

The Relevance of Jesus' Height

On reading the Philippian "hymn," it is difficult not to be struck by the "scandal of the incarnation." That scandal is that the meaning of the universe is disclosed in a particular point, place, and person in history, and that the long-awaited Messiah is none other than Isaiah's Suffering Servant.

Have this mind among yourselves . . . did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant . . . humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Phil. 2:5-8

Thinking about this brings to mind a story I read years ago reporting the reaction of a first-century auditor of Jesus: "He was a lot shorter than I thought he'd be."

We live in an age of vitamin-enriched foods, "larger-than-life" entertainment centers, beauty products that make one look "years younger," and athletes on steroids. All these testify to an impatient culture, bored with the "incarnate realities" of ordinary, everyday life. It would be surprising not to find this same impatience in modern churches.

At some point "worship enhancement technologies" that give us "larger than life" images and super sounds/louder noises may betray symptoms of modern dissatisfactions with the limitations of our finite humanity. Contemporary preoccupations with the mechanics of "mega worship" not only disclose much about our modern hearts and minds – "larger, louder, brighter, and faster are better;" they may also, however unintentionally, mask the affront of the Incarnation.

The relevance of Jesus' height? Not much. Come to think of it, it probably wasn't even a very big cross!