

I love words. I love understanding the meanings of words and their roots, the use of simile and metaphor, rhyme and alliteration, and so on. My love of word humour, especially puns, means that my wife feels like she's received a "life sentence"!

I love words. And that love has me tonight riffing on John's use of "*logos*", the Greek word for "Word" or "speech" or "utterance". John uses "*logos*" in the prologue of his Gospel as he tries to say something important about Jesus, whose birth we celebrate tonight.

Logos occurs frequently in English as a root. I've already used it tonight – when I mentioned that John 1 acts as a "prologue" to his Gospel. "Prologue" is a beginning word, something that is said to get our thinking started before the narrative gets underway. Jesus the *Logos* is indeed the beginning Word, as John asserts – the creating Word of God bringing all things into being.

But Jesus is not just something or someone that needs to be covered *before* the narrative begins: Jesus *is* the narrative.

Logos gives us "logic". Logic is very useful; it is the way we structure thoughts and our arguments, so that we draw valid conclusions from the propositions made. And I would say that logic owes its origin to a rational God, a God who created order rather than chaos, a God who is therefore trustworthy and dependable.

But Jesus is far more than mere logic, mere thought and argument. Actually, logic demands that he be greater because as the *creating Word* – the one through whom "all things were made". He is greater because he *made* logic, the ability for humans to think and make arguments.

Logos also gives us "monologue" and "dialogue". On one level "monologue" seems apt, given that this Word set out in John's Gospel is the *Word of God* – there seems to be just the one actor here.

But we quickly find that "dialogue" must be more appropriate to the case because

there is a relationship here: the Word being described by John is not just the speech of God, but is personal and is in relationship with God: “the Word was *with* God”. And “dialogue” is apt too because we find ourselves included as dialogue partners in this; we are the ones towards whom the speech of God is directed, the ones invited to respond.

From *logos* we also get “log” or “log book”, a record of what has taken place. Logs are intended to be kept accurately, and in many uses there are legal consequences if the logs are falsified. There is a sense in which what John goes on to set out in his Gospel is a log, an historical record. In his narrative John is setting out the facts of Jesus’ life. And that historical basis is vital: Jesus the Word of God means nothing if he had not truly existed in first century Palestine, and if what is said about his life, death and resurrection is not true and real.

But Jesus the Word cannot be reduced to mere historical artefact – one of a set of log books filed away somewhere, gathering dust. If he truly is the Word of *God* – assuming that word “God” means anything worthwhile – then that can’t be relevant to history only: God matters in the present and in the future too.

From “log”, my thoughts turn to something more contemporary: the “blog”, the “weblog”. Usually these extend well beyond mere recording of events, to include reflection and commentary. They are creative works. Again I see parallels in what John goes on to do in his Gospel, where at times he provides remarks on the meaning and significance of the events he is setting out. And this is helpful and important, because Jesus the Word is full of meaning and significance for those who might read the Gospel.

But again, the Word of God goes far beyond being like a blog, something creative: the Word of God is described as the *Creator*. “Without him nothing was made that has been made.”

The thought of blogs takes me, just for a momentary digression, to another online phenomenon: the things formerly known as “tweets”. I find a delicious irony in the fact that the platform that hosts these, once called “Twitter”, is no longer known by a word at all – it is simply “X”. And perhaps there is a profound symbolism in that, seeing as how often they are employed for the simply vacuous through to the deeply

hateful. Their 280 characters can be rattled off by keyboard warriors without thought, and without relationship with, or consideration for, those who might read them. Perhaps these are words that are best ignored.

There is no lasting relationship in these words, but there is in the Word of God (as we will see). And the Word of God is definitely worth paying attention to. And the Word of God is not about emptiness or hate: it is about the fullness of love.

There are another couple of deep ironies in the platform now known as “X”. First, we could do well to remember that “X” stood first for Christ, the letter “X” having much the same shape as the Greek letter *chi*, the first letter of the word “Christ”. The second irony is that the platform now denoted “X” has adopted the slogan “Blaze your glory”. But what is this glory relative to the glory of the Word? – as John says “We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

But back to more serious words. From *Logos* we also get “anthropology”, “sociology”, and “psychology”: speech about, subjects of study about, various ways of understanding humankind and the human condition.

In the Word that John sets out we have God, not studying, but actually *entering into* the human condition: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.”

Logos gives us “Decalogue”, the formal term for the 10 Commandments. I’ll let the Decalogue stand for the whole of the ancient Law, given by God to mark out and form a distinctive people, but also, in a deep mystery, to demonstrate how far from perfect they were, how much they could not help themselves.

But in Jesus the Word we have the one who is perfect in himself and who is the completion and fulfilment of the Law. For in this Word we have the one who upon whom all of humankind’s failings would be heaped so that sin could be destroyed in him. “He came to what belongs to him, and his own people did not receive him.”

I mentioned “anthropology” and so on a moment ago. Another field of study is “theology”, the study of God.

In the Word made flesh we are enabled to have something much richer than *study*: we have *relationship*. And an astonishing relationship it is too: “to those who did

receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”

I could go on.

As you can see, I *love* words!

But where does this get us? And what is the relevance to our celebration tonight?

John uses this strange word *Logos* almost as a placeholder, a provisional designation, of something – of *someone* – that will be filled in later through his Gospel.¹ It turns out that this someone is Jesus, who’s coming among humankind took place through his birth to a young woman named Mary in a little town called Bethlehem around 2000 years ago. John will go on to do in his Gospel is to set out Jesus’ life and ministry, his teaching, and above all his dying and rising again. What John’s prologue does is to alert his readers to the cosmic significance of all this: that it is about the fact that in Jesus God has made himself personally present within humankind in order to do a work of new creation, and to bring humankind into proper relation with God once again.

John uses *Logos* as a placeholder for someone he will introduce by means of his Gospel. And with the introduction comes invitation, because alongside the cosmic significance is the deeply personal. For each one of us is invited to become a child of the living God.

I love words.

But of vastly greater significance is the fact that I love *the Word*, and that the Word loves me.

Sources:

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¹ Klink,, *John*, p.88

