

The Theology of Christmas, part 2

Last week, we began our study on the theology of Christmas from Philippians 2:6-11.

We saw how the legend of Santa Clause is juxtaposed with the birth of Christ, giving people within our culture mixed messages. We then began our study of the Philippians passage, considering the first of five steps in understand the basic message of the passage. That first step was that Christ abandoned His sovereign position. Today, we will consider the other four steps.

Philippians 2:6-11

Second Step - He accepted a slave's place

Verse 7, "*taking the form of a slave.*" (Doulos, slave.) In abandoning His sovereign position, He came down from heaven to earth, taking off the robes of majesty and putting on the apron of a slave. He came to be a slave.

He takes on the *form* of a slave. (morphē) He takes on the attributes and the characteristics of a slave.

The characteristic of a slave: *Absolute, total, submission to the will of another.* In Christ case, it was the will of His Father to which He gladly submitted. He became the slave of God, that He might serve us at the point of our deepest need.

—What is our need? Salvation. Reconciliation. Redemption.

—How does He serve? By giving His life for us to secure our salvation, to be reconciled to God, and to buy us back for sin, Satan, and death.

He becomes a slave of God and a slave of sinners. He came not to be served, but to serve. "*I am in the midst of you as one who serves,*" Luke 22:27.

Third Step - He associated with sinful people

Verse 7, we begin to get to the depth of His slavery: "*He was made in the likeness of men.*"

Jesus came down as a slave, all the way down to being made in the likeness of men.

He became human—a real man, true man, a hundred percent human as a hundred percent God. This is the mystery of the incarnation. He's not half God, half man. He's not all God, masquerading as a man. He is fully God and fully man. He takes on the likeness. This is how could He approached a sinful people.

Verse 8 tells us that this likeness to men was not only true on the inside, but it was also on the outside.

"*Being found in appearance as a man.*" He literally became human.

Schēma is used here, and it means *the external.* *Morphē* describes the inside, what is true of a person by nature or by attribute, characteristic. *Schema* refers to the exterior, the outer manifestation. "Being found in fashion as a man." He was made in the likeness of men, but He also looked like a man.

Fourth Step - He adopted a selfless posture

How selfless was He? Verse 8, "*He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*"

In the Garden of Gethsemane, as He prays, He begins to feel the cross coming on Him, and He knows that on that cross, He will bear the weight of all the sins of all the people who would ever believe throughout all human history. He will bear an infinite amount of sin in a few hours. He will feel the wrath of God, the likes of which we could never comprehend.

So, how can Jesus in a few hours absorb all the necessary punishment for all the sins of all the people who will ever believe in the history of the world? How is this possible when the wrath God is for all

eternity in hell, punishing the sins of sinners who are there, whose sins will not be paid? The wrath of God was and is beyond comprehension.

How could He receive all that wrath in a short time? *Because He is an infinite person and, therefore, had an infinite capacity to be punished.*

The selflessness shows up in the garden when He says, *“Father, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will but yours be done.”* And He even says, *“For this I was born, to go to the cross and die.”* He humbled Himself.

He became obedient, even to the death of the cross. He stooped all the way to die for our sins. Death on the cross was painful, shameful. You were accursed. Deuteronomy 1:23 says, *“Cursed is anyone who hangs on a tree.”* Paul quotes that in Galatians 3:13. Christ became a curse for us, absorbing the wrath of God on our behalf.

Fifth Step, He ascended a Supreme Prince

Verses 9 to 11. *For this reason, also.* What reason? *The reason of His submission, the reason of His humiliation, the reason of His obedience to death, even the death on the cross, because He perfectly obeyed the Father and accomplished redemption, God highly exalted Him.*

God raised Him from the dead as a sign of God’s satisfaction over His death, and then God exalted Him to His own right hand and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.

Hebrews 1:3 says that God exalted Him to heaven, and He sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high.

He was then given a name—the name **LORD**. It’s not the name Jesus, that’s an earthly name. That’s not the name above every name. The name above every name is **LORD**. God now highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name - the name which is above every name so that at that name, every knee will bow of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is **Lord** to the glory of God the Father.

His humiliation complete on the cross, followed immediately by His exaltation. Raised from the dead, lifted to the right hand of God, restored to full glory, full honor, full privilege, full expression of attributes, full use of His own independent will. He accomplished our redemption and God exalted Him.

Verse 10 says that every knee will bow to Him in heaven, on the earth, and in hell. They will all acknowledge Him as Lord, every tongue.

Verse 11, all will confess Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of God the Father, whether they confess it in heaven, whether they’re confessing it on earth, or whether they confess it in hell.

He is the Lord of hell. Hell is the terrible, inflicted suffering of those who denied Christ what He deserves; He deserves the affirmation of His lordship and appropriate submission and worship. That’s what sends people to hell—their rejection of Christ.

God has given you the opportunity even today to make that confession now. If you make it now, you will joyfully make it forever, and He will exalt you to His own throne, and you will be a joint heir and share in all His heavenly riches. Confess Him as Lord. Receive the salvation He offers, and you’ll go on doing that forever.