

The Word of God - John 1:1-2

The 2nd Person of the Triune God came to change the World

Welcome to the beginning of our Advent Celebration He's Here!

Christmas Eve, 1968.

As one of the most turbulent, tragic years in American history drew to a close, millions around the world were watching and listening as the Apollo 8 astronauts - Frank Borman, Jim Lovell and Bill Anders - became the first humans to orbit another world.

As their command module floated above the lunar surface, the astronauts beamed back images of the moon and Earth and took turns reading from the most important book the earth had to offer.ⁱ
[text of message read Apollo 8ⁱⁱ]

[Apollo 8 clip - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1uNQDHLG3Q>]

The Bible is the world's most important library. It has but 66 books.

The very first book found in the library opens with words that remind us of what we already intuitively know, simply by looking into the clear brilliance of a night sky.ⁱⁱⁱ That Someone unfathomably greater than us, and unimaginably more powerful than us, made happen all that we physically see, and more, out of nothing.

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth

² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.
And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

³ [Then] God said...

Turn to the 2nd half of the library. There are again important opening words, not about what we already intuitively know, but about what we desperately need to understand.

In the beginning was the Word.

And the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Now when you put the opening words of the 1st half of the library, with the opening words of John's gospel in the 2nd half of the library, you discover something. You discover that whenever God wants to begin something -- to create a new reality, to catalyze a change, to reverse a direction, to provide in a new way – **He always uses His Word**. In fact...He sends His Word.

For a moment or two, think about the things that really need to happen in your life.

- Does your life need new shape and purpose because too much is without form and void?
- Does your marriage need a fresh creation of real love to that will sustain it for years to come?
- Does your discouraged heart need new hope?

- Does your broken spirit need a promise of a better future?
- Are you chained to a past from which you long to be free?
- Are you repeatedly defeated by sin, a need for fresh power?

In the beginning was the Word!

Think about it -- when God wants to create what isn't, when God wants to fill the dark with light, when God wants to bring life to what is lifeless, hope to what is hopeless, victory to what is defeated, He always begins with **His Word**.

This Christmas season, beginning today, we're out to explore the answer to this question:

God...why did You do it?
God, why did You send Your Word?

The opening verses of John's Gospel explains. God says, I sent my Word because My Word is

#1 The WORD of God is always at the BEGINNING of what God does John 1:1a

In the beginning^{iv} God created the heavens and the earth...In the beginning was **the Word**.

As you read John's gospel – a special biography of the life and ministry of Jesus – you realize that in these opening verses John is speaking about his flesh-n-blood friend Jesus. Jesus was a human being who called John out of his fishing business to follow him, who developed a deep personal camaraderie with John. Two strapping men navigating the dusty pathways of Galilee and Samaria and Judea.

But Jesus was fully human, but more. He was the Word who was at the beginning. In fact – as the rest of the New Testament library explains – Jesus was the Word who did the creating!

Colossians 1:16

For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him.

Hebrews 1:2

God has spoken to us by His Son, through whom he created the world.

Connect the dots! When God wants to create something, when God wants to start something new, He always uses His Word^v...He always sends Jesus to make it happen.

Listen to how Jeffrey Bingham processes these Scriptures:

*The Genesis account begins with silence and darkness and disorder and emptiness. Finally—shall we say blessedly—into the void God speaks **his word** in the 3rd verse. Tozer noted, “Chaos heard it and became order, darkness heard it and became light.”*

*The **word of God** replaces the empty terror of silence with divine provision and crafts the cosmos into a good and beautifully arranged structure.*

*The first gift God gives to his creatures is the **grace of His Word**, whereby he breaks the cold dark voice of silence and brings light into being as the first in a grand succession of creatures that culminates in the formation of richly supplied human beings.*

Here we learn that unless God speaks, we have no being.

*Here we learn that we are utterly reliant on **God’s word** and commandments.*

*Here we learn that **divine speech** and revelation are the foundation of all well-ordered, bountiful existence.*

*Here we learn **that God’s voice** gives birth to light.*

Not only does the word of God create, not only does it bring something from nothing, but it illuminates.

*Only by means of **God’s word** are we able to see things as they really are.^{vi}*

~~*Scripture’s account of this world’s genesis establishes that God exercises sovereignty over this world and its history by means of the divine word. Therefore, **the word of God is the basis for the existence of all creatures in this world.**^{vii}*~~

And what Dr. Bingham means is what God means—that His Word is His Son, the very person of His Word, the very Person who can make all things new. He was sent to bring order out of our chaos. He was sent to bring light into our darkness. He was sent to begin new things because our old life comes to nothing.

Nothing is truly ordered without Jesus.

Nothing is truly fully of light without Jesus.

No perspective on living is truly full without Jesus.

When God wants to begin something new in your life, He sends His Word.

But there’s more. God says “I sent my Word because…”

#2 The WORD of God has a unique relationship with GOD John 1:1b

In the beginning was the Word.
and the Word was with (or “toward”) God.

If we’ve read this verse a thousand times, it is very likely you and I should slow down together. I’m convinced that when the Holy Spirit prompted John to begin writing his Gospel, that the Spirit was

saying to John, “Let’s get this right. Let’s use precisely the right words so that your readers truly understand the relationship with The WORD and God. Use the word “with,” or more precisely in the original Greek, “toward.” Now why use that precise word?

Because it has two meanings. On the one hand it means “closeness, proximity, even intimacy” with God the Father. 18 verses later, John will say that Jesus was “in the bosom” of the Father.

What does that mean?

I don’t come from a family of huggers. So when I was a young husband and a young dad, I had to learn the value of a hug. But I had a good teacher. When I visited the Michigan farm where my young bride Pamela grew up, sometime soon after we would arrive for our visit, I would see Pamela and Grandma Lois standing on the old heat register in a bear hug that would last a long time. A long time. Even today, my wife likes almost nothing better than for her and I simply to sit in our chair-and-a-half and sit as closely as we can to each other. In other words, she wants to be “toward.”

The Word was “toward” God – no one closer to God the Father than the Word.

But there’s a second meaning. It also means “action,” or more precisely, “interaction.”^{viii} The Word and God fellowshiped. The Word and God engaged each other; in fact, they’ve been engaging each other in the limitless joys of their personalities for eternity.

This has incredible implications for you and me. **God is relational**; he loves to be close and he loves to interact. This explains why David exclaimed, “Oh God, you have searched me and known me.” This explains why from the first moments in the created world, the Word came into the garden to fellowship with Adam and Eve. It explains why God wants to dwell in the midst of His people. It explains why Revelation (21) says that in eternity, God (a voice from the throne) will joyfully shout,

“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be any mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

Revelation 21:3-4

“I sent My Word,” God says here, “because I begin new things through Him. And I sent the Word because He knows how much I want a relationship with you.”

And...for one more reason—I sent My Word because

#3 The WORD, in fact, is God Himself

John 1:1c-2

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with (or “toward”) God. And the Word was God.

“This,” writes Leon Morris, “is the high point of the 3 statements. ‘The Word was God.’ Nothing higher could be said. All that may be said about God may be fitly said about the Word. John is not merely saying that here is something divine about Jesus. He is affirming that He is God, and doing so emphatically as we see from the word order in the Greek.”

And **GOD** was the Word
και θεος ην ο λογος

Verse 2 – “This One was in the beginning *toward* God.”

The IMPORTANCE of GOD’S PURPOSEFUL SENDING

The truth is that Christmas is all about God sending Someone who is like no one else. He sent His Word. He sent His Word because He intends to create something new in us. He sent His Word because He longs to have a close, dynamic relationship with us. He sent His Word so that we might KNOW God.

He is one of the world’s most powerful apologists for Christian faith. But he wasn’t always that way.

Ravi Zacharias was a young man who grew up in India. At 16, hating school, he enrolled in a community college because it offered him a short-cut to finishing high school. But his heart was crippled with unanswered questions; a deep emptiness inside. So he would skip classes and filled his hours playing cricket instead...until his father discovered his lies, and thrashed him so mercilessly that his mother had to intervene to prevent permanent damage. Life had become dark and meaningless.

A Hindu friend begged him to attend all the popular Hindu festivals, and Ravi enjoyed watching the dramatic presentations of their mythology. His friend pressed him to become a Hindu. But one day, as he was cycling by a cremation site, he stopped to ask the Hindu priest where the person, whose body was nothing more than a pile of ashes, was now. “Young man,” the priest said, “that is a question you will be asking all of your life, and you will never find an answer.” Ravi thought, *If that is the best a priest can do, what hope is there for a novice like me?*

In the coming weeks, he read the hopeless writings of Jean Paul Sartre -- *Nausea* and *No Exit* -- the atheist who admitted that the only question he could not answer was why he did not commit suicide...and Ravi unable to answer that question himself, decided to end it. But he botched his attempt at self-destruction, and was rushed to a hospital in critical shape.

Somehow, there, a Bible was brought to his bed, and someone read him a passage of Scripture. “I knew,” Ravi remembers, “that my life was wrong and that I needed Somebody to make it right. I wanted new hungers, new longings, new disciplines, and new loves. I knew God had to matter. I just did not know how to find Him.”^x

As he lay in that hospital bed, as someone read to him the Word of God--the 14th chapter of John – Jesus claiming, *I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father except through Me.* “Piecing together God’s love in Christ, the way that was provided because of Christ, and the promise of life through Him, on that hospital bed I made my commitment to give my life and my pursuits into his hands. I turned my life completely over to Jesus Christ.”

“I walked out of that hospital room a new man. The Lord Christ had entered in. The transformation was as dramatic as I could ever imagined. There is no other way to describe it.”^x

That’s how John introduces the Word. The Word creates a new beginnings. The Word offers a dynamic relationship with God. The Word is God himself who chose to come close.

There is no one more important for you to have a relationship with
There is no one who can create what is new and necessary in your life than this Person
There is no one who knows God better and can make known to you anything and everything you want to know about God
There is no one who is more committed to you nor who wants to have a life-giving, life-changing, life-shaping relationship with.

That’s WHY, God says, I sent My Word. There is no one like him!

Copyright 2017 © David A. Staff
All rights reserved

ⁱ https://www.nasa.gov/topics/history/features/apollo_8.html The crew rocketed into orbit on December 21, and after circling the moon 10 times on Christmas Eve, it was time to come home. On Christmas morning, mission control waited anxiously for word that Apollo 8’s engine burn to leave lunar orbit had worked. They soon got confirmation when Lovell radioed, “Roger, please be informed there is a Santa Claus.” The crew splashed down in the Pacific on December 27. A lunar landing was still months away, but for the first time ever, humans from Earth had visited the moon and returned home safely.

ⁱⁱ William Anders

“We are now approaching lunar sunrise, and for all the people back on Earth, the crew of Apollo 8 has a message that we would like to send to you.”

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep.

And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.”ⁱⁱⁱ

James Lovell

“And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.”ⁱⁱⁱ

Frank Borman

“And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.”

“And from the crew of Apollo 8, we close with good night, good luck, a Merry Christmas – and God bless all of you, all of you on the good Earth.”

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apollo_8_Genesis_reading

^{iv} Romans 1:19-20

^{iv} Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, notes Temple’s observation in saying, “Temple is probably right in thinking that the phrase here combines two meanings, ‘In the beginning of history,’ and ‘at the root of the universe.’ John is fond of using expressions with more than one meaning.” p. 73.

^v Psalm 33 (p.463 ESV)

Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous! Praise befits the upright.

² Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings!

³ Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts.

⁴ For the word of the LORD is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness.

⁵ He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD.

⁶ By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.

⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses.

⁸ Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!

⁹ For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.

^x D. Jeffrey Bingham, “Chapter Five Biblical Inspiration, Authority, and Canonicity,” in David S. Dockery, editor, *Theology, Church, and Ministry: A Handbook for Theological Education* (Nashville, TN: Academic, 2017), 94-95.

^{xi} Bingham, 96.

^{xii} Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, notes that Dods maintains that the preposition *προς* “implies not merely existence alongside of but personal intercourse. It means more than *μετα* or *παρά* and is regularly employed in expressing the presence of one person with another.” A.T. Robertson, the literal idea of ‘face to face with God’ comes out well. P.76, footnote.

^{xiii} Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 2000), 14.

^x Ibid., 14-16.