

Reflections on the Incarnation.  
Philippians 2:5-8.  
Sunday morning, December 19, 2010.

I. Christ is God.

“Who, being in the form of God ...”

A. The apostle does not use the regular verb for “being,” which is “eimi” in the Greek; he uses “huparcho” instead. “Huparcho” stresses what a person is by nature; one’s true condition. “Eimi states merely what appears.

As such he is not saying that the Lord was in the form of God, but looks can be deceiving. Rather he is making the case that Christ was God and no one else.

With this the rest of Scripture agrees:

1. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...” John 1:1.

This passage speaks to us about Christ, but why is He called the Word?

- Words give expression and definition to the heart and soul of a person. The thoughts of our hearts come in the form of words. “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” Proverbs. 23:7.

- Words reveal and communicate the nature and the state of a person’s heart and soul.

The Word then, or the Logos as the Greek has it, stands for that original rationality or intelligence, which is the expression of the heart and soul of the original Being who made all things, which is God.

“This Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory... full of grace and truth.” John 1:14.

2. In John 8:58 Jesus said: “before Abraham was (born), I AM,” thus taking one of the OT names of God for himself.

3. Even Christ’s enemies understood the implications of this. They sought to kill Him because He was calling God His own Father, making himself equal with God. John 5:18.

4. Ultimately God Himself would declare Jesus to be the Son of God with power by raising Him from the dead and exalting Him at His own right hand.

Romans 1:4.

B. The apostle does not use the regular word for “form” either; it is “schema.” He uses the word “morphe.”

Schema refers to the way something appears, as in vs. 8: “Being found in appearance as a man...” Morphe refers to a form that truly expresses who or what a person really is. Jesus is than really and truly God, but also really and truly a bondservant, for morphe is used both in vs. 6 and in vs. 7.

The only other time the New Testament uses morphe is in Mark 16:12 where the reference is to the appearance of the resurrected Christ, who truly was resurrected.

II. Christ emptied Himself.

A. Christ did not consider it robbery, or a thing to be grasped, to be equal with God.

The word translated “robbery” or “a thing grasped” (harpagmos) underwent a

change in meaning during NT times. Originally it carried the meaning that was perhaps the equivalent of our modern purse-snatching. A purse is grabbed or robbed and run off with.

The meaning became, anything held dearly, clung to tightly, valued highly, not easily parted with.

The context of Philippians 2 demands clearly the second meaning as the Lord never robbed or snatched His being equal with God from anyone. It was His by His very nature. Rather the sense is that Christ refused to cling to, to hold tightly on to, His being equal with God. He voluntarily gave it up.

B. He made Himself of no reputation; He emptied Himself.

What did He empty Himself of? Not His deity, for then the holy trinity would have ceased to exist.

He did not give up being God; rather, He gave up the advantages and privileges and glories of being God; only the free exercise and voluntary display of the prerogatives of being God were voluntarily set aside so that God, in Christ, might make himself the bond-servant of people like you and me.

What were some of those privileges Jesus gave up?

1. He gave up His heavenly glory and spender and exchanged it for the baseness of this vile, fallen world.
2. He gave up the free exercise of His authority, and exchanged it for humility and submission. “Your will, not Mine be done.” Matthew 26:39.
3. He gave up His divine riches, and became poor, so as to make many rich. 2 Corinthians. 8:9.
4. He even gave up His fellowship with the Father when He, who knew no sin, was made sin for us on the cross, and He cried out: “My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?” Matthew 27:46.

### III. The Incarnation and You.

The apostle started off with his application in this passage when he stated at the outset: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...”

He was referring back to two things he asked the Philippian Christians to do:

A. “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” Philippians 2:3

This the Lord Jesus did in coming to earth the way He did. He put our eternal wellbeing ahead of His own advantages, privileges and glories, and He made Himself a bond-servant in our lives. The word “better” means “more worthy;” the way in which you give your seat to an elderly person on a crowded bus.

Are you making progress in viewing your life on earth as a mere bond-servant in the lives of those who need your help the most?

B. “Let each of you look out, not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” The Lord Jesus, in undertaking the work of our redemption, looked first and foremost upon our interests, and He put His own last.

Only in the pathway of emptying ourselves; esteeming others as more worthy than ourselves, and looking upon their interests first, and doing so willingly, voluntarily, as the Lord did, can we deepen and grow in our walk and fellowship with the Lord.