



A 28-day Advent devotional, *From Heaven* features daily reflections on the first and second comings of Christ. Beloved 20th-century pastor A. W. Tozer, renowned for his wisdom and writing abilities, will lead you into a greater appreciation of the Light that dawned among our darkness—and will shine on us again.

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DAY I

THE LOST PRESENCE

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God.

GENESIS 3:8

... the Lord God banished him from the Garden of Eden ...

GENESIS 3:23

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

JOHN 1:14

Adam had lost the presence of the Creator God and in the Bible record of the ages that followed, God never dwelt with men again in quite the same way.

To the Israelites, God dwelt in the Shekinah, hidden in the fire and the cloud. Occasionally He would appear

in what theologians call a theophany, an appearance of the Deity. God might speak briefly with a man as He did with Abraham in the tent door or with Gideon on the threshing floor. God did not linger; His appearance always cautious and veiled.

Even when God showed Himself to Moses it was in the fire of the burning bush or while Moses was hidden in the cleft of the rock. The eyes of fallen, sinful men were no longer able to endure the radiant majesty and glory of Deity.

Then, in the fullness of time, He came again to men, for “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.”

They called His name Immanuel, which means “God with us.” In that first coming of Jesus the Christ, God again came to dwell with men in person.

I will have you know that I am not a prepositional preacher but at this point we must note three prepositions having to do with the coming of Jesus, God appearing as man.

He appeared to dwell *with* men. He appeared to be united *to* men. He came to ultimately dwell *in* men forever. So, it is with men, and to men, and in men that He came to dwell.

I always note with a little chuckle the frustrations of the translators when they come to such passages as “No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:18).

God's Word is just too big for the translators. They come to this phrase in the Greek: *The Son hath declared Him*. In the English of the King James Version it is just *declared*. In other versions they skirt it, they go around it, they plunge through it. They use two or three words and then they come back to one. They do everything to try to say what the Holy Ghost said, but they have to give up. Our English just will not say it all.

When we have used up our words and synonyms, we still have not said all that God revealed when He said: Nobody has ever seen God, but when Jesus Christ came He showed us what God is like (paraphrase of John 1:18).

I suppose that our simple and everyday language is as good as any.

“He has revealed Him—he has shown us what God is like!”

He has declared Him. He has set Him forth. He has revealed Him. In these ways the translators shift their language trying to get at this wondrous miracle of meaning.

But that man walking in Galilee was God acting like God. It was God, limited deliberately, having crossed the wide, mysterious gulf between God and not God; God and creature. No man had seen God at any time.

“The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father . . .” (John 1:18)—will you note that *was* is not the tense? Neither does it say that the Son *will be* in the Father's bosom. He *is* in the Father's bosom. It is stated in present, perpetual tense; the continuous tense, I think the grammarians call it. It is the language of continuation.

WEEK I

Therefore, when Jesus hung on the cross He did not leave the bosom of the Father.

You ask me, then: “Mr. Tozer, if that is true, why did our Lord Jesus cry out, ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’” (Mark 15:34).

Was He frightened? Was He mistaken?

Never, never!

The answer should be very plain to us who love Him and serve Him.



BRIDGING THE GULF

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.
We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son,
who came from the Father . . .*

JOHN 1:14

John the Baptist bears witness of Him, and cried saying, “This is He of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me [that is, in honor]: for he was before me [that is, in rank].” And out of His fullness we have received grace following grace. The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came from Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.

We notice first of all that John said the Word became flesh, or the Word was made flesh. What we have here,

stated in four words, is one of the darkest mysteries of human thought: How the Deity could cross the wide yawning gulf that separates what is God from what is not God. For in the universe there are really only two things: God and not God, that which is God and that which is not God. And all that is not God was made by God. And God was made by none. So we have God and not God. And the gulf that exists between God and not God—that is between the Creator and the creature, between the being we call God and all other beings—is a great and vast and yawning gulf. How God could bridge this—and how God could join the Creator to the creature—constitutes one of the profoundest and darkest mysteries to which human thought can ever give itself.

If you have never thought very much about this, it may not seem so amazing. But if you have given it a little thought, you will see how astonishing it is that the unbridgeable gulf between God and not God—for the very archangels and the seraphim and the cherub that shield stones of fire are not God, so that there is a gulf fixed, a vast gulf, a gulf of infinitude—and how God managed to bridge that and how He could join Himself to His creatures, and how He could limit the limitless, or in the language we hear more popularly, how the infinite could ever become the finite. And how that which had no limit, which is God, should deliberately impose upon Himself limitations. And how God and why God would favor one order of being above another.

If you read your Bible you will discover that man is not the only order of being. Man, in his sinful pride, thinks he is. We do not even believe in angels anymore. We think angels are simply Santa Clauses with wings, and Protestants do not believe in angels anymore. Foolishly we do not believe in angels. Nor do we believe in cherubim or seraphim or watchers or holy ones or any of these strange principalities and powers that walk so darkly bright through the passages of the Bible. We do not believe them as much as we should at any rate. And yet they are there, and mankind is only one order of God's being of creatures.

How and why God should favor one above the other? For it is written in the book of Hebrews that God took upon Him not the nature of angels, but He took upon Him the seed of Abraham. Abraham certainly was not equal to an angel. One would suppose that God in stepping down should step down as little as He dared or could, that He would stop with an angel or a seraphim, but instead He came down to the lowest order, and took upon Himself the nature of Abraham, the seed of Abraham.

Even that man Paul, who was declared to be one of the six greatest intellects of all time, that great man of God, threw up his hands and said, "Great is the mystery of godliness."



DAY 3

GOD MANIFESTED IN FLESH

*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us . . .
full of grace and truth.*

JOHN 1:14

Christ Jesus is not only Redeemer, but the Sustainer, the Creator, the Upholder, the One who holds all things together, the adhesive quality of the universe. To those who believe, Christ Jesus is the medium through whom God dispenses grace to all of His creatures, including those to be redeemed and those who do not need to be redeemed.

It is true that there are orders upon orders and ranks upon ranks of creatures that do not need to be redeemed.

Yet, it is also true, that they live by grace as well as the lowest sinner who is converted.

Through the apostle John, the Holy Spirit tells us that the eternal Son, the Word who became flesh, is full of grace and truth.

Let us remember this: everything God does is by grace, for no man, no creature, no being deserves anything. Salvation is by grace, the creation is by grace—all that God does is by grace and every human being has received of His fullness.

This boundless grace must operate wherever that which is not God appeals to that which is God; wherever the voice of the creature crosses the vast gulf to the ears of the Creator.

How do the angels get their broad wings?

Out of His grace.

How do the principalities and powers, the ranks and the columns of shining creatures appearing through the pages of the Bible get what they have?

Out of His grace upon grace.

I dare to ask in this context: What have you received of His grace and mercy?

Even though you may still be unconverted and going your own way, you have received much out of the ocean of His fullness. You have received the pulsing life that beats in your bosom. You have received the brilliant mind and brain within the protective covering of your skull. You have received a memory that strings the events you

cherish and love as a jeweler strings pearls into a necklace and keeps them for you as long as you live and beyond.

All that you have is out of His grace. Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, who became flesh and dwelt among us, is the open channel through which God moves to provide all the benefits He gives to saints and sinners.

And what about the years, the rest of your existence?

You cannot believe that you have earned it.

You cannot believe that it has something to do with whether you are good or bad.

Confess that it is out of His grace, for the entire universe is the beneficiary of God's grace and goodness.



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