

## BEHOLDING THE WONDER AND THE WISDOM OF GOD BECOME (ALSO) A MAN

Bruce A. Ware, Professor of Christian Theology, Southern Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky

### I. Introduction

In all of human history, never has a humility been manifest, or a life been lived, or a mission accomplished, or a victory won, as was done in Jesus. Consider these features of the life, mission, and obedience of Jesus:

- There never has been a **higher place** from which one has stooped;
- There never has been a **lower position** to which one has aspired; and
- There never has been a **costlier obedience** by which one has served.

Two texts in the New Testament that highlight and celebrate “God becoming (also) a man” are John 1 and Philippians 2. We’ll look briefly at the first, and give more attention to the second.

### II. Incarnation of John 1

John 1:1-3, 14-18, 29 – <sup>1</sup>In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup>He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup>All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. . . . <sup>14</sup>And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup>John testified about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’ ” <sup>16</sup>For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup>For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup>No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. . . . <sup>29</sup>The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”

#### A. Fully God (John 1:1-3)

1. Eternal with the Father (1:1-2)
2. Creator of all that is (1:3)
3. Agent of the Father in Creation, as he will be in Redemption

#### B. Fully Man (John 1:14-18, 29)

1. Incarnation (“the Word became flesh”) – historical reality that the Christian faith depends upon (1:14, 18)
2. Grace and Truth of the Father in the Son (1:14, 16-17)

3. Incarnate for one ultimate purpose: to die for the sin of the world (1:29)

### III. Kenosis of Philippians 2

Philippians 2:5-11 – <sup>5</sup> Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

#### A. Stooping Low (Phil 2:5-8)

##### 1. Highest Height (2:6)

- a. Existed in the “form” (*morphē*) of God – essential nature (cf. 2:7)

- b. Equality with God – nothing is equal to God but GOD

##### 2. Lowest Depth (2:7)

- a. He “emptied” or “poured out” Himself (note: He did not pour something *out of* Himself)

- b. How? By *taking* the form (very nature) of a servant—an emptying by adding; subtraction by addition. Illustration: new car covered in mud

##### 3. Costliest Obedience (2:8)

- a. He displayed the deepest and most profound humility – “He humbled himself by becoming obedient. . .”

- b. He rendered the perfect and most pervasive obedience – "... to the point of death, even death on a cross"

## B. Exalted High (Phil 2:9-11)

### 1. Exaltation's Basis (2:9a)

"Therefore" or "For this reason" ... indicates the basis for the exaltation is the humble, costly obedience of the Son. Here is the ultimate expression of the principle of James 4:10!

### 2. Exaltation's Expression (2:9b)

Name above every name given to Him. As God? No! But, as a man, the Messiah, the second Adam, the seed of Abraham, the Son of David, he won the right to rule the nations! (cf. Psalm 2:7-9; Matt 4:8-10; Matt 28:18-20; Eph 1:20-23; Heb 1:1-4)

### 3. Exaltation's Response (2:10-11)

*Every* knee will bow; *every* tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

## IV. Conclusion:

- Rejoice! – the lowest humiliation and costliest obedience has won the greatest victory!
- Repent – bow now in gratitude and faith, or bow then in fear of certain judgment.
- Resolve – to follow Christ as Lord, for Lord He is! Yield to, trust, obey, and follow him.

## Discussion Questions for “The Man Christ Jesus” Conference

Beholding the Wonder and the Wisdom of God Become (also) a Man (John 1:1-18; Phil 2:5-11)

1. Describe some of what Jesus experienced with the Father before he came to earth to take on human existence. What were some of the privileges He knew then? Consider what Jesus says in John 17:5 and 24 for some indicators.
2. Recall that Jesus, the incarnate God-man, was both fully (100%) God and fully (100%) man. Given this, what is the difference between saying that in taking on human nature, Jesus gave up “attributes of deity,” vs. he gave up “privileges and rights of deity”? Can you give an example or two of the privileges he was willing to forego in becoming (also) a man?
3. Describe the level and quality of the obedience that Jesus rendered. What does the phrase “obedient to the point of death” tell us about this?
4. What is the significance of the “therefore” or “for this reason” that begins Phil 2:9? What lessons can we draw from this?

Jesus Living His Life and Accomplishing His Mission as the Spirit-Empowered Messiah (Acts 2:22; 10:38)

1. How common is it to think of Jesus living his life fundamentally as a man? Can the deity of Christ (which is true!) be overemphasized? How is your view of Jesus affected by seeing his life and ministry carried out as a man?
2. What are some ways we commonly think Jesus acted out of his deity, whereas in fact he did this out of his Spirit-empowered humanity?
3. Are there some things Jesus must have done only by his deity? What are some ways we know that Jesus was fully God as well as fully man?
4. It was stated that Jesus continues to have the Spirit upon him following his resurrection and exaltation. Why would this be? What does this tell us about his ongoing human existence?

Jesus Facing Temptation and Growing in Obedience as a Man (Heb 4:15-5:9)

1. What impact does it have on your life to know that Jesus was “tempted in all ways are we are” yet he never ever, not even once, sinned?
2. Knowing that Jesus’ obedience and resisting temptation was not “automatic,” how does this affect your respect and reverence for Jesus?
3. If Jesus “learned obedience through the things that he suffered,” how does this affect your own view of the trials and difficulties that come into our lives? Can you see any connection here between this teaching and Paul’s statement in Rom 8:28?
4. What are some ways you plan to take advantage of the resources God has given you, a new covenant Christian, to grow in obedience and character? How can you live more like Jesus?