

IMITATING THE INCARNATION

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Philippians 2:1-11

Religious fads – W.W.J.D? or W.D.J.D. The gospel itself is about what Jesus in fact DID, not our speculating about what He would DO in today's world. See 1 Cor. 15:1-8.

The real question is What DID Jesus DO? The essence of the Gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-8). But before he could do that, He had to do something else; the Creator had to come here, to planet earth, and become one of US. And we call that event the INCARNATION, literally the “enfleshment.”

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though 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 a cross. Phil. 2:5-8

“Emptied himself” of what? His deity? His divine attributes?

B.B. Warfield: “He relinquished his heavenly status, not his divine being.” That is, He did not cease to be God.

“He emptied himself, divested himself of the honours and glories of the upper world with the rags of human nature. ‘He had to be made like his brothers in every respect... Heb. 2:17.’” (Matthew Henry, 1662 - 1714)

Jesus, though in the form of God takes on the form of a servant. That's exactly what St. John says in chapter 1 of his Gospel:

The Form of God – The Word was God ----- The Form of a Servant – The Word became Flesh

Phil. 2:6

John 1:1

Phil. 2:7

John 1:14

Don't let the word "form" scare you, as if Jesus was a lot like God, or a lot like us. "What Paul asserts then, when he says that Christ Jesus existed in the 'form of God' is that He had all those characterizing qualities which make God God, the presence of which constitutes God, and in the absence of which God does not exist. He who is 'in the form of God,' is God." (Warfield)

Why would he do that? Save us. He must be one of us. BUT that's not St. Paul's emphasis in our text.

Liberal Protestantism dismisses the traditional understanding of the atonement as "slaughterhouse religion." Jesus death as "example" of unselfish love., etc. Thankfully, we don't have to choose between the two. It is the very heart of his appeal to the believers at Philippi – and to us – on how we are to relate to one another, how we are to treat one another.

2:1 "IF there is ANY encouragement in Christ...." NIV "from being united with Christ."

"Any comfort from [Jesus'] love..." Can you even begin to grasp how much Jesus loves you? Jesus loves me, this I know.... Do you?

“Any participation [fellowship] in the Holy Spirit...” The Douay-Rheims translation: “society of the Spirit.”

“Any affection and sympathy.” KJV – “bowels and mercies.” “Bowels” is literally what that Greek word is. Seat of emotions – where we feel things, as when Jesus is said to “have compassion” or be “moved with compassion.”

If there’s ANY of this to be found in Jesus, Paul says in v. 2 – 4,,,,, and again in v. 8. Easy preaching, hard living. But **not optional**, not even **extraordinary**. This is to be **the norm among us as God’s children**.

The key word here (v.3) is HUMILITY, that most elusive virtue. I say “elusive” because if you’re aware of your humility, well, you’ve probably lost it. What can make one more proud than to be known for one’s humility! It’s the opposite of PRIDE, that deadliest of the seven deadly sins.

WHAT HUMILITY IS NOT:

- It is not necessarily the result of being *humiliated*.
- It is not *false modesty, which can in fact be a form of pride*
- It is not self-loathing even if we’re faking it. Example: Uriah Heep, just “a poor ‘umble person.”

Verse 7 tells us he “emptied himself.” Warfield points out that the KJV renders it “made himself of no reputation,” or as Warfield puts it, “‘made no account of himself,’ that is, in comparison with the needs of others.” That characterized his life and ministry, did it not? And it is to characterize us – a self-forgetfulness, unawareness, and ignoring of how I will come across or be perceived.

“A life of self-sacrificing, unselfishness is the most divinely beautiful life that man can lead.” (Warfield)

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at 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. Phil 2:9-11