

GOD'S THESAURUS

By: Keith R. Keyser

People love a good mystery. Throughout the millennia, man has been captivated by seemingly inexplicable puzzles. Whether it is natural phenomena like gravity or electricity, or strange occurrences such as the disappearance of Amelia Earhart, it is clear that people are fascinated by the unexplained. Interest in uncanny happenings is not limited, however, to the rank and file of humanity. Rather, thoughtful sages and scholars have always pondered the deep issues of life and the Universe, deliberating on the meaning of life. Take the noted sixth-century philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus, as an example of this inquiring disposition among thinkers. He noted that the world seemed to be in a perpetual state of change. He likened it to a river: one can never step into the same river twice. By the time that one has removed his foot and placed it in the brook again, the water is different (due to the flow of the current.) In spite of this constant change, the cosmos does not degenerate into chaos, as one might expect. What explains the underlying unity that we see in the world? Heraclitus attributed this order to an unseen force, known as the *Logos* (i.e. “the Word.”) Other classical thinkers used this term to describe higher meaning. To the Stoics, the *Logos* was “the soul of the world” that gave ultimate reason to the cosmos. The Roman emperor-philosopher Marcus Aurelius viewed it as the creative principle in the Universe. Interestingly, the celebrated sage Plato once told his followers: “It may be that some day there will come forth from God a Word, a *Logos*, who will reveal all mysteries and make everything plain.”¹ He had no idea how right he was!

The Jewish sages also grappled with the mysteries of the Universe. Since the Hebrew Bible is God’s revelation of Himself to man, the Israelites were not as much in the dark as their Greco-Roman peers. Notably, Job pondered the seemingly inscrutable dealings of the Almighty with men. At the end of the book that bears his name, he still did not know why God had sovereignly allowed certain tragedies to befall him. Nevertheless, he did possess a greater knowledge of the character, wisdom, and faithfulness of the Lord. Later in Israelite history, Daniel struggled with visions regarding the Lord’s future purposes for His earthly people. When he sought to know the times and seasons for the accomplishment of these events, he received this response: “...Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.”(Dan.12:9) For the most part, however, Scripture shows that God desires to reveal Himself to His Creation.

It is well-known that the first two chapters of *Romans* teach the guilt of mankind before the Holy God. In this passage, the case for the total depravity of humankind rests on two pillars of God’s revelation: creation and conscience. Listen to Paul’s case: “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and godhead, so that they are without excuse...For when the Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law are a law to themselves: Who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between

¹ Quoted by the excellent Bible teacher James Montgomery Boice in his commentary on *John*. For further reading on the Greco-Roman ideas associated with the *Logos*, see A.T. Robertson’s *Word Pictures in the New Testament*; Kittel’s *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (one volume edition); and *Alford’s Greek Testament* (passage on John 1:1 & following.)

themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.”(Rom.1:20; 2:14-15) God is not content, however, to give man an incomplete revelation of His nature. So He went the extra mile.

John records for us the way in which the Father unveiled His character before humans in these words: “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...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only-begotten from the Father) full of grace and truth...No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” (Jn.1:1-2,14,18, ASV.) The God who made the Universe was so intent on revealing Himself to man that He actually added humanity to His deity.² As the Scripture says: “And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” (1 Tim.3:16) What mortal poet or author of fiction could have dreamt up a plan of revelation so fantastic? In the Lord’s marvelous plan we see the Word, which Plato predicted would come from God, making the Creator known to His creation!

The Lord Jesus pitched his tent among men in order to show them what sort of God it is who created and maintains the Universe.³ When He touched lepers, man saw that God was not only able and willing to heal, but also was compassionate towards their misery. When He groaned and wept at the grave of Lazarus, the creation saw that the Creator abhorred sin, and the wreckage that it has brought about in this world. While feeding more than five thousand people the Lord Jesus showed that God was able to provide the living bread that would feed and satisfy man’s deepest spiritual longings for fellowship and peace. When men heard Him say “Suffer the little children to come unto Me...” and “he that cometh unto Me I will no wise cast out”, it dawned on them that God desires to save men. When He taught the people they marveled that He spoke with authority, and even those who came to stop Him were forced to confess: “Never man spake like this man!”(Jn.7:46) This is because the Lord Jesus asserted that His teaching emanated from God the Father. As He said: “For I have not spoken of Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that His commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me, so I speak.” (Jn.12:49-50) Listen to His scathing denunciation of the hypocrisy of the manmade religion of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Listen again as He reveals to the sinful woman at Sychar’s well that the Father wants genuine, Spirit-led worship from His creatures. The Lord Jesus summed His revelatory ministry in this manner: “...he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.”(Jn.14:9b)

The Word revealing the heart and mind of God finds its highest expression at Calvary. Jesus Christ’s work on the Cross showed man the insurmountable obstacle of sin that impeded creatures from communing with their Creator. There it was also seen that “God is love”, for “He spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all.”(1 Jn.4:8,16; Rom.8:32) As the great British Bible expositor G. Campbell Morgan described it:

² . The author wishes to stress that Phil.2:5-8 and other passages teach that in becoming man, the Son of God in no way ceased to be God or became an inferior sort of deity. He remained everything that He had been, & yet added real humanity (sin apart) to His person. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

³ The word translated “dwelt” in Jn.1:14 literally means “to tabernacle/pitch a tent.”

The cross, like everything else, was manifestation. In the cross of Jesus there was the working out into visibility of eternal things. Love and light were wrought out into visibility by the cross. Love and light in the presence of the conditions of sin became sorrow—and became joy! In the cross I see the sorrow of God, and in the cross I see the joy of God, for ‘it pleased the Lord to bruise him.’ In the cross I see the love of God working out through passion and power for the redemption of man. In the cross I see the light of God refusing to make any terms with iniquity and sin and evil. The cross is the historic revelation of the abiding facts within the heart of God.⁴

Truly, we may stand in awe of such unfathomable mercy, grace, holiness, and love as we see the Word dying on the Cross. Furthermore, we are filled with unspeakable joy as the resurrection teaches us that the Word also reveals God as a Being who is victorious over death. As the pagan philosophers believed, this Word gives reason and order to Creation. Moreover, the Word brings man into full understanding and fellowship with the person and work of God. Thanks be to God for manifesting Himself through the Living Word, of whom the written word speaks!

⁴ G.C. Morgan, “The Purposes of the Incarnation,” quoted in *The Fundamentals, Vol.3, ed. R.A.Torrey, A.C. Dixon, et al.* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993), 349.