

# The Beauty of Jesus—3

## HE HUMBLLED HIMSELF

There are many aspects to the person of Jesus but we are reminding ourselves of only some. He is far more wonderful than just a collection of good points and greater than just the sum of his parts; He is ‘altogether lovely’ (Song of Sol. 5:16, AV):

My beloved is all radiant and ruddy,  
distinguished among ten thousand.  
<sup>11</sup> His head is the finest gold;  
his locks are wavy,  
black as a raven.  
<sup>12</sup> His eyes are like doves  
beside springs of water,  
bathed in milk,  
fitly set.  
<sup>13</sup> His cheeks are like beds of spices,  
yielding fragrance.  
His lips are lilies,  
distilling liquid myrrh.  
<sup>14</sup> His arms are rounded gold,  
set with jewels.  
His body is ivory work,  
encrusted with sapphires.  
<sup>15</sup> His legs are alabaster columns,  
set upon bases of gold.  
His appearance is like Lebanon,  
choice as the cedars.  
<sup>16</sup> His speech is most sweet,  
and he is altogether desirable [lovely].  
*This is my beloved and this is my friend . . .* (Song of Sol. 5:10–16).

Previously he was described as King Solomon ‘in all his glory’ (Song of Sol. 3:11; cf. Matt. 6:29). But see your king!

Lo, your king comes to you;  
triumphant and victorious is he,  
humble and riding on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey (Zech. 9:9).

Our beloved is indeed King of kings and Lord of lords, but he is humble. Older writers used to speak of Christ’s ‘humiliation’, but I doubt that ‘humiliation’ is appropriate in our present context. One who is truly humble cannot be humiliated, since his dignity does not depend on the approval anyone but God. When he is lifted up he will draw all people to himself, but who can see any dignity in this if it refers as it does to his horrible death? The answer is that there is one who highly exalted him:

<sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,  
<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited,  
<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.  
And being found in human form,  
<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—

even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:5–11).

Here is our *Adam*. He was in the form of God, not as deity, but as image. As such he knew such high status and honor, since he was crowned with the glory of God (Ps. 8:5). Therefore he emptied himself. The translation of verse 6, ‘though he was in the form of God’ sounds as if he was making a concession in spite of what was his due, but Paul wrote simply: ‘who *being* in the form of God . . .’ It may come as a surprise, but our God is humble. Of course we worship him, but he does not receive our worship as some potentate might from his cringing, defeated subjects; he receives our worship as Father, loving and delighting in the love of his dear children.

Jesus did not do what the first Adam did, demanding to be ‘as God knowing good and evil’. Rather ‘he emptied himself’. This simply means he was totally submissive, totally obedient. It does not mean that he must, of necessity, have emptied himself of something.<sup>1</sup> He just made *himself* nothing in order that God may be all in all.

His emptying was his humbling of himself and his humbling of himself was his obedience. Although he was a Son, he was not a Son who demanded high privilege; rather, being a Son he learned *obedience* through what he suffered. Had he not done so he would not be the source of eternal salvation for all who *obey* him (Heb. 5:8–9). Then there is genuine, authentic exaltation (Phil. 2:9–11). And it is this, seen in the last Adam, which we should see in ourselves (Phil. 2:5). In Peter’s words:

. . . all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for  
“God opposes the proud,  
but gives grace to the humble.”

<sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time (1 Pet. 5:5–6).

So if our Lord washes his disciples’ feet, out we not do the same (John 13:14–15)? Surely that is the truth of the gifts which Christ has given to his church? They are the way love is to flow within the community of love.

We may also note that as high priest, Jesus leads the worship; he does not receive it. He is the ‘minister<sup>2</sup> in the sanctuary’ (Heb. 8:2). He told the Samaritan woman that ‘the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth’ (John 4:23). It is ‘now here’ because he worships the Father. It is not all beneath his dignity to lead our worship; it is his dignity. And it ours to participate in the worship he presents.

---

<sup>1</sup> Apart from the Philippians use, the verb κενώω is used the New Testament at Rom. 4:14 (‘faith is emptied’); 1 Cor. 1:17 (‘lest the cross of Christ be emptied’; the words ‘of its power’ are not in the text and have been added by translators); 2 Cor. 9:3 (‘that our boasting about you may not prove to have been empty’). On none of these occasions does emptying require that something be lost or removed. It means simply ‘made nothing’, and this in spite of the delightful statement that he ‘emptied himself of all but love, and bled for Adam’s helpless race’.

<sup>2</sup> Here, ‘minister’ is λειτουργός which does not mean servant or slave, but one who does duty in the true tabernacle. As such he offers worship, having received a ‘more excellent ministry’ than the priests in Israel (Heb. 8:6). Elsewhere a λειτουργός is one who does his civic duty in the Greek cult, either by his presence or his finances.

## JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING

Nehemiah, along with Ezra and the Levites, addressed the people:

“This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law.<sup>10</sup> Then he said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our LORD; and do not be grieved, for *the joy of the LORD is your strength.*” (Neh. 8:9–10)

Likewise Jesus described the great day as when servants receive access to ‘the joy of their lord’ (or ‘master’, Matt. 25:21, 23). When we add to these such ‘passing comments’ as Luke 15:7, ‘there will be more joy in heaven’ and Luke 15:10, ‘there is joy in the presence of the angels of God’, we see that there is joy in God himself. The angels may well rejoice when one sinner repents, but at best they are participating in the joy of the Lord.

But there is more, for if there is deep joy in God, then we would expect to see it in the image of God, and in the whole creation (Isa. 55:12). It will be a derived joy, but that would not demean it. True humanity could never have any ‘quality’ which did not find its source in God. What we do see is that fallen humanity only ever has fear<sup>3</sup> when faced with the truth of God (see Gen. 3:10). He is faced continually with the finally fruitless task of making his own joy, and this is often by debasing the good things of God (Rom. 8:18–31).

We could say that joy and happiness are related, though happiness is more fragile, open to the changes in circumstances<sup>4</sup>, whereas joy is the settled confidence that God is in absolute control of all things and accomplishes all that he intends; hence Hebrews 12:2. If the disciples are to know joy, it will only be as they have the joy of Jesus in them (John 15:11). Present pain can never destroy that (John 16:22).

Likewise with peace. Peace does not mean sedation, or even lack of warfare. Peace is the full blessing of God untainted by guilt. It is the full salvation that is at the heart of the kingdom.<sup>5</sup> So the great cry of ‘peace on earth’ from the heavenly host when Jesus was born (Luke 2:14). There is a pseudo-peace but that is not for the people of God. Genuine peace is totally dependent on the work of the prince of peace.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid (John 14:27) ...I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world (John 16:33).

When Jesus greeted the disciples on the resurrection morning, his words were far more than a Jewish or even a religious ‘G’day’. They were a strong declaration that what was promised was now in force (John 20:19, 21). ‘Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God *through our Lord Jesus Christ*’ (Rom. 5:1); ‘The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds *in Christ Jesus*’ (Phil. 4:7).

All of this is impossible to self-generate. Hence the opening prayers of Paul to which we referred above: ‘Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord

---

<sup>3</sup> Not what is intended by the good ‘fear of the Lord’, in e.g. Proverbs. This is more a continuing *angst* which demands to be suppressed.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Happiness’ relates to the old word ‘hap’, luck or fortune, what comes by chance.

<sup>5</sup> The Hebrew pleasure in word play may be seen in the climactic moment when there is peace, *shalōm*, under the king of peace, *Shalōmon*, in the city of peace *Irshalōm* in 1 Kings 4ff. esp. 4:24–25.

Jesus Christ.’; ‘Grace to you and peace from him who was and who is and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,<sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth’ (Rev. 1:4–5).

## LET THE BEAUTY OF JESUS BE SEEN IN ME

From what we have seen, this little song is quite significant. It goes on to ask that the Holy Spirit transform and refine our being, and that is appropriate as we have no independent resources by which to accomplish anything.

We might see the way the New Testament says the same thing, and some of it has already been mentioned. First there is the recognition that our ‘old man has been crucified with [Christ]’ (Rom. 6:6). Once we were in Adam, but he is dead, judicially and truly executed in the cross of Jesus Christ. And as Adam is dead, we have also been executed with Christ, baptised into his death, and buried with him by baptism into death. The aim of this is wonderful:

So that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4).

Our obligation is simple. It is the debt of love:

Now this I affirm and insist on in the Lord: you must no longer live as the Gentiles live, in the futility of their minds.<sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of their ignorance and hardness of heart.<sup>19</sup> They have lost all sensitivity and have abandoned themselves to licentiousness, greedy to practice every kind of impurity.<sup>20</sup> That is not the way you learned Christ!<sup>21</sup> For surely you have heard [about] him and were taught in him, as *truth is in Jesus*.<sup>22</sup> You were taught to put away your former way of life, *your old man*, corrupt and deluded by its lusts,<sup>23</sup> and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds,<sup>24</sup> and to clothe yourselves with *the new man*, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph. 4:17–24).

The same sentiment is also in Colossians 3:9–11:

Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off *the old man* with *his* practices<sup>10</sup> and have clothed yourselves with the new [man<sup>6</sup>], who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of *his* creator<sup>7</sup>.<sup>11</sup> In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but *Christ is all and in all!*

Therefore:

you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers;<sup>12</sup> the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light;<sup>13</sup> let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy.<sup>14</sup> Instead, *put on the Lord Jesus Christ*, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires (Rom. 13:11–14).

Let the beauty of Jesus Christ, the man in whom we know ‘new creation’, be seen in us, as we habituate all that God has done in him.

© Ian Pennicook, February 2012

---

<sup>6</sup> Not in the Greek.

<sup>7</sup> Lit. ‘according to the image of the one who created him’.