

The Word

Most Christians are familiar with 'the Word', at least, perhaps, in a cliched form. It can be another name for the Scriptures or for a sermon and those things would not be wrong. But John's Gospel opens with something which takes us, initially at least, to a different level.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-3, 14)

Israel was a nation that, at its truest, was strictly monotheistic. The one God, Yahweh, was the creator of all things, the sustainer of all things, Israel's shepherd and, indeed, the ruler of the nations of the earth, even if those nations did not acknowledge it. Were Israel to be asked how it knew these things the answer was, simply, God told them. Israel's god was the god who speaks, not merely through written documents, but 'face to face, as one speaks to a friend' (Ex. 33:11). The written documents (and certainly their collection) came later.

Israel's claim was that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' and that he did so by issuing a command. God spoke and it happened. The writer of Hebrews referred to this when he wrote: 'By faith we understand that the worlds (literally, the ages) were prepared by the word of God' (Heb. 11:3).

In the Scriptures themselves, the phrases 'the word of God' or 'the word of the Lord' are not used of written documents. Mostly they refer to the 'word' which came to prophets. Always there is the understanding of dynamic communication between God and persons. Even what we know as the ten 'commandments' were really the ten 'words'. 'God spoke these words and said' (Ex. 20:1). From this perspective we can see that the word of God is God himself speaking in such a way that men and women can hear and understand him. To that extent, the word of God will always be a revelation, that is, what is expressed is not abstract information for later consideration but a clear indication of the mind, character and purpose of God.

We may tend to think that prophets are extraordinary people and perhaps that is so in our present experience. But that is hardly the way creation was intended. For instance, if we take as a definition of grace something like, 'God's action to restore to humanity all that was lost at the Fall', we then look at the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. Jesus said that the death of Abel was because Abel was a prophet (Matt. 23:29-37; Luke 11:50-51). Then, if we say that a prophet is one to whom God speaks concerning his character and purpose in order that the prophet may communicate that to those to whom he or she is sent, we might ask what God was doing. The answer is that he was restoring to humanity the communication with himself that had been lost at the Fall. At that point we can see that mankind, Adam, was created to have full, unfettered communication with God. What we read in Genesis chapter one about creation coming into being through the word of God is continued in chapter two as God speaks to and with his created image.

Always there was the word. As the story unfolds we are shown that, where there is guilt, the word of God becomes a torment. Adam hides, Cain kills Abel. Even Israel, redeemed to be the means through which all creation is restored, preferred the word of God to be mediated through Moses (Deut. 5:23-27). Of course, Israel in its deepest

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rebellion was always confronted by the word of God. Always there were the prophets (see Amos 3:7-8).

There was a period when the prophetic voice was understood to be silent. But even then, what was known as the *bath qol*, 'the daughter of the voice' or 'the echo of the voice', was especially looked for.

Where the gift of prophecy was clearly lacking - perhaps even because of this lack - there grew up an inordinate desire for divine manifestations. Often a voice from heaven was looked for to clear up matters of doubt and even to decide between conflicting interpretations of the law. So strong had this tendency become that Rabbi Joshua (*ca.* A.D. 100) felt it necessary to oppose it and to insist upon the supremacy and the sufficiency of the written law.¹

Sometimes this desire for a 'word' meant that Israel looked to false prophets who would readily oblige, even if only with 'visions of their own minds' (Jer. 23:16), especially when they were rewarded for it (Mic. 3:5).

We should conclude that humanity is structured for the word of God. Created in the image of God, men and women cannot be satisfied without the word of God coming to them. The statement of Deuteronomy 8:3 was, and is, always true:

He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.

THE REFUSAL TO HEAR

If we want a reason for the rush to false prophets, then and now, it may be found in this: the true prophet brings the word of God himself to men and women. When the genuine prophet speaks it will be God himself speaking through him or her. For instance, Jeremiah 1:9 'Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, "Now I have put my words in your mouth".' This will involve the hearers in a confrontation with God himself and thus, of necessity, with the bearers of God's word.

There is, though, more than one way to silence the speaker. Most obviously there is the frontal attack, as the prophets themselves are persecuted and killed (Luke 11:50). A more subtle approach is to entice the prophet away from the import of his word:

For they are a rebellious people, faithless children, children who will not hear the instruction of the LORD; 10who say to the seers, 'Do not see'; and to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy to us what is right; speak to us smooth things, prophesy illusions, "leave the way, turn aside from the path, let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel.'" (Isa. 30:9-11)

One cannot but speculate concerning how the false prophets came to be that way, but given that in the early life of Israel there were bands of prophets (see 1 Sam. 10:5, 10 etc.) might we perhaps take it that there were always many prophets within Israel, but also that their function was always being opposed and that very many of them succumbed. We could see Israel 'yoking itself to the Baal of Peor' (Num. 25:1ff.) as an example. Possibly unaware of the battle that had been taking place with Balaam and Balak, as God even compelled the ungodly Balaam to bless Israel (Num. 22-24),

¹ J. R. Van Pelt, 'Bath Kol', in Geoffrey Bromiley (Gen Ed) *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Volume One A-D, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1979, p. 439.

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many in Israel who could not be cursed gave in to sexual immorality. Others 'turned aside after gain' (1 Sam. 8:3).

Even more subtle still was the temptation simply to give in to what seemed peer pressure (1 Kg. 13:18). The genuine prophet, faced with the demand for a word from the dead (or from any other source than God) would be reminded: 'To the teaching and to the testimony!' (Isa. 8:20). 'Teaching' here is *Torah*² and, perhaps, like the later Pharisees, some had turned from Torah to Torah-ism, if I may coin a word. Most difficult of all, perhaps, to resist was the persistent refusal of the people to hear the word in faith:

As for you, mortal, your people who talk together about you by the walls, and at the doors of the houses, say to one another, each to a neighbor, 'Come and hear what the word is that comes from the LORD.' 31They come to you as people come, and they sit before you as my people, and they hear your words, but they will not obey them. For flattery is on their lips, but their heart is set on their gain. 32To them you are like a singer of love songs, one who has a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument; they hear what you say, but they will not do it. (Ezek. 33:30-32)

Jeremiah put it:

An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land: 31the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule as the prophets direct; *my people love to have it so*, but what will you do when the end comes? (Jer. 5:30-31)

The result of this refusal to hear was that God refused to let them hear. Jeremiah lamented:

To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? See, their ears are closed, they cannot listen. The word of the LORD is to them an object of scorn; they take no pleasure in it. "But I am full of the wrath of the LORD; I am weary of holding it in. (Jeremiah 6:10-11)

Their ears were closed because God himself had given the people over to their chosen deafness. Take the following descriptions:

And he said, 'Go and say to this people: "Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand." 10Make the mind of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes, so that they may not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and comprehend with their minds, and turn and be healed.' (Isaiah 6:9-10)

Stupefy yourselves and be in a stupor, blind yourselves and be blind! Be drunk, but not from wine; stagger, but not from strong drink! 10For the LORD has poured out upon you a spirit of deep sleep; he has closed your eyes, you prophets, and covered your heads, you seers. "The vision of all this has become for you like the words of a sealed document. If it is given to those who can read, with the command, 'Read this,' they say, 'We cannot, for it is sealed.' 12And if it is given to those who cannot read, saying, 'Read this,' they say, 'We cannot read.' (Isaiah 29:9-12)

The time is surely coming, says the Lord GOD, when I will send a famine on the land; not a famine of bread, or a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. 12They shall wander from sea to sea, and from north to east; they shall run to and fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but they shall not find it. (Amos 8:11-12).

² The NRSV renders this verse differently, by making it the conclusion of the previous verse and making *Torah* a more general word for 'teaching', as does the N.E.B and the J.B.

THE RESTORATION OF HEARING

Whether or not there was a period of total prophetic silence, in what we call the intertestamental period,³ the prophets who spoke and wrote in Israel brought not only the message of judgment but also the clear declaration that the famine of hearing the word would not be forever. God would restore his people and that included the restoration of prophecy. The judgment will come, as it must, but the result will be a purified people.

Whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, 4once the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. (Isaiah 4:3-4; cf Matt. 3:11)

But a purified people will be a people once more attuned to hear the word of God. Hence in Isaiah God speaks to restored Zion:

I have put my words in your mouth, and hidden you in the shadow of my hand, stretching out the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, 'You are my people.' (Isaiah 51:16)

while Joel 2:28-29, also speaking of the restoration of Israel (v. 27), promises that the spirit will be poured out and that consequently the word of God will be on the lips of all flesh, 'and they shall prophesy'. (We could add that these promises are not to be understood in isolation. All the promises of God will be fulfilled: the new heavens and new earth, the blessing of the nations, the law written on the heart, the knowledge of God, the restoration of the kingdom and so on.)

Given the modern obsession with 'Christmas', it is sometimes surprising to note that only two of the Gospels, Matthew and Luke, mention the birth of Jesus, and that Matthew does so only in passing, preferring to focus on the visit of the wise men from the East (Gentiles), an event that may have taken place up to two years after Jesus was born. What all four Gospels are agreed on is that the ministry of Jesus began with the ministry of John the Baptist. Luke especially devotes significant space to the events surrounding his birth (Luke 1:5-25, 57-80).⁴

John the Baptist was 'a prophet, ...and more than a prophet' (Luke 7:26). By him the prophetic word was again proclaimed and the promise of Isaiah 40:3 claimed to be fulfilled. But his prophetic role was specifically to be the forerunner of the one who would baptise with the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16 John 1:33). 'He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world' (John 1:8-9).

The appearance of John the Baptist excited vast crowds, who heard his message and who responded positively (Mark 1:5). Even some time after his death, John still exerted great influence. When asked by Jesus concerning the origin of John's ministry, the Pharisees were perplexed as to how to respond. They hated John as they

³ '...by the NT period *it was widely believed* that the gift of authentic prophecy had died out in Israel' (John Barton, 'Prophecy (Postexilic Hebrew)' in D. N. Freedman (Ed), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* Volume 5, Doubleday, New York, 1992, p. 495, italics added).

⁴ There may even be a slight reason to think that the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) was actually sung by Elizabeth. Some MSS have in verse 46, 'And *Elizabeth said...*' This might be consistent with the way the Song was patterned on the song of Hannah in 1 Sam. 2:1-10, as Hannah rejoices in the birth of one who will be the forerunner of Israel's great king, David. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, United Bible Societies, London, 1971, p. 130f.

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hated Jesus, but considered, 'If we say, "From heaven," he will say to us, "Why then did you not believe him?" But if we say, "Of human origin," we are afraid of the crowd; for all regard John as a prophet' (Matt. 21:25-26).

Jesus' message was very similar to that of John in many ways. At times the language was almost identical (Matt. 3:2 cf. Mark. 1:15). But Jesus' message went beyond that of John. His teaching accomplished far more than John's. It had a potency which none could resist, if he chose. That aspect staggered the crowds, as in Mark 1:27,

They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, 'What is this? A new teaching - with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.'

The conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount is significant. Jesus had been expounding the issues of the Kingdom of God but the crucial matter was not only that:

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. (Matthew 7:21)

It was that the final judgement, as to whether someone had in fact done the will of God or not, depended directly on how they had responded to what Jesus himself said. Thus:

Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. 25The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. 26And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell - and great was its fall! (Matt. 7:24-27)

Here is the prophet par excellence. He speaks with authority and not as the scribes because the word he speaks is nothing less than the word of God.

I do not judge anyone who hears my words and does not keep them, for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. 48The one who rejects me and does not receive my word has a judge; on the last day the word that I have spoken will serve as judge, 49for I have not spoken on my own, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment about what to say and what to speak. 50And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I speak, therefore, I speak just as the Father has told me. (John 12:47-50)

The parable of the sower (Matt. 13:1-23 etc.) is a parable which describes the action of kingdom of God, as the following parables make clear. But it particularly describes why Jesus' ministry received such varied responses. He is speaking 'the word of the kingdom' (Matt. 13:19) and the declaration of the kingdom is both good news and a judgment. In Mark's words:

When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables.' 11And he said to them, 'To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything comes in parables; 12in order that 'they may indeed look, but not perceive, and may indeed listen, but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.' (Mark 4:10-12)

The word spoken by Jesus actually locked people into their unbelief and, further, provoked them to deeper rebellion.

There is something almost paradoxical here. P. T Forsyth wrote:

*He was a prophet to Israel alone. He met His people with a *bona fide* call, and not one perfunctory and useless, whose failure was foregone. It was a call, at first hopeful, to the greatest decision and the deepest repentance to which that people had ever been summoned by*

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all the prophetic line. It was not impossible that He should have been heard, though ... it soon grew improbable. He took His mission to Israel with entire seriousness. With all His heart He taught not only the lost sheep, but at first the national soul. But without the effect He sought. He failed with his public. And it was His failure as a prophet that extorted His resources as Redeemer. The Kingdom, His great theme, could only be established in His Cross.⁵

Jesus' 'failure' (to use Forsyth's word) as a prophet was both inevitable and essential. By his words and actions, indeed, by his whole person, Jesus exposed the great depths of Israel's sin in order that he might be crucified as a result of their spiteful rejection of him but in order that by that he might expose and bear and totally destroy the sin of the world.

This was what he was about from the beginning. He would 'save his people from their sins' (Matt. 1:21) and not merely divert them from the worst excesses of them. He would take away the sins of the world (John 1:29). At the commencement of his ministry Jesus announced that in himself the prophecy of Isaiah 61:1ff had been fulfilled.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19)

What remained to be made clear was the nature of the horrible bondage that held men and women and which oppressed them. But after his death and resurrection he told the disciples:

Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Luke 24:46-47)

The 'release' he would bring to the captives and the 'forgiveness' of sins were, indeed, one and the same thing. They are the same word in the Greek of the New Testament. And it was from this liberty that a new hearing came upon all flesh.

On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit was poured out, first on the one hundred and twenty then on three thousand and the great flood soon caught up thousands upon thousands. 'The Holy Spirit fell on *all who heard the word*' (Acts 10:44). The word of forgiveness had come to them and with it faith and repentance had been evoked (Acts 5:31; 11:18; Eph. 2:8-9) and now those who received the Holy Spirit were impelled to speak of 'what they had seen and heard' (Acts 4:20). In Joel's words, the Spirit had been poured out on all flesh and they all prophesied (Acts 2:17-18). The almost incredible growth of the early church (which continues today) was not the result of charismatic leadership or strategic missionary planning, however beneficial those things might be. The Scriptures simply record: 'So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed' (Acts 19:20). The prayer of Moses was answered: 'Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit on them' (Num. 11:29).

The church born at Pentecost is the community of the word. As Israel was the community gathered around the word of the LORD, so the church is the community which must 'let the word of Christ dwell in [us] richly' (Col. 3:16) even if it does bring us into conflict with those who will not hear it (Rev. 1:9; 6:9; 20:4). 'Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and

⁵ P. T. Forsyth, *The Preaching of Jesus and the Gospel of Christ*, NCPI, Blackwood, 1987, p. 5

intentions of the heart' (Hebrews 4:12) and that is the word of God which is at work in us now (1 Thess. 2:13).

THE WORD HIMSELF

There only remains for us to examine some of the implications of the passage with which we commenced, namely John 1:1-3, 14.

There has been a lot of speculation about this description of Jesus, and much of it, I suspect, would have quite puzzled the author of the Gospel. But what was John's intention when he said that Jesus was - and is - 'the Word'?⁶

John's opening sentence is obviously a reference to Genesis 1:1, 'In the beginning'. Verses 1-3 really say no more than could be assumed from the opening of Genesis, except that 'the Word' is called 'he', something the Old Testament writers would not have done.

Verse 14 makes the staggering assertion:

*the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth'*⁷

The word 'lived' is accurate enough, but does not tell us that the same word was used in the Old Testament of the Tabernacle, the tent in which the worship of Israel was to be conducted and where the revelation of God's character, the ten words, were kept.⁸ It was the place where Moses would speak to God 'face to face' (Ex. 33:11). Furthermore, the Tabernacle was the place where the glory of the LORD was especially revealed:

*Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.
³⁵Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. (Exodus 40:34-35)*

So John 1:1 and 14 say that the Word, that is God himself speaking ('the Word was God'), the Word by which God brought all things into being, actually became flesh, that is, became fully a human being, and that he became the place where the full revelation of God was to be found. To hear Jesus is to hear the words of God: 'He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure' (John 3:34; cf. 14:10). To see Jesus is to see the glory of God (cf. John 2:11; 11:40).

The Word and God cannot be separated (so, John 10:30 'one 'thing', not one 'person'), even if they are distinct, so the glory of the Word become flesh is not one bit less than the full glory of God. But John tells us what the glory is. We see the glory of God when we see the glory of Jesus and that is specifically the glory *of the Father*.

Both Father and Son are full of grace and truth. That is the character of the Father and so that is what the Son reveals. This revelation is dynamic, meaning that it is not for intellectual consideration so much as that men and women are confronted by it. 'From his fulness we have all received, grace upon grace ... grace and truth came

⁶ It would be presumptuous to be dogmatic about the influences on John's use of words here. The most I could do is suggest direction taken from within the text of the Gospel.

⁷ This is the rendering of the NRSV, and highlights the absence of a definite article before 'father' in the Greek. Except for the vocative use (i.e. addressing God), this absence is unique in John's Gospel when the reference is to God.

⁸ See, Stephen Westerholm, 'Tabernacle' in, Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Ed), *The International Bible Encyclopedia* Volume 4, pp. 698-706 for a discussion of the various points raised by the O. T. language.

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through Jesus Christ' (John 1:16-17). This grace and truth come in the revelation of the Father (John 1:18).

Once again, familiarity with the terminology on our part should not make us miss the impact of Jesus' revelation of the Father. John the Baptist, seeing the Spirit descend and remain on Jesus, declared, 'I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God' (John 1:34). Nathanael cried 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' (John 1:49). In changing the water into wine, Jesus 'revealed his glory' (John 2:11). In cleansing the Temple, Jesus said it was 'my Father's house' (John 2:16).

The figure of the triumphant 'Son of Man' had intrigued Jewish thinkers for a long time and Jesus announced that the only one who could reveal heavenly things was the Son of Man, but then added:

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. (John 3:14-15)

The serpent in the wilderness was contemptible, the sign of Israel's judgment, and yet this should happen to the Son of Man. But more than that:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. (John 3:16)

God the Father sent his only begotten Son (the same word used in John 1:14) to be the one held up to contempt, the expression and focus of judgment, in order that those who believe in him may have eternal life. This was grace. It was not God's intention to send the Son in order to condemn the world but to save it (John 1:17).

This revelation of grace and truth, the glory of the Father in the Son, was in stark contrast to the Torah-ism of the Pharisees. After Jesus healed the man on the sabbath, we might think a gracious act, we are told:

Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath. ¹⁶But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is still working, and I also am working.' ¹⁸For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God. (John 5:16-18).

The revelation was rejected. 'He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him' (John 1:11).

The actions of the Son were no less than the actions of Father. The language is tender and intimate, yet indicate a powerful relationship:

Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. 'The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. ²¹Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomever he wishes. ²²The Father judges no one but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Anyone who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.' (John 5:19-23).

Even to the Cross, the Son obeyed the Father, 'so that the world may know that I love the Father' (John 14:31). And 'the words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works' (John 14:10).

In the hours before his death, Jesus instructed the disciples about what was to come. Jesus would leave the disciples, but they should not be distressed by this. On the contrary, if they indeed love him, far from resisting his purposes they would keep

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his commandments (John 14:15), just as he kept his Father's commandments (John 15:10). Yet the disciples were not able to take the full implications of all that Jesus was about.

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. ¹³When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. ¹⁵All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (John 16:12-15)

Just as Jesus was the truth of the Father, so the gift of the Spirit to them would mean that the disciples would become participants in all that truth. The Spirit, who searches all things even the depths of God, will reveal what he hears (cf. 1 Cor. 1:10). He will glorify Jesus because the whole of who and what Jesus is will be declared to them. But the climax will be that they will know that Jesus has nothing other than what the Father has given. And they will know it because they will become participants in the whole of that truth; in Peter's words, they will be 'participants in the divine nature' (2 Peter 1:4). Superficially complex perhaps, the prayer of John 17:20-24 sums it up.

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, ²that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. ²⁴Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

The Word, the revelation of the Father, the place where the God the Father himself dwells with men and women and where his glory is seen, actually comes into us in the person of the Holy Spirit (see John 14:18-23).

In the words of the Apostle Paul:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵or you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, 'Abba! Father!' ¹⁶it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ - if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:14-17)

The Word, the Son, has poured out the Spirit in order that we might be participants in his sonship and that we might live in that filial intimacy, the intimacy of the Son with the Father, the depths of which only the Word of God can reveal.

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