

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

W. W. Prescott



"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The Revised Version says, "The Word became flesh."

The theme of redemption will be the science and the song of the eternal ages, and well may it occupy our minds during our short stay here. There is no portion of this great theme that makes such a demand upon our minds in order to appreciate it in any degree, as the subject we shall study to night, — "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." Through Him all things became; now He Himself became. He who had all glory with the Father, now lays aside His glory and becomes flesh. He lays aside His divine mode of existence, and takes the human mode of existence, and God becomes manifest in the flesh. This truth is the very foundation of all truth.

The Truth Above All Truth's

And Jesus Christ becoming flesh, God being manifest in the flesh, is one of the most helpful

truths, one of the most instructive truths, the truth above all truths, which humanity ought to rejoice in.

I desire this evening [October 31, 1895] to study this question for our personal, present benefit. Let us command our minds to the utmost, because to comprehend that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, demands all our mental powers. Let us consider, first, what kind of flesh; for this is the very foundation of this question as it relates to us personally. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath

suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." (Hebrews 2:14-18) That through death, being made subject to death, taking upon Him the flesh of sin, He might, by His dying, destroy him that had the power of death.

"Verily He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham." The margin says, "He takes not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham He takes hold;" and one version reads, "He helps not angels." We see the reason from the next verse: "Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God." "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." (Galatians 3:16) Now verily, He helps the seed of Abraham by Himself becoming the seed of Abraham. God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be revealed in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

So you see that what the Scripture states very plainly is that Jesus Christ had exactly the same flesh that we bear, —flesh of sin, flesh in which we sin, flesh, however, in which He did not sin, but He bore our sins in that flesh of sin. Do not set this point aside. No matter how you may have looked at it in the past, look at it now as it is in the word; and the more you look at it in that way, the more reason you will have to thank God that it is so.

Adams Sin Typical

What was the situation? —Adam had sinned, and Adam being the head of the human family, his sin was a typical sin. God made Adam in His own image, but by sin he lost that image. Then he begat sons and daughters in his image - not in God's. And so we have descended in the line, but all after his image.

For four thousand years this went on, and then Jesus Christ came, of flesh, and in the flesh, born of a woman, made under the law; born of the

Spirit, but in the flesh. And what flesh could He take but the flesh of the time? Not only that, but it was the very flesh He designed to take; because you see, the problem was to help man out of the difficulty into which he had fallen, and man is a free moral agent. He must be helped as a free moral agent. Christ's work must be, not to destroy him, not to create a new race, but to re-create man, to restore in him the image of God. "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." (Hebrews 2:9)

An Undone, Helpless Race

God made man a little lower than the angels, but man fell much lower by his sin. Now he is far separated from God; but he is to be brought back again. Jesus Christ came for that work; and in order to do it, He came, not where man was before He fell, but where man was after he fell. This is the lesson of Jacob's ladder. It rested on the earth where Jacob was, but the topmost round reached to

heaven. When Christ comes to help man out of the pit, He does not come to the edge of the pit and look over, and say, "Come up here, and I will help you back." If man could help himself up to the point from whence he has fallen, he could do all the rest. If he could help himself one step, he could help himself all the way; but it is because man is utterly ruined, weak, and wounded and broken to pieces, in fact, perfectly helpless, that Jesus Christ come right down where He is, and meets him there. He takes his flesh and He becomes a brother to him. Jesus Christ is a brother to us in the flesh: He was born into the family.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." He had only one Son, and He gave Him away. And to whom did He give Him? "Unto us a child is born,

“Unto Us a Son is Given”

(Isaiah 9:6) Sin has made a change even in heaven; for Jesus Christ, because of sin, has taken upon Himself humanity, and to day He wears that

humanity, and will through all eternity. Jesus Christ became the Son of man as well as the Son of God. He was born into our family. He did not come as an angelic being, but was born into the family, and grew up in it; He was a child, a youth, a young man, a man in the full prime of life, in our family. He is the Son of man, related to us, bearing the flesh that we bear.

Adam was the representative of the family; therefore his sin was a representative sin. When Jesus Christ came, He came to take the place in which Adam had failed. "And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." (1 Corinthians 15:45) The second Adam is the man Christ Jesus, and He came down to unite the human family with the divine family. God is spoken of as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, came Himself to this part of the family, that He might win it back again, that there might be a reunited family in the kingdom of God. He came

and took the flesh of sin that this family had brought upon itself and wrought out salvation for them, condemning sin in the flesh.

Adam failed in his place, and by the offence of one many were made sinners. Jesus Christ gave Himself, not only for us, but to us, uniting Himself to the family, in order that He might take the place of the first Adam, and as head of the family win back what was lost by the first Adam. The righteousness of Jesus Christ is a representative righteousness, just as the sin of Adam was a representative sin, and Jesus Christ, as the second Adam, gathered to Himself the whole family.

But since the first Adam took his place, there has been a change, and humanity is sinful humanity. The power of righteousness has been lost. To redeem man from the place unto which he had fallen, Jesus Christ comes, and takes the very flesh now borne by humanity; He comes in sinful flesh, and takes the case where Adam tried it and failed. He became, not a man, but He became flesh; He became human, and gathered all humanity unto

Himself, embraced it in His own infinite mind, and stood as the representative of the whole human family.

Adam was tempted at the very first on the question of appetite. Christ came, and after a forty days' fast the devil tempted Him to use His divine power to feed Himself. And notice, it was in sinful flesh that He was tempted, not the flesh in which Adam fell. This is wondrous truth, but I am wondrous glad that it is so. It follows at once that by birth, by being born into the same family, Jesus Christ is my brother in the flesh, "for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." (Hebrews 2:11) He has come into the family, identified Himself with the family, is both father of the family and brother of the family. As father of the family, He stands for the family. He came to redeem the family, condemning sin in the flesh, uniting divinity with flesh of sin. Jesus Christ made the connection between God and man that the divine spirit might rest upon humanity. He made the way for humanity.

He Hath Borne Our Grief's

And He came right near to us. He is not one step away from one of us. He "was made in the likeness of men." (Philippians 2:7) He is now made in the likeness of man, and at the same time He holds His divinity; He is the divine Son of God. And so, by His divinity joining itself to humanity, He will restore man to the likeness of God. Jesus Christ, in taking the place of Adam, took our flesh. He took our place completely, in order that we might take His place. He took our place with all its consequences, and that meant death, in order that we might take His place with all its consequences, and that is life eternal. "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Corinthians 5:21) He was not a sinner; but He invited God to treat Him as if He were a sinner, in order that we, who were sinners, might be treated as if we were righteous. "Surely He hath borne our grief's and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." (Isaiah 53:4) The sorrows that He bore were our

sorrows, and it is actually true that He did so identify Himself with our human nature as to bear in Himself all the sorrows and all the grief's of all the human family. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." What was bruising to Him was healing to us, and He was bruised in order that we might be healed. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:6) And then He died because on Him was laid the iniquity of us all. There was no sin in Him, but the sins of the whole world were laid on Him. Behold the Lamb of God, which bears the sins of the whole world. "And He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 2:2)

The Price Paid for Every Soul

I want your minds to grasp the truth, that, no matter whether a man repents or not, yet Christ has

borne his grief's, his sins, his sorrows, and he is invited to lay them on Christ. If every sinner in this world should repent with all his soul, and turn to Christ, the price has been paid. Jesus did not wait for us to repent before He died for us. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Christ has died in behalf of every single soul here; He has borne their grief and carried their sorrow; He simply asks us to lay them on Him, and let Him bear them.

Christ Our Righteousness

Furthermore, every one of us was represented in Jesus Christ when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. We were all there in Jesus Christ. We were all represented in Adam after the flesh; and when Christ came as the second Adam, He stepped into the place of the first Adam, and thus we are all represented in Him, He invites us to step into the spiritual family. He has formed this new family, of which He is the head. He is the new

man. In Him we have the union of the divine and the human.

In that new family, every one of us is represented. "Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him." (Hebrews 7:9,10) When Melchisedec went out to meet Abraham returning from the spoil, Abraham paid to him a tenth of all. Levi was still in the loins of his father Abraham; but inasmuch as he was a descendant of Abraham, what Abraham did, the Scripture says that Levi did in Abraham. Levi descended from Abraham according to the flesh. He had not been born when Abraham paid tithe; but in that Abraham paid tithe, he paid tithe also. It is exactly so in this spiritual family. What Christ did as head of this new family, we did in Him. He was our representative; He became flesh; He became we. He did not become simply a man, but He became flesh, and every one that should be born into His family was represented in Jesus Christ when He lived here in the flesh. You see, then, that all that Christ did, every one who

connects himself with this family is given credit for as doing it in Christ. Christ was not a representative outside him, disconnected from him; but as Levi paid tithe in Abraham, every one who should afterwards be born into this spiritual family, did what Christ did.

The New Birth

See what this means with reference to vicarious suffering. It was not that Jesus Christ came from outside, and simply stepped into our place as an outsider; but by joining Himself to us by birth, all humanity was brought together in the divine head, Jesus Christ. He suffered on the cross. Then it was the whole family in Jesus Christ that was crucified. "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead," or as the Revised Version says, "All died." (2 Corinthians 5:14) What we want in our experience is to enter into the fact that we did die in Him. But while it is true that Jesus Christ paid the whole price, bore every grief, was humanity itself, yet it is also true that no man receives benefit

from that except he receives Christ, except he is born again. Only those who are twice born can enter into the kingdom of God. Those who are born in the flesh must be born again, born of the Spirit, in order that what Jesus Christ did in the flesh, we may avail ourselves of so that we may really be in Him.

The work of Christ is to bestow the character of God on us; and in the meantime God looks upon Christ and His perfect character instead of upon our sinful character. The very moment that we let Christ empty us of self and believe on Jesus Christ; receive Him as our personal Saviour; God looks upon Him as our personal representative. Then He does not see us - He sees Christ.

Our Representative in the Courts of Heaven

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." (1 Timothy 2:5) There is a man in heaven now, —the man Christ Jesus, —bearing our human nature; but it is no longer a flesh of sin; it is glorified. Having

come here and lived in a flesh of sin, He died; and in that He died, He died unto sin; and in that He lives, He lives unto God. When He died, He freed Himself from the flesh of sin, and He was raised glorified. Jesus Christ came here as our representative, traveled the path back to heaven in the family, died unto sin, and was raised glorified. He lived as the Son of man, grew up as the Son of man, ascended as the Son of man, and today, Jesus Christ, our own representative, our own brother, the man Christ Jesus, is in heaven, living to make intercession for us.

He has been through every one of our experiences. Does not He know what the cross means? He went to heaven by the way of the cross, and He says, "Come." That is what Christ has done by becoming flesh. Our human minds stand appalled before the problem. How shall we express in human language what was done for us, when "the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us"? How shall we express what God has given to us? When He gave His Son, He gave the most precious gift of heaven, and He gave Him never to take Him

back again. To all eternity the Son of man will bear in His body the marks that sin made; forever He will be Jesus Christ, our Saviour, our Elder Brother. That is what God has done for us in giving His Son to us.

Christ Identified With Us

This union of the divine and the human has brought Jesus Christ very near to us. There is not one too low down for Christ not to be there with him. He identified Himself completely with this human family. In the judgment, when the rewards and punishments are meted out, He says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these. My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." One version reads, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My little brothers, ye have done it unto Me." Christ looks upon every one of the human family as His. When humanity suffers, He suffers. He is humanity; He has joined Himself to this family. He is our head; and when in any part of the body there is a throb of pain felt, the head feels that throb of pain. He has united Himself

with us, thus uniting us with God; for we read in Matthew: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

Unity in Christ

Jesus Christ thus united Himself with the human family that He might be with us by being in us, just as God was with Him by being in Him. The very purpose of His work was that He might be in us, and that, as He represented the Father, so the children, the Father, and the Elder Brother might be united in Him.

Let us see what His thought was in His last prayer: "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us." "And the glory which Thou gave Me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as

Thou hast loved Me. Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me; for Thou loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee; but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared Thy name unto them, and will declare it." And the last words of His prayer were: "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:21-26) And as He was ascending, His parting words to His disciples were, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matthew 28:20) By being in us, He is with us always, and that this might be possible, that He might be in us, He came and took our flesh.

This also is the way in which the holiness of Jesus works.[i] He had a holiness that enabled him to come and dwell in sinful flesh, and glorify sinful flesh by His presence in it; and that is what He did, so that when He was raised from the dead, He was glorified. His purpose was that having purified

sinful flesh by His indwelling presence, He might now come and purify sinful flesh in us, and glorify sinful flesh in us. He "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." (Philippians 3:21) "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren." (Romans 8:29)

The Election of Grace

Let me say that in this idea is bound up the whole question of predestination. There is predestination; it is a predestination of character. There is an election; it is an election of character. Every one who believes on Jesus Christ is elected, and all the power of God is behind that election, that he shall bear the image of God. Bearing that image, he is predestinated to all eternity in Christ's kingdom; but every one who does not bear the image of God is predestinated unto death. It is a predestination of God in Christ Jesus. Christ

provides the character, and gives it to any one who will believe in Him.

The Heart and Life of Christianity

Let us enter into the experience that God has given Jesus Christ to us to dwell in our sinful flesh, to work out in our sinful flesh what He worked out when He was here. He came and lived here that we might through Him reflect the image of God. This is the very heart of Christianity. Anything contrary to it is not Christianity. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." (1 John 4:1-3) Now that cannot mean simply to acknowledge that Jesus Christ was here and lived in the flesh. The devils made that acknowledgment. They knew that Christ had come in the flesh. The faith that comes by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus Christ is come in my flesh; He

dwells in my flesh; I have received Him." That is the heart and life of Christianity.

The difficulty with the Christianity of today is that Christ does not dwell in the hearts of those professing His name. He is an outsider, one looked at from afar, as an example. But He is more than an example to us. He made known to us what God's ideal of humanity is, and then He came and lived it out before us, that we might see what it is to be in the image of God. Then He died, and ascended to His Father, sending forth His Spirit, His own representative, to live in us, that the life, which He lived in the flesh, we may live over again. This is Christianity.

Christ Must Dwell in the Heart

It is not enough to talk of Christ and of the beauty of His character. Christianity without Christ dwelling in the heart is not Christianity. He only is a genuine Christian who has Christ dwelling in his heart, and we can live the life of Christ only by having Him dwelling in us. He wants us to lay hold

upon the life and power of Christianity. Do not be satisfied with anything else. Heed no one who would lead you in any other path. "Christ in you, the hope of glory," His power, His indwelling presence, that is Christianity. That is what we need today; and I am thankful that there are hearts that are longing for that experience, and who will recognize it when it comes. It does not make any difference what your name or denomination has been. Recognize Jesus Christ, and let Him dwell in you. By following where He leads, we shall know what Christian experience is, and what it is to dwell in the light of His presence. I tell you this is a wondrous truth. Human language cannot put more into human thought or language than is said in these words: "The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us." This is our salvation.