

"THE TRUE LIGHT THAT LIGHTETH EVERY MAN."

– JAN. 1. – JOHN 1:1-14. –

"In him was life, and the life was the light of men." – John 1:4.

REACHING far into the past, to the beginning of earth's creation as mentioned in Genesis, our lesson informs us that even then the Logos, the Word, existed, with God. "The Word" is a very good title for our Lord Jesus in his prehuman condition: it is the translation of the Greek word Logos, which might more literally be rendered, "the Expression:" for the great and honorable one, the heavenly Father's companion "before the world was" made, who is declared to have been "the beginning of the creation of God," was in every sense of the word a full and complete expression of the divine will, mind, purpose, character. Of this First-begotten-one the Apostle writes that he was "in the form of God" – a likeness of Jehovah (Phil. 2:6), but he does not claim, as our common version would appear to make him say, that the Logos thought it not robbery to be equal with the Father, Jehovah God. The Apostle's argument is to the very contrary of this: he is showing that the Logos was fully subservient to Jehovah; and that it was a proof of this subserviency and obedience and humility, that the Logos became flesh, the "man Christ Jesus." And further, in harmony with the same humility and obedience to the Father, he became obedient to death, even the death of the cross; and on this account ("wherefore") Jehovah God highly exalted him by a resurrection to the divine nature, far above angels, principalities, powers, and every name that is named, – to a position higher than any other, higher than his prehuman condition, next to the Father, and an associate of his throne, his glory, his power, his nature.

What the Apostle does say is to the very contrary of the statement of our common translation. A good translation is furnished in the *Emphatic Diaglott*: – "Who, tho being in God's form, ***did not meditate a usurpation*** to be like God, but divested himself, taking a

bondman's form." This is in agreement with the rendering of the passage by various Greek scholars, thus: "Who...did not think it a matter to be earnestly desired," – *Clarke*; "Did not earnestly affect," – *Cyprian*; "Did not think of eagerly retaining," – *Wakefield*; "Did not regard...as an object of solicitous desire," – *Stewart*; "Thought not...a thing to be seized," – *Sharpe*; "Did not eagerly grasp," – *Kneeland*; "Did not violently strive," – *Dickinson*; "Did not meditate a usurpation," – *Turnbull*; "Who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize [margin, *a thing to be grasped*] to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant." – *Revised Version*.

But altho the Scriptures nowhere place the only begotten and well-beloved Son of God on an equality with Jehovah himself, either while he was here on earth, nor while he was the Logos, before he was "made flesh," they do assure us that *now*, in his highly exalted condition, the Logos still, Christ Jesus still, he is partaker of the divine nature, glory and all power in heaven and in earth; and accordingly we are instructed that "all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." (John 5:23.) However, our lesson introduces us to our Redeemer in his prehuman condition, a spirit condition, higher than the angels, and assures us that all things were made by him: literally, "Without him was not one thing made that was made." Thus we see that in all of Jehovah's creative work on every plane the Logos had preference – "that in all things he might have the preeminence." – Col. 1:18.

The number of Bible students who are non-critical is very large. It is not, therefore, surprising that many have fallen into the error of supposing that this first verse of John's Gospel is a declaration that the Logos was the full equal of Jehovah – that the Word, the message, was the full equal to the one who sent the Word, the expression, the message. Yet this is contradictory to reason, as well as contradictory to the testimony of our Lord Jesus himself, who unequivocally

declared, "Of mine own self I can do nothing; as I hear I judge;" and again, "The Father is greater than I." – John 5:30; 14:28.

Scholars are all aware that the word that is translated **God** in the Old Testament is not equivalent to the word **Jehovah**. Altho its significance is "**mighty one**," it is frequently used for others besides the All-mighty, Jehovah: it is used for angels; it is used for great men; it is used for false gods. The word **Jehovah** is the specific name for the All-mighty One, to whom all other **elohim** (gods – mighty ones) are subject. So in the New Testament, the word **theos** is the equivalent to **elohim**, and signifies mighty one. It is used in the New Testament most frequently in reference to Jehovah himself, but sometimes, in referring to man, and to false gods, and several times in referring to our Lord Jesus. The first verse of John's Gospel is a marked instance of the use of **theos** in referring to Jehovah's Logos, his Only Begotten Son, "the beginning of the creation of God." (Rev. 3:14.) But the critical Greek student should find no difficulty in distinguishing between these two Gods, and noting that the one is distinctly referred to as the superior of the other, for this distinction is clearly shown by the use of the Greek article before **theos** in referring to Jehovah, and the absence of that article when **theos** is used in referring to the Logos. The effect of this, expressed in our English language, would render the passage thus: –

"In the beginning was the Logos, and the Logos was with **the** God, and the Logos was **a** God. The same was in the beginning with **the** God."

This translation will not be disputed by any Greek scholar; and it sets at rest all ground for dispute respecting the primary relationship between the Father and the Son. Indeed, the expressions, "Father" and "Son" imply what is elsewhere stated, – that the Son "proceeded forth and came from God" (John 8:42). Otherwise these terms, Father and Son, are meaningless. A son can never be his own father, nor can it be claimed that a son never had a beginning, for the term, son, implies a

life, existence, being, which had a beginning, and which was derived from a father. The Scriptures, when permitted to interpret themselves, are beautifully consistent, and harmoniously reasonable. But when warped and twisted by preconceived ideas and false doctrines, the light of truth becomes darkness, and mystery is written upon everything connected therewith – not the [R2408 : page 374] mystery of God, however, but "the mystery of iniquity," of darkness, of error.

"In him was life." Our Lord's separateness from the human family is thus pointed out: in no other man than "the man Christ Jesus" was there *life*. In all the race of Adam, the entire human family, aside from Jesus, *death* was working; it thus reigned in the entire race from the time father Adam became disobedient and forfeited the life that was in him originally, and was able to impart to his posterity only *dying* conditions. It was this *life* in Christ – the fact that he was separate from sinners, holy, harmless, undefiled, that constituted this Savior, whom the Father sent, a beacon light of hope for our race. Had he in any manner forfeited his rights to *life*, either before he came to human conditions, or while he was the man Christ Jesus, our light of hope would have been extinguished: but possessing his rights to life he, according to the Father's program, *laid down his life on our behalf* – a corresponding price for the life of Adam, which had been forfeited through sin; – a corresponding price, therefore, for all who had a share in Adam's death penalty.

Having thus bought us with his own precious blood, he thus became light-giver, hope-giver, to the world of mankind, and also its life-giver. Praise God for this great light and life provided for a dying world; and altho it is true that the light shone amidst the darkness of [R2409 : page 374] human depravity without being generally comprehended or appreciated, it is also true, nevertheless, that "that was the true [antitypical, the real, genuine, not counterfeit or typical] light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." It matters not, therefore, that this true light was not comprehended and appreciated by the Jews in the days of his flesh, and that he is not

comprehended even to-day by the world of mankind; he, nevertheless, is *the true light*, and in the Father's due time he shall accomplish the great plan of God, of which he is the center, the expression, the Logos; – he shall enlighten every man born into the world. Nor shall any be permitted to languish in darkness, or to fail of eternal life by reason of lack of knowledge; in due time all the blind eyes shall be opened, all the deaf ears shall be unstopped, and the blind shall see out of obscurity the great Light which God has raised up, to be a prince and a Savior for whosoever cometh unto the Father through him. – Isa. 35:5; John 8:12; 14:6.

True, only a minority have yet seen this light, for still "Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people." (Isa. 60:2.) We are waiting, however, for the glorious Millennial Day in which this great light, this true light, shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father, and when his faithful ones, his jewels, chosen and polished during this time of darkness, shall be glorified with himself, and be associated in the great work of enlightening mankind, and as the Seed of Abraham, in blessing all the families of the earth with this enlightenment, and with accompanying opportunities for harmony with God, and eternal life. – Matt. 13:43; Rom. 8:17; Gal. 3:16,29; Gen. 22:17,18.

Nothing in this, however, offers excuses for those catching even a glimpse of this great light in the present time. Blessed are their eyes if they see, and their ears, if they hear, and such will have the graver responsibilities and "stripes," if they do not walk according to the light which they have received. – Luke 12:47,48.

The Apostle carefully distinguishes between the messenger of the light and the Light itself. Subsequently (John 5:35) our Lord speaks of John the Baptist as a burning and a shining lamp (mistranslated light). A totally different Greek word is used when our Lord is spoken of as being the Light, but this same Greek word, *phos*, is used with respect to the Church which is the Body of Christ, and with her Lord partaker

of the holy spirit. Respecting these members of his Body, members of the *ecclesia*, the elect, our Lord expressly says, "Ye are the light of the world," using the very same Greek word that in this lesson is used with respect to himself. It is this same word, *phos*, that is used in the following Scriptures: "If the *light* that is in thee become darkness;" "The children of the *light*;" "What union hath *light* with darkness?" "Put on the armor of *light*;" "Now are ye *light* in the Lord;" "Walk as children of the *light*;" "Out of darkness into his marvelous *light*;" "Walk in the *light*, as he is in the *light*." A similar distinction, as between John and Christ, is to be noted in the fact that our Lord is the Logos, the Word, while John the Baptist was not the *Word*, but was merely "A *voice* crying in the wilderness."

When the Logos was made flesh, became the man Christ Jesus, altho he was in a world which he had created by the Father's power vested in him, yet the world did not recognize him, and even his own nation, to whom he specially presented himself, received him not. Nevertheless, some of them received him, and as many of them as did so were blessed – blessed with the power and privilege of becoming *sons* of God, whereas previously their highest possibility had been to be God's servants and friends. Here we note the change of dispensation from the Jewish to the Christian, and that this change was made possible by something which our Lord did or offered. What he did was to redeem the Jews from the sentence of the Law Covenant, under which they rested, and to redeem all mankind from the death sentence which came upon all through Adam's disobedience.

Until this ransom had been paid to divine Justice, the condemned ones could not be received back to the condition of sonship primarily enjoyed by father Adam, but forfeited for himself and posterity when he became a sinner. The mission of the great Light into world was not only to redeem man's life, but also to enlighten him and to restore as many as may be willing to accept sonship, and this work has not yet been accomplished. Nay, it may be said scarcely to have begun, for only a remnant of his own nation received the true Light; and only a

little flock in all, from every kindred, nation or people, have received him and his blessing, as now offered to mankind, – the vast majority being blinded by Satan, and thus hindered from seeing the true Light, as the Apostle explains. – 2 Cor. 4:4.

Those called during this time of darkness, when gross darkness covers the people, are called to what the Scriptures denominate a "high calling," a heavenly calling – not merely to a restoration to human nature, and its privileges and blessings lost through sin: they are called to special fellowship with the Logos himself – called to be partakers of his light, and sharers with him in the future work of enlightening and blessing [R2409 : page 375] the world. These are *sons* of God in an especial sense – in a sense different from Adam even in his state of innocence. (Luke 3:38.) These are invited to be sons of God on a plane of sonship higher than the angelic sons; *viz.*, as heirs of God, joint-heirs with the Logos, partakers with him of the divine nature, which is far above angelic and all other natures. – 2 Pet. 1:4; Rom. 8:17.

This power to become sons of God is not granted to sinners, but to the *justified* – to those who have been justified by faith, by believing on his name. These are begotten, not after the ordinary manner in which fleshly children are begotten, not by blood, nor has the will of the flesh anything whatever to do with their begetting, as it always has to do with the begetting and character in a fleshly begetting. In their begetting of the spirit of the truth, altho that truth may be presented through human agencies, the begetting cannot be accomplished by the will of man, but only in proportion as the natural will is rejected and ignored, and the will of God received instead. The Apostle James (1:18) explains this begetting, saying, "Of his own will begat he us *with the word of truth*, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures." These "new creatures in Christ Jesus," sons of God and prospectively joint-heirs with Christ, are expected to receive of the Father's spirit so fully (through the word of his grace) that they will be willing to suffer reproach for his cause and his truth, and like the Logos himself be willing to lay down their lives for the brethren, in

harmony with the divine arrangement of this age, as living sacrifices to God, holy, acceptable through Christ. And it is only upon condition that they suffer with Christ that they may hope eventually to be his joint-heirs in the Kingdom and glory and power promised him by the Father. – Rom. 8:17; John 1:11,12.

The fourteenth verse goes back to take up the subject at the same point as verse five, and to repeat the narrative from another standpoint. "The Logos was *made flesh*, and dwelt among us." This does not teach what is ordinarily called the doctrine of the *Incarnation*, which is understood to signify that the only begotten of the Father, the Logos, came as a spirit being, and *inhabited* a fleshly or human body for a time, and was again *liberated* from that body at or about the time that the body was crucified. This view of the incarnation of the Logos makes nonsense of much of the Scripture, and beclouds and mystifies the minds of many Bible students. From this standpoint they think of our Lord as really a spirit being, who never ceased to be a spirit being, and who never was in any sense of the word a *man*, a human being, but who merely *appeared to be* a human being, but actually was not. From this standpoint of view our Lord's prayers to the Father, his temptations in the wilderness, and his tears and dying cry are all made to appear as so much clever *acting*; because this false claim makes it appear that he really was so far above human conditions that he could not be tried, tempted, suffer, etc. Furthermore, it implies that *he* did not really die, but merely appeared to die, and that at the moment the flesh was crucified the Logos merely stepped out, and became a silent invisible spectator of the tragedy of Calvary.

But it was no such *farcical* sacrifice for sins, and *pretended* death without dying, that God had typified during the preceding sixteen hundred years, in the sacrifice of bulls and of goats, etc., year after year continually. Adam's death-sentence was a real sentence, a genuine penalty, and the *ransom* by which we are made free from sin was a no less real sacrifice, which our Lord – "the man Christ Jesus" – gave on our behalf. – 1 Tim. 2:5,6.

The Apostle assures us that he who was rich for our sakes became poor: he did not merely pretend to be poor, by merely putting on an outer coat of a lower nature, but he actually *became poor*, actually left the glory and honor of a higher nature, he actually humbled himself and took human nature; – not, however, *fallen* human nature, not sinful flesh, but the human nature unfallen, the likeness of humanity free from its blemishes through sin and death.

This is in exact accord with the Scriptures under consideration, "He was *made* flesh:" literally, "he *became* flesh." Nothing less than this great stoop or humiliation enabled him to be our Redeemer, and qualified him to give to God the *ransom price* for man's transgression; as it is written, "By a *man* came death, by a [R2410 : page 375] *man* also came the resurrection." It was a man that was sentenced to death, and neither an angel's life, nor the archangel's life, nor any other life than a *man's life* could be the "corresponding price" which would release Adam and his posterity from the death penalty. Just so the sacrifice of lower animals could never take away sin; because, altho innocent of sin, they were not of the same identical nature as the sinner, and therefore could not be accepted of divine justice as man's *ransom price*. The Logos did not die in his change from spirit nature to human nature; but when "the man Christ Jesus" died, it was the full giving up of life in every sense of the word – nothing was retained; "He gave all that he had" (Matt. 13:44,46), – he gave his life, the life of the man Christ Jesus, which had previously been the life of the Logos. His being ended: "He poured out his *soul* [being] unto death; he made his *soul* [being] an offering for sin." This is further testified to by the Lord himself who, after his resurrection, declared, "I am he that liveth and *was dead* – behold, I am alive forever more." "Christ dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." – Isa. 53:10,12; Rev. 1:18; Rom. 6:9.

"We beheld his glory," his grandeur, his perfection, his nobility; it shone out clearly to those who had eyes to see it – those who were not blinded by the prince of this world. These very glories of the man

Christ Jesus attest fully that he was not of the sinner race of Adam, but that he was indeed an exception to all mankind; giving evidence of having been begotten of the heavenly Father, in that he was full of grace and truth. "As he was so are we in this world," says the Apostle: and altho we are by nature sinners and children of wrath even as others, yet by grace we have been begotten again to a new nature, and this grace of God operating in our hearts, enlightening, purifying, sanctifying, should, gradually at least, transform us, change us "from glory to glory," bringing us more and more to the *likeness* of God's dear Son, our Redeemer and Lord, to whom, with God the Father, be praise and thanksgiving now and forever, for "so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by our Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." – Heb. 2:3.
