

Christmas The Humiliation of Christ

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[0 : 00] Philippians for the bulk of our message. Luke chapter 2. I'm going to preface all my message today by mentioning that! What we'll get into involves a lot of...

! This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria and when all went to be registered, each to his own town.

And Joseph went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.

And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth, and she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

And in the same region there were shepherds out in the fields keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear.

[1 : 22] And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

And this will be a sign for you. You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those whom he has pleased.

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.

And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the baby lying in a manger. And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.

Let's pray. Father, as we come to your word, we thank you, first of all, for what you have brought before us, what you have made sure is recorded for us.

[2 : 36] Thank you, Father, for being able to look into this birth narrative. And thank you that even here, even though we won't spend our time here, what's here is glorious.

And I thank you for pointing out what went on to the shepherds and their then coming to give glory to our Savior.

But I pray that you would be with us. I pray that, as always, our focus would be on this one, our Savior.

And I pray that you would open our eyes more to who he is. But as much as we want that, Lord, our desire today is to have that attitude of wonder and worship.

And especially to see God's love for us in what he's done and what he did to show that love. So, Lord, I pray that you would bless.

[3 : 38] Be with me as I speak. Be with us as we hear. And may you draw us to yourself. In Jesus' name. Amen. Now, not everybody does this, but I'm convinced that often the way we come to Christmas Day and the way we come to the birth narrative is almost the way we come to the birth of any baby.

If you have a baby and your parents see it for the first time or even your neighbors or a stranger in the street, you're holding this little baby and they all go, oh, most of them, oh, such a cute little baby. And that's appropriate. And that's good. And that kind of wonder, I mean, we had no idea how cute he was. Scripture says there was no beauty that we would desire him.

So we don't know if the shepherds come in and said, oh, how cute he was or anything like that. But as they came, I emphasize the last words, verse 17, and what was told them concerning this child.

This child was different. This child was like no other child. And so I want us to take time and think about who this child was.

[5 : 05] And really my aim today is to take you back, scripturally, before this all happened, spend a few minutes of talking about who would come to be this child, what he was like, and then what he went through, and then what the father did for him, and our reaction, what our reaction should be.

So, the first question I want to ask today is, who is this child? And of course, we've read the birth narrative. We've read that this child was born. Now, if we didn't read onto the shepherds, and if we stopped at verse 7, I believe it is, in Luke 2, we would have had little idea of who this child was.

Of course, God in his wisdom, announced it to the shepherds, and told them a bit of who this child was. But, as a scene, you just look at it, and it's just a baby.

It's just a baby. But already, Mary had been told who this child would be, in Luke 1, 31 through 33.

The angel comes to Mary, and announces beforehand who this child will be.

And the angel says, and behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the son of the most high.

[6 : 34] And the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and in his kingdom there will be no end. and emphasizing that idea that the angel told Mary that this baby would be the son of the most high.

And I'm sure she did not understand all that that meant. There were hints of it in the Old Testament. But the son of the most high, who is this?

What is he? And of course, we look in Matthew, and we find that an angel spoke to Joseph also, in Matthew 1, 18 to 23, now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way, when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

The next verse points out that he really didn't have any clue that was going on, and he thought something different had gone on. And he goes on, and scripture goes on to say, and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly.

But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

[8 : 02] She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins. All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which means God with us.

Now, Joseph would have understood that that name meant God with us, but the name Jesus means God our Savior, and all kinds of boys had had that name, and even since had had that name.

But God told Joseph who this boy would be, though I'm not convinced he totally understood all that was going on when that happened.

What was going on when that happened? When Mary went through those birth pains and a baby boy was delivered, what was going on at that time?

What was, I mean, yeah, you say, duh, she's going through pains, she's laboring to have a child, and a child is born. That's what's going on. But behind the scenes, what was God doing?

[9 : 19] What had God done? He was sending his son into the world. This is not just the next in the line of people.

This was the son of God. This little baby was God's son. Now, we'll get into some of this stuff. He is man, and he is God.

And again, we'll talk about these things as we go on. But to be the God man, what had to happen?

And I want us to see what did it cost the son of God to come into this world and be our savior?

He was born a little baby, and lots of people probably said, oh, he's cute. But what did it cost? What did it take? And in looking at what it cost and what it took, we're going to see who this child is.

[10 : 29] No one can truly know what it cost, God, for Jesus to be born. Maybe I better wait at what it cost Jesus, the son, the son of God.

It's very difficult at this point to make sure you use the proper terms. Before we talk about his incarnation, you really shouldn't talk about him as Jesus, although because we know who he is.

He's the son of God. Before he's born, before he's conceived in his mother's womb, he is the second person of the Trinity. But we'll see he'll become to be known as Jesus, and we'll talk about

that more as we can go further.

together. I'd like for us now to be turning. We're not going to read it quite yet. You can be turning to Philippians chapter 2, and that's where we're going to spend most of our time, although I have many scriptures that I want to share this morning.

I want to first talk about what was the station of God, of the son of God, before he came and took on flesh. This little baby, before he took on flesh, John 1, 1 through 4, says he was very God of very God.

[11:54] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Now John's using that because it's an Old Testament theme.

John's using that term word to refer to Christ, the Son of God. The Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.

All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. So, before Jesus took on flesh, before he was born from the Virgin Mary, he had eternally existed as very God of very God.

We know him as the second person of the Trinity. In that capacity, he was, and still is, equal with God. Very God of very God.

He was the one through whom God created all things, and nothing was made without him being a part of it. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

[13:09] You can get into all kinds of things. How does this, how does this, uh, at the creation of man, it's formed from the dust of the earth, God breathed into him the breath of life.

Part of that was the aspect of the Son's ministry. I'm going to admit, there's so much I don't understand, so much beyond my understanding in relation what aspects the Son of God had at different points in history, but we know that in him was life, and he was the light of men.

He was very God of very God. His radiance was the radiance of the glory of God, Hebrews 1, 3. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

This is the Son of God before he is incarnate. Now, mind you, we're going to mention this several times, but mind you, even though he becomes incarnate, he will remain these things.

He will be the radiance of the glory of God. He will have the exact imprint of the Father's nature, and he will, even as that little creation in the womb, even as that baby that's held and nursed in his mother's arms, he is the one, though in flesh, who is upholding all things by the word of his power.

[14:41] In Isaiah 6, 1 through 3, in the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of his robe filled the temple, and above him stood two, above him stood the seraphim.

Each had six wings, with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.

Jesus was a part of that. As Isaiah saw the picture of God in heaven, a picture that made him fall and his face is dead, and he had to be revived and stood up by God, that was Christ in the midst of that.

Father, Son, and Spirit, but no less Christ. As Christ ruled and reigned in the heavens before his coming to become man, angels attended him 24-7, 365, of course there's no time there, but all of the time saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, the Lord of hosts, the whole earth of his, Jesus was used to hearing that in his station before his incarnation.

We get a hint of that in Jesus' prayer just as he was heading to the garden in John 17, verse 5, and now Father, glorify me with your own presence and with the glory I had with you before the world existed.

[16:32] Jesus, he's not being tucked in the corner. All of heaven is singing his praises. All of creation is bringing him glory with the Father and with the Spirit.

This was his position before he became incarnate. We know from 2 Corinthians 8-9 that he was rich because 2 Corinthians 8-9 says, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet he became poor for your sakes.

It just wasn't another stage in Jesus' life. Oh, he was poor, he was a nobody, and now he was born into family, and now he's another poor nobody.

Jesus, before he took on flesh, was the grandest of beings there is. All glory, laud, and honor was brought to him constantly, and he deserved it.

You and I might be praised for some little thing that we do, and that may be alright and appropriate, but everything he did was perfect, and he was used to all this.

[17 : 51] And now to Philippians 2, we see Paul using this as an illustration. He's going to talk about how the Philippians were people who loved the Lord, and God was blessing that church, and it was a good church, and yet he wrote and encouraged them, and one of the things he wanted them to encourage them about was their humility.

He wanted them to be more humble, and so he sets before them the picture of what Jesus did to come to this earth, and then he calls them to be humble. That's the purpose of this passage. That's where Paul is going with this passage, and we'll make reference to that, Lord willing, at the end. But in doing this, Paul brings before us, praise God he does, he brings before us the picture of what the Lord Jesus did in coming to be that baby.

And so in Philippians 2, I'm going to read verses 6 through 8, who, though he was in the form of God, think all that we've talked about and much more.

He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.

[19 : 31] I'm going to pick out phrases and make comments about this and help you to see what Paul is saying here. Paul says, though being in the form of God, he didn't kind of look like God, he was God.

Now, this English word form is a little difficult for us because we think of shape, and this is based on a Greek word that talks about essence.

Okay, and so it's something meant to convey a little different than we think of form. He's saying that he has the essence and nature of God.

He's saying he is God. He is equal with the Father and God the Spirit. He didn't work to earn this spot.

He wasn't given this spot. He was of his very essence God by nature of who he was. God and so he didn't work to get that spot.

[20 : 40] He's equal to God because he has the same nature and essence as God. But to be that baby, remember when Isaiah, here, I've listened to too many British preachers lately.

When Isaiah, they say Isaiah, I've got to stop listening to British preachers. When Isaiah saw God, he fell down in his face.

If Jesus had come, now, there are more important reasons for this, but if Jesus had come like that, his mother couldn't have taken care of him.

His father couldn't have taken care of him. All of them would have been on their face before him as dead. but other things. Here he is, God of very God, equal with the Father and with the Spirit.

And yet, this passage says, he didn't consider, now I've lost where I have here, he didn't consider it, let me just get to the passage, six, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.

[21 : 57] Now, what's that talking about? We think of grasps, we think of grabbing at something. Oh, I want that, I want that, that's not what's getting at here. Think of white knuckling, you know what white knuckling is?

It's holding onto something so badly that your knuckles turn white, it's white knuckling. Think of that when you think of this term grasped. Jesus is God, did not count equality with God something so important that he grasped.

He didn't think it was so dear to hold onto. Even though the Son of God, before his incarnation, was, and still is, but was, truly God, when he came to be our savior, he chose not to hold onto the privileges of deity.

Okay? First thing I'll say, some people come to this passage and they say, Jesus laid aside his deity. He did not. He never, for one instance, did, nor could he lay aside his deity.

that moment that he was conceived, that conceived seed, was deity and flesh.

[23 : 22] he never ceased to be deity. But when he chose to become our savior, he didn't hold onto all the privileges of his deity.

He didn't hold onto the free exercise of his power. He was the one who created all things. Did he create things on his own as he walked this earth? No, he did what his father, called him to do. He depended on the spirit for his strength. And yes, sometimes the father allowed him to use his deity, but it was all stuff that he had relinquished,!

Relinquished the free, he only did what his father wanted. He relinquished the free exercise of his power. He relinquished the riches of heaven.

he relinquished the continual recognition of his glory. He emptied himself.

[24 : 34] He didn't divest himself of deity. He remained God with all power and authority, but he set aside many of the privileges of his deity.

We read part of this verse, 2 Corinthians 8-9, For you know that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty might become, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

rich. He set aside all those riches, so he didn't use them while he was here on earth. He set aside the voluntary display of his attributes for us.

Matthew 24-36, this verse is a hard saying to many people and to all of us at one point until we understand that there were two natures in Jesus and he always relied on the Father in Matthew 24-36, but concerning, when they asked when the end would be, he said, concerning the day and the hour, no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.

Now, we can get into things that are difficult to understand. How did deity reside within humanity? How did God, who knew everything, reside within or have taken on flesh that didn't know when the end would be?

[26 : 13] Those are all things beyond our understanding. Will probably forever be beyond our understanding, but they're nonetheless true. And so he set aside, as a human who walked this earth, he did not know all the things that he knew in his divinity.

And he chose to veil his divine glory, the glory that he had in heaven, and chose to let go of the continual recognition of his glory.

I read this verse also, now Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. Jesus came, and we'll talk more about veiled in just a second, but he veiled his glory.

Some years ago, maybe it's still on, I didn't like the program when it was on, but there was this TV program called Undercover Boss. Maybe you've seen it, maybe you haven't, doesn't matter.

The premise of the show was that there would be this big corporation and there would be a boss at the top of that corporation and that boss who would not be known by face to many of his employees.

[27 : 32] This would be companies with many, many employees, probably branches all over the place, and he would go and put regular clothes on and he would work alongside regular people as the boss, as the owner of the whole company, and he would hear things that people would say, some things about him, and he would be able to see what was really going on, that undercover boss.

So he would walk around looking like them. In one sense, in one sense, that's what Jesus did. Now, the undercover boss wasn't divine like Jesus was, but think of that, how he went undercover.

Jesus veiled his glory. They could not see. Remember, as I've already mentioned twice, Isaiah and others, when they saw the glory of God, fell down dead.

But Jesus veiled his glory. No one can see that he was God just by looking at him. if he had not veiled his glory, all would have been dead in his presence.

And as I mentioned, he gave up his independent exercise of authority. He didn't do his own will, but always did the Father's will. He stated such in John chapter five, when he says, I can do nothing on my own as I hear I judge.

[29 : 11] My judgment is just because I seek not my own judgment, but the will of him who sent me. And then Luke 22 42, as Jesus is praying in the garden, Father, if you're willing, remove this cup from me.

Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done. And this is the Son of God, having taken on flesh, gave up the doing of his own will, and gave it over in obedience to the Father.

God and it says in scripture that he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant. He set aside, the Son of God chose to set aside the form of master and to take the form of a servant.

And Jesus himself gives a great example of this. We don't have time to read it. From John chapter 13, Jesus is speaking with his disciples, he's sitting at supper, and as he's sitting at supper, he stands up, takes off his robe, puts a towel around his waist, grabs a basin of water, and goes around and washes all the disciples' feet.

Now there's more interchange that takes place there. When he gets done, he takes the towel off, puts his robe back on, and sits down to address them. And that is a picture of what Philipians is trying to give to us.

[30 : 38] Jesus laid aside the glory that he had in heaven. It was all veiled. It was veiled by him taking on flesh. And he took upon him the form of a servant.

He put this towel around, and he served people. And I think of that, that gap that's there. The Son of God, God, very God of very God, becomes the servant literally washing the feet of his disciples.

He becomes the servant of all his people in the sense that he comes to live his life for his people, to take their sins upon him and serve them by giving himself over to those who would crucify him and giving him his life in atonement for those who would be his people.

He served in that way. And so he says, you call me Master and Lord, and so I am, but I am among you as one who served.

And so he takes on flesh in order to serve. He's taking the form of a servant or his taking the form of a servant was accomplished by being born in the likeness of men.

[31 : 56] To become that servant, Jesus took on a true human nature and a human body. He took on a true, he was made like us.

Not the perfect copy of us because he didn't take on sin nature. But he took on a true human nature but not a sinful human nature. And as that servant he humbled himself to the point of being willing to die for others according to the Father's will.

So I want you to see Paul's building steps here. He was in glory, he veiled his glory, he humbled himself by taking on flesh to veil that glory, he chose then to be a servant, the choice was all made in once, but if we can think of it in logical terms, he humbled himself, chose to be a servant, and then even further he chose to die.

as the God-man, there's still very God of very God in this person. the divinity doesn't die with Jesus, it's the human that dies.

Again, there's so many things we have to kind of keep it, but just the gist of it, and so he humbled himself taking on flesh, humbled himself to be a servant, humbled himself by saying I'm willing to die, and then he humbles himself further to say I am willing to die the way man devises that is the worst possible way to die.

[33 : 36] Now, we may have seen all kinds of horror shows, and we could have seen and read of or heard all kinds of ways people have tortured people to die.

die. There is none worse than crucifixion. And he was called the death of a thousand strangulations. It was just awful. You would be nailed through your wrists and your ankles, knees, and you would become exhausted and slumped down, and everything would be tightened up to the point that you had no strength to breathe, and you would rally and lift yourself up by hanging on those joints that were nail pierced, enough to gasp a few more grasps of air, and then the process would start again, and you would do that over and over often for days, in total agony.

And here, remember, we have this picture of very God, of very God, one whose presence would cause people to fall down as dead before him, who was willing to cover all that glory with flesh, and then willing to be a servant for us, and then willing to die because we needed a substitute, and willing to die on the cross.

The worst way for man to die, he was willing to do for us. God was pleased with that. But why?

[35 : 24] Why do this? And the answer to this you all know. It's the most common verse in the Bible. Why did Jesus do that? For God so loved the world that he gave his only son.

Gave was not generic. Gave was not meaningless. Gave was this kind of description that we're talking about. Very God, a very God, his own son, who takes all these steps down in order to meet our need.

need. The Bible is full of verses that talk about this. Romans 5, 8, but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Ephesians 2, 4, and 5, but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you

have been saved.

In this, 1 John 4, 9, and 10, in this the love of God has been made manifest among us that God sent his only son into the world so that we might live through him.

[36 : 37] And this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation, the satisfaction of wrath.

for our sins. And we don't have time to go into a lot of it, but Paul makes sure in verses 9-11, I'll read it because it's a good conclusion to Philipians.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross and because he was willing to go through the cross, the Father highly exalted him.

And so let me just conclude by pointing to this. And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth and she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no place for them in the inn.

[37 : 51] Ah, yeah. Ah, yeah. Praise and worship to the God of gods who is willing to serve us in this way.

This was no small light thing he did on the side. Remember, he took on flesh and while he was on earth, it veiled his glory. It no longer veils his glory.

We will see his glory. But he took on flesh and he did all that to serve those, any who would come to him. And so I'll close with asking what's our responsibility when we know this?

I just have to read Revelation 1, or 5, starting in verse 1. Then I saw the right hand of him who was seated on the throne, a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals, and I saw a mighty angel proclaim with a loud voice, who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?

And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it.

And I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it.

[39 : 09] That would talk about our redemption. We don't have time to go into that right now. And one of the elders said to him, weep no more because the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

And between the throne and the four living creatures, see, he's back in that position. And among the elders I saw a lamb standing as though it had been slain with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into the earth.

And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll back to what he was before, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

And they sang a new song saying, worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and you have made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on earth.

Then I looked and behold, around the throne and the living creatures and the elders, the voice of many angels numbering myriads of myriads and thousands and thousands, saying with a loud voice, worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.

[40 : 39] And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all that is in them saying to him who sits on the throne and to the lamb blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever.

That's our God. who was willing to cover all that glory that he might walk amongst us totally unrecognizable as God that he might give himself for us.

And God has highly exalted him and we will be those who will join with the seraphim and all the angels and cry out his glory for all eternity.

It will be our greatest joy and enjoyment. God has been willing to do that. What should we do?

We should do what he came for. For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

[41 : 52] Now, that's for two kinds of people. That verse is for anyone who doesn't know Christ, who doesn't know what they're going to do when faced before God with all the sin they know they have.

Well, God so loved you that he gave his son for you. Believe in him and you won't perish. But that verse thankfully is not just for those who don't know Christ.

That verse is for us who know Christ. Our reaction to the wonder of who Christ is should be to trust in him, to rest in him, to know that God so loved us that he gave his only son and that he has promised that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life.

I rejoice in that hope. We should rejoice in that hope. A great savior we have.

Who is this child? He's the God man. Let's pray. Thank you father for your goodness.

[43 : 11] Thank you for revealing this. We would have had no clue who Jesus was, what he was before he came if you hadn't told us. And so father we rejoice in the wonder of what our savior has done for us.

I pray that he would be lifted up even as John goes on to talk about or Jesus goes on to talk about in John chapter three. And may he draw all nations to himself.

And may he today draw his people to himself here and those who don't know him. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.