

Second Sunday after Christmas

ALPHA MAIL

John 1:1-18

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Analysis by Marcus Felde

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 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.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And 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 testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has

made him known.

DIAGNOSIS: Surface Mail

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Moses Shows Us Only the Law*

Living by what Moses shows us may not seem to be a problem; but when his words preoccupy us, yes, that is a problem. Our pericope runs deep and is heavy on prognosis, omitting explicit reference to presenting symptoms. We may infer that people whose lives were like little letters from Moses were superficially nice, but only looked alive.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *Return Jesus to Sender*

The Word made flesh was refused by all too many. They didn't recognize Jesus, so how could they "receive" him, i.e., believe in his name? Our author thinks it strains belief that the one by whom all things were made would not be recognized by all; or that the one who owns all things would be unwelcome. Didn't they look at the return address? How could they throw that letter from God in the waste basket?

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *"Dear John:"*

The Law may be from God, but it does not give life. It can't get below the surface. The last letter in the lover's correspondence between legalists and the Law always begins something like "Dear John," and goes on to tell us that "It's over." Without Christ, you and I haven't got the grace or the truth we desire in our inward parts. The Law can tell we aren't writing from "close to the Father's heart" (v. 18). Detecting our superficial insincerity, the Law of God breaks up with us.

PROGNOSIS: Alpha Mail

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution) – *“Alpha” Mail-the Word from the Beginning*

Jesus, the Logos, the Word, who was from the beginning, is the Alpha Mail that saves us by bringing grace and truth from the Father. The medium is the message, of course. His glory is the Father's, his grace is the Father's, his truth is the Father's; therefore, the salvation he offers by giving us power to become children of God is not from someone else, it is from the Father. (I believe Tertullian used that argument to support the doctrine of the Trinity.)

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – *Red Letter Day*

And while that Alpha Mail is rejected by some, others actually seize upon it. It makes their day! They know their master's handwriting, and he knows them, and so on (John 10:14-16). By these, the Word is read, heard, seized, held, treasured, lived in.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *Heir Mail*

Now we are children of God (vv. 12-13), we live out of our love for the message God has written in our hearts by the Spirit of the Son whom he sent special delivery that Christmas long ago. Who was from even longer ago, in the Beginning. And is with us even now, and to the Omega point. “He the source, the ending he,” we sing in that Johannine carol “Of the Father's love begotten.” We are letters ourselves, now, or call us letter carriers.