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Philippians 2

“The Great Descent”

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This message continues the study series in Philippians; however, the focus of this teaching will be the Palm Sunday story.

In [John 12:16](#), we read that “[a]t first, his disciples did not understand all this,” and they weren’t the only ones. The people gathered there on that first Palm Sunday didn’t understand the magnitude of the moment either. They thought it was a victory parade, but Jesus knew it was a funeral procession. They thought Jesus was coming to conquer Rome, but the Bible tells us that Jesus was coming to conquer sin and death. They thought celebration, but Jesus thought crucifixion. They thought crown, but Jesus thought cross.

The people in the crowd waved palm branches and quoted [Psalm 118:25–26](#). Jesus entered the city riding on the colt of a donkey. He rode in meek and humble and made his way down the Palm Sunday road from Bethany to Jerusalem. In [Luke 19:41–44](#)¹, we read that Jesus paused, and as he looked over the landscape of Jerusalem he started to weep² because people didn’t recognize the time of God’s coming to them. His words would be fulfilled about 37 years later in 70AD, when Titus, the Roman emperor, would destroy Jerusalem.

The fact is that the Lord is still weeping over people who do not recognize God’s coming to them. The question begs to be asked, “How many times and in how many ways does God have to show himself to people before they finally recognize him?”

¹ As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace-but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

² This is one of only two times in the Bible we read about Jesus weeping. The other time was at Lazarus’ tomb. ([John 11:35](#)) The Greek word for wept means to shed a tear. The Greek word used in [Luke 19](#) means to weep or mourn bitterly, including loud wailing.

This teaching is about *The Great Descent* and how God came in the form of man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross for sin and rose from the dead on the third day.

Jesus is God

1. In [Philippians 2:6a](#), the Greek word *morphe*, means that Jesus is God.
2. Jesus is not like God; he is God.
3. Jesus said he was God.
 - a. [John 10:25–33](#) – “Jesus answered, ‘I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father’s name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.’ Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, ‘I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?’ ‘We are not stoning you for any of these,’ replied the Jews, ‘but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.’”
 - b. [John 14:6–9a](#) – “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.’ Philip said, ‘Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.’ Jesus answered: ‘Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.’”

Jesus is the Savior

4. Jesus gave up his rights, put aside his majesty, laid down the splendor of heaven, and emptied/divested³ himself of his glory to enter our world. ([Philippians 2:7a](#))

³ Taylor, Richard S., editor. Beacon Dictionary of Theology, Kansas City, Beacon Hill Press, 1983, p. 299.

The word *kenosis* means “an emptying.” It comes from the Greek word *keno* (“I empty”) and appears in [Philippians 2:7](#) where it is used of Christ’s self-humiliation to become man. While the divine Son might have given up temporarily His function of sustaining and providentially caring for the universe, it is unthinkable to assume that He could have given up any attribute of Deity. Divine attributes belong only to God. To have any of them is to be God, and to be without any of them is to be less than God. Yet by many statements and deeds throughout His ministry Jesus showed himself to be both God and man.

In [John 17:5](#) the Lord reveals that He had emptied himself of His glory (not an attribute) to become man. That was because: (1) otherwise, no earthly being could have endured His splendor to come to Him ([1 Timothy 6:14–16](#)); (2) with such overwhelming evidence of Deity, the free exercise of volition to choose Him would have been impossible; (3) having such glory, no enemy would have dared resist Him and seek His death; (4) He could not have lived the life common to man nor demonstrate that God supplies grace to meet mankind’s common trials; and (5) He could not have died to redeem sinners.

5. In **Philippians 2:7b**, we read that Christ stooped down and lowered himself to become like us.⁴
6. **John 1:14** – *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*
7. The Greek word for appearance is *schema*, which is where we get the English word schematic.
8. Christ was designed as a man so that he could die as one of us in our place.
9. **Isaiah 53:5** – *“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.”*
10. Christ humbled himself according to **Philippians 8b**, and *“became obedient to death – even death on a cross!”*
11. **Isaiah 53:10** says, *“It was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer...”*
12. It wasn’t just that Jesus died; it was that he died a horrible, excruciating painful death.
13. When the Lord was on the cross, a sponge with wine vinegar mixed with gall⁵ was lifted up for him to drink, but after tasting it, Jesus refused it, because he wanted to pay the full price.
14. **Acts 4:12** – *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”*
15. **1 Thessalonians 5:9** – *“For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*
16. **2 Peter 3:9** – *“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”*

Jesus is Alive and He’s Coming Again!

17. God raised Jesus from the dead, and 40 days later he ascended into Heaven with his disciples looking on.
18. **Philippians 2:9–11** – *“Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth*

Jesus Christ was not without divine attributes; but He did limit himself in the use of them in order to accomplish His mission. So successful was He in it that many, even of those who had known Him from childhood, thought Him to be a mere man.

⁴ Muslims don’t accept the Incarnation. The Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem has this inscription on it: God is not begotten; neither does he beget.”

⁵ This mixture was an analgesic given for the purpose of lessening the pain of crucifixion.

and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

- a. “[I]n heaven” refers to every angelic creature.
- b. “[O]n earth” refers to every living person.
- c. “[U]nder the earth” refers to those who have already died.
- d. All living beings everywhere will one day acknowledge that Jesus is Lord.
 - i. This doesn’t mean that everyone will be saved; it just means that no one will have no other choice at that point than to state the obvious.

19. To confess Jesus is Lord by choice before you die is unto salvation.

20. To confess Jesus is Lord at any other point is unto condemnation, which will be a confession that acknowledges his condemnation is just.

21. Jesus came into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday riding on a donkey, but when he comes again he will be riding on a white horse in power and majesty.⁶

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Philippians 2:5–11](#) and [John 12:12–16](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share their personal experiences concerning the question, “How has God been trying to get your attention?”
 - a. Do you recognize that the purpose is for you come into a closer relationship with the Lord?
4. Spend time talking about ways God has been revealing himself so that you might recognize him and respond to him.
5. Close your time in prayer by: giving thanks for the plan of salvation; rejoicing in the fact that you’re saved from the penalty of sin because Jesus humbled himself to pay the penalty for sin; asking the Holy Spirit to help each person to recognize the ways that the Lord is trying to get their attention and to respond accordingly; praying for family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers who don’t know Jesus as their Savior and Lord.

⁶ [Revelation 19:11–16](#)