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Chapter ONE

JESUS THE WORD

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it (John 1:1-5).

And the Word became 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 (John 1:14).

See also Revelation 19:11-13.

Jesus is God's clearest and most profound message to us, not simply of what God wants to say, but of who God is. We believe that God is infinite in knowledge, unlimited in power, and unconfined to space and time. We believe that God is absolutely right, and consequently, that everything He says and does is said and done in perfect

righteousness. We believe that God is love, that He is merciful and gracious, kindhearted toward humanity and willing to rescue those gone astray even at horrible cost to Himself. We believe that God is glorious in majesty and mysterious in beauty, and that He delights in all that is noble and true and good.

And we believe that as the powerful Word of God, Jesus revealed this God to us, expressing by His life and teachings that our Father in Heaven is all of the above. Jesus showed us that our good-hearted Father has planned a cosmic redemption focused on saving sinners. This redemption includes the overturn of disease, decay, death, and all that has been marred by the curse of sin, as well as the absolute overthrow of all the forces of evil.

This heavenly Father is so eager to save the lost, that like the father of the wasteful son in Luke 15, He takes shame upon Himself and runs to embrace penitent sinners in their dirty rags, lavishing undeserved affection upon them. Jesus is this message to us from eternity.

The Word of God shines in the darkness, illuminating even the darkest places. He gives hope to the hopeless, sight to the blind, courage to the downcast, comfort to the brokenhearted, and life to those appointed to death. The Word of God causes those who are sick and broken and despairing to look up and cry out for divine help. He shows us that our prayers are not in vain, that the Father hears and is already at work on behalf of those who come to Him in faith.

The Word became flesh. God's Word in spoken and written form is precious beyond telling, but all that God is and does cannot be reduced to human language or contained on a page. We needed more than the written Word. God's essence came among us in the Man from Nazareth to do God's works and to speak God's words. He walked our

streets, breathed our air, ate our food, lived our life, felt our sorrows, and experienced our troubles. He called us to open our ears to hear the message of hope He embodied. He is the Word of Life in our world of sin and death.

Prophets had spoken God's words to God's people. They had explained what to do and what not to do. They had given instructions and warnings. They had offered glimpses of the divine glory. But in Jesus we have the Word embodied. He is not just another messenger, but the Message Himself. He speaks with the authority of the Author. He acts with the certainty and power of the Maker.

The Word was with God, and the Word was God. And this Word came among us. John says, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (1:14). Those who saw Him and heard Him found their eyes opened to One who bridged Heaven and earth, and they testified to what they had seen.

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full (1 John 1:1-4).

Just as the Word ordered the events of Creation in the beginning, so He actively orders the events of the conclusion. Through John's binoculars, we gaze into the future and see Jesus on a white horse at the

head of the heavenly armies. There the Word of God goes forth to rid the old system of sin and evil.

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God (Revelation 19:11-13).

The same Word that in the past called all things into existence and in our time offers such marvelous grace and truth has all authority to make all things new. We see creativity, majesty, and power in the creation. We see grace amazing and inexpressible in the redemption. And we see righteousness white-hot and glorious in the consummation.

The scene in Revelation is an expansion of Jesus' parable of the tares.

"Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:40-43).

Yes! We must pay attention to the *Logos*!¹ Jesus is the full and complete message of God to humankind. And as He said to His disciples, we must have ears to hear. The disciples heard the Word and became

¹ *Logos* is the Greek word translated as *word* in John 1.

apostles who were sent out to proclaim the message of Jesus. They, too, urged everyone to take heed.

Peter on the Day of Pentecost: “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it” (Acts 2:22-24).

Paul to the Jews at Antioch: “Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you:

‘Behold, you despisers,

Marvel and perish!

For I work a work in your days,

A work which you will by no means believe,

Though one were to declare it to you’” (Acts 13:26, 38-41).

Writer to the early Christian Jews: “Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved