

Philippians 2v6-7 Not Robbery to be Equal With God, of No Reputation

The Similarity of Modern Versions with the Jehovah Witness Version and the Catholic Bibles.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, THOUGHT IT NOT ROBBERY TO BE EQUAL WITH GOD: but MADE HIMSELF OF NO REPUTATION, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

The phrase "thought it not robbery to be equal with God", as found in the King James Bible, clearly teaches that Jesus Christ was in fact God.

Notice the comments of a couple of orthodox commentators.

John Gill - "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" the Father; for if he was in the same form, nature, and essence, he must be equal to him, as he is; for he has the same perfections, as eternity, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, immutability, and self-existence: hence he has the same glorious names, as God, the mighty God, the true God, the living God, God over all, Jehovah, the Lord of glory... the same works of creation and providence are ascribed to him, and the same worship, homage, and honour given him: to be "in the form of God", and to be "equal with God", signify the same thing, the one is explanative of the other: and this divine form and equality, or true and proper deity, he did not obtain by force and rapine, by robbery and usurpation, as Satan attempted to do, and as Adam by his instigation also affected;

Matthew Henry - "He thought it not robbery to be equal with God; did not think himself guilty of any invasion of what did not belong to him, or assuming another's right. He said, I and my Father are one, Jn. 10:30. It is the highest degree of robbery for any mere man or mere creature to pretend to be equal with God, or profess himself one with the Father. This is for a man to rob God, not in tithes and offerings, but of the rights of his Godhead."

"Thought it not robbery to be equal with God" is not only the reading of the King James Bible but also of Tyndale 1525, - "thought it not robbery to be equall with god. Neverthelesse he made him silfe of no reputacion", Coverdale 1535 - "thought it not robbery to be equall with God, but made him selfe of no reputacion", the Great Bible 1540, Matthew's Bible 1549, the Bishop's Bible 1568 - "Who beyng in the fourme of God, thought it not robbery to be equall with God. But made hym selfe of no reputation, takyng on him the fourme of a seruaut", the Geneva Bible 1587 - "thought it no robberie to be equall with God: But he made himself of no reputation", Wesley's Translation 1755 - "thought it not robbery to be equal with God", Webster's 1833 translation, the Hebrew Names Version, Lamsa's 1933 translation of the Syriac Peshitta - "did not consider it robbery to be equal with God", the Third Millennium Bible 1998 and the NKJV 1982 edition (but not the 1979 NKJV).

By being equal to God, Jesus Christ was not stealing or taking something that did not belong to Him. He was and is equal to God the Father.

However many modern versions give us a rendering that means the exact opposite. I am presently in a discussion with a Jehovah Witness who, of course, denies that Jesus Christ is God. He says: "As for Philippians 2:6, the ambiguity is simply one that is shared by many translators and exegetes. The Harper Collins Study Bible NRSV states that some of the key words used here "had puzzled interpreters" and are "problematic."

The New World Translation, which the JW's use, says: "although he was existing in the form of God, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God."

Then he proceeds to show the readings found in many modern versions.

NASB "did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped"

Revised Standard Version "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped"

ESV 2001 - "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing."

Catholic New Jerusalem Bible 1985 "did not count equality with God something to be grasped"

Catholic St. Joseph New American Bible 1970 -"he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at."

21st Century Free "he never even considered the chance to be equal with God."

Revised Version "counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God."

Goodspeed "he did not grasp at equality with God."

NKJV 1979 edition "did not consider equality with God something to be grasped."

NIV 1984 edition - "Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing". (End of comments by this Jehovah Witness)

However the NIV 2011 edition has changed their wording. It now reads: "Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage." This is similar to the Holman Standard Version.

Keep in mind that this is a Jehovah Witness who is using these modern version to support his view that Jesus Christ was not God!

To get a clearer idea of just how different in meaning the phrase is, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God" from "did not consider equality with God something to be grasped" compare the following statements.

"The black man thought it not robbery to be equal with the white man." In other words, he was not stealing something that did not belong to him; he is equal to the white man.

"The black man did not regard equality with the white man a thing to be grasped." He didn't even try and thought it way beyond him.

The meaning found in the NASB, NIV 1984, NKJV 1979 edition, ESV, RSV is totally different from the one found in the King James Bible and others which reveal the full deity of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Another change in meaning is found in verse 7 where we are told that Christ "MADE HIMSELF OF NO REPUTATION". This is one of those "ambiguous, problematic" passages that the JW guy says has puzzled interpreters. The verb used here has variously been translated as "to be made void", "to be made of none effect", "to be in vain" and "made of no reputation". The King James translators got it right and many other versions give us a nonsensical reading.

Other Bibles that exhort us to follow the example of Christ, who "MADE HIMSELF OF NO REPUTATION" are Tyndale, Coverdale, The Great Bible 1540, Matthew's Bible 1549, the Bishops' Bible 1568, the Geneva Bible - "But he made himself of no reputation", Whiston's Primitive N.T. - "But made himself of no reputation", NKJV 1982 edition (but not the 1979 NKJV), Lamsa's translation of the Peshitta - "did not consider it robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation", Webster's 1833 translation, the KJV 21st Century Version 1994, the Third Millennium Bible 1998, the Complete Apostles' Bible 2005 - "but made Himself of no reputation."

The Wycliffe Bible of 1395 says: "He lowered Himself, taking the form of a servant".

However instead of "made himself of no reputation", the NIV, NASB, RSV, NKJV 1979 edition, NET, Holman Standard, the Catholic Douay Rheims of 1582, the Catholic St. Joseph NAB 1970, the Catholic New Jerusalem bibles and the New World Translation of the JWs all read the same. They say Christ "emptied himself" (NASB, NKJV 79, RSV, NWT, NET) or "made himself nothing" (NIV).

Now if Christ made himself nothing or emptied himself, there was NOTHING THERE. If I empty a box, what remains? Nothing. The King James Bible translators obviously knew of the reading "emptied himself" because the Catholic Douay-Rheims of 1582 read this way; but they correctly rejected it.

The Lord Jesus Christ was not empty or nothing when He came to earth. He was full of grace and truth. In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. But He did make Himself of no reputation. He was born in a stable, from a common and poor family; He came not to seek His own glory but that of His Father, and He often told others He had healed to tell no one. When the multitudes wanted to make Him king, He departed into a mountain alone. How different from our sinful tendency to want to be recognized, make a name for ourselves, and have others look up to us as some great one.

Not all bibles teach the same thing. Many modern versions continually downgrade the glory and deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. The King James Bible exalts the Lord Jesus Christ to His rightful place as "God manifest in the flesh" 1 Timothy 3:16. Compare the NASB, NIV, ESV, NET, New World Translation and the Catholic versions here for such an example; they do NOT say that GOD was manifest in the flesh. See also Romans 14:10, 1 John 5:7, 1 Cor. 15:47 and Luke 23:42.

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow...and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Will Kinney

Return to Articles - <http://brandplucked.webs.com/kjarticles.htm>