

Consider the Lord Jesus

Philippians 2:5-11—For let this mind be in you which [was] also in Christ Jesus; who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God; but emptied himself, taking a bondman's form, taking his place in [the] likeness of men; and having been found in figure as a man, humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, and [that the] death of [the] cross. Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and granted him a name, that which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly and earthly and infernal [beings], and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord to God [the] Father's glory.

Let us have a word of prayer:

Dear Lord, as we gather together this morning, we are gathering unto Thee. We praise and thank Thee because of Thy presence here with us. Oh dear Lord, open our understanding, our hearts, that we may be able to hear what Thou hast to say to each and every one of us. May Thy Word fall upon good ground that will bear a hundredfold fruit for Thyself. Dear Lord, we commit this time into Thy hand and trust Thy Holy Spirit to do His work to the glory of God. In Thy precious name. Amen.

Haggai's Encouragement

Yesterday, we spoke on Haggai and the word was *consider*. The Jewish remnant, who came back from captivity to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, made a start. They laid the foundation, but as they continued on, their enemies tried every means to stop them. Eventually, through King Artaxerxes the work was ordered to stop. So what did the Jewish remnant who had returned do? They began to build their own houses, and for fifteen years they continued with the building of their beautiful houses thinking that the time had not yet come for the building of the temple. Finally, God raised up two prophets—Haggai, the old one and Zechariah, the young one. Through the words of these two prophets, the remnant who had returned were encouraged to start rebuilding the house of God. Thank God, in spite of the opposition, they were able to continue to build until the temple was finished.

So in the book of Haggai, we discover that word *consider*, meaning “think over, think again, think deeply of what has happened, what you have been doing.” Instead of building the house of God, each family began to build their own beautiful house. They said, “The time has not yet come for the rebuilding of the temple.” Thank God, He raised up two prophets, Haggai the old one and

Zechariah a young man, and through the encouragement of these two prophets they rebuilt the temple until it was finished.

So the word that Haggai used was *consider*. Think over. Think deeply. Think again. What has happened? You have built your own houses and left the temple unfinished. What are you doing? Thank God, through their encouragement the remnant began to rebuild the house of God. The opposition was still there, but by the grace of God they were able to continue until the temple was built.

In the book of Haggai the number of times the word *consider* is used is four times. Is it not time we consider that we should not live our lives casually as if the return of the Lord is not imminent? We know from the Scriptures that the Lord may come at any moment. All the prophecies preceding His return have been fulfilled. There are yet prophecies to be fulfilled, but these prophecies are concerning the time of His coming and afterwards, not before. So do not wait to see how prophecies are fulfilled before we are alert to His coming. May we warn you again that all the prophecies preceding the coming of the Lord have been fulfilled.

The Hope of the Lord's Imminent Return

We are living at the end time. Thank God for that! This is a thrilling time, but it is also a very dangerous time. It all depends upon how we live today. Are we living with the hope of the Lord's coming during our lifetime? Are we saying that the Lord will not come so soon? that He will be delayed and we can continue to live our own lives thinking that there will be more time? But we want to warn you that there is no more time; the Lord can come at any moment from now on. Thank God, He did not tell us when He is coming because He wants us to be always ready.

So through the encouragement of the prophets, the remnant began to rebuild the house of God in spite of opposition, and eventually the house of God was finished.

We are living at this end time. It is a thrilling time for us because the Lord may come at any moment. Thank God for His long patience. Does the Lord desire to return? Even in the first century, He had promised His disciples that He was coming back for them. Now we are in the twenty-first century, and we thank God for His long patience. So this is our opportunity. We cannot afford to be complacent any longer. Wake up! The Lord is coming! Let us be ready for Him at any moment, and that is the encouragement of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah.

All Things have been Created for the Son of God

Now we would like to consider not ourselves but Jesus. In the verses we read in Philippians 2, God is showing us what is going to happen to our Lord Jesus. So our focus will be on “consider Jesus Christ.”

In verse 6, it says, “Who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God.” That is what our Lord Jesus formerly was. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; but before the beginning, there was a consultation, if we may use human words, among the Godhead—God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It was the Father’s pleasure to create all things for His Son. But being God, He knew the end from the very beginning, and He knew that after He had created what would happen.

In the first creation, man was not there. The highest created beings were the angels, and in those days, God created angels to serve Him. Among the angels there was one called Lucifer. He was built almost perfect, but not quite. When you read the accounts of him, you will find he had ten qualities of life and not twelve because twelve is the perfect number. But he was created almost perfect. He was created to lead the other angels to worship God and to serve God’s purpose. In the beginning, he must have been faithful, but gradually he began to look into himself. It is always bad to look into yourself. Let us look off unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of faith and not at ourselves. But that archangel, because of his much trade, because of his many skills, because of his position, he began to look into himself. As he looked into himself, he began to be proud and ambitious. He was not satisfied to be that leading angel.

Lucifer’s Rebellion

In Isaiah 14, five times he said to himself, “I will. I will. I will. I will. I will. I will do something. I will to be equal with God. I am not satisfied with being the first of the angels but not equal with God.” When this ambition came into his heart, he wanted to be equal with God. In a sense, he wanted to be equal with the Son of God. God has His beloved Son and everything is centered on Him. And the archangel Lucifer wanted to take the place of God’s Son Jesus Christ. And because of his ambition, he was punished and driven out of heaven. As a matter of fact, the earth we live in today was under his control at first, so when he fell, the whole earth fell with him.

As you read Genesis 1:2, you find that the earth was surrounded with water. This was not the case in the very beginning. When God created the earth, everything was perfect; but something happened. Because of the rebellion of the archangel, God punished him and the realm under his control. The earth at that

time was most likely under his control. So when you read Genesis 1:1-2, there is a great gap. Verse 2 does not describe the first creation; it tells us that something happened to the first creation. Can God create a mess? No. When God created, everything would have been perfect. Therefore, something happened to this earth. Because of the rebellion of Lucifer and because he tried to get the position God had given to His only begotten Son, the earth entered into judgment, and it was surrounded with water.

The Only Begotten Son had the Form of God

The Bible tells us that His only begotten Son subsisted in the form of God, but He did not esteem it an object of rapine to be on an equality with God. In other words, God's beloved Son had the form of God. Now the form here is not the outward form. Today, when we use the word form, we always say it is something outward. However, the form here is image and refers to the inward quality. So far as the Son of God is concerned, His inward quality is the same as God the Father. He was equal with God and that is not something to be grasped at. It gives us a hint that once upon a time someone tried to grasp that place, and that was the fall of the archangel Lucifer.

Our Lord Jesus is and has always been the only Son of God, and He is equal with God. That is not something He tried to grasp. When we read this verse, it gives us a hint that one day someone tried to grasp this position, and it was Lucifer. That was the fall of the angel and the reason why this earth was surrounded with water. It was judgment upon the fallen angels. We do not know how long this continued. We only know the historical fact that this earth was once under what we call the ice age. It was surrounded with ice and water because of the rebellion of the fallen angels.

However, our Lord Jesus, the Son of God, was the same as God. He shared the same life and the same position, and it was not something that He grasped at. On the contrary, we find a different attitude. The Bible says that He emptied Himself. He could not empty Himself of what He really is. All He could empty was the glory, honor, position and power that accompanied His being. Therefore, the word *emptied* means that He laid down everything that is connected with His position as the beloved Son of God. What an emptying that was! What a contrast with the archangel Lucifer who was trying to grasp what was not his. God's only beloved Son was willing to empty Himself.

Before the Foundation of the World the Son Offered Himself

Here I will use human words to describe what happened before God created everything, He was thinking of creating everything for His beloved Son, but being

God He knew the end from the beginning. He knew that when He created the world to give to His Son, there would be the archangel Lucifer who would try to rob the position of His beloved Son. While God was thinking about making the creation, the Son stepped up and said, "Father, if this is Your will, go ahead. I am willing to come into this world to be the substitute, to be the Savior of this world." So in Peter it says, "Even before the foundation of the world, He had offered Himself as a substitute." As we think of our Lord Jesus, it touches us deeply. When we think of the love that He must have for us, who are we? We are but sinners, rebels destined for eternal death. Yet His love for the Father is so great that He would offer Himself to be our substitute.

Salvation does not begin today. Salvation began before God created everything (see I Peter 1:20). Even before the foundation of the world, He had offered Himself as a substitute for our sins. Here you see the love of God that really surpasses our understanding.

Think for a moment. Who are you? Look at yourselves. What are you? You are sinners. You have sinned against God. You have rebelled against God. You are destined for eternal death. There is no hope for you. Yet God, in His great love, even before God created the world let His Son offer Himself to die for each and every one of us that He might save us and save us to the uttermost. What love that must be!

The Lord Jesus Emptied Himself

He emptied Himself. He could not empty His Godhead because that is what He is. That is something eternally true. He cannot change it. But He emptied Himself of all the rights, position, glory, and honor that was His as the Son of God. What an emptying! Sometimes we love the Lord and we have emptied ourselves for His glory, but when you compare it with what the Son of God did for us, there is no comparison. His love far surpasses our love. Even before the foundation of the world, He offered Himself as our substitute. That is the love of Christ. We cannot but bow and worship.

The Taylor Story

I remember a story that I like to tell about Hudson Taylor's great-grandfather. When Hudson Taylor's great-grandfather was a young man, He loved the world. He loved dancing and all the things of this world and its pleasures. But on the day that he was going to be married, he suddenly woke up and said to himself, "Marriage is a serious matter." So he went to the field to pray. Of course, he confessed his sins before God, and he prayed and prayed and prayed. When he finished praying, he realized it was already past the time of his wedding. Everyone

was waiting, including the bride, for the bridegroom to show up, and wondering where he was. So Hudson Taylor's great-grandfather hurriedly went to the wedding and he was wed that day.

In the evening, before they went to bed, Hudson Taylor's grandfather told his new wife: "Let us kneel down and pray." His wife was frightened. "What has become of my man? We used to take pleasure in the world together." Suddenly he was a strange person. But anyway, Hudson Taylor's great-grandfather told his wife to kneel down and pray. Thank God, this touched his wife. So his wife came to the Lord, and together they served the Lord. For four generations Hudson Taylor's family served God. After Hudson Taylor, more than four generations, even to this day, have served the Lord. During the wartime, I was in Chungking, the war capital, and Hudson Taylor's grandson was there. I saw him walking on the streets of Chungking and shouting the gospel to the people. Such love in that family! And it all began with Hudson Taylor's great-grandfather.

The Lord Jesus Took the Form of a Bondslave

Here we find our Lord Jesus emptied himself and took the form of a bondman. Now the form here is not the outward form; it is image. It is the inward quality. In other words, our Lord Jesus cannot deny His Godhead because that is what He is forever. But He gave up everything that was connected with that glory in order that He may take the form of a bondman, the image of a bondslave. What an emptying that must have been!

I remember a story. Once in this country years ago there were slaves, people who had been captured from Africa and brought to this country, and sold as slaves. You can see the tragedy of it. Once there was a girl who had been captured and she was standing on the platform ready to be bartered for, to be sold. You can understand her heart. She must have been very, very sad. As she was weeping, she knew that she had no more future, and that she would be a slave forever. Different people came up to bid for the girl. A strange man came in and put in the highest bid and he bought the girl. After he bought the girl, he asked people to come and break all her chains. Then he said to the girl, "I bought you to set you free; now you can go. You are a free person." The girl did not know what to think, but suddenly she saw it all. Here was a man who was so good to her and had set her free. But did she want to be free? No. She went after him and said, "I am willing to be your slave for life."

This is what the Lord has done for us. He died for us to set us free. Now we are free from sin and eternal death, and it is all because of our Lord Jesus. But that is not all. We remember the gospel story of how the Son of God came down

from His glory to become a man. He was a perfect man, but He was in no way any different from any of us. The only difference was inwardly. He is God, but outwardly He is just a Man.

When the Lord Jesus took the form of a Man, this does not refer to outward form. The form here refers to image. Being in the form of God, He took the form of a bondsman. This is what our Lord Jesus did while He was on earth. He was not free; He was a slave to God. He was not able to do anything by Himself. Our Lord Jesus often said, "I cannot do anything by Myself; I do it because I see My Father do it. I cannot say anything of Myself; I say it because I have heard My Father say it." In other words, while our Lord was on earth, He was a bondsman to God. In everything He had to do His Father's will. That is the life of our Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus Became Obedient to the Father

He became obedient. We have never seen any life so obedient to God as the life of our Lord Jesus. How often He said, "I cannot say anything by Myself; I say it because I have heard My Father say it. I cannot do anything by Myself; I do it because I see My Father doing it." You will remember that once His brothers in the flesh went to Jerusalem for the feast, but our Lord Jesus remained behind. He said, "Your time is always ready. You can do anything you like, but My time is not in My hand. My time is not yet." But after His brothers left, He also left because His time had come. So when you read the Gospels, you find in the life of our Lord Jesus that He never once did anything of His own initiative; He always waited for His Father. He did everything according to the Father's will.

He was obedient even unto death and that the death of the cross. I think we are all familiar with the Gospels. We are all familiar with what happened with our Lord Jesus and how He followed the Father in all things and yet He was betrayed; He was taken and crucified as if He was the greatest sinner in the world. But He died for our transgressions that our sins may be forgiven.

The Lord Jesus was Given a Name Above Every Name

So when we think of the life of our Lord Jesus, our hearts bow in worship. How can we thank Him enough? We who were dead in sins and transgressions, having no hope, no future, but the Lord has come and died in our stead. He saved us, and saved us to the uttermost.

What love is that! No wonder God highly exalted Him and has given Him a name above every name, and to that name every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord to the Father's glory. This is our Lord Jesus. This is the One whom we believe. This is the One whom we follow. This is the One with whom we go together. Thank God, we have the Lord Jesus!

So not only our knees will bow, but our tongues will confess that Jesus is Lord to the Father's glory. This is our privilege. This is our pleasure. This is what we love. So we are gathering here for this one thing. We come together to worship the Lord Jesus to the Father's glory.

Let us pray:

Dear Lord, our hearts do bow in worship. Who can love such great sinners as we are except Thee, Lord? You love us to such an extent as to give Thy life in our stead. Thou died on the cross, Thy blood was shed for the remission of sins, Thy body was broken that we may be joined together with Thee. Oh dear Lord, we owe everything to Thee. We are what we are today because of Thy mercy and grace. So we come this morning to bow before Thee, to worship Thee, and to thank Thee. We pray, Lord, that Thou will take us and enable us for the rest of our lives not to live for ourselves anymore, but to live for Thee and for Thy glory. Hear our cry. We ask in Your precious name. Amen.