

THE LORD OF GLORY. Acts 9:5; Phil.2:6-11; 1 Cor.2:8.

by
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James Stalker has said that the whole theology of Paul is nothing but the explanation of his own conversion. On the way to Damascus he saw the Lord of Glory shining in heavenly splendor. He instantly acknowledged Him as his divine Redeemer who had been raised from the dead. In his later years in his letter to the Philippians he gives what is perhaps his most sublime brief statement of his conception of Christ, which is simply an expansion of his testimony of that first heavenly vision which changed his whole life. In the heavenly picture there is portrayed

1.

The Lord of Glory as He is by nature.

A famous painter started to make a picture of a beautiful landscape. He began by first throwing on the canvas the skies, and then the remainder in harmony with the heavenly splendor.

Paul seeing Jesus in the glory of heaven by the power of the Holy Spirit calls him Lord. "Who art thou, Lord? What shall I do, Lord?" He is the Lord of Glory who was crucified.

"Who, existing in the form of God." Prior to His coming into the world Jesus was already, beforehand truly God. In His own nature He was the Lord of Glory. In His own high-priestly prayer recorded by John, Jesus speaks of the glory that He had with the Father before the world began. As has been well stated, "He is the Lord because He is in His own person the Jehovah who was to visit His people and save them from their sins," He is "the Lord to whom glory belongs as His native right— Glory is the peculiar attribute of Jehovah among all the gods." See Psalm 29:1. Paul takes his stand on the deity of Christ the instant of his first vision of Him, and never moves from this foundation. "Existing in the form of God" is interpreted as meaning "to have and to hold all those characterizing attributes which make God God." "Form" means the essential attributes as shown in the form. In His pre-incarnate state Christ possessed the attributes of God and so appeared to those in heaven who saw Him. It is a clear statement of the deity of Christ." (A.T. Robertson) At the very outset of Paul's profound statement setting forth his conception of Christ "he is telling us who and what He (Jesus) is who did these things for us, that we may appreciate how great the things He did for us are." (Warfield) The Lord of Glory is the Divine Redeemer of sinful man.

2.

The Lord of Glory as He willingly became.

With such a background for the heavenly picture let us look at the Lord of Glory as He willingly became. "Counted not the being on equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross." What a picture of the historic Jesus! In his view Paul does not overlook the earthly life of Jesus. Here in Jesus is the supreme example of humility and unselfishness as given in His incarnation and passion.

In our study of this full, rich passage we turn again to such New Testament interpreters as Somerville, Warfield, and A.T. Robertson. "He did not regard the being on equality with God a thing to be grasped, as a prey or booty. He looked rather to the good of men and renounced his own things on a course of self-denying service to others and humble obedience. He preferred to receive from the Father the sovereignty over all as the Divine recognition of His self-effacement for others rather than to obtain it by the assertion of his own right." Christ in His temptation in the wilderness is a typical illustration of the spirit just described. Here Christ "chose the path of self-humiliation in preference to self-glorification in order to reach Messianic supremacy." A typical contrast to this spirit is found in the temptation of the first Adam, who though made in the image of God "abused the original gift by seeking to reach equality with God."

He emptied himself, "took no account of himself," He did not lay aside His divine nature. He remained essentially God. Earthly life was alien to His nature. Yet "He stripped himself of the insignia of majesty." (Lightfoot) Though He was God He became also man; His hadamaanactual servant who was the Lord of Glory. He took the characteristic attributes of a slave. His humanity was as real as His deity. He was "made in the likeness of sinful flesh". "He became obedient unto death, yea, the death of the cross." This has been called "the bottom rung in the ladder from the Throne of God, Jesus came all the way down to the most despised death of all, a condemned criminal on the accursed cross." See 2 Cor. 8:9 and Matthew 20:28. Here then is the central fact of the picture, the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, the death of the cross which gave the the Risen Christ His power to save us from sin and death. This is the old, old story of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love. Jesus himself regarded the time of His death as the hour of His glorification. See John 12:23-24.

3.

The Lord of Glory as He was declared to be.

If there was one thing that impressed Paul from the time of his conversion, and was a key-note in his preaching, it was that this Lord of Glory who appeared to him was Jesus of Nazareth, alive, risen from the dead. He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. By the resurrection the true nature of Jesus is revealed. "By raising Jesus alive from the dead in glory, God set his seal to the truth of Jesus' claim. Therefore Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, and Savior of sinners." (E.C. Caldwell) What a wonderful conception of Christ! What a glorious gospel for a lost world! After such a vision no wonder Paul was convinced and converted and compelled to proclaim the crucified, Risen Redeemer as the only Savior of the world, and went forth making it the passion of his life to declare also to the Gentiles "how that Christ must suffer and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles."

4.

The Lord of Glory crowned with glory and honor.

"Therefore—highly exalted—to the glory of God the Father."

"From the highest throne of glory
To the cross of deepest woe,
Thou didst stoop to ransom captives;
Flow my praise, forever flow.
Reascend, immortal Savior,
Leave Thy footstool, take Thy throne;
Thence return, and reign forever:
Be the kingdom all Thine own!"

Note the distinctive glory of the Exalted One "Because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor." Heb. 2:9b His was through suffering to glory. "Christ as the Indwelling Spirit and Life of His people, and Christ as their Lord--- this is the distinctive glory of the Exalted One." (Somerville) See Gal. 3:14 and Phil. 2:9-11.

From the Lord of Glory crowned with glory and honor, to whom all power has been given in heaven and on earth, we are endued with a new power, the power of the Indwelling Spirit of Christ, endued with power from on high. "The Spirit would do for the believer what Christ would do Himself in person and even more." See John 14:13.

"Highly exalted"—a name above every name—in the name of Jesus." Paul first heard that name from the realms of glory. "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." And he confessed that Jesus Christ was his Lord to the glory of God the Father. In the surrender of his will as he said, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Is this response of Saul of Tarsus my personal answer to the Lord of Glory?

13

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