

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS
Response of God to the Son's Obedience
Philippians 2:9-11

Introduction

1. The depths to which the Saviour's obedience is recorded is not the end of things. From the bottom, the Lord Jesus is brought to the highest heights.

2. There were seven steps He took down: 1) Existing as God. 2) Thinking as God. 3) Making no reputation. 4) Taking a servant form and made in likeness of men. 5) Being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself. 6) Being obedient until death. 7) Being crucified with a servant's death.

3. The steps down now are fully recorded. This is the significance of "wherefore" (v. 9). That particle says: Because 1) He looked after others. 2) He emptied Himself. 3) He became a servant and humbled Himself. 4) He obeyed perfectly unto a cross-death -- wherefore! The word "and" is an added expression of reciprocity to the downward steps.

4. So now there are seven marvelous steps upward. These are:

1. EXALTATION

The verb used here is a hapaxlegomenon (one time in the N.T.). Since this is an aorist form of the verb, it is a reference to an historical moment in our Lord's life -- His resurrection and subsequent ascension. While the perfect idea is explicit in the act, it is best not to translate it that way (cf. K.J.V.). There are other aorist tenses in this matter (cf. Acts 2:23, 24, 32, 36; Eph. 1:20-22). The word "highly" is equivalent to a Greek preposition with which Paul has compounded the verb. This is therefore a hyper exaltation (cf. the slang "super").

2. PRESENTATION

In addition to the exaltation is the giving of a Name. The aorist verb gave () really means to graciously give, hence bestowed as a gift of supreme and rejoicing love. It is a gift "freely given." There is no need to depart from the simple and proper lexical meaning of the word. Infinite grace in humiliation is responded with infinite grace in kind. Glory, glory, glory!

3. DESIGNATION

Some texts insist that He is given "the" Name, a reading which is somewhat doubtful. Hence "a" Name appears to be more accurate. But as the context shows this is not something generic as Lord or Son of God. Rather, this is specifically and expressly as "Jesus." It is the name of His humiliation, but now that of His exaltation and glory. Now it is a Name with which every highest attribute, grace, power, and dominion is eternally combined. It is forever "the" above every Name. This defining clause states that the Name "Jesus," albeit employed for others, now has a greater meaning (cf. Mt. 1:21; John 17:11, 12; Rev. 3:12). Therefore, since His resurrection et al, there is no other Name above His -- Jesus stands for Him -- period!

4. PROSTRATION

Here is a forthright purpose clause "that in the Name of Jesus every knee might bow . . ." The Divine Name "Jesus" speaks of His authority (John 5:43), His power (Jn. 17:11, 12), His character (Jn. 17:6). Thus, in the acknowledgment of all the Name "Jesus" stands for and indicates, "every knee might bow." Moreover, this is an implicit quotation from Isaiah 45:21-25 (cf. Ro. 14:10, 11). Thus since Isaiah speaks of the Eternal God Himself, the reference here in Philippians produces a profound index to the Nature of the Name "Jesus." Make no mistake, He is God!

5. CONSIDERATION

The triad of words -- things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth speak of creation in totality. Evidently all created existence in its heights and depths is meant, hence animate and inanimate existence alike, the non-personal and unconscious creature are being said to obey, after its manner, the Lordship of the exalted Jesus! The three words might be rendered "things heavenly and things earthly, and things sub-earthly."

In the first two words, the preposition is prefixed and suggests "pertaining to" (cf. for the second word 3:19; 1 Cor. 15:40). The third word has prefixed and is only used here in the N.T. It is significantly omitted in two other verses (Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20).

6. ADMISSION

There is a question whether this verb is parallel with "bow" as a subjunctive following the purpose clause "that" or is a simple future tense. In either case, the point is clear: every tongue is going to fully agree (force of the prefixed to the verb stem). There is no question but that an open or public acknowledgment is in view. The admonition is congruous with the O.T. (cf. Isa. 45:24). Literally it affirms: Lord Jesus Christ, prominence being given to the title "Lord" which is the equivalent to Jehovah (). This title "Lord" is set in direct contrast with His servant character (v. 7).

7. DECLARATION

The unremitting object of the whole course of the Son, the ultimate issue of everything about Him is expressed with the phrase "I glorified Thee on the earth" (John 17:4). So, the Saviour's very exaltation, by which the Father glorified Him, had the glory of the Father as its end. Therefore, the confession of Jesus as Lord of all is unto the glory of the Father, whose Son He is, their honor being inseparable and their glory being one -- true and wise words that deserve to be borne in mind always.

Conclusion

Remember, this sublime paragraph (vv. 6-11) is an essential part of some practical exhortations concerning the life of believers (vv. 1-5). Cardinal doctrines form the basis for spiritual behaviour. Apart from such firm doctrine, there really is no appeal. But His example cries out for: 1. A Selfless Mind -- which thinks nothing of itself. 2. A Sacrificial Mind -- which goes to utter lengths for others. 3. A Serving Mind -- which is content to help. This passage underscores "We preach . . . Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake" (2 Cor. 4:5).