

"No, Lord, not like that!" It was the angels who spoke. God had just decided that to save the world, the Word would become flesh. "Not like that, Lord. Let the Word become an angel. Angels have freedom and life, they live in heaven--angels get respect. Creatures of flesh suffer too much pain." But God decided that to redeem the flesh, the Word would become flesh.

"No, Lord, not like that!" It was Adam and Eve who spoke. God had just decided that the Word would become flesh as an infant. "Not, like that, Lord. Let the Word start as an adult as we did. Infants have too much to learn, it takes too long for them to get started." But God decided that the Word could comfort the weak only by becoming a child.

"No, Lord, not like that!" It was the Queen of Sheba who spoke. God had just decided that the Word would become flesh as a member of a poor family. "Not like that, Lord. Let the Word become flesh among the wealthy. Only the wealthy have the money and resources to spread the Good News." But God decided that the Word would become poor so that the poor might have hope.

"No, Lord, not like that!" It was Peter who spoke. Jesus, the Word made flesh, had just announced that he would suffer and die a violent death, then be raised again after three days. "Not like that, Lord. Suffering is painful. You should end your life in glory and success, not in sorrow." But Jesus decided that by suffering, he could show that you don't have to be healthy to be successful, and that suffering is not God's punishment.

"No, Lord, not like that!" It was the first Christians who spoke. "Not like that, Lord. Don't let your followers be martyred for the faith. Let them become successful in the eyes of this world instead. Then they will draw others to you." But God decided that the eyes of this world are false, and that the only true success is faith in the Son of God.

"No, Lord, not like this!" It was I who spoke. "Not like this, Lord. Your faithful people suffer many hardships. They want to pray, but they have no time. They want to love, but people alienate them. They want to believe in you, but everywhere they see ignorance, prejudice, and the desire for riches. Save them from this pain." But God has already saved us from pain. For those who believe in God are already citizens of heaven. Our pain is a sign of our longing for the one who saves us. But He has already suffered, He has already conquered death, and life can never be weary. God knows better than I, better than Peter, better than the angels just how to give hope to the world.