

Sunday School Lesson

JANUARY 5, 1947

By Dr. Paul Coudill

Topic: The Word Made Flesh. Scripture: John 1:1-14, 29.

Christmas has come and gone, but Christ remains forever! How fitting it is, therefore, that the first lesson of the new year has to do with the incarnate Christ. The greatest event of the centuries was his supernatural ap-

pearance among men as sinless Son of man and perfect Son of God.

For the greatest of all interpretations of the Incarnation we turn to the Gospel of John. "The test of time has given the palm to the Fourth Gospel over all the books of the world," said Dr. A. T. Robertson. "If Luke's Gospel is the most beautiful, John's Gospel is supreme in its height and depth and reach of thought. The picture of Christ here given is one that has captured the mind and heart of mankind."

His Absolute, Eternal Being John's opening words, "In the beginning," brush aside all boundaries of time and space. In fact, as Wescott suggests, he gives wings to our thoughts and leads us back, even beyond the beginning of creation, in time to eternity. One thinks of the opening words of Genesis: "In the beginning God..."

Three times in the opening sentence, John makes use of the imperfect form of the verb to be which conveys "no idea of origin of God, or for the Logos, simply continuous existence" (Robertson). In this graphic, unequivocal declaration of John we have the foundation for the message of the entire Book. "It sets aside the false notion that the Word became 'personal' first at the time of Creation or at the incarnation. The absolute, eternal, immanent relations of the Persons of the Godhead furnish the basis for revelation. Because the Word was personally distinct from 'God,' He could make Him known" (Westcott).

It is not John's intention here to offer argument to prove the existence of God. Neither is such an attempt made in Genesis 1. It is simply assumed. "Either God exists and is Creator of the universe as scientists like Eddington and Jeans assume or matter is eternal or it has come out of nothing" (Robertson). What John is doing is simply this: He is identifying the person, Jesus Christ, whom he is about to introduce on the plane of human history, with the Logos. Now the term "Logos" is from an old word (Gr. lego) meaning in Homer to collect, lay by, to speak or express an opinion. The term was frequently used "for reason as well as speech." It was used by Heraclitus to represent the principle which governs the universe. It was used by Marcus Aurelius to express the generative principle or creative force in nature.

Greek philosophy was familiar with the term. "The word being thus already in use and aiding thoughtful men in their efforts to conceive God's connection with the world. John takes it and uses it to denote the Revealer of the incomprehensible and invisible God. Irrespective of all speculations which had gathered around the term, John now proceeds to make known the true nature of the Logos" (Dodds).

It is difficult for one to dwell for long on John's treatment of the Logos without thinking of Paul's words to the pagan philosophers in Athens as he surveyed the materialistic objects of their devotion and sensed their hunger for God: "What therefore ye worship in ignorance, this I set forth unto you" (Acts 17:23).

The eternal Christ "was" when time began to run its age-long course. His existence knows no barriers of time and circumstance. He, "the Word," already existed at that remote point of time in history when "God created the heaven and the earth." Even then "the Word was." Hence, "The 'being' of the Word

is thus carried beyond the limits of time." His Relation to Creation John not only declares Jesus Christ, the Word, to be absolute and eternal; he goes on to set forth the essential facts with reference to His relation to creation.

First, he points out how the act of creation was accomplished. It came about through the Word and by His presence: "All things were made through Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made" (v. 3). Note that John presents creation as "a becoming" (Gr. gignomai) rather than as "being" (Gr. eimi)—the word used to interpret the existence of Jesus. Creation had, in point of time, to "come into being," whereas Jesus already existed.

Jesus Christ, according to John was the intermediate agent through whom all things came into being. In the Logos John offers an explanation of the creation of the universe. Like the author of Hebrews he declares that God's Son is the one "through whom he made the ages" (1:2). So does Paul assert that "in him were all things created" (Christ) and "the all things have been created through him and unto him" (Col. 1:16f.).

Again, John holds up the Logos as the power that creates and sustains life in the universe. The very principle or essence of life, unlimited and all-inclusive, resides in Him. He is its source, its sustaining power. Moreover, this incarnate Christ is responsible for more than the life of men. He is also the Light of men. This Light keeps on shining—giving light—irrespective of the attitude of the unresponsive and unbelieving world. Nothing can stop Him—not even the perfidy of wilful, sinful man. His Gift of Salvation

The miracle of Jesus, however, is best expressed in his role as Saviour. "But as many as received him," says John, "to them gave he the right to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (1:12f.).

First and last Jesus, the Logos, the Christ of God is man's perfect remedy for sin. He was the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world"

The ancient scapegoat bore away, symbolically, the sins of the nation; and sacrifices had been offered without number for individuals. But here was One who came for the express purpose of being the world's sin-bearer. He would become the reality of which all preceding sacrifices had been but a shadowy symbol. Apart from John's picture of Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb of God, voluntarily pouring out his blood in his supreme act of self-giving to God in behalf of sinful man, there can be no real understanding of the mission of Jesus, or the character of his adequacy as world Redeemer. His deliberate sacrifice of self became for us both the symbol and the pledge of forgiveness the remission of sin. Never again would the children of God have need of the ancient temple sacrifice. In Christ a new Mediator had come. As the angel of annunciation proclaimed to Joseph, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins."

It is in this role of the Lamb—the role of Saviour, Redeemer, and Cleanser from sin—that Jesus Christ has eternal meaning for the world.

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Obituary Given For Mrs. Patterson

Mae McLean Patterson, daughter of David H. and Mary Michael McLean, was born Nov. 1, 1929, and departed this life Dec. 15, 1946, being 26 years, 1 month and 7 days of age. On May 17, 1941, she was married to Louis H. Patterson, of California. Surviving are the husband and four children, Louis McLean, Mary Anne, Sidney, and Jay Edwin Patterson, of Los Angeles, California; her parents, one brother, Robert McLean, and a maternal grandmother, Mrs. Selah Michael, of Route 1, North Wilkesboro.

After her graduation from Wilkesboro high school in May 1938, due to her health she went to California to make her home with an aunt, Mrs. Sara Pries. There she met her husband.

She joined Harmony Baptist church at the age of ten years and lived a devoted Christian life. She was a devoted wife and mother and always ready to lend a helping hand.

Funeral service was held Sunday, December 22, at Harmony Baptist church. Those from a distance attending the service were: Mrs. Una Hall, Evansville, Ind.; Mr. and Mrs. T. M. Michael, Mrs. Nina Heith, Johnnie and Bill Michael, Cherry Point; Mr. and Mrs. Fred Michael, Jr., Helen, Paul and Roy Michael, Winston-Salem; Jimmie Michael, Camp Lejeune; Mrs. B. H. Watson, Boone; Mr. and Mrs. Bill Moore, Winston-Salem.

CARD OF THANKS
We wish to take this opportunity to thank all for their kindness and sympathy during the death and funeral of our wife and mother. We also thank our friends from California, and the chief of police and highway patrol for their cooperation during the funeral.
PAT PATTERSON and Children.

Odell Sink, Jeff Pritz, Webb Wilson, and the Baptist Orphanage of Davidson county have found that curing and storing sweet potatoes in baskets or crates is the best practice to follow. Caswell County farmers planted a pound of Lodi sweet potato in 1945 and 1,255 pounds in 1946.

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