



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

A Systematic Study of Bible Teachings (Dogmatics) Lesson 6.6.1 – The Doctrine of Jesus, Son of God, Messiah (Christology)

The State of Humiliation

Jesus' state of humiliation began when He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary. At the same time, **"The Word became flesh"** (John 1:14). In other words, the incarnation began at the same time as Jesus' state of humiliation. Nevertheless, it is important to understand that incarnation, in itself, is not humiliation. The fact that God became man is a mighty miracle, but Jesus incarnate still had His glory. We see Jesus, as man, in His glory at the mountain of transfiguration. If Jesus came in this glory, it would not have been any humiliation at all. We also see that Jesus' incarnation is not part of His state of humiliation from the fact that Jesus' state of humiliation came to an end, but Jesus' incarnation is still in effect and will remain in effect even when Jesus returns.

Notice that the One who **"made Himself of no reputation"** was not the *Word without flesh*, but **"Christ Jesus,"** who was already the *Word in flesh*. The name Jesus was not given to Him until He became flesh. He was **"in the form of God,"** that is, He was the God-man, the incarnate God on earth, and it was this God-man who **"made Himself of no reputation, taking on the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself"** (Philippians 2:5-8). Jesus' humiliation is not God becoming man in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus' humiliation is that the God-man, Jesus Christ, became the kind of man He became: one that did not use His Godhead in any way. He came into the world in poverty and humility. He did not appear as a fully-grown man with all knowledge, but He was born and raised by poor parents, growing up like any other Jewish boy of that time. And He lived the life of a servant without a place to call His own.

Philippians says that **"He did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation"** (Philippians 2:6-7). The best explanation of these words, according to the context, is that Jesus Christ did not consider His equality with God as something to be displayed, as one would display the treasures gained in a robbery. Instead He veiled or hid His divine nature in order to carry out His assignment as Redeemer. This assignment involved obedience. Just like any other human, Jesus was required to obey God's laws, to suffer and die as a human being, which is the punishment for sin. In a state of glory, as on the mountain of transfiguration, Jesus could not have carried out His Father's plan of salvation. That is why He had to empty Himself, and humble Himself even to the point of crucifixion and death.

Jesus' state of humiliation, then, consists in this: that He did not consider His equality with God as something to be paraded as spoils of victory, but He took on the form of a slave (**"bondservant"**) in the interest of our redemption. Jesus in His state of humiliation was truly God and truly man, but He did not use His divine nature except on rare occasions (for example, when He performed miracles). Jesus in His state of humiliation voluntarily gave up the full use or continual use of His divine powers for a certain period of time. He did not give up the possession of His powers, but only the full and continual use of them. As His miracles show, He did sometimes use His divine powers partially or temporarily in His state of humiliation.

If Jesus had not humbled Himself, the Jewish leaders and the Roman governor would never have **"killed the Prince of life"** (Acts 3:15). If Jesus had not humbled Himself, He never would have **"died for our sins according to the Scriptures"** (1 Corinthians 15:3), that is, in accordance with Old Testament prophecy. If Jesus had not humbled Himself, He never could have **"loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma"** (Ephesians 5:2).

The Gospels give us many glimpses of Jesus' life in His state of humiliation. There is no doubt that Jesus was born to a poor family. The offering presented at the Temple when Jesus was forty days old was the offering of the poor: **"A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons"** (Luke 2:24). Jesus once said to a would-be follower: **"Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head"** (Matthew 8:20). One of the most amazing facts about Jesus' humiliation was His non-use of His divine omniscience, as when He told His disciples: **"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father"** (Mark 13:32).

Questions

1. Which came first, the state of humiliation or the state of exaltation?
2. What are some differences between humiliation and incarnation?
3. What kind of human being did Jesus become when He **"became flesh"**?
4. What is the difference between possession of divine powers and the use of divine powers?
5. Why did Jesus have to humbled Himself in order to be our Savior?
6. What are some incidents in which Jesus used His divine powers in His state of humiliation?
7. Give some evidence of Jesus' poverty in His state of humiliation.