

## The Word Wins

Revelation 19:10-21

#36 in our series “The Gospel According to Jesus: The Revelation”

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### Message

Do you ever feel like an ass . . . when you try to tell people about Jesus?

I do . . . I was thinking about why that is and I think it's for several reasons:

For one, the Word of God offends people; it cuts into their ego. Charles Wesley wrote, “Nothing is more repugnant to capable, reasonable people than grace.” I didn’t use to believe that, but I do now. Frankly, I’m surprised anyone comes to church, especially after a sermon like last week’s. Do you remember last week’s sermon? I preached *God* is salvation, which me *you* are *not* salvation at all! In other words, you’re no better than any else—even Hitler! Jesus is better than Hitler, but you—on your own—are better than no one else.

You see? The Word of God just obliterates the human ego—any ego.

One night, years ago a friend of mine had an encounter with Jesus as we prayed for her deliverance from some horrid memories in her past. At one point, Jesus stood in front of her in the Glory of His Relentless Grace—His relentless love. As she was having this vision I remember saying to her: “Look! You are entirely forgiven. Your sins are absolutely forgiven you!”

I remember! She grabbed me and screamed at me through her tears: “Don’t you get it? I don’t want Him to forgive me!” Understand? If you’re forgiven, you cannot justify yourself; you’ve been justified.

Pride and shame are two sides of the same idol and that idol is the self. The Word of God is a knife that sacrifices the self, the psyche, the flesh. That’s what we talked about last week. The Word cuts away that which separates and is the will that binds all things together, such that none is left alone . . . *“It’s not Good that the Adam is alone.”*

So #1, the Word of God offends people and #2 when I speak it, I often feel like a fool. I have to testify to something that I cannot fully comprehend. People want something that they can understand and use to make a life—to make their life work. I can’t make the Word of God work for you. And that cuts into my ego!

The Word offends people, makes me feel like a fool, and # 3 sometimes I despair that it makes any difference at all. It seems so broken and weak. Actually, all words seem weak, while “sticks and stones” will “break your bones.”

All words seem weak, particularly in this modern era . . . ever since the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment (or age of reason) refers to the last three hundred years and a view of reality built on a Newtonian understanding of space and time. It's the idea that only matter and energy are real, while words and ideas are more like a mythical byproduct of chemicals in the brain.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Enlightenment lead to Christian Liberalism. That's the idea that we couldn't take the Bible too seriously and that, in the words of Rudolph Bultman, it needed to be "de-mythologized."

The claim that God created all things with a word, and a statement like "*Before Abraham was I am,*" must clearly be poetry—"poetry" *not* reality—thought the Liberals.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, Fundamentalists and Evangelicals reacted by arguing that we need to take the Bible literally. And yet, by "literally" they didn't mean according to the author's literary intent, they meant that they needed to take everything in the context of our modern notions of space and time, and thereby make it reasonable to us.

- So they developed simple theories to explain the work of the cross—the atonement.
- And they developed maps of the end times, which would fit in the boxes on any human calendar.

Ironically, like the liberals, they thought matter is what matters and words are weak.

Even the Pentecostals and Charismatics got in on the action...

Some think that unless someone shakes or a leg grows nothing really happens as if the flesh availeth much and the spirit availeth little.

Jesus said, "*It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life*" (John 6:63).

Well, my background is liberal, fundamentalist, charismatic... and I'm sympathetic to each; *I'm just pointing out* that for all of us modern folks, non-Christian and Christian, words seem weak.

They must've really seemed weak along about 70 AD in Asia Minor when the seven churches received a circular letter from John the beloved disciple exiled on the island of Patmos. By 70 AD, Nero had already burned countless believers in the Coliseum in Rome or offered them as sport for the Gladiators in Rome.

Much like America today, in ancient Rome it wasn't Truth or Love that reigned supreme; it was all about power—life was the survival of the fittest.

Clip from *Spartacus* the movie:

[Spartacus is exhausted and covered in blood from fighting others in order to stay alive. He is granted life because he was able to remain alive by killing others in the arena. At the declaration the crowd that was observing the fights jumps to its feet and begins chanting: "Spartacus" over and over.]

That's a modern, explicit, and very graphic depiction of Spartacus, the Roman slave who became a champion Gladiator and won his life by taking others' lives.

In 73 BC Spartacus lead a rebellion against Rome; he fought power with power and Rome crushed Spartacus and his fellow slaves.

In 70 AD it was the common belief that none could stand against the supernatural beast called Rome... let alone seven little churches in Asia Minor.

[Image of the *Alexamenos Graffito*]

This is actually a little graffiti from Rome... it's called the *Alexamenos Graffito*. It's graffiti as well as, possibly the very oldest depiction of Jesus in the world.

[Clearer image of the *Alexamenos Graffito*]

This is a line drawing of the graffiti, so you can better see the image. It's a picture of a man worshipping another man, crucified on a tree . . . a man with the head of an ass. The graffiti states: "Alexamenos worships [his] God."

To speak the Word in Rome was to look like an ass. And, of course, you remember that when Jesus entered Jerusalem he road an ass, which was obviously a disappointment for many Jews but it was just as Zechariah had prophesied (Zech. 9:9)

*"Behold your king IS (like right now) coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of an ass."*

An ass meant humility.

The Jews didn't want a savior on an ass that would save them from themselves. They wanted a king on a warhorse that would save them from the Rome.

But that's how He came—humble and riding on an ass.

In Revelation 19 He comes again . . . or maybe I should just say:

In Revelation 19 He *comes* . . .

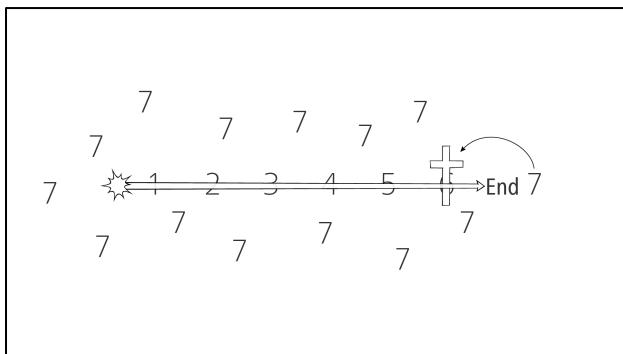
In Acts 1:11 an angel tells the disciples that Jesus will come in the same way that they saw Him go, and yet the Bible never uses the phrase "The Second Coming."

To the High Priest on Good Friday Jesus said, "*I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven*" (Matt. 26:64).

That means that ever since His crucifixion, Jesus has been coming in power . . . but maybe we're not so good at recognizing real power. Jesus is the Lion of Judah, but standing before the High Priest He looks like a slaughtered lamb. So, will Christ come again?

Well, it's clear, that time as we experience it, the ages (*aions* in Greek), will come to an end. But Scripture is also clear that Jesus is "the end" (Rev. 22:13) and His sacrifice is the "end of the ages" (1 Cor. 10:11, Heb. 9:26) come to us and even revealed in us as Faith.

That's why I keep showing you this funky timeline:



In 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians (2:8) Paul writes that the man of lawlessness, the imitation Christ, will be destroyed by the breath of Christ's mouth and the *epiphanao* of His *parousia*, that means the epiphany of His presence or the manifestation of His coming—as if He's always coming but we don't always see it. One day it will be manifest.<sup>1</sup>

You may remember that this actually happened (the *epiphanao* of His *parousia*) to Saint Paul on the road to Damascus: Jesus appeared to Paul and just His appearing destroyed the imitation Christ, which was the flesh of the old Pharisee named Saul. Just the revelation of "God is salvation," utterly destroyed the illusion that "Paul and his own deeds were salvation." Later Paul would write, "*It's no longer I who live but Christ in me.*"

Technically if we want to be accurate Scripture records a second coming of Christ along about 35 AD on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus. And yet, Christ is still coming, and has been coming since Good Friday . . . at least.

So, if we believe Scripture, Christ is coming now.  
He is always coming . . . and . . .

We will see Him, but currently, we seem to have a hard time recognizing His presence . . . as if something is blocking our view...

Well, even talking about this kind of stuff is hard; it kinda makes me feel like an ass, like a fool.

Revelation 19:10

The angel says, "*The spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.*" "Testimony of Jesus" can mean testifying *to* Jesus—being a witness, OR Jesus testifying through you maybe even with you. Whatever the case, when you testify to Jesus, you prophesy.

And it means that *all* the prophets were testifying to Jesus, and the more I study, the more I see that it's true. Through Isaiah God says, "*I am Yahweh and beside me there is no savior.*" They all testify that we are not salvation, "God is salvation," *Yeshua* . . . And yet each of them feels like an ass: God actually commanded Isaiah to prophecy naked for three years with "*buttocks uncovered*" (Isaiah 20:1-6).

A few years ago a friend told me, "Peter God showed me that this Scripture is for you." I said, "Thanks . . . I guess." I don't have a problem with being naked *of clothes*... but I do have a problem with being stripped *of my ego*; that's another matter.

God tells Ezekiel to eat the scroll, speak the Word, and that people won't listen. God once showed me that he was telling me to do the same.

Jeremiah finds God's Word and eats the words.  
They become a delight to his heart, and yet he finds himself alone and weeping.

See? They each testified to Salvation and felt like an ass.

Think of Hosea: Hosea is commanded to marry a harlot because God is married to a harlot.

We just witnessed the destruction of the Harlot in the last chapter of the Revelation, and we're about to behold the Bride—the New Jerusalem coming down. But in between the Old and New Jerusalem, we see this rider on a white horse.

Jesus rode an ass into old Jerusalem . . . or at least that's what we saw. Jesus is the Lion, but He looks like a slaughtered lamb . . . that's what we see. Jesus rides a warhorse in Revelation 19, but we're seeing with from the perspective of heaven... on earth maybe all that we see is a donkey.

Revelation 19:10-21

*... the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread (literally: "He treads") the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.*

*Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the great supper of God to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, [not "some," "all"] both free and slave, both small and great." And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army. And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur (Theion: "divine being"). And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.*

We preached about most of that last week, and this week, I'd just like to point out that the Word wins... That is, the Word conquers.

Remember that the Revelation is sent to seven little churches in Asia Minor, and it's all about conquering, that is winning; our national dialogue seems to be all about winning . . . although we're not sure what that means.

Well, the Word that is Faithful and True wins, and that's weird, 'cause when we speak it (a word that is faithful and true), we often feel like an ass and end up looking like a slaughtered Lamb.

## What is “the Word of God?”

The word “Word,” translates the Greek word *Logos*, from which we get our word Logic. The Word is the logic, reason or idea of God.

Physicists now argue that the idea in an observers thoughts may actually be more real than matter and that all matter came from something that we previously thought didn’t matter—that which is not matter, that which is “outside” of space and time and “before” the Big Bang. In other words, the age of reason was entirely unreasonable—not only scientifically but also philosophically, for all matter and energy appear to be based on an idea, a *logos*, a word.

The Word is Reason . . .

## What is “the Word of God?”

- ✓ Reality

Indeed it’s the very fabric of reality.<sup>1</sup>

*“In the beginning was the Logos, the Idea, the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God... all things were created through him and without him was not anything made that was made,”* writes John.

In Hebrew, they really don’t even have a word for word.

*Dabar* is translated Word, and it means, “thing.”

So all real things are the manifestation of a word—the Word of God.

Nothing could possibly be more powerful than the Word of God.

*“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth. We have beheld his glory . . .”*

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<sup>1</sup> Almost as if reality is the vibration of meaning on superstrings in multiple dimensions; that’s actually String Theory.

His name is Jesus, actually *Yeshua*, short for *Yahweh Yasha*, that is:  
“God saves” or “God is Salvation.”

### What is “the Word of God?”

- ✓ Reality
- ✓ Jesus

Jesus is the Word of God in flesh and He constantly quoted Scripture. The Word of God is a character that appears over and over in all of Scripture—in the Old Testament and New Testament. John records Jesus as saying, “*Scripture can’t be broken.*”

### What is “the Word of God?”

- ✓ Reality
- ✓ Jesus
- ✓ The One revealed in Scripture

Scripture isn’t an analytical explanation of the Word, as if the Word could be comprehended by us. Scripture is His story (the Word of God) in space and time.

If you said to me, “Peter who is your wife Susan.” I wouldn’t give you a description of her physiology or biology, I’d tell you stories of things she’s done.

God is what He does, and does what He is: God is Salvation, and in flesh: Jesus. And He’s called us to testify of Him, that is, to preach the Word—the Gospel, Good News.

## What is “the Word of God?”

- ✓ Reality
- ✓ Jesus
- ✓ The One revealed in Scripture
- ✓ The thing we’re told to “announce”

It’s not a threat, or a bargain, or a deal; it’s an announcement.

It’s an announcement not of what *might be* but what *is*.

It’s the revelation of reality, that is, Jesus, that is, the Judgment of the Creator.

The Judgment of the Creator is a Lion and a Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

To His disciples just before He ascends in Luke 24 He says, “*It’s written that the Christ rose from the dead that is repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations.*” It is to be proclaimed.

Forgiveness is not *earned* but *announced*... BECAUSE it is reality.  
Repentance is a change of mind to come in line with reality.

*God is Salvation*, which means *you are not salvation*—that’s the Judgment: the Word

In 2 Timothy Paul writes, “*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by... (or “with”) his appearing and his kingdom: Preach the Word.*”

“Preach” means to announce or tell, and I think he may be calling you to tell.

So, how do we speak the Word?

## How Do We Speak the Word of God?

Here are a few thoughts from Revelation 19:

### How Do We Speak the Word of God?

- ✓ We must hear the Word for ourselves.

First, you must hear the Word to speak the Word, and it will cut you.

It's what we spoke of last time:

The Word cuts the flesh from "*all men*."

And "*Judgment begins with the household of God*."

When you testify that God is Creator you testify that you did not create you.

When you testify that God is Salvation you testify that you need a Savior.

When you sing, "*Amazing grace how sweet the sound*," you also sing, "*that saved a wretch like me*."

When you announce the Word, you'll feel like an ass, and maybe look like one too.

I mean by that, that you'll be stripped of your ego—you'll be un-dragoned.

Remember how Eustace, in the *Chronicles of Narnia*, became so fascinated with a dragon that he became a dragon, and Aslan the lion had to strip him of his dragon flesh? Aslan had that power because he surrendered his flesh and our flesh as a sacrifice upon the Stone Table.

"The very first tear he made was so deep that I thought it had gone right into my heart," says Eustace. "And when he began pulling the skin off, it hurt worse than anything I've ever felt. The only thing that made me able to bear it was just the pleasure of feeling the stuff peel off... it is such fun to see it coming away."

Do you see? The Word of God will strip you of your fig leaves, your psyche, and your ego, until you realize someone else is speaking...

Not the person that you thought you had made...

But the person that God has made—you'll experience that person as Faith, Hope, and Love rising within you.

## How Do We Speak the Word of God?

- ✓ We must hear the Word for ourselves.
- ✓ We must believe it for others as we do for ourselves.

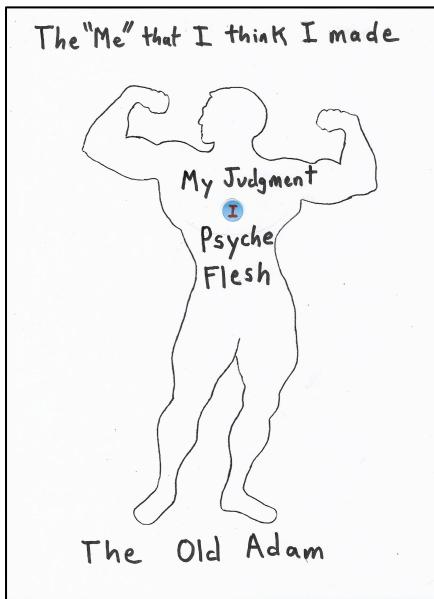
# 2. You must believe it for others as you do for yourself.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 Paul wrote:

*... the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded (literally “judged”) this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God....”*

Or, I love how the NKJV translates it: *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”*

If you allow yourself to be judged by God’s Word, God’s Word will change the way that you judge others, and that will change the meaning of all your words.



Remember that picture from last week?

Paul writes, “*We view no one according to the flesh.*”

The flesh is the person that we think we have made—so we view no one according to their own ego because we know that no one is their ego, their resume.

No one is their shame . . . and no one is their pride.

No one is the sum total of their own judgments.

Some one may bite, devour, and consume the good like a beast, but we know *that* is not who they truly are.

They may manipulate and use our love like a harlot, but we know:

*That* is not who they truly are.

They may act like an abomination, exalting themselves before men but we know:

*That* abomination is only a shadow of their true self.

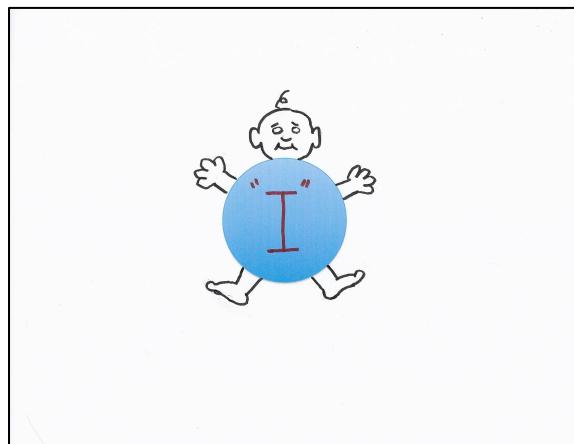
They may act like the antichrist, but we know the antichrist is a lie and Jesus Christ is the Truth—He is the Truth about them and in them.

The world judges according to the flesh; but we know that the flesh has already been judged, condemned, and destroyed. *It's not who anyone truly is.* Paul talks as if in the garden of Gethsemane and on the tree on Calvary, Jesus absorbed all of our sin in His own body of flesh and bore it to destruction.

He calls it the circumcision of Christ, and it means that all our bad judgment is exposed for what it is—and destroyed like a shadow is destroyed by Light. The flesh is destroyed.

So then, what is left?

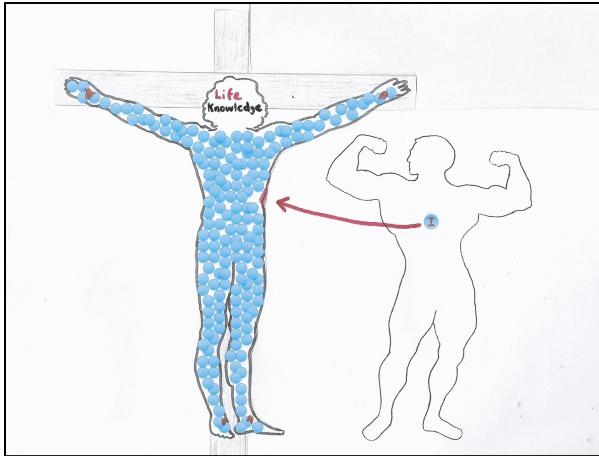
Well, just God’s good judgment, the breath of “I am.”



I think that’s the Spirit of God.

And *that* is more valuable than anything you can comprehend.

That Spirit will be given new flesh, which will be revealed as the Body of Christ.



So, the human psyche is more depraved than you've ever imagined . . .  
But the Spirit in each of us is more glorious than you can possibly conceive.

What I'm saying is that when you speak to *the least of these* you speak to Jesus. As Mother Teresa used to say, "He is here in distressing disguise." I think that means that when you speak, you speak past a person's sin. You name it for what it is, but you don't take it as the truth about that person because it's truly not that person—it's the lie of the dragon about that person (that they have believed). You look past their shame, fear, anxiety, and despair . . . And you speak to their spirit saying, "Rise from the dead. I know who you are; You are Faith, Hope, and Love."

That's not something you can say with human words it is God's Word.

### How Do We Speak the Word of God?

- ✓ We must hear the Word for ourselves.
- ✓ We must believe it for others as we do for ourselves.
- ✓ We speak the Word in Truth, when we see that the Word is speaking us.

So#1. We must hear the Word for ourselves.

#2. We must believe it for others and...

#3. We speak the word in Truth when we see that the Word is speaking us...

I know that sounds like mumbo-jumbo... but it's a critical point.

- We've demythologized the Word and turned it into something reasonable to us: like a psychology, sociology, or anthropology. We've turned it into something like a self-help book.
- We've reduced the Word to a plan of salvation and a map of the End Times,
- We've turned the Word of God to an incantation for making legs grow or getting rich.

Liberal, Evangelical or Charismatic, we've turned the Word of God into something to be used rather than a Lord to be followed.

We've treated the Word of God as if it were a thing . . .

As if it were dead, and we were alive.

We've judged the Word of God so we wouldn't be judged by the Word of God.

We've crucified the Word of God . . .

But we were dead, and the Word of God is The Life; He is alive.

See? It's the Word that is "*living and active...*"

In Revelation 19 John sees the armies of Heaven, which is the 144,000, which is the Bride having made herself ready, which is the Church.

The Church is not *applying* the Word... the Church is *following* the Word.

Have you ever had this experience?

You're telling someone about Jesus and realized:

*"Jesus was speaking and I was just along for the ride."*

It happens to people with the gift of tongues or when delivering people of demons...

It happens at times when people are healed or a word of knowledge is just perfect for the moment...

Actually, it happens *anytime you love*.

*"He who loves is born of God and knows God. God is Love,"* wrote John.

When you love, God is speaking you and speaking through you...

Whether you know it or not, and whether you use words or not...

Jesus is the Word of our testimony, and we are His testimony, His Body through whom God loves. Love God and you will be speaking His Word!

#4. We speak the word in faith when we trust that the Word *is* the Judgment of God and so we entrust all judgment to the Word.

## How Do We Speak the Word of God?

- ✓ We must hear the Word for ourselves.
- ✓ We must believe it for others as we do for ourselves.
- ✓ We speak the Word in Truth, when we see that the Word is speaking us.
- ✓ We speak the Word in Faith, when we trust that the Word is the Judgment of God.

*"The Word of God is living and active sharper than any two edged sword piercing to the division... of soul and spirit, psyche and pneuma, that old Adam and the breath of God, the old self and Christ's self, the self we have made, and the self that God has made... The Word of God is piercing to the division... NOT US.*

In John 12:47-48 Jesus says something utterly mind-bending:

*If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words [rhema] has a judge; the word [logos] that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.*

The last day is the day you wake from the illusion of your own control . . .

It's the day you wake from the dream that you created you . . .

And see that you are God's creation.

It's the day you wake from faith in "me is salvation," and meet "God is Salvation."

It's the day you surrender your Judgment to the Judgment of God.

You see? The Judgment of God is reality.

It's just the way things are, and everything else is lies, shadows, and illusions. The Judgment of God is not dependent on you, but you are utterly dependent upon the Judgment of God.

In John 12 in His human flesh, I think Jesus is saying something like, "Look I'm not interested in judging you, but one day you will have to wake up to the Judgment of God. I am the Judgment of God. I am reality."

Jesus continues (John 12:49):

*For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life.*

What do you think the punishment is for breaking that commandment?  
Would it be that you get to stay dead in your trespasses and sins, and the uncircumcision of your flesh? I don't think so... Death must die and you must live.  
God's Commandment is Life, for His Judgment is Life; God's Judgment is Jesus—"The Life".

Well, my point is that we don't judge, but we're called to speak the Word that is the Judgment: "God is Salvation," Yahweh, Yasha, Yehoshua, Jesus.

And that's not just a human word...

- It's the idea that upholds all creation.
- It's the Word that became flesh in Jesus the Christ.
- He's the person people come to know through His Story in Scripture.
- And the person people come to know through His Story that is you...

We've been called to testify to be a witness to Jesus.

No one likes a "creative" witness—that is a witness that creates truth.

What is a good witness?

It's a person that has been created *by* the Truth; the Truth creates witness.

Your job is not to judge, but to just tell the story, tell your story of "God is Salvation" in the hopes that the Truth will judge.

You are to testify, and when you do you'll probably feel like an ass because you're not testifying to how great you are, but how great *He* is for saving someone like you.

We've been called to testify to "God is Salvation."

And "God is Salvation" will judge the lie that "we are salvation."

God's Judgment will expose our bad judgment and cause us to love God's Good Judgment. And that truth will begin to separate the wheat from the tares. We can't do that but the Judgment can.

That fire will begin to expose the dross and refine the gold.

That knife will cut to the division of *psyche* and *pneuma*, soul and spirit.

We've been called to testify to the Word of God, which is living and active.

You can't comprehend the Word of God, but the Word of God comprehends you.

You can't understand the Word, but you can testify to the Word.

You can't make the Word work, but the Word makes you work.

If you think you have to judge, and manipulate, and use the Word to save your neighbor, you're not testifying to the Word.

If you testify with fear and anxiety as if it depended on you or them, you're not testifying to God is Salvation —“Jesus”; you're testifying that God is *not* salvation and *we* are; you're testifying to the flesh and the lie from Hell.

You see? The question is not whether or not God will be salvation.

The question is, whether or not, you want to help God save.

The question is whether or not you want to announce His Judgment:

God is Salvation; You're sins are forgiven you.

If you don't like that Judgment...

If you don't want to help Him save... you need to ask,

“Am I saved or do I even know what that means?”

Jesus saves us from our own judgment, which is sin. For we fall in love with God's Judgment, which is Grace. To be saved is to love God's Judgment, who is Jesus. God's Judgment is reality and so to hate God's Judgment is to be utterly alone in the outer darkness where men weep and gnash their teeth.

No one will remain there, forever without end, for Jesus is the end.

But when you testify to Jesus, you and Jesus storm the gates of Hell.

Greater is He that is in you than He that is in the world...

Greater is He that is in you . . . that is, He that is riding on your tongue . . .

You don't judge, but the Word you speak is the Judgment of this world.

Even if—especially if—you feel like an ass.

Once upon a time, there was a little donkey. One particular day, he came home, thrilled to death. He said to his mother, “I had the most amazing day! I went into Jerusalem this morning, and when I did, people lined up on the side of the road, cheering and waving palm branches. Mom, it was a great day for me!” The old, wise she-donkey looked at her little ass and said, “Sweetie, I’m sorry, but that wasn’t about you; that was about the One you were carrying.”

In this world, you may feel like an ass, ‘cause there’s a good chance you look like an ass.

- But from the perspective of Heaven, you’re not an ass, you’re a warhorse.
- You’re an army dressed in fine linen storming the gates of Hell.
- You’re the Body of the Lion who conquers all space and all time.
- You’re the Church, and there is no empire that can stand against you—because of the One you carry (not on your back but in the temple of your soul).

We conquer “by the blood of the lamb and the word of our Testimony” (Rev. 12:11) Jesus is the *Word* of our testimony.

In 70 AD, it looked as if nothing could conquer Rome. The believers in the seven little churches in Asia Minor were being threatened with losing their livelihoods, and even their lives if they refused to worship Caesar the beast.

- Brothers in the synagogues were even handing them over to the Beast
- In Smyrna, many would soon die.
- In Rome, a multitude had already been slaughtered in the arena.
- Peter and Paul had also been martyred in Rome.
- John was exiled by Rome.

The Word must've seemed terribly weak and inconsequential...  
They must've felt like fools, and yet . . . they spoke the Word.

Devoid of earthly power, the Church grew as it never has since that time. By the fourth century, the empire itself was at least nominally Christian... And yet, the crowds still came to the Coliseum to watch the Gladiator Games.

At the end of the fourth century, (according to Theodoret—Bishop of Syria and Foxe's book of Martyrs) there was a Syrian monk who traveled to Rome on a pilgrimage. He arrived at the time of the Roman circus when the city was celebrating their recent victory over the Goths. He followed the crowds to the Coliseum, where people had worshipped the Beast, and the Harlot had drunk the blood of the saints for 200 years.

He watched as gladiators saluted the Emperor and cried, "Hail Caesar, we who are about to die salute you." He watched as men became like beasts and devoured each other's lives. But Telemachus didn't see beasts; he saw children of God. Compelled by love, he jumped the perimeter wall and ran between two gladiators attempting to stop their blows. He cried, "Don't repay God's Mercy, by taking each other's lives." He looked like an ass.

When the crowd saw him interfere, they began to jeer and to chant, "Run him through, run him through." And then one of those gladiators did... the crowd even joined in, hurling stones. But with his dying breath he preached the word: "*In the name of Christ, stop.*" As his blood spilled onto the stadium floor the crowd grew silent. Then one after another . . . everyone left. They had been conquered with a Word.

Supposedly, that was the last gladiator contest in the Roman Empire.  
And Telemachus was the last Gladiator.<sup>ii</sup>

Well, Jesus is the last Adam, the ultimate Adam, Man in the image of God.  
He looks week, and yet He is the Word that upholds *all things*.  
He speaks a few words, and everything is made new.  
He speaks "Father forgive; it is finished, and into your hands, I commit my spirit."  
It's the Judgment of God and when you announce the forgiveness of sins, He is the Word that rides out on your tongue.

The Word of God conquers all things, but it first appears to us in this world as a cold and broken Alleluia—that means “*Praise God*.”

God is Love and His Judgment is His Word.  
His Word does not return void but accomplishes that for which it was sent.  
And so, soon, you will hear every creature in heaven and on earth . . . singing “Alleluia.”  
And you will be so very *NOT ALONE*.

### **Communion**

The Word took bread and broke it saying, “This is my body given to you.”  
And He took a cup saying, “This is the covenant in my blood poured out for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me.”

[Movie clips shown from *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *The Passion* set to the song “A Broken Hallelujah】

[The clip starts with Jesus’ view while riding a donkey through crowds waving palm branches in the streets of Jerusalem. The scene quickly shifts to a beaten and bloodied Jesus carrying His cross through crowds chanting, “Crucify!” The scene then changes to Aslan approaching the Stone Table under the cover of darkness. The scene then transitions back to Jesus struggling under the weight of His cross, then back to the White Witch given the nod approving Aslan’s death; then it shifts back to Jesus being tied to the cross by a Roman soldier, then to Aslan being tied and placed on the Stone Table, then nails are driven into the hands of Jesus and then the White Witch slays Aslan. Jesus breathes His last breath, and then the stone is rolled away from the tomb. The clip ends with a risen Aslan surrounded with the morning sun.]

### **Benediction**

Please don’t feel sorry for Telemachus... because in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, his flesh was cut away. Suddenly, he heard all the works of God worshiping God on the throne. And all the works that were not of God were revealed as just an illusion. Telemachus’ eyes were opened for his darkness had been cut away, and suddenly, he found himself at the edge of the New Jerusalem.

It wasn’t like he had not been there before. But now he could see it and look down into the Valley of *Gehenna*. According to Isaiah 66, he could see his old body of flesh being consumed by Eternal Fire and the Worm that does not die. Then, he would look down and see himself in new flesh, but new flesh that felt other people’s pain and other people’s sorrow, but there is no sorrow there! It’s all pleasure.

Then, he would turn around and join a great banquet that is a constant communion of Life and Love that is the Life and Love that is at the very heart of the Trinity. Behold! God was bringing him into His very self. That’s what He’s doing with you because the Word of God does not return void; it descends into the void and accomplishes that for which it was sent!

*Disclaimer: This document is a draft and has not been edited by the author. Therefore, there may be discrepancies. Some discrepancies may be minor; some may have to do with theology. When in doubt, please refer to the audio or video version of the sermon on this website and don't be shy about informing us of errors.*

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<sup>i</sup> Scripture often uses the Greek Word *parousia* to refer to Christ's coming. Peter uses the word to refer to the transfiguration (2 Peter 1:16). *Parousia* means something like "effective presence." Jesus was with the disciples all along, but on the Mount of Transfiguration His true nature was revealed and the disciples couldn't bear the glory. It was the *parousia*, the coming of the Lord.

*Will there never be an end of all our ceaseless talk about the delay of the Parousia? How can the coming of that which doth not enter in ever be delayed? The End of which the New Testament speaks is no temporal event.... What delays its coming is not the Parousia, but our awakening.*

--Karl Barth, The Epistle to the Romans, page 500

*If we find in the coming of the Resurrected, His coming in the Holy spirit, and His coming at the end of the age three forms of His one new coming for all their significant differences, there need be no artificiality in explaining that these passages refer to the first and immediate form in which His coming did really begin in that generation as the Easter event and in which the two remaining forms are plainly delineated and intimated....*

*The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is also the parousia. In this it has not only taken place but is still taking place to-day. And as it has taken place in the resurrection and is taking place to-day in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, it is also true that it will take place at the end of the days in the conclusion of the self-revelation of Jesus Christ.*

--Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, A Selection (Gollwitzer), p. 242-243

*The King says not that the sheep have compiled a splendid moral record, but that they had a relationship with himself: "Amen, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." Or to put it even more precisely, they are praised at his final parousia for what they did in his parousia throughout their lives.*

--Robert Capon, Kingdom Grace Judgment, pp. 509-510

<sup>ii</sup> Emperor Honorius, moved by the death of Telemachus, outlawed the games in 404 AD.