

THE HUMILIATION AND THE EXALTATION OF CHRIST

TEXT: PHIL. 2:5-11

Introduction:

1. We are coming now to one of the most important doctrinal passages in the New Testament.
2. In this passage are found four key doctrines:
 - (1) The **incarnation of Christ** – i.e. God taking the form of a man so that He could die on the cross for our sins (“and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” – Phil. 2:7b). “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). “God was manifest in the flesh” (I Tim. 3:16).
 - (2) The **condescension of Christ** – i.e. He left the glories of heaven and condescended to become a man, in fact – a servant (2:7).
 - (3) The **humiliation of Christ**. This refers to His submission to a cruel death on the cross in order to atone for our sins.
 - (4) The **exaltation of Christ**. Christ rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and now sits at the right hand of God the Father. And one day “every knee should bow” to Him. This is His exaltation.
3. Two weeks ago (I was away last week), we saw how God wants us to look out for others (2:1-4). We saw how God wants us to have a SINGLE MIND, A SUBMISSIVE MIND, and an UNSELFISH MIND.
4. Tonight, we will see how Paul holds up the Lord Jesus Christ as our perfect example (2:5).

I. WE NEED TO HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST (2:5).

1. The apostle Paul tells us that the mind of Christ is to be the mind of the Christian (2:5). As Christians we are to be “like-minded” (2:2; 4:2), and this means having the mind of Christ.
2. This is essential for spiritual growth, maturity, and holiness.
3. The key here is “humility.” Andrew Murray said, “Humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is not thinking of yourself at all.”
4. We all have a tendency to assert ourselves, promote our interests, defend our rights, and so on. We need the mind of Christ (2:5).
5. Christ must always be our example.

II. THE SEVENFOLD SELF-HUMBLING OF CHRIST (2:5-8).

1. The Scofield Bible refers to “The sevenfold self-humbling of Christ.” The first step in our Lord’s humiliation: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (2:6).

- a. “Being” is a participle, which declares Christ’s indefinite continuance of being, i.e., He is eternal. This is clear from Micah 5:2, “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”
 - b. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).
 - c. Jesus said, “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). And, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).
 - d. “Form” (Phil. 2:6) refers to the nature and essence of our Lord’s deity. Some object and say that Jesus was not God but merely the in the “form” of God. But they misunderstand what Paul is saying here. If “form of God” implies anything less than fully God, then “form of a servant” (2:7) would mean our Lord was less than a servant. But the thrust of this passage is that Christ was a humble servant and we should emulate Him (cf. Mark 10:42-45).
 - e. “thought it not robbery...” i.e., He did not grasp at being equal with God. He was not taking something that did not belong to Him. Our Lord was not worried about losing His position as co-equal with God and He did not have to retain His deity by effort (cf. Heb. 10:5-7).
 - f. Christ’s incarnation was not an emptying of Himself of deity, but a clothing of Himself in humanity (Heb. 10:5). He did this in order to be a servant, and as I said, His choosing to be a servant is the thrust of this passage.
 - g. Paul is not describing a change of our Lord’s nature or essence but the mode of His existence. One mode of existence may be changed for another, but the essential nature remains the same. The Bible says: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Heb. 13:8). But the Bible also says, “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich” (II Cor. 8:9). This refers to a change of the mode of existence, but not of nature.
2. “But made Himself of no reputation” (2:7a).
 - a. This literally means, “He emptied Himself.” In His condescension, our Lord was willing to “empty Himself” – not of His divine nature, not of His attributes, but only of the outward and visible manifestations of His deity.

- b. The KJV translators were careful to guard the deity of Christ. Unfortunately, the modern translators are not as careful.
- c. During His incarnation, our Lord did not cease to be God. He assumed all that was essentially human without relinquishing anything that was essentially divine.
- d. In becoming a man, our Lord did not diminish His deity, but rather He added a human nature to His divine nature.
- e. This means He emptied Himself only of the manifestations of deity. The Scofield Bible says: “When occasion demanded He exercised His divine attributes” (p. 1258, citing W.G. Moorehead). And, “He emptied, stripped Himself of the insignia of Majesty” (p. 1258, citing J.B. Lightfoot).
- f. Christ intentionally veiled His pre-incarnate glory. It was necessary to give up the outer appearance of God in order to take upon Himself the form of man.
- g. This pre-incarnate glory was restored when His work on earth was finished (John 17:5). His glory was never surrendered in an absolute sense (cf. Mt. 17:1-6; John 18:1-6).
- h. This veiling of His glory is apparent in the O.T. as well when our Lord appeared as the angel of the Lord and His glory was hidden from people so that He could appear to them and converse with them.
- i. Remember in Genesis 32, Jacob wrestled with a man “until the breaking of the day.” That man was the pre-incarnate Christ. Genesis 32:30 says, “And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”
- j. Remember God appeared to Moses in a burning bus. Exodus 3:6 says, “And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.”
- k. In Judges 13, the angel of the LORD appeared to Samson’s parents. Judges 13:22 says, “And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.”
- l. We must keep in mind that our Lord did not surrender His divine attributes but rather He voluntarily surrendered the independent exercise of some of them. This is the proper way to interpret some difficult passages such as Luke 2:52 and Mark 13:32.
- m. Harry Ironside used to tell a wonderful story to help illustrate this doctrine: “Peter the Great, when Czar of Russia, wanted to build a navy. But the Russian people were not a maritime people. As the result of wars he got a seaport for Russia on the Baltic Sea. He

said, 'I will build a navy.' But his people knew nothing about ships. What did Peter do? He laid aside his royal robes and crown, and invested Katherine, his czarina, with the regent's authority over the Russian dominion. He dressed as a common working-man, and made his way to Holland and England. There he veiled his identity and wrought as an apprentice to a ship's carpenter, and learned how to build ships. Then he went back to Russia, laid aside his workman's garb, and arrayed himself once more in his royal robes. He was the same person when he was in Holland and in England as he was in Russia. He had simply emptied himself of the outward dignity of his royal estate. So our Lord, when He came to this earth, laid aside His glory, and came as God clad in robes of flesh. He glorified God, finished the work, and then said, 'O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.'"

- n. Phil. 2:5-8 has been called the *Kenosis* passage from the Greek word "emptying" or "made Himself of no reputation."
3. "And took upon Him the form of a servant" (2:7b).
 - a. Christ never ceased to exist in the form of God, but rather, He added the form of a servant. He voluntarily restricted the benefits of His divine attributes as they pertained to His walk on earth and condescended to live as a servant (cf. John 13:4,5; Isa. 52:13).
 - b. As stated earlier, if Christ was truly with us in the "form of a servant," than He truly was in the "form of God" as well.
4. "And was made in the likeness of man" (2:7c).
 - a. "Likeness" indicates that He was really like men. Remember when Jesus was betrayed, Judas Iscariot identified Him by kissing Him (Matt. 26:47-50).
 - b. "Likeness" also indicates that He was different from men. For example, He was sinless. Therefore, He was not exactly the same as men. Romans 8:3 says, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."
 - c. Obviously, this is difficult for the human mind to comprehend. We accept it by faith.
5. "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself" (2:8a).
 - a. The word "fashion" suggests the temporary character of His humanity. Although His humanity will continue on forever, Christ's outer fashion changed when He resumed His place in glory (cf. Rev. 1:12-18).

- b. “He humbled Himself,” therefore we must humble ourselves (cf. Phil. 2:1-5; James 4:10; I Peter 5:5,6).
- 6. “And became obedient unto death” (2:8b; cf. John 10:15, 17, 18).
- 7. “even the death of the cross” (2:8c) – i.e., a shameful, terrible way to die (cf. Gal. 3:13).

III. THE SEVENFOLD EXALTATION OF CHRIST (2:9-11).

1. “Wherefore (because of our Lord’s obedience and death on the cross) God also hath highly exalted Him” (2:9).
2. God the Father has highly exalted Christ. The Holy Spirit also exalts Christ (John 16:13, 14). And we should exalt Christ as well.
3. When Isaiah saw the Lord “high and lifted up” (Isa. 6:1ff), he was referring to the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. John 12:37-41).
4. God has “given Him a name which is above every name” (2:9b). That is why it is a terrible thing to take the Lord’s name in vain (Ex. 20:7 – the 3rd commandment). It is the only name whereby we must be saved. Peter said: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).
5. “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow” (2:10). When the Bible speaks of the name of Jesus, it is because His name represents His person, His majesty, His authority, etc. His name means “Saviour” (Matt. 1:21).
6. Hebrews 1:4 says, “Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”
7. Philippians 2:10 will be completely fulfilled when our Lord returns to set up His millennial kingdom.
8. In Phil. 2:10, Paul is quoting Isaiah 45:23 (cf. Rom. 14:11). By comparing these Scriptures, it is clear that Jesus Christ is God (cf. Isa. 45:22 – “for I am God, and there is none else”).
9. When people bow their knee to Christ, they acknowledge His Lordship, His deity, and His sovereignty. Today people do it willingly and gladly, some day “every knee should bow.”
10. “Every” includes the angelic realm and all the saints “in heaven” (2:10). “Things on earth” includes everyone living on earth. “Things under the earth” refers to the demons and all of the lost souls in hell.
11. How much better to bow down to Christ now and be saved, then wait until it is too late and be compelled to bow down to Him in the day of judgment (Rev. 20:11-15).

12. This verse is not teaching a “second chance” for the lost to get saved.
They will bow down to Him but it is too late for them to get saved.

CONCLUSION:

1. “And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...” (2:11). The JW’s translation, the “New World Translation,” says in the preface that when the translators came to the word “Lord” they translated it “Jehovah.”
2. But they are not being honest. They did not translate “Lord” as “Jehovah” here or in Romans 10:9.

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