

Christ

The Condescension and Incarnation of The Lord - Part 3 - Philippians 2

Introduction

One of the greatest lessons I was ever taught was to always “study the context”. It is in a passage such as Philippians 2 where this is so important. The context is not dealing with the self-humbling of the Lord in the coming of the world. The passage is the ideal Christian virtue of exhorting the saints on how to prevent strife and vain glory and esteem others better than themselves. It is, in other words, how each saint ought to care for the spiritual welfare of others. With that in mind, the apostle gives four illustrations of those who thought of others; the Lord (Phil. 2:6-8); Timothy (Phil. 2:19-20); Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25-29); and Paul (Phil. 2:17). Having no greater example of thinking and caring for others, Paul begins with the Lord and very specifically marks out the manifestation of the care for the Lord and for others.

Who Being

“Who Being”. Robertson in his Word Pictures in the New Testament points out that “Being” indicates the Lord never was anything other than being in the form of God. While the passage is not presenting His eternality, it is emphasizing His pre-existence. It is those “characteristics” which the individual is in essential being and cannot be changed, the features and characteristics that mark an individual out as distinct from others. I Rowan Jennings have features and characteristics of which one could say, “That’s just Rowan”. It is emphatically stating what the Lord was pre-incarnation, is now, and ever will be is in the form of God. There never was a moment when He became God, developed God likeness, or was inferior to God. He is the unchangeable God from everlasting to everlasting, and in becoming man nothing was diminished, modified or changed in His person and personality.

In the Form of God

Form: While this word is very hard to define as the many translations manifest, I suggest the following catches the main truths. This includes the external and inward glories of that which He was in Himself. It presents the unbiased external appearance of all that He is revealed as God. He has, is and forever will be the (πλήρωμα/plērōma) fulness of God (Col. 2:9), thus identical to the Godhead in glory, position, person and personality. His is not only external but inwardly. He is all that God is in His characteristics of love, grace, mercy, love, peace, righteousness, holiness, and every other perfection. Using the words of Hebrews He is the “Image of God” (Heb. 1:3); in John He is the “Word of God” (Jn. 1:1). No attribute was ever lacking, ever needed development or refinement in Him. Before His incarnation He was always God’s co-equal by all who saw Him, celestial, terrestrial or infernal. Because the Lord was still God when on earth, nothing of sin could entice Him, nothing of the satanic powers alarm or disarm Him, no suffering, humiliation could deter Him. His purposes in coming never wavered. He was true and genuine in all He was and did.

Thought it not robbery to be equal with God

Being righteous in all His judgments and telling others to judge righteously meant His weighing of facts was uncoloured by personal desires or egotism for the applause of others. God described Him as, “My righteous Servant” (Isa. 53:11). His was a righteous judgment based on the reality of His deity. Deity was not something He longed to have as Satan did (Isa. 14:14), nor a glory He envisaged Himself having, and holding with all tenacity. He was Deity and therefore did not grasp after it. The man of sin will grasp after this glory (2 Thess. 2:4) because he will not have it. We grasp after that which we do not have. The fulness of deity was that which the Lord ever was, is and ever will be.

Made Himself of no reputation

- 1) The Lord was the opposite of the Pharisees who, when about to do something virtuous, sounded a trumpet (Matt. 6:2) drawing attention to one’s self and what he was doing. In the prophecy concerning the Lord, Isaiah wrote, “He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street” (Isa. 42:2).

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- 2) He did not demand due respect be given to him making Himself some great one as Simon did (Acts 8:9). The Lord never needed to be humbled, He humbled Himself, and man despised Him, and mocked him but it is only when there is pride humbling is needed, and that was something the Lord never had.
- 3) If that is left to God then we learn that the Lord can humble us without humiliating us. Humbling was something God never needed to do to the Lord. All pride was repugnant to him for pride is self-occupation to the dishonouring of God. One might say, the Lord covered the glory of His deity by the body of humanity. I got the following notes somewhere in Australia. His humility was the corrective on every avenue of pride. It is:
- a) Pride of birth and rank: "And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him." (Matt. 13:54-57)
 - b) Pride of wealth: "Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." (Lk. 9:58)
 - c) Pride of place of birth: "Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (Jn. 1:46)
 - d) Pride of rank: "He hath no form (no appearance) nor comeliness (magnificence, majesty) . . . no beauty (attractiveness) that we should desire Him." (Isa. 53:2)
 - e) Pride of reputation: "The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" (Lk. 7:34)
 - f) Pride of learning: "Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught. And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." (Jn. 7:14-16)
 - g) Pride of superiority: "For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth." (Lk. 22:27)
 - h) Pride of success: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not." (Isa. 53:3)
 - i) Pride of independence to function: "Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." (Jn. 5:19)
 - j) Pride of independence to speak: "Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things." (Jn. 8:28)

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**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.
John 16:13**

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