

Call to Obedience #214
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org

“We have this treasure earthen vessels...” (2 Co. 4:7).

The Word Became Flesh

By Reimar Schultze

“And the Word was made 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” (Jn. 1:14).

If John were to enter a popularity contest with Matthew and Luke for the best Christmas story, John would lose. In John’s Christmas story, there are no wise men, there is no Bethlehem, there is no manger, there are neither shepherds nor angels, and there is no Herod. But if simplicity is beauty, and if brevity is power, then John would win hands down in any Christmas story contest.

What Is the Meaning of “the Word”?

In this context, “the Word” means the revelation and expression of God. Until the first Christmas, Jesus, God’s revelation of himself, was mostly hidden. Up to that time, Jesus was hidden in the shadows of the Old Testament as God himself also was hidden, saying, “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Je. 29:13). That’s the Old Testament: a hidden God and a hidden Christ.

Until Bethlehem, the “Word” was unseen, unrevealed, and unexplained. He was always there, but men did not and could not know him. It is like a missionary going to India, leaving his wife behind for a year. All the Indians know that the missionary has another intimate person in his life by the ring he wears and by the letters he gets and sends, but they do not know that other person until she arrives in their town.

Praise God, at the incarnation, the long hidden revelation of God is revealed. At the first Christmas, God in Christ, the hidden “Word,” steps out of the shadows of the Old Testament and says, “Here am I. Look at me. If you see me, you see the Father. If you know me, you know the Father. If you touch me, you touch the Father,” Hallelujah!

Christmas means ‘the Word hidden’ has become ‘the Word revealed’, and ever more revealing the depths and mysteries of the Triune God to those who follow the Savior.

The Word became flesh means that Jesus understands us; it means flesh can hold the fullness of God; and it means the hidden has come to light.

Now, let’s consider these matters more fully.

Jesus Understands Us.

Since the incarnation, we have someone at the right hand of the Father who, with feeling, can plead our cause. We have someone who has been where we are. That God is all-knowing is a fact that no sound Christian mind will ever question. But knowing and feeling are two different things.

I venture to say that God the Father knows, and Jesus the Son feels. This, of course, is not to be considered a new doctrine to be placed into your drawer of theological valuables. It is merely a practical way of learning to appreciate the incarnation. Although God the Father probably knows what we feel, it is not exactly the same as God feeling or having felt what we feel. So, we can say of the Father, “...he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust” (Ps. 103:14). But we can say of Jesus the Son, “For we have not an high priest which cannot

be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (He. 4:15).

We do allow for oneness and quality when it comes to the Father and Son in terms of divinity, but we must allow for some differences in personality, character, experiences, and functions of the members of the Trinity.

Hence, the Father never became flesh, but the Son did. Hence, the Father never died on the cross, but the Son did. Hence, the Father never experienced the resurrection triumph, but the Son did. And because the Son, the Word, became flesh, therefore, Jesus has the capacity to pray for us at the right hand of the Father as one having been 'us'.

Christ's pleading ability because of having been with us is beautifully expressed by John Wesley:

Five bleeding wounds He bears, Received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers, They strongly speak for me;
"Forgive him, O forgive," they cry, "Forgive him, O forgive," they cry,
"Nor let that ransomed sinner die?" (Arise, My Soul, Arise)

A biblical passage that shows that the one who has been 'us' is mediating for us at the Father's throne is Romans 8:34: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Here you have it all together: Christ died, Christ rose, Christ at the right hand of the Father, interceding for us, speaking in our behalf, explaining from his own flesh, death, and temptation experiences, what can be and cannot be expected of us. As this intercession at the throne is made by our Lord on our behalf, I am sure that many times, more than we think, God's mercy bends a little more in our direction, yea, if not at times, it even abounds toward us.

Because the Word became flesh, Jesus is "able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (He. 7:25).

Getting more practical to the millions who are in prison for Christ's sake, it means that Jesus, having become flesh and having been in prison himself, knows from personal experience how to plead for the Father's mercies in their behalf.

For the single person, Jesus, having been single, knows the pull of the flesh for intimate, human companionship, and he knows just how to pull that single person through, pleading for an extra measure of mercy for him or her to save them to the uttermost.

For men who have great potential for power, influence, fame, or wealth, Jesus, by having become flesh and having been tempted to step into great opportunities himself, has also become a mighty intercessor in their behalf. The devil offered him all the kingdoms of the world, and Jesus was tempted to take them. The devil offered him instant fame and proof of his divinity had he cast himself off the pinnacle of the temple to be caught by angels. Jesus was tempted to start with such a splash of the spectacular. Because of Jesus having experienced the pull of power, recognition, and influence, he is able to plead for those equally tempted so that they might draw strength from him to resist such ploys of the devil.

Yes, the Word became flesh means that Jesus understands. It means that he knows, that he has felt what we feel, and it means Jesus will draw from heaven for you what you cannot draw for yourself.

Now, let us consider this: "And the Word was made flesh, and..."

"We Beheld His Glory."

By resisting all the ploys of the devil, Jesus resisted physical glory to choose spiritual glory. And, when it says that "we beheld his glory," we must recognize that the "we" was no more than the inner circle of our Lord.

First of all, the “we” was John, who wrote this gospel. Secondly, it means the ten apostles. It does not include Judas who, although he was in the physical inner circle with Jesus, was never in the spiritual inner circle of our Lord. And because Judas lacked true spirituality within himself, he did not see the glory of Jesus, full of grace and truth, and so he betrayed him.

The “we” of the “we beheld his glory” includes the apostles (minus Judas); it also includes other intimates such as Mary Magdalene and Joanna. Only intimacy with Jesus, the forsaking of all, that which is characteristic of intimates, will cause us to see Christ’s glory, for it is a glory only visible to the spiritual eye that is singly fixed on Jesus, and therefore, full of light.

The Pharisees did not see the glory; the scribes did not, the lawyers did not, and the multitudes did not. These religious leaders and the people saw Jesus as a miracle worker, as a prophet, as a king of whom they expected something for themselves, rather than as a king that deserved everything from them! And, thus, they did not see his glory.

If you look at Jesus primarily as someone who owes you something rather than the one to whom you owe everything, you will not see his glory, and you will not get excited about him. But, it is when we give all to him that we see Christ’s glory, and that the thrills, romance, and adventure begin. It is when we experience this glory that total satisfaction settles into our souls.

No, Jesus did not have a halo as the Dutch painters Dürer and Rembrandt would want you to think. He, as Isaiah said, “hath no form nor comeliness; and...no beauty that we should desire him” (53:2). Jesus looked undesirable to the physical eye! This is another reason why, when “He came unto his own...his own received him not” (Jn. 1:11).

Only the inner circle knew and saw and were thrilled. Oh, what a world of difference between what inner circle people see of any man of God and the picture others, outside that circle, get of that same man of God.

The Blessings Of Inner Circle People

Through the Lord having become flesh, inner circle people receive blessings that unbelievers, as well as saints in the pre-Christian era, have never experienced.

“For out of His fullness (abundance) we have all received [all had a share and we were all supplied with] one grace after another and spiritual blessing upon spiritual blessing and even favor upon favor and gift [heaped] upon gift” (Jn. 1:16 AMP).

Again, the “we” in this passage refers to the inner circle folk. When we are in the inner circle, Christ spills his glory over on us.

Now, let us take this a step further. God not only wants us to have a ‘spill over’ but the whole thing. It is therefore that we find Paul praying, “And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Ep 3:19).

As Christ’s body was flooded with God’s fullness, so can and should ours be! This is not a matter of the world of dreams but a possible reality to be obtained. Yes, of course, this is all beyond knowledge. All this passes knowledge. It is too big for our heads. It is not a subject of comprehension, no, not even to the finest of theological logicians.

First, God’s fullness; the “Word,” became flesh. And then, that same fullness comes to dwell in our mortal bodies, the ultimate in Christmas bliss and splendor. It out-splendors the wise men, the manger, the shepherds, and the angels all rolled into one. Yes, if simplicity is king, John’s Christmas deserves a high mark!