The Fulfillment of the Tabernacle and the Offerings*, ch. 4.
2. *Conclusion of the New Testament*, msg. 425.
3. *Life-study of Colossians*, msgs. 29, 35.