
Balancing Biblical passages about Christ

Paradoxical pairs of statements on Christ's humanity/divinity

He whom presently you scorn was once transcendent, over even you. He who is presently human was incomposite. He remained what he was; what he was not, he assumed. No "because" is required for his existence in the beginning, for what could account for the existence of God? But later he came into being because of something, namely your salvation, yours, who insult him and despise his Godhead for that very reason, because he took on your thick corporeality.

... He was begotten - yet he was already begotten - of a woman. And yet she was a virgin. That it was from a woman makes it human, that she was a virgin makes it divine. On earth he has no father, but in heaven no mother. All this is part of his Godhead. He was carried in the womb, but acknowledged by a prophet as yet unborn himself, who leaped for joy at the presence of the Word for whose sake he had been created. He was wrapped in swaddling bands, but at the Resurrection he unloosed the swaddling bands of the grave.

He was laid in a manger, but was extolled by angels, disclosed by a star and adored by Magi. Why do you take offence at what you see, instead of attending to its spiritual significance? He was exiled into Egypt, but he banished the Egyptian idols. He had "no form or beauty" for the Jews, but for David he was "fairer than the children of men" and on the mount he shines forth, becoming more luminous than the Sun, to reveal the future mystery.

As man he was baptized, but he absolved sins as God; he needed no purifying rites himself - his purpose was to hallow water. As man he was put to the test, but as God he came through victorious - yes, bids us be of good cheer, because he has conquered the world. He hungered - yet he fed thousands. He is indeed "living, heavenly bread." He thirsted - yet he exclaimed: "Whosoever thirsts, let him come to me and drink." Indeed he promised that believers would become fountains.

He was tired - yet he is the "rest" of the weary and the burdened. He was overcome by heavy sleep - yet he goes lightly over the sea, rebukes winds, and relieves the drowning Peter. He pays tax - yet he uses a fish to do it; indeed he is emperor over those who demand the tax. He is called a "Samaritan, demonically possessed" - but he rescues the man who came down from Jerusalem and fell among thieves. Yes, he is recognized by demons, drives out demons, drowns deep a legion of spirits and sees the prince of demons falling like lightning.

He is stoned, yet not hit; he prays, yet he hears prayer. He weeps, yet he puts an end to weeping. He asks where Lazarus is laid - he was man; yet he raises Lazarus - he was God. He is sold, and cheap was the price - thirty pieces of silver; yet he buys back the world at the mighty cost of his own blood. A sheep, he is led to the slaughter - yet he shepherds Israel and now the whole world as well. A lamb, he is dumb - yet he is "Word," proclaimed by "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." He is weakened, wounded - yet he cures every disease and every weakness.

He is brought up to the tree and nailed to it - yet by the tree of life he restores us. Yes, he saves even a thief crucified with him; he wraps all the visible world in darkness. He is given vinegar to drink, gall to eat - and who is he? Why, one who turned water into wine, who took away the taste of bitterness, who is all sweetness and desire. He surrenders his life, yet he has power to take it again. Yes, the veil is rent, for things of heaven are being revealed, rocks split, and dead men have an earlier awakening.

He dies, but he vivifies and by death destroys death. He is buried, yet he rises again. He goes down to Hades, yet he leads souls up, ascends to heaven, and will come to judge quick and dead, and to probe discussions like these. If the first set of expressions starts you going astray, the second set takes your error away.¹

Both the exaltation and humiliation of the Son must be emphasised

[The Son] was *sent*, but as man, for He was of a twofold Nature; for He was wearied, and hungered, and was thirsty, and was in an agony, and shed tears, according to the nature of a corporeal being. And if the expression be also used of Him as God, the meaning is that the Father's good pleasure is to be considered a Mission, for to this He refers all that concerns Himself; both that He may honour the Eternal Principle, and because He will not be taken to be an antagonistic God.

And whereas it is written both that He was betrayed, and also that He gave Himself up and that He was raised up by the Father, and taken up into heaven; and on the other hand that He raised Himself and *went* up; the former statement of each pair refers to the good pleasure of the Father, the latter to His own Power.

Are you then to be allowed to dwell upon all that humiliates Him, while passing over all that exalts Him, and to count on your side the fact that He suffered, but to leave out of the account the fact that it was of His own will? See what even now the Word has to suffer.²

¹ *Or.* 29.19-20 (*On God and Christ*, pp.86-88)

² *Or.* 38.15, (NPNF², Vol.7, p.350a)