

Luke 1:31-32 The Child Who Is the King

During this Christmas season, and kind of following Scott's topic last week with Mary, I want us to consider the real meaning of Christmas as we consider just a couple verses. There is nothing new here that you haven't heard before. But, this text will help us keep the main thing the main thing. And as always, we need the simple realities of Scripture. I have three truths about King Jesus, and some applications to follow.

1. The King is Divine. In v. 32 we have two descriptions of the child. The first is "great." If we look over at 1:15 we see the same word to describe John the Baptist. An angel appeared to his father, Zechariah and said, "**Your wife will have a son . . . you shall call his name John . . . And he will be 'great' before the Lord.**" And He was a great! Jesus says of John, "**I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John**" (Luke 7:28). And the same word is used from Gabriel the angel to describe Jesus. But there is a vast difference. With John, "great" is qualified with the words "before the Lord." But not so with Jesus. He does not qualify the word "great." It stands alone and absolute. And when this word stands alone in the OT, it can only refer to God. Ps. 48:1-2: "**Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised in the city of our God! His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation . . .**" Ps. 86:10: "**For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God.**" My favorite for this context is Ps. 145:3 which says: "**Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.**"

You see, John's greatness was searchable. His greatness could be qualified. We know what he was like. We know he was a great, godly, preacher and witness before the Lord. But with God, his greatness is unsearchable. This King is in a class by himself! In 1 Tim. 6:16 Paul says, "**God alone has immortality . . . He dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.**" In Ps. 97:2 God is described as being surrounded by "**clouds and thick darkness?**" (Ps. 97:2). Brothers and sisters, such is the description of Jesus. Such is the King!

And to clarify this truth even further, we continue to read in v. 32 that He will be called the "**Son of the Most High.**" Quick quiz from Hebrews. Does "Son of the Most High" sound familiar? . . . Melchizedek is called "**priest of God most high**" "*El Elyon*" (Gen. 14:18; Heb. 7:1). Ps. 57:2: "**I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me.**" Ps. 78:35: "**They remembered that God was their rock, the Most High God their redeemer.**" This word, "most high," along with "great" puts God in a class by himself. There are none like HIM! We can sort of think in such terms. I'm a sports fan. And some people and events are like no other. I think of ASU beating Michigan, or the amateur USA Hockey team beating Russia. To the sports fan, these are games are "great." I think of Wayne Gretsky. He is still called the "great" one by hockey fans today. Older folks may still remember Babe Ruth as the "Great Bambino." We put folks like that in a certain category, much like what Jesus said of John the Baptist as a prophet. But, we are creatures! We are merely comparing apples to apples. But with God, but God is in a class by Himself.

This means that in these two descriptions, Gabriel puts Jesus in the same class as God. He is the "GREAT" ONE, and this, without clarification. He needs no introduction! He is the "Son of the Most High." Listen to the words from Heb. 1:1-3: "**Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us**

by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.” V. 5: “For to which of the angels did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you.” V. 8: “But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.”

Brothers and sisters, it will never get old to proclaim the glories of Christ as the “GREAT” “Son of the Most High.” Recently, I read a book on the great king Charlemagne. Amazing king! One of the greatest in Western History! Both the French and the Germans claim him as one of their kings. King of the Franks? King of the Germans? Scholars still argue today. But, with Jesus, the Great, the Son of the Most high, He is king of Franks, He is king of the Germans. He is king of nations of the west. He is king of the nations of the east. And these words do not do him justice. He is King of Creation. And whether we acknowledge Him or not, He is our king! He is divine!

2. The King is Humble. I get this from v. 32: “**And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David.**” There is much I could say about this verse and the truths associated with the fulfillments of OT prophecy. But, I want to highlight the truth of humility. The obvious truth for the humiliation of the King is that he would be . . . born. Our text says “**the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David.**” Think about it. David was an earthly king. He was a man. And for the “GREAT” “SON OF HE MOST HIGH,” to occupy the throne of David, he must also be a man. This means that ALL the things we just considered about his divinity must, in some way take on flesh. This is the incarnation: God takes on flesh. And he doesn’t merely take on flesh. As a man, he lives among us in the greatest of humility. And then, if this were not enough, he willingly lays down his life as a sacrifice. And we know this sacrifice to be on a Roman cross, where only the worst of criminals were punished. THIS IS HUMILIATION! It is interesting that one of my favorite theologians (Herman Bavinck) refers to this particular work of Christ as “Christ’s Humiliation.” This particular work of Christ gets to the heart of Christmas, and it’s true meaning. As Matthew tells us: “**Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel**” (which means . . . God with us).” (Matt. 1:23).

Now, before moving any further, I want to ask and try to answer a very deep question. I ask, “*Is there humility with God in his person?*” “*Is there humility with God who is Spirit?*” “*Is there humility with God who is Light?*” In 1 Tim. 6:16 we read: “**God alone has immortality . . . He dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.**” Can such a God be described as “humble?” Is there humility with God who is described in Ps. 97:2 as being surrounded by “**clouds and thick darkness?**” Is there humility with God? I searched this week and found no reference to God (in his Person, in his essence, in his deity) as being described as being humble. And from this perspective, God cannot be humiliated. When I looked up different resources on the attributes of God (those things that identify and describe WHO God is, I did not find humility on the list.)

Yet, EVERYTHING we celebrate about Christmas is found in the ULTIMATE humiliation of the Son, who is God. All I can say for now is that this is such a mystery. I cannot say God is humble, at least in the way human language can describe Him. But, in the incarnation of King Jesus, we find the greatest of all humility. And in the Son, we will always have the God/Man;

and in Him we find that humanity can be united with God (greater mystery to me than the Trinity). In John 17:21:22, Jesus prays: **“that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one . . .”**

So, here’s my conclusion: God, considered absolutely as God, cannot be humble — though He is Love, and though he is Merciful. But, in the incarnation, the Son, taking on flesh, we find the greatest of all humiliation. This means the God-man in his perfect humanity, could be humble, and in fact, our salvation depends on it. And in that sense, as John Piper says: He *“has taken the beauty of humility into the Godhead. For Christ, the God-man, will always be God and man forever.”* (John Piper). This is what we celebrate today, particularly at Christmas. Let me read some verses that speak of this great humiliation.

On the incarnation John writes in John 1:14: **“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”** Col. 2:9: **“For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily . . .”** Rev. 21:3: **“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”**

Probably the most comprehensive text is Phil. 2:4-8 on both the incarnation and the cross: **“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross . . .”**

Beloved, Has there ever been a king so humble, so meek, so mild? Has there ever been a king that would ever descend into the depths of his kingdom and identify with his people? Has there ever been a king who would leave his glory in such humiliation? I do not believe there would ever be a king who would CHOOSE such humiliation.

Do you remember the King, Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of Babylon? HE also left his glory, his kingdom, and his subjects. But he did not do it willingly. Because of his pride God changed him into some kind of beast where he lived away from his glory as a king, eating grass, being covered with dew (Dan. 4:15). But, God never forced the Son to do anything. It not so with the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Not so before the ONE whose light that even the moon is not bright and the stars are not pure in his sight (Job 25:5). Brothers and sisters, this is Christmas! This is what we celebrate: The King of Glory becomes the King of humiliation!

And Christ did so willingly, knowing what was coming! Have you ever been humiliated? Of course you have! I don’t know how many times growing up I was distracted and my teacher or my coach has to bring me back to reality in front of the team. I remember getting in a fight in the 6th grade and my teacher taking me and the other kid to the hallway to receive 3 strokes from “Big Bertha” (the entire hallway heard them). We all have our stories of humiliation. But, of

which one did we ever choose to endure? Not so with our King! He came from glory and willingly laid down his life. All of this is his humiliation! This is what Christmas is about!

3. The King is also the Savior. Do you remember Matthew's description of what the angel said to Joseph. **"She will bear a son. You shall call his name Jesus, for He will save his people from their sins"** (Matt. 1:21). "Jesus" means "savior." **"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life"** (John 3:16). Why would anyone perish? You know the answer. We are sinners! By nature and by choice. Just look around! And our sin has separated us from a holy God. But, God does not leave us in our sins! No! He sends the Son, the Diving King becomes the man of humiliation. And he lives a life free of sin, in both his heart and his actions. And at the age of 33 he laid down his life as a sacrifice in the place of sinners. **"It was the will of the Father to crush the Son"** (Is. 53:10). 2 Cor 5:21 says: **"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."** Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us (Gal. 3:13). 1 Pet. 2:24 says: **"He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed."**

3 Applications:

We need to be reminded constantly of the meaning of Christmas. THIS is our focus!, not the rest of the things. So let me ask, how much of your time and effort is taken up by the good things of Christmas in comparison to the good things of Christ? There are lots of good things about Christmas, the gifts, the gatherings, the food, the charitable giving, etc. And, yes, in God's common grace, enjoy those things! But, do not confuse the gifts from the one who gives? Christmas about the King of Glory who became the King of humiliation. So, do everything you can to worship this king, to tell others about this king, and to remind yourself of this gospel I preach today.

Both the deity and the humanity of the King is necessary for our salvation. Throughout church history, denying either the humanity, or the deity of Christ, has always been the greatest cause of heresy. But, only a holy God can take care of our sin problem. We have fallen short of the glory of God. And ONLY God can provide what the glory necessary for our salvation. The Son must take on flesh! This is what makes the incarnation and death of Christ so wonderful! Also, As Christians, this is what we confess. In 1 John 4:2 the Apostle John says: **"every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God . . ."** And in v. 15 of the same chapter: **"Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God."** What a mystery! Yet, by the Spirit, this is our confession.

We need Him. We need him as our savior. We need him as our helper. We need him as our friend. We need him. We need him when we are up. We need him when we are down. (Cathleen's husband)! We need him. And this is exactly why He came. This is exactly why the King of Heaven became man. Oh what a beautiful King! There is nothing more important of every second of every day that we worship this king of glory with our hearts and with our minds and with all our works. **"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!"** **"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"** (1 Cor. 10:31).