

The Theology of Christmas Part 1

What is going through the mind of someone who is experiencing Christmas in America for the first time? I wonder if they are confused by it all.

So, what is Christmas about? What is the celebration of the birth of Christ all about?

Philippians 2:6-11 is all about the theology of Christmas. These verses begin by explaining Who is God and ends designating God as Lord. The real message of Christmas is that Jesus Christ is God and Lord. These verses explain the humiliation and exaltation of Christ, who humiliated Himself by His self-condescension, coming to earth, to die, to be resurrected and then to return to glory, where His Father exalted Him above all creation.

We will consider five steps to help us understand this passage as it explains the theology of Christmas. We will consider the first step today, and the other four next week.

Step One: Christ Abandoned His Sovereign Position

Verse 6 says that *He existed in the form of God; thus, He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped or seized.*

Being - Denotes *God's essential nature, His essence, the inalienable, unchangeable truth about Him; Christ possesses this nature as God.* This His being, this is who He is. This refers to His innate, unchangeable, unalterable essence. His nature is that of God. He is God. Matthew 1:23; John 1:1-2; John 8:58; Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 1:15.

Form – From the Greek word, *morphe*, which refers to the characteristics or the qualities or the attributes of someone. “Form” doesn’t work here very well for it has the connotation of something on the outside, something changeable, something that can be altered. *Morphe* means *the essential, abiding characteristics or attributes that belong to someone.* It is translated in the New Testament “conformed” or even “transformed.” 2 Corinthians 3:18. We are not physically, externally made to look like Him. It means we are being conformed into what He is: by His characteristics and attributes

Equally Grasped – The verb “grasped” has a rather broad possibility of interpretation. It can mean *to seize something, to snatch something, to take hold of it and pull it away,* or it can mean *to hang onto something, to cling to something, to clutch something.*

Lucifer wanted to snatch or seize being equal with God (Isaiah 14:12-14), but Jesus didn’t need to do that for HE WAS GOD. There was nothing to snatch or seize.

Jesus did not cling to His being equal with God. He was willing to let it go.

Emptied Himself

So, on the one hand, equality with God wasn’t something He had to snatch because He was God. And on the other hand, equality with God was not something that He clutched. He was willing to give it up. He was so willing that verse 7 says, “He emptied Himself”. “Emptied” means *to pour out until it’s all gone.* So, what did He empty Himself? *His glory!* John 17:4

He also emptied Himself of the following: His honor. (Isaiah 53); His riches (2 Corinthians 8:9); the independent exercise of His own will (John 6) which includes His personal authority, His omniscience, and His omnipotence.

He even gave up a favorable relationship with His Father. For a time, as He hung on the cross, made sin for us, He said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

These are the things of which He emptied Himself. It’s a deep mystery of wisdom and power, and *it’s true*. This is the nature of His humiliation. This is the nature of His love. He did this for you, child of God!

Privileges

A more inclusive way of explaining His humiliation is to say *He gave up His privileges*.

Willingness to do that, even on a human level, is a very, very difficult thing. If you want to know a person’s character, or if you want to do a test of leadership, give them privileges. The more privileges you give them, the more they will reveal their character.

This is different than giving somebody responsibilities, especially if you pay them. If you pay people to do something, they’ll do it. That doesn’t give you any indication of character. People want money and so they do what they’re responsible to do.

—A noble person will use his privileges to help others.

—A noble person will somehow take those privileges and spend them on other people. A lesser person will use his or her privileges to separate themselves from other people, to elevate themselves. “Look at me!”

Jesus had all the privileges of being God and He chose to set those privileges aside to serve sinners in the Father’s will. So, He’s like a king who takes off His crown and takes off His majestic robe and puts on the rags of a slave and comes out of the palace to help the poor, destitute paupers survive.

You have been given the privilege of being a child of God, of being like Him.
How are you handling this?