



Provided by the Church of the Lutheran Confession - Board of Missions

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics)

Lesson 6.6 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The Two States of Jesus' Existence: Humiliation and Exaltation

The Bible clearly makes a separation or distinction between two states or conditions in Jesus' life. Jesus Himself called attention to this distinction when He spoke to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus on Easter Sunday afternoon. At the time they did not know that the Man walking with them was Jesus. This Man said to them they were foolish for not believing what the prophets had foretold about the Messiah: **"O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"** (Luke 24:25-26). The prophets foretold both the suffering of the Christ and the glory that would follow. First, humiliation; then, exaltation.

Jesus' apostle Peter also showed that the prophets foretold these two states, for he wrote that the prophets **"prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow"** (1 Peter 1:10-11).

The terms themselves – humiliation and exaltation – come from Paul's letter to the Philippians, where we read: **"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"** (Philippians 2:5-11). Another term sometimes used instead of humiliation is "exinanition".

In his second letter to the Christians in Corinth, the apostle Paul encouraged generosity on the part of the Corinthians by writing: **"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich"** (2 Corinthians 8:9). The purpose of Jesus' humiliation – His becoming poor – was to make us rich, not in earthly goods, but in spiritual treasures: the forgiveness of sins, faith in Christ, the sure hope of eternal salvation, the vast riches of heaven itself.

The letter to the Hebrews speaks of Jesus' time of humiliation as **"the days of His flesh"** during which time He **"offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears"** (Hebrews 5:7) to His heavenly Father. And then, **"having been perfected"** (having completed His work of redeeming the world through His suffering), **"He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him"** (Hebrews 5:9).

From the day of Pentecost onward Jesus' followers have presented the life of the Savior according to these two states of living. Peter accused the thousands who gathered on Pentecost of crucifying their Messiah: **"Him... you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death,"** but then he continued: **"Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death"** (Acts 2:23-24). Jesus' death and burial were the last phases of His humiliation; after that there was nothing but exaltation and glory. As Peter said: **"This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to**

the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear” (Acts 2:32-33). And all of this was “by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23).

Questions

1. What are the two states or conditions of Jesus’ life?
2. How did the Old Testament prophets speak of these two states?
3. What did Jesus say to the two disciples at Emmaus about these two states?
4. What is included in the humiliation, and what is included in the exaltation, according to Philippians 2:5-11?
5. What was the purpose of Jesus’ humiliation?
6. What was the end of Jesus’ period of humiliation?