

# DO JESUS CHRIST PRE- EXIST HIS BIRTH?

A CONSIDERATION OF PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11.A.V.

By R.H. Judd

"Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God...."(Phil.2:6).

THE ABOVE quotation from the Authorized Version is yet another text thought by leaders of "orthodoxy" to be strong proof of the pre-existence of the Christ, and His co-equal relationship with the Father.

Our friends are assuredly very fond of texts. The context is seldom consulted. The utterance of a text, is, with them, the simplest, the shortest and the surest method of winning an argument; for whatsoever the argument may be, some text taken by itself from the sacred pages of Scripture can generally be found to give, at least, seeming support. As for verifying the translation, or examining the import of the surrounding matter with a view to better understanding of the text in question, the effort is too great to attempt; and were they to do so, a lurking fear would be felt that some long-cherished theory might be made void.

With sincere and sure confidence in the correctness of our assertion, we put forward the statement that there is nothing in the whole passage indicated at the head of this page, that has reference to a pre-existent personality of Jesus the Christ. The theme of Paul's discourse in Philippians 2 is humility, and his message was to living men. When urging them to "each esteem other better than themselves," he puts before them an example known to all - the Man Christ Jesus. No other person as fulfilling that requirement is even mentioned. He then adds: "Who (like yourselves) being in the form of God (see Gen.1:27) thought it not a thing to be grasped at to be equal with God..."(Compare R.V. Gen. 3:5.) Any thoughtful mind will readily see that the translation of the Authorized Version naturally results in the more correct translation just given. Dr. Paley renders it: "Did not affect to be equal with God."

Dr. Adam Clark's rendering is, "Who did not think it a matter to be earnestly desired to be equal with God." The Revised Version reads: "Counted it not a prize to be equal with God." The Revised Version margin: "Counted it not a thing to be grasped at." The Revised Standard Version translates it: "Did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped at."

It is the purpose of a robber to take by force - to grasp - that which is not his by right. The cognate Greek word is translated "extortion" in Luke 11:39 R.V. See also Matt. 11:12. Indeed, in nearly every instance, if not in all, the word implies a wrong action, namely, to take (by force if necessary) that which is not his by right. This was precisely the advice of the "serpent" in Eden. (Gen.3:5 R.V. ). Christ not only refused to follow that course, but he also acknowledged that God was "greater than" Himself ( John 14:28).

The Scriptures continually assert that there is but one God ( 1 Cor. 8:4). When that primal fact is literally accepted, the statement "Who being in the form of God..." is equivalent to an assertion that He (Christ) was not God; for that which is in the form of another, can never be the other itself.

"But emptied himself..." The whole context clearly shows that it was Jesus Christ who emptied Himself, and not one who was to become Christ. It was Christ Jesus who continually submitted His own will to the will of the Father. "Orthodoxy" and Weymouth's New Testament - we are sorry to say, renders these words as "stripped Himself of His glory." There is no hint of such in the Greek, and we are glad that a note in Weymouth's New Testament admits the literal reading is "emptied himself." Any man empties himself when he gives up his own will into the control of another. We do not require an hypnotist to remind us of that fact.

"Took upon him the form of a servant..." The apostle Paul did the same. The Greek word here is "doulos," meaning a servant, or bondservant. It occurs considerably over one hundred times in the New Testament. In chapter 1 of this epistle, Paul said that he and Timothy were "servants of Jesus Christ." In 2 Cor. 3:5; he said: "ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake." In 1 Cor. 9:19, Paul said: "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant to all, that I

might gain the more." Christ Himself said: "Whosoever shall be chief among you shall be your servant, even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" ( Matt. 20:27,28).

"And was made in the likeness of men." Could language better express an accomplished present and oft-repeated fact? There is nothing cryptic in the quotation last given. Paul actually states the same in Galatians 4:4. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made (R.V. born) of a woman..." John the Baptist, and other men were "sent from God" ( John 1:6), and all were born of women. We may note that in connection with the word "likeness" the A.V. margin supplies the word "habit." If that is correct, then Jesus Christ was not only like men in form, but in other respects also; thus fulfilling the prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy 8:15, "of thy brethren, like unto me."

"Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." We might paraphrase this passage, "being, or recognizing Himself as in human form, namely - in the human scheme of things" ( for that is the meaning of the Greek word translated "fashion," see Young's Concordance page 330); and realizing that he was therefore mortal - subject to death - He humbled Himself to the extent that He was willing to suffer the ignominy of an inflicted death, the death of a criminal; even death on the cross in company of wicked men. The word "humbled" here, and in every other instance of its use, refers to a voluntary, not a forced humiliation, It was humiliation, not from glory to humanity, but from innocent God approved manhood to death, "yea, the death of the cross." ( v. 8, R.V.). "Wherefore also ( for this reason), God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name, that at the name of JESUS every knee should bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The change of position of the word "also" in the R.V. is significant, and probably intentional. It suggests that God exalted Him, not only for His death on the cross, but also for His whole life leading up to the finishing of the work which God gave Him to do ( John 17:4;19:30).

From beginning to end of this passage there is no other name mentioned than the name of JESUS, the name given to Him at birth; and everything recorded is the record of happenings since that event.

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" FOR THERE IS ONE GOD, and ONE MEDIATOR between GOD and men, the MAN CHRIST JESUS ( 1 Tim.2:5).

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Copies of this tract may be obtained from the author by those who are interested in a special study of the subject. Copies are free, but contributions will be appreciated. Requests should be sent to the author, R.H. Judd, Fulton Cottage, Rt. 3, COLBORNE, Ontario.

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