

I don't know about you, but one of the things that always impressed me is when someone uses relatively simple things to make something that is very sophisticated. My children (and likely many of yours) have at various times during their childhood created many amazing things out of simple little LEGO blocks. These tiny chunks of plastic can be used to bring a child's imagination to life.

The Gospel according to John is another thing that really impresses me because it uses simple words to proclaim some very profound theology. For example: Of the 224 words that make up today's Gospel, just over 200 of them are one-syllable words. Less than ten of them have more than two syllables. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit worked through John's simple words to proclaim some very sophisticated theology.

John himself gives us the purpose for this writing near the end of his Gospel account: Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; 31but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. (John 20:30–31) With these words, John proclaims that Jesus is the anointed one of God, He is God the Son, and there is a specific faith in Jesus that receives eternal life.

The beginning of this Gospel begins to fulfill this purpose with simple, elegant beauty. Here we learn that there is a Word that is more than just simple information. Here we learn that there is a Word that is a living, thinking being. Here we learn of an eternal, living Word that has come to live with us.

“In the beginning was the Word.” (John 1:1) It is not an accident that the first words of this Gospel account are the same as the first words of Genesis. This special Word that John tells us about is eternal. In the beginning ... before anything was created ... this Word already existed. The only way to BE in the beginning is to be eternal. The only thing that existed at the beginning ... before anything is created ... is God.

Now, just in case this is not obvious, the proclamation continues: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.” (John 1:1–2) Here the account begins to develop the idea that this Word is not alone as God. These first two verses inform us that this Word was with one person of God, He actually was the second person of God, and, in addition, He was with a third person of God. Here the text begins to show that God is three persons ... AND this Word is one of those

persons. Since God does not change, if this Word was God in the beginning, then He is still God today.

The proclamation then tells us that this Word was intimately involved with the creative work of God. “All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” (John 1:3) This verse informs us that this Word was totally involved in the creative process. In fact, it says it twice. All things were made through him really says it all, but just to emphasize the point, we also hear “without him was not anything made that was made.” (John 1:3) the text powerfully drives home the point that when God created all things, He created them through this Word.

The next verse informs us that God not only created us through this Word, but He also maintains us through this Word. “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:4) This text teaches us that our very life is tied up in this Word. True life is in Him. Then, by way of this true life, He gives us the light of intellect, reason, and wisdom.

Next, we learn that this Word has an enemy. “The light shines in the darkness...” (John 1:5) Darkness is not a thing. It is the absence of a thing. Darkness is the absence of light. If the Word, who is light is God,

then Darkness is the absence of light ... the absence of the Word ... the absence of God. God creates. The Darkness destroys.

Yet, in revealing this enemy, there is great hope. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:5) Light is more powerful than dark. God is more powerful than evil. In the end, the light of the Word will overpower the darkness of destruction.

Now that John has told us about the Word ... that He is God with the two other persons of the Trinity ... that He is the source of life and thought ... that He is the light that drives out the darkness of evil. Now that John has told us all these things, he tells us that this Word ... this light came into the world. “The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.” (John 1:9)

As we learn about the Light coming into the world. John reminds us of the sad state of the world. “He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.” (John 1:10–11) Because of the darkness of sin, the world, whose life was in Him, did not know Him. Even the Jews, who had the light of the written Word, rejected Him. He was a stranger to those who were created through Him.

Despite this general rejection, there were a few ... a remnant ... who received Him. “To all who did receive him, who believed in his

name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.” (John 1:12–13) John is clear - no human activity whatsoever can make one into a child of God. God and God alone comes to the sinner and converts that sinner into His child.

He now tells us how He came. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) Here we learn that the eternal Word took on our human flesh in order to dwell with us ... in order to be one of us. By the power of the Holy Spirit, the eternal Word joins with a single human egg in the womb of the Virgin Mary so that God and man are now one Christ ... our brother ... our saviour.

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” (Hebrews 1:1–2) God communicated His love to us in the Word made flesh who dwelt among us. It is by the flesh of this Word that He conquers the darkness of sin and death. For it is the flesh of this Word that hung on the cross to purify you and me from the darkness of our sin. It is the flesh of this Word that rose from the dead to open the path to life for all who believe.

The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. That is what this day is all about. The eternal Word – God – now lives in human flesh. We celebrate the birth of a son to the Virgin Mary, a son who is God with us. In that human flesh, Christ was born. In that human flesh, Christ died. In that human flesh, Christ rose. In that human flesh, Christ now reigns at God’s right hand. In that same human flesh, Christ will come to judge the living and the dead.

On that Last Day, when we look at our judge, we shall see our saviour... our saviour whose birth we celebrate on this day ... Jesus ... the God-man ... the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. On this day, we celebrate the birth of the one who gave His life so that we might live and enjoy His presence forevermore. Amen