

**THE SERMONS, LECTURES, AND SONGS OF
SIDNEY EDWARD COX**

CD 88-1

Gospel of John

Chapter 1

The Word Was Made Flesh

Delivered at the East Lake Alliance Church. Birmingham, Alabama.

Editorial Note: In 1972, Sidney Cox moved from Detroit, Michigan to Birmingham, Alabama to be near my parents, John and Jean Cox. He was 85 years of age at the time, and although in remarkable health, was beginning to slow down. Although he greatly curtailed his traveling; nevertheless, he remained in great demand as a preacher and teacher.

During the latter part of his life, he had developed a close relationship with the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church, who more or less adopted Sidney Cox for their own. He was invited to speak in many CMA churches. In Birmingham, he attended and became a member of the East Lake Alliance Church.

It was at the East Lake Alliance Church that he was asked to present this series of Bible lessons on the Gospel of John. These two lessons appear to have been given on consecutive nights and also appear to have been a part of a larger series; however, I have been unable to locate the other lessons in the series.

J. Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney and Violet Cox. February 2009.

(The first few words on this CD are from an unknown speaker, not Sidney Cox. “Nothing can fail in the redeemer’s hand. Shall nothing be lost? No, nothing. Why.....”)

We will start tonight at the very beginning, with the opening words of the Gospel of John, and our message tonight will be, “The Word Made Flesh”. Here is the beginning of the study of the Gospel of John.

I was so glad to hear you sing that little chorus a few moments ago, *Far Off - Made Nigh*. I received a very interesting letter, pastor, this week about that chorus. It was from one of the fine songmen, gospel songmen of the United States, who was present at the Founders Week Conference at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago in February of this year.¹ Just a little while ago. He writes and tells me that the song leader there made quite a feature of this little chorus there, and folks singing it and liked it, and it had already traveled that far. And we were so glad about it and it’s amazing how a little chorus will take wings to itself and the first thing you know, it’s gone and it’s gone on a journey. I hope it will be going on a journey for a long, long distance. It think it will. You pass it on to somebody else.

¹ Sidney Cox himself was once on the staff of the Moody Bible Institute from 1922 - 1927. Later in life, he served as a member of the Expansion Department, preaching and teaching around the country as a representative of Moody. He himself was once invited delivered a sermon during Founders Week at the Moody Bible Institute.

The man who taught it at Moody Bible Institute in that conference, he got it from somebody; I have a feeling I know who taught it to him, but it travels in this way. Perhaps you can pass on the truth that is there, for remember that in a little gospel song, the truth is the more important thing. It's not too important about the music or the poetry. Most of our gospel songs are second rate things so far as music and poetry is concerned, but they've got the living word in the heart of them if they're gospel songs at all. They're not all that way, but gospel songs are those that have the gospel in them. Some of them don't come anywhere near the gospel, but, and the gospel doesn't come anywhere near them. But in the main, the gospel song is the one that has God's truth about redemption in it, some phase of it. And I think this has, and so we can pass it on to somebody else. And thank you so much for doing it.

May we turn please, to the opening words of the first chapter of the Gospel of John.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.”²

The first five verses of the first chapter of the Gospel of John.

Now, I want to remind you too, of Verse 14 in that same chapter. “And the Word was made 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.”³

Now, you have heard the word, “word” several times in that reading. How many times was our Lord referred to as, “The Word” in the few verses, the six verses, I have read to you? How many times? Are you good at observing? How many times there? How many? How many? Let me give them to you again. “In the beginning was the Word, (Did you count it?) and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” When you go to Chapter 4, Verse 14 you've got the same thing again. “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.” Now, here's your answer. How many times in six verses do you find the “Word” w-o-r-d? How many? Four times in that opening section we find the Word, w-o-r-d.

Let's have a word of prayer and then we'll go on with our study.

(Prayer)

Our Father, we pray for Thy blessing upon us, for Thy quietness for our hearts, for Thy quickening for our minds, for the hush upon our hearts as we gather around Thy word. We pray that we may enter into its treasures and see something of its beauty and wash in the water of it. May it be to us as the very word of God Himself, as it verily is. Help us, we pray Thee, to be listening tonight, to see what God has to say to each one of us. In Jesus precious name we pray, Amen.

² John 1:1-5

³ John 1:14

The greatest tragedy that ever came into the universe was the entrance of sin into it. It started in heaven and when God had completed His creative work, it was not long before it appeared down here. The greatest tragedy that ever happened was the entrance of sin into the universe. Now, the greatest thing that happened in connection with that was that God and man lost their relationship one to the other. Before sin came, God and man were in relationship to each other. They walked with each other. There was a free means of communication between God and man. God walked in the garden, in the cool of the evening, and He was able to talk personally to man. Now the greatest thing that ever happened in connection with sin, the most terrible thing was, that fellowship was broken. That communion ceased. That means of communication was broken and instead of God and man being close together, they were now far off. God was over here; man was over here. And between the two, there was no means of communication.

Now, the heart of God had not changed because of sin. Because God turned his back upon man as He had to do in his righteousness, did not mean that out of the heart of God had evaporated His love for man. God still loved us in spite of it. And the great desire in the heart of God was to reestablish that fellowship between Himself and man. There must be a means. Now at the beginning, God began to speak to mankind in various ways. He would speak personally to some of those whom He could trust.

For instance, he could talk personally with Enoch. He could talk personally with Noah. He could talk personally with Abraham, and many another. Then He would send messengers, anointed ones. He spoke in times past. The first verses of Hebrews tells us, "By the prophets, in various times and sundry manners He spoke in times past by the prophets."⁴ God seeking a means of communication. But when the prophets ceased speaking, the means of communication was gone, and God had in His heart, not a temporary means by which he could get into touch with man, but a permanent means. A means that would last, not just for a moment, but forever. The permanent means of communication. Now, we find that, "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in times past by the prophets. Hath, (and here's the permanent means of communication) He hath in these last days spoken unto us in his Son."⁵

One of the greatest facts that we can contemplate is the fact that God has now found a permanent means of communication between God and man. Somebody has bridged the gulf. Somebody has set himself in between, carrying God's message to man and man's message back to God. Have you ever noticed that in this Gospel of John, our Lord is spoken of in two ways: One, the Word of God, and the other, the Lamb of God. Now, you find them both in this first chapter of the Gospel of John. He is the Word of God. He is also the Lamb of God. Why the two? Well, it's just simply two sides of this problem of communication.

When He's the Word of God, He is God speaking to man. But as the Lamb of God, He is man's way of communicating with God. We can only approach God by the blood of the Lamb that was slain, that's all. We come to God by the Lamb. God comes to us by the Word. And we have the two sides of communication. God speaking to us and then providing a way by which we may speak to God. Now, let me ask you something.

⁴ Hebrews 1:1

⁵ Hebrews 1:1,2

When you communicate with someone else, a friend, when you talk to them, what do you use as your means of communication? Tell me right out there, somebody. Nobody here but us, let's talk, shall we? A voice, yes, but what does the voice do? I can use a voice without any communication. I can use my voice and not communicate a thing. I can demonstrate that to you if I wanted to – I don't want to. I don't want to disturb the atmosphere here, but I could sure do it. But if I'm going to communicate, it's not merely my voice. I can communicate with my pen and pencil. Conversation, yes, but what in conversation? Words! That's the thing I'm after. That's the thing we use in communicating. Words. Words are our means of communication.

Let me say something to you very reverently. Words are God's means of communicating too. God has two words by which He makes known Himself, His will, His way, His purpose, His love. The written word is one way. The "living word" is the other. Now, if you want to be correct, you must bring those two together for the one who is the living word is also the heart throb of this written word. You take Him out of the middle of this and what have you got left? You've got merely a conglomeration of words without sense on paper that isn't worth burning. But you put him in the middle of this and you've got something that has life and power and that generates life and that can transform lives and bring light into the midst of the darkness of earth. The Word, the Word, the Word.

But this word tells us that that Word was in the heart of God. Before the Word can ever come down to us He must leave the heart of God, and come down to where we are. A word is God's means of communication. That is why the Lord Jesus is spoken of as, "The Word of God." Now, when you speak with words you do, presumably, express a thought that's in your mind. Words are the expression of a thought. When our Lord comes here as the Word of God, He is the expression of the thought of God. We know what God is thinking when we look at Jesus and when we listen to Him. We know what God is thinking. We know what God thinks about us. We know what God thinks about sin, and we not only know what God thinks about sin, we know what God has done about it too. God thinks aloud in the person of His Son. Jesus is God thinking out loud.

S.D. Gordon⁶, one of the great servants of God of the recent generation, the man who wrote *Quiet Talks* on this, that and the other. One of those books just literally transformed my life years and years ago. But he was a great teacher of the word, one of these quiet folks who just talked quietly. And he said this, he had a quaint way of expressing himself, he said this, "Jesus is God spelling himself out in language man can understand." Did you hear that? "Jesus is God spelling Himself out in language man can understand." The Word made flesh. God thinking aloud. Now, when Jesus comes and He is God thinking aloud, of whom was God thinking? Well, the answer to that, my dear, is a very comforting one. He was thinking about you and about me.

⁶ In the early 1900s, S.D. Gordon was a widely traveled speaker in high demand. A prolific author, he wrote more than 25 devotional books, most with the phrase "Quiet Talks" in the title. His first book sold half a million copies over 40 years! He died in 1936. E.W. Kenyon said that "S.D. Gordon is a sporadic outburst of divine grace. He is unusual, as are all of God's rare tools... he is perfectly balanced in the Word and in the Spirit. He represents that rare but vanishing class of spiritually minded men of the last generation." "The Treasury of Quiet Talks Selections from S.D. Gordon" (1951) by John W. Bradbury gives this brief biography: "Samuel Dickey Gordon ministered the deep things of God. He was not an ordained minister. He could boast no academic degrees. He was never doctored [he never received an earned or honorary doctorate]. Theological concepts he obtained from his Bible. A plain man, controlled by a deep desire to edify God's people, he won the respect of the learned and at the same time the affection of the simple." Gordon lived a long and useful life. He was born in Philadelphia August 12, 1859 and died June 1936.

And our precious Lord came down here, the Word incarnate, in order that we might know what God was thinking about poor, miserable, no good sinners like us. Don't get inwardly disturbed about those words, because that's exactly what we are, apart from grace. We are poor, miserable, no good sinners apart from God's grace, we sure are. And here our Lord comes, to let folks like us, He didn't come to call the righteous, did He? He came to call sinners to repentance. He didn't come to those who were well, He came to those who were sick. He came to give Himself for sinners, to die for me, that's why He came.

But if God is thinking aloud, and thinking about us, what was He thinking about us? Would He be thinking about things that don't matter too much, or would He be thinking about us at our deepest need. Let me illustrate that.

If I went into a hospital room, and there on the bed was a little sick girl, very ill. A mother standing in that room, watching her. And while I watch too, the door opens and the doctor walks in. Supposing that doctor, with this desperate need here, looked around the room and said, "Well this is a very pleasant room Mrs. Jones. There are very nice curtains at the windows. That's a nice bedspread you have on the bed there Mrs. Jones. That's a nice Toni wave you have there Mrs. Jones." How long do you think he'd go on with that? Before he'd gone very far with that kind of conversation, Mrs. Jones would have had him by the arm and saying, "Doctor, we didn't bring you here to talk about bedspreads and curtains and Toni waves." And by the way, there isn't anything wrong with any one of them, not a thing. "Well, we didn't bring you here to talk about these things. We came here to find out what about this? This is the need." And God didn't send Jesus down here to let you know what He was thinking about secondary things. He's not particularly interested whether you have wall to wall carpets in your home or not. He didn't send his Son down here to let us know what He thinks about overstuffed furniture, and a lot of other things. He sent his Son down to let us know what He's thinking about at the point of our deepest need. Now, again, what is our deepest need? If our Lord came as the Word made flesh to communicate God's thought at the point of our deepest need, what is the deepest need? What is it?

Let me give it to you in three words. You will find that man's deepest need in this book, and no other book would dare to tell it, but this book describes man's deepest needs in three words. And it's easy to remember them because they all begin with "D". The three words are these: Death, Distance, and Darkness, are the three words that describe man's condition by nature. Dead in trespasses and sin. At a distance. Death, distance, and not only in darkness, he is darkness. Let me give you a scripture for that.

Ephesians 2:1, "And ye were dead in trespasses and sin." I know that in that verse it says, "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." But if you look in your Bible, you will find that the words 'hath he quickened' are there in italics which means they were not there in the original but the translators added them to make the sentence a little more euphonious perhaps. But the original carried the plain dogmatic statement, "And you were dead in trespasses and sin." And dead in the scripture means exactly the same as it does in the undertaker parlor. It doesn't mean unconscious. It doesn't mean you look dead, but you're not really. Not at all. It means exactly what it says. It means life has gone and life is absent entirely. "Dead in trespasses and sin."

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Ephesians 2:13, the verse on which our little chorus is based.⁷ “Ye who sometimes were far off.” Did you ever stop to think how far off, far off is when God says it? Now when somebody else says it, you can usually measure the distance. But don't get out your little tape measure and try to measure the distance of “far off” when God says it. Only God knows how far off, far off is when he says it. And sin had led us that far, until nothing in the universe could ever span the distance except the outstretched arms of the Son of God, who could take God with one hand and man with the other and span the distance. That's what He did. Death, distance.

Sidney Cox's original manuscript for his chorus, "Far Off – Made Nigh"

Ephesians 5:8, “And ye were sometimes darkness.” Not, you were in darkness, but you were darkness. “Now are ye light in the Lord. Ye were darkness.” Darkness was of our nature. That's the condition of man by nature. Dead, at a distance, he is darkness. Has God got anything to say about a situation like that? Does His Word incarnate, does that incarnate Word answer those problems and questions? What does God say about that?

You know the most difficult thing that you will ever do is to face a sinner and convince him that what the Bible says about him is true. You try to tell the average sinner, perhaps well dressed, respectable, even with a smear of religion about him. You try to tell him that he's dead in trespasses and sin. You try to tell the modernistic preacher that man by nature is dead in trespasses and sin, and you will find

⁷ He is referring to the chorus that he composed, “Far Off – Made Nigh.”

lightnings coming out of his eyes and poison off the end of his tongue as he condemns you for it. They won't have it at all. Death? This man here dead in trespasses and sin, who gives to the church? This man who has such a fine moral life? This man who does so much with the Community Chest and this and that and the other? This man who is such a fine citizen, dead in trespasses and sin? This old Word of God doesn't make any bones about that. It simply answers the question, yes, unless he has received new life through Christ. Death doesn't always look the same, does it?

I went by a river one time and I saw them drag a man's body out of the river who'd been there for a long time. And I took one look at this horrible thing and turned away in sickened disgust. Dead. That's death. I went into an undertaking establishment in the city of Atlanta, to visit a little girl belonging to the Sunday School that we were interested in at that particular time. And I knew this place quite well. I could walk in and out of it anytime at all and feel that I had a right to. And so I walked into this place and there was nobody around and I walked over to the room where I felt sure I'd find this little girl. And sure enough, there she was. Lovely little room with soft lights. There she was in this little bed with its pink tinting, and as I looked at her I could see just the shade of a smile upon her face and there was a little bit of color in her cheeks. And my heart almost stopped; I expected her to speak to me, she looked so alive. But she didn't speak to me, and she wasn't alive. And in the fact of death, there wasn't one bit of difference between this man dragged out of the river and this beautiful little girl in that undertaking establishment. They were both equally dead. They would never be any other way until new life was imparted to them.

Dead in trespasses and sin. Darkness, how deep it is. You know, darkness, my dear, in the scripture is not something, it's someone. We say we love things, but we don't really love things. We talk about things we eat sometimes, and we say we just love this. Or things that we use for furniture or something of the kind, and we say we just love this. But we don't really love that. You can only apply love to a person. We can have regard for these things and like them and so on, but love is a word that is applied to a person. One of the condemnations of the sinner in the third chapter of this very book is, "He loves darkness, rather than light because his deeds were evil."⁸ Darkness is something, not just someone, not just something. And we were darkness. We were of the nature of the original darkness, sin's darkness, Satanic darkness. That was our condition.

Is there any answer to this? Is there anybody that can come and bring life for our death and light for our darkness? What does a dead man need? A new suit of clothes? Not at all. He needs life. What does a man who is darkness, what does he need? He needs light. Is there anybody that can come and bring from God the answer to our deep need? Oh, my dear, won't you listen to it again? You've heard it a thousand times before. Won't you listen to it again? "And the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not."⁹ Listen to it again. "In him was life! And the life was the light of men."¹⁰ So we've got the answer. God is communicating to a man dead in trespasses and sin and saying, "I've got life for you." He's communicating with a person who is darkness and saying through our precious Lord, "I have light for you." That's what He means.

8 John 3:19

9 John 1:5

10 John 1:4

And if you have any doubt as to how deep the darkness is, let me remind you of three words that are right in here in these opening words of this chapter. “And the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not.” - Verse 5. You go to Verse 10 and you will find, “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.” Notice, comprehended him not – knew him not. You go one step further to the next verse and you'll find it again. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.”¹¹ Notice it, comprehended him not, knew him not, received him not. Don't you see there is a picture of man in his entirety.

Any teacher who is dealing with the construction of the personality of man will tell you that it is made of three sections: mind, emotions, and will. Where do we comprehend with our mind? 'And he comprehended not.' His mind was blank as far as God is concerned. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God for they are spiritually discerned.”¹² 'He knew Him not.' Where do we really know things. Not up here; down here in the center of our being. And his inner heart was absolutely dead as far as God was concerned; every phase of his being. What about that last one? “Received Him not.” How do you receive anything? You say, “I receive it with my hands.” Oh, no you don't, you receive it with something else before your hand ever touches it. You receive it with your will. If your will refused it, your hand wouldn't stretch out for it. It's because your will receives it, and your hand stretches out for it. We receive with our will, and here you find a man who is dead as far as his mind is concerned towards God. He may be perfectly normal in every other realm, but put him into the realm of the spirit and he's dead. Here is a man whose emotions are all away from God. Here is a man whose will has been turned inexorably against God so that when God's only begotten Son comes, even He is refused. Into a situation like this, where the darkness gets deeper and deeper and deeper, as you go down, into a situation like that, our Lord steps. Now you listen to it.

“But to as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.”¹³

And so here is the answer to it. As we receive Christ our Lord the darkness goes, and the death goes, and the distance is spanned, and instead of us being isolated in our hopelessness, we are now again united with God. That's why the Lord Jesus came, in order to accomplish that impossible thing for you and for me. “To them gave He the right to become the sons of God.”

And beloved, it was not merely a matter of God saying to a sinner, “Because you have received my Son, I declare you to be a son of God.” In order that we might be a son in any family, we must share the life of that family. But in that beautiful twelfth verse of this chapter, you find the indication of it: “To as many as received Him, to them gave He the right.” In connection with that word, there is the overarching thought: To them gave He of His substance that we might become the born sons of God. There's life there, to as many as received Him, to them gave He the right. Upon them bestowed He His own substance, His very nature that we might be the very born sons of God.

The distinction between the Christian and one who is not, is not at all a matter of conduct, although that

11 John 1:11

12 1 Corinthians 2:14

13 John 1:12

ought to be there. But the great difference is, there is a new nature, God's life has been imparted and faith in the Son made that possible.

Now you've been very patient tonight as you have listened to me. We'll pick it up tomorrow night and go on with our study of the Gospel of John. But right now, you have heard the heart of the Gospel of John, because this book is like so many others, it has a prologue, in which the thought developed all the way through the book is concentrated. And you've got the concentration of thought that is developed all the way through the Gospel of John in those opening words that we have been listening to tonight.

Are you glad you're a Christian? Because that's what it means, that's what it means to be a Christian. It means that God through Christ has transformed you until you now have a life different entirely to that which you had before - a life, a life so that God can look down upon you as a mother might look upon her child and say, "You are my very own." And whether you believe it or not, if you've been born again, God's looking at you tonight and saying, "You are my very own." And if you haven't been born again, God's still looking at you and saying, "I want you to accept my Son. I sent Him for you. I sent Him down there to die for you." When you accept him then you open the door for God to do all that God wants to do for you. And the communication is once more established.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."¹⁴ "And the Word was made 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."¹⁵

Prayer:

Our Father, we pray that Thou will take Thy word and use it for Thy glory, for our blessing, our strengthening, until we may grow in maturity, because of this intimate contact with the preciousness of Thy word. Bless us as we go along day by day, evening by evening. May we put aside nonessential things and gather around the Word of God, content with Thy smile, Thine approval. May this be a moment in which God's word shall be glorified and in which we may be approved. In Jesus precious name, Amen.

We're going to sing.....

(audio ends).

¹⁴ John 1:1,2

¹⁵ John 1:14