

God and His Ways

Stages in Christ's Work

Understanding what Christ *did* for our salvation and *does* for our ongoing sanctification is a major part of being a Christian. Our primary scripture passages this week are Isaiah 45:18-25 and Philippians 2:5-11.

Humiliation

- Christ lived in eternity past with the Father and Holy Spirit in Heaven.
- He came to earth periodically in the appearance of a man (Gen. 18).
- However, He did not actually take on human nature until conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary.

We call this descent from His position as God the Son in Heaven to earth as a mortal man the _____ of Christ.

- He humbled himself by voluntarily giving up His exalted place in Heaven, where He received the praise and adulation he deserves, and taking on the limited, frail, inglorious body of a human being.
- Jesus was born to a very poor family in a race subject to foreign domination.
- His human father, Joseph, is not mentioned again after Jesus was twelve years old.
- Jesus did not surrender the least bit of His power or righteousness or infinity. But, He temporarily gave up His glory. He endured the same weaknesses, temptations, and other limitations of humanity.

Jesus Christ actually did all the things a human must do to be a human being totally righteous before God. He kept the law perfectly in our place and on our behalf. We call this the _____ **obedience** of Christ.

- Christ earned righteousness as a human being. By doing this, He gained both the right and the ability to impute (give) to us His earned righteousness.

The climax of the Lord's humiliation was His _____ **obedience**, His death on the cross in submission to God the Father's will. He suffered the full penalty for breaking the law in our place and on our behalf.

Activity on Philippians 2:6

Goal: See how the New Testament teaches Christ's equality with God without teaching Christ's equivalence to God.

The translation of Philippians 2:6 has presented an interpretive challenge for generations of Bible readers and preachers.

KJV: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God"

NASB: "who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped"

NIV: "Who, being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped"

The noun translated "robbery" comes from a verb that means "to snatch or seize violently"; thus the noun form often denoted the activity of snatching or seizing (just like the verb *rob* and the noun *robbery*). But the noun came to refer that which was seized – ie. the loot, the plunder, the goods – and even to describe something that was not actually seized but already possessed and, consequently, clutched, grasped, protectively held onto.

Conservative interpreters do not agree on the exact translation and intended meaning of this verse. The three major interpretations of this verse are:

1. The preincarnate Christ already possessed equality with the Father and resolved not to cling to it.
2. Christ had no need to grasp at equality with God, for He already possessed it.
3. Christ did not reach for His crowning prematurely, as Adam had, but was willing to wait till after His suffering.

Homer Kent Jr. argues² that option (1) above best fits the context. Charles C. Ryrie suggests this paraphrase: "Who, though of the same nature as God, did not think this something to be exploited to His own advantage."

*The Jehovah's Witnesses publish and distribute materials which cite Christian commentators' questions about this particular word, in order to cast doubt on the validity of the Trinitarian view.

Note that the culmination of Phil. 2:9-11 directly applies the language of Isaiah 45:23 to Jesus Christ as fulfillment of that text and the one being referred to. Yet, who is the speaker of Isaiah 45? It is the Lord, Jehovah.

For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; ... That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. (Isaiah 45:18, 23)

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10-11)

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- So, Philippians 2:6-11 explicitly equates Jesus with Jehovah.

Exaltation

- After His death on the cross, Jesus rose from the dead in triumph.

He had earned eternal life as a human being, then absorbed the punishment human beings deserve – effectively _____ with man what each had duly earned.

- In response to Christ's obedience in working salvation for man, the Father exalted Him above all creation.
- He received additional special honor for carrying out salvation's plan.

He who endured humiliation now is _____ to God the Father's right hand, the place of highest honor (Phil. 2:9-11).

Conclusion

- There can be no Christianity without the divine-human Son of God.
- His person is unique and His work is unique.
- Jesus Christ is in Himself and by Himself the Savior.
- He accomplished all the necessary work.
- He completed salvation for mankind.
- He was both holy deity and perfect humanity.
- Who he was enabled Him to do what He did – take all the punishment due for our sins while simultaneously giving us the righteousness He had earned.
- Only in Christ can there ever be salvation.

References

¹ *God and His Ways Teacher's Edition*, by Layton Talbert, Ph.D., BJU Press 2001, pp. 94-97.

² *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, by Homer Kent Jr., Zondervan 1978, pp. 123, 127.

Word Bank

active
exalted
humiliation
passive
swapping