

An Eternal Perspective Produces Godly Conduct, Part 4: Unity through Example, Part 2 The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ Philippians 2:6-8

Andrew R. Rappaport

Introduction

Who is Jesus Christ?

Jewish thought:

Judaism states that the virgin birth is a myth and that Jesus Christ is a false prophet. They do not believe Jesus Christ to be the Jewish messiah. They do not believe He is God, holding to a view of monotheism that believes in one God in one Person.

Muslim thought:

Islam refers to Jesus as “the son of Mary”, who they teach was merely human and a messenger of Allah. They recognize His supernatural birth and miracles, but see Him as only a prophet like Noah, Abraham or Moses.

Mormon thought:

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (sometimes called Mormons) teaches that Jesus was a pre-existent spirit that became a man and now is a god.

Jehovah Witness thought:

Jehovah Witnesses believe that Jesus Christ pre-existed in heaven as the first and only direct creation of God and known as Michael the Archangel. Before becoming the man Jesus Christ, was merely an angel. They teach that the angel Michael became the man Jesus and returned to a spirit being. They do not believe that Jesus was God.

Early “Christian Era” thought:

During a time of the early Christian Church, many heresies on the views of the person of Christ had been entertained. Some such as Ebionism and Arianism denied the divine nature of Jesus Christ, believing him to be merely human. Others such as Docetism, followed Gnostic thought and denied the humanity of Jesus Christ believing him to be God but that his body was only an appearance of a ghostly form. Some such as Nestorianism, denied in the union of the two natures of Christ.

Ebionites thought:

The Ebionites (A.D. 107) denied the reality of Christ's divine nature and held in Him to be merely a man, whether naturally or supernaturally conceived. They believed that Jesus held a particular relation to God, in that, from the time of his baptism, an unmeasured fullness of the divine Spirit rested upon Him. This was simply Judaism within the Christian church.

Docetoe thought:

The Docetoes (A.D. 70-170) denied the reality of Christ's human body, consistent with Gnostic thought of the second century. This view was the logical sequence of their assumption of the inherent evil of matter. If the matter is evil and Christ was pure, and

Christ's human body must have been merely an appearance. This was simply pagan philosophy introduced into the Christian church.

Arian thought:

The Arians (A.D. 325) denied the integrity of the divine nature of Christ. They regarded the Logos who united in himself to humanity in Jesus Christ, not as possessed of absolute godhood, but as the first and highest of created beings.

Apollinarians thought:

The Apollinarians (A.D. 381) denied the entirety of Christ's human nature. According to this view, Christ had no human spirit other than that which was furnished by the divine nature. Christ had only the human person; but place of the human spirit was filled by the divine Logos. This was an attempt to construct the doctrine of Christ's person in the form of Platonic thought.

Nestorians thought:

The Nestorians (A.D. 431) denied a real union between the divine and human natures in Christ, making it rather a moral than an organic one. They virtually held to a view of two natures in two persons instead of two natures in one person.

Eutychians thought:

The Eutychians (A.D. 451) denied the distinction and coexistence of the two natures and held to a mingling of both into one, constituting a third nature.

More recent "Christian" thought:

Theologically known as the "kenosis theory", which began with several theologians in Germany (1860-1880) and lead to England (1890-1910) advocating a view that Jesus somehow gave up some of his divine attributes to become man. According to the theory, Christ "emptied himself" of some of His divine attributes, i.e. omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence, while he was on earth as man.

"How deity and humanity were united in the person of Jesus Christ has been debated hotly throughout church history. Everything that can be questioned about the proposition that Jesus Christ was one person with two natures, divine and human, has been questioned. Some have denied the deity of Christ (Ebionites, Arians). Others denied the reality of His humanity, feeling that He was simply a phantomlike appearance of God (Docetists). The Apollinarians claimed that the humanity was incomplete, the spirit being that of the eternal Logos. Others declared that [Jesus] was adopted as divine at His baptism (Unitarians). Jehovah's Witnesses claim He was God's highest created representative. Barthians hold that He was fully human (including a sinful nature) and that God worked through this man to reveal Himself, especially at the cross."¹

Other thought that people have is the view of modalism. This is the view that Jesus pre-existed as God the Father, came to earth as a man, Jesus Christ, God the Son and in return to heaven as the Holy Spirit, God the Spirit. This is the view that God is one Person in three modes. This came to influence later thought with the idea that Jesus could not be both fully God and fully man at the same time.

Orthodoxy has always held that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully, perfect man, and that these two natures were united in one person without forming a third nature (as Eutychius said) or two separate persons (as Nestorius taught).

¹Ryrie, C. C. (1995, c1972). *A survey of Bible doctrine*. Chicago: Moody Press.

Transition: The problem with all of these false views is that they do not accept the dual nature of Jesus Christ. Historical Christianity has taught that Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man. The view of the Kenosis Theory and some of these other heresies, seek to diminish, in one way or another, either Christ's deity or His humanity. They seek to claim that Jesus could not be both fully God and fully man at the same time.

Because this is such an essential doctrine for us to understand, we do not want to move on with Paul's example of humility until we fully understand what he is saying in Philippians 2:6-8. Before we understand Christ's exaltation we need to understand the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was the most unique person in all of history. Our salvation is depends upon a proper understanding of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. This doctrine is so important that the entire salvation of mankind rests upon it. First, we need to see why Jesus Christ was fully God.

1. Why Jesus Christ was Fully God

In the first century Christ's Deity was not questioned as much as His humanity. Now it is mostly His Deity that is questioned and not His humanity. It is important to see that the Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus Christ is both God and man; the God-man. We need to understand that Jesus Christ was God.

When Constantine was emperor he declared Rome a "Christian" nation. However, Christians are not Christian by name nor decreed. It is only in a true belief in Jesus Christ that a person becomes a Christian. During that time many people, who were Christians in name only, found it favorable and politically expedient to talk like Christians. However, they were unbelievers. Therefore, they did not believe in Jesus Christ. They did not believe in the Holy Scriptures.

These "Christian" leaders began to debate Christian doctrine to argue for a belief system that they, as unbelievers, could believe. In this regard a conflict between true Christians and the unsaved "Christian" leaders ensued for many years. The debate went back and forth and was more a political struggle than truly a doctrinal one. These debates have been the causes of much confusion in areas of Christian doctrine that cannot be understood at a human level.

THE NAMES OF CHRIST INDICATE HIS DEITY

When the Scriptures refer to someone by name it indicates much more about the person than how to refer to them or a title. It indicates their position, personality and character. When comparing the Old and the New Testaments, many names refer to Jesus Christ. These names display His Deity.

The Names of Christ in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament we see that future Messiah or Christ is called

- 1) "Mighty God" and "Everlasting Father" (Isaiah 9:6),
- 2) "Lord" (Psalm 110:1),
- 3) "Immanuel", which means "God with us" (Isaiah 7:14) and
- 4) "YHWH" or "Jehovah" (Jeremiah 23:6; Isaiah 40:3), a name that is only used of God.

These names all point to the fact that the future Jewish Messiah was to be God Himself.

The reference to Jehovah in Jeremiah 23:5 states, "'Behold the days are coming', says the Lord, 'that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and

prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.” The reference of a Branch of David and a King who will prosper and execute judgment is a prophecy of the Messiah’s reign. He will reign with righteousness and that is why in verse 6 it says, *“now this is His name by which He will be called: THE JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”*. It is not a proper name but a description of who He is and how He will reign.

His Names in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the names of Jesus Christ are explicitly of Christ. The New Testament calls Jesus *“the Christ”* (Matthew 16:16, 20; 23:8; 24:5; Luke 9:20; John 7:26-42; 11:27). This is the Greek word for “anointed”, which in Hebrew is the word “Messiah”. The definite article before Christ means that He is the One awaited Messiah prophesied about in the Old Testament.

Scripture refers to Jesus Christ as:

- 1) *“God”* (John 1:1, 20:24-29; 1 Timothy 1:1; 4:10; Titus 1:3-4; 2:10, 13; 3:4, 6),
- 2) *“Lord”* (Luke 6:46; 24:34; Mark 2:23-28; John 13:13; Acts 10:36; 26:15; Revelation 19:16),
- 3) *“Son of God”* (Matthew 16:16; Mark 1:11; 5:7; 15:39; John 10:31-39),
- 4) *“First and Last”* (Revelation 1:11, 17; 2:8; 22:13),
- 5) *“the Word”* (John 1:1, 14; Revelation 19:13),
- 6) *“I AM”* (John 8:58-59) and
- 7) *“Savior”* (Titus 1:3-4; 3:4-6).

The phrase *“Son of God”* is often misunderstood, because people do not take the time to understand “sonship” in the times and culture of Christ. The word *“son”*, while it can mean offspring, most often is used to refer to one who partakes of or is identified with the one to whom he is son. Some examples of this usage are:

Sons of Thunder (Mark 3:17)

Son of Perdition (John 17:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:3)

Son of Encouragement (Acts 4:36)

Also, note that *“sonship”* in relation to Christ is always connected to his incarnation.

When Jesus Christ uses the name “I AM” it is an explicit reference to Deity (John 8:58-59). In the Greek the phrase for “I AM” is the same as the Hebrew for the name of God in Exodus 3:14 often translated YHWH or Jehovah. The Jews at the time of Christ understood this because after using this name about Himself in John 8:58 the Jews *“took up stones to throw at Him”* (v. 59) for blasphemy (calling Himself God) (John 10:33).

THE WORKS OF CHRIST INDICATE HIS DEITY

The works Jesus Christ did while on earth indicate His Deity. It was one of the proofs or witnesses that He refers other to examine (John 9:3-5). He did things only God could do, such as:

- 1) Creation (John 1:3; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2)
- 2) Forgiveness of Sins (Matthew 9:2-6; Mark 2:7)

- 3) Giving of Life
 - A) Physical Life (John 11:17, 34-44)
 - B) Eternal Life (John 10:58)
- 4) Acceptance of Worship (Matthew 14:33; Luke 24:51-52; Philippians 2:9-11)
- 5) Judgment of Mankind (John 5:22, 27; Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:1)

THE ATTRIBUTES OF CHRIST INDICATE HIS DEITY

If Jesus Christ is Deity then He should have the attributes of Deity. There are attributes that are only attributed to God. Therefore, if Christ possesses these attributes it is only because He is God. In the New Testament we see that Jesus Christ possesses the following attributes of Deity:

- 1) Incomprehensibility (Ephesian 3:8, 19)
- 2) Sovereignty (Romans 14:10-12)
- 3) Omniscience (John 2:24-25; 16:30-32)
- 4) Omnipotence (John 5:19, 21; Colossians 1:17)
- 5) Omnipresence (Matthew 29:20; Hebrews 4:13)
- 6) Immutability (Hebrews 13:8)
- 7) Eternality (John 1:1; 8:58; Revelation 1:8)
- 8) Holiness (Mark 1:24)

While possessing the attributes of Deity, Jesus Christ did not necessarily use the attributes of His Deity, but limited Himself by his humanness (Matthew 4:2; Luke 22:43; John 4:6; 19:28). This does not mean that He stopped being God nor was never God, but that somehow He limited Himself to being a man.

⁵ Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)

One passage which ascribes to Christ one of the greatest statements of Deity is Colossians 2:9, *"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily"*.

After examining the totality of information on the deity of Christ, one must say He is one of three things:

1. Liar – That is, He deceived those who followed Him, telling them He was God.
2. Lunatic – That is, he was so deluded He did not know what He was saying, claiming to be God.
3. Lord – He was who He said He was "The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords"

When we sin we are guilty of violating God's law (Romans 3:10-12). Even the "smallest" of sins require a punishment (James 2:10). The punishment for breaking God's law is an eternal death (Romans 6:23), often referred to as the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). Each sin requires

an eternal sentence and to pay for the first offense takes all eternity. Therefore, we will never end paying for the first sin and never start paying for the second sin. We can NEVER pay off the debt that we owe to God, for it will take all of eternity. The only way to pay the debt is to either pay it ourselves for all eternity or have someone that is eternal pay it for us.

If Jesus was not God, or stopped being God or did not have the attributes of God on the cross, then He could not pay the punishment required for our sin and we would still be dead in our sin. In order for Jesus Christ to make the payment for our sins He had to have been an eternal Being at the time of His death. People struggle with this, because they cannot conceive of the idea that God can die or that one Person can be both God and man. We should not place our beliefs on what we can understand about God, because we can never fully understand God in our finite humanness.

Illustration: The court of law will allow for one person to pay for the punishment of another. However there are certain stipulations that come with that.

- 1) The person paying the debt must be innocent of any charges involved.
- 2) He must be able to make full payment of the debt.
- 3) He also, must be willing to pay the debt.
- 4) The person owing the debt must be willing to receive the payment.

In a case like this, a person who would make the payment would not be guilty of the charges himself and would not have it on his record. Upon completion of the full term of the punishment, the guilty party would be free of any debt.

I had a friend of mine who before becoming a Christian was involved in drugs. He got himself arrested and was being sentenced to prison. He had arranged a plea-bargained with the court where he named his supplier. If he would have been sentenced to prison (and he was) he would be in the same prison with a well-connected murderer who he set up. He was fearful for his life. I was in a position where I was innocent of the charges, was able to make full payment of doing his jail sentence and offered to do it. However, he did not accept the offer. Regardless of all that I was willing to do, because of his refusal to accept my offer he had to serve his full prison term.

Maybe some of you have heard of Charles Colson. He had paid majority of his prison term for his involvement in the Watergate scandal, at great personal sacrifice to him and his family. He was facing bankruptcy, his marriage was on the rocks and his children had a strained relationship with him. A congressman who knew Charles Colson offered to complete his jail sentence, which he did. He left his position in government and went to jail on Charles Colson's behalf. Mr. Colson's full prison term was paid even though he was not the one in jail for the full time.

This is what Jesus Christ did for us. He made the payment on our behalf. What we cannot pay on our own, Jesus Christ paid for us. Jesus Christ had to be innocent of sin and capable of making the full payment of our debt. Then, and only then, can he offer to us the payment of our sin and we would be able to receive that gift. Jesus had to be eternal to be able to pay an eternal debt at one time in one place in history for all mankind. It is precisely because Jesus Christ is God, that He is able to make that payment for us. However, in order for that payment that Jesus Christ did on the cross to be applied to us, individually, we must accept that debt-freeing and loving offer.

Transition: This is why Jesus Christ's had to be fully God. Our eternal punishment cannot be paid for if an eternal Being did not pay it for us. Jesus Christ was and remained to

be eternal God on the cross. However, He was not just fully God, He was also fully man.

2. Why Jesus Christ was Fully Man

While the Deity of Jesus Christ is widely debated, His humanity seems to be widely accepted as fact. However, there are areas of the humanity of Christ that are still misunderstood by different world religions and cults. It is important to look at the purpose, prior existence, evidence and exaltation of the humanity of Christ.

In the incarnation, the second person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God, assumed the place of a Son, and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine attributes (Philippians 2:5-8).

As the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the Head of His body the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the coming universal King, who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31-33), He is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14-46; Acts 17:30-31).

It is important to note that Jesus had both a physical body and an immaterial soul, because in the first century the debate was that Jesus was one or the other. People had a hard time understanding that Jesus Christ could have two natures. It is important that Jesus Christ had two natures to be the true mediator and true savior.

The Gnostic thought was that every spiritual thing was good and everything material was evil. Therefore, they had a problem calling Jesus totally good and material. They taught that Jesus was a spirit but only appeared to be a man. It is this reason that the Scripture often states that an antichrist is one that does not believe that Jesus Christ came in the flesh (1 John 4:2-3).

The Purpose of the Humanity of Christ

Why did Jesus Christ have to enter into humanity? Being God, Jesus Christ had everything in Heaven where the angels worshiped Him and there is no sin. However, Jesus Christ came to earth to become a man and live among His creation for the purpose of His death, burial and resurrection. However, there is more to His purpose than just the cross to the ascension.

Christ's death, burial and resurrection provided a sacrifice for sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). Christ's sacrifice was the payment for our sin so that we could be set free (Romans 6:18, 22). Jesus Christ becomes the fullest revelation of God to man, because "*no one has seen God at any time*" (John 1:18) except Jesus Christ. Now Jesus Christ acts as the only true mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1-2).

The true mediation of Jesus Christ is because He is the only God-man. It is this reality that makes Him a sympathetic High Priest (Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:14-16). Jesus Christ was the perfect man. He is the ONLY human to have NEVER sinned. His sinlessness is what makes Him a perfect sacrifice and example to follow (Philippians 2:5; 1 Peter 2:21), yet as a sympathetic High Priest. It is because He is fully human that He can sympathize with humanity. As a sinless being, He provides a perfect sacrifice for sin. Thus, we can only obtain salvation by God accepting Jesus as our sacrifice and payment by His sinlessness. Jesus Christ was without any sin. If Jesus Christ had sinned, He would have to pay for His own sin, which would disqualify Him as our substitute.

The Prior Existence of the Humanity of Christ

Some falsely teach that Jesus Christ was merely a good man. We have seen in the Deity of Christ that He could not be a just a man, good or otherwise. Others teach that Jesus Christ prior to His time on earth He was an angel. His Deity disproves this theory as well. If Jesus Christ was at any point in time an angel, He could never have been the Creator of all things and eternal.

The correct view of Jesus Christ prior to His humanity, is that He was and is God (John 8:56-59).

Jesus Christ always was, is and will be God. Those that see Christ as merely a “good man”, (Jewish position) believe that Christ came into being at His birth. Those that see Christ as being an angel, (Jehovah Witness position) believe that Christ was in the form of another being before His birth. Jesus Christ claimed that during Abraham’s lifetime He was the great “I AM” (John 8:58).

Some see a contradiction with Christ’s entrance in humanity, because John the Baptist answered that he was not Elijah (John 1:21), yet Jesus Christ stated he was the forerunner (Matthew 11:14; 17:11-13).

The solution is John was one like Elijah (Luke 1:17). In order for Christ to sincerely present the kingdom to the Jews there needed to be a forerunner like Elijah. John fulfilled that role. When asked whether he was Elijah, he rejected that he was a resurrected Elijah. John had to come in the form of Elijah, but not as the resurrected Elijah, who will come before the second coming, to fulfil all the prophecies of the forerunner to the Messiah.

Another supposed contradiction with Christ’s entrance in humanity is with the prophecy of the virgin birth. The doctrine of the virgin birth has been a point of controversy between conservative evangelicals and liberal theologians for some time. Also, the Roman Catholics add to the controversy by declaring Mary as one who was always a sinless virgin, who had no need for a Savior.

I. The Scripture

A. Isaiah 7:14

1. The Context

Isaiah was a prophet to Judah from about 740-680 B.C. This particular passage was around 735 B.C., 12 years before the northern Israel fell to Assyria. A wicked king Ahaz was being intimidated into submitting to the eventual overthrow of Judah by Assyria (which did not happen).

2. The Prophecy

Since Ahaz rejected the idea of receiving a sign from God, Isaiah’s prophecy reaches out to the people of Judah and is a promise that the New Testament fulfills for us in the revelation of the incarnation of Christ (Matthew 1:23).

B. Matthew 1:21-23

Matthew, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, clearly reveals that the fulfillment of this prophecy was the incarnation of Christ.

II. The Problem

The only real problem is whether there was some type of fulfillment in the days of Ahaz. The prophecy was ultimately and completely fulfilled in Christ.

A. Concerning the Child

Liberals and others have argued against the virgin birth and have made claims that the Isaiah 7:14 prophecy was fulfilled during the time of Isaiah. There is some question as to whether this was fulfilled temporally during Isaiah's day, but there is no question that it was ultimately fulfilled in Christ.

B. Concerning the Virgin

Many liberal and Jewish scholars have attempted to discredit Isaiah 7:14 as a Messianic prophecy by claiming that the Hebrew word "almah" means simply a young woman and not a virgin. Previous usage of the word (Genesis 24:43; Exodus 2:8; I Chronicles 15:20; Psalm 46:1; 68:25; Proverbs 30:19; Song of Solomon 1:3; 6:8) all seem to verify the fact that "almah" is used to indicate virginity.

C. Concerning the Event

The time element of the event, as mentioned, has been a point of difficulty. The only difficulty, however, is trying to see whether this prophecy had any fulfillment during the days of Isaiah. If so, the virgin would have been one impregnated by a human father, as opposed to the divine conception of Christ; and the child would have been either, Herekiah, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, or an unknown child to an unknown virgin.

The process of the incarnation from the aspect of Christ is the Self-emptying or Kenosis of Christ (Philippians 2:5-8). This is Christ's voluntary surrender of the exercise of His divine attributes in order to accomplish a number of things:

1. To provide a sacrifice for sin. (2 Corinthians 5:21)
2. To provide an example of humility for us. (Philippians 2:5)
3. To reveal God to man. (John 1:18)
4. To be a sympathetic High Priest (Hebrews 4:14)

The Evidence of the Humanity of Christ

There are three evidences of the humanity of Christ.

He possesses the necessities of humanity.

He possesses the names of humanity.

He possesses the nature of humanity.

Jesus Christ has the necessities of humanity a physical body (Hebrews 2:14) and an immaterial soul (Matthew 28:6; Luke 23:46). The reason this is important to note is that the first century Christians were battling the false belief that Jesus Christ did not have a physical body. So when we see much attention given to Christ's humanity in the later writings, like 1 John, it is because John is trying to combat this false doctrine, not trying to disprove the Deity of Christ. That was widely accepted at the time.

Jesus also possesses the name of humanity. He most often called Himself the “*Son of Man*”, emphasizing His humanity (Matthew 8:20; 9:6; 12:8; Mark 8:31, 38; Luke 19:10; John 6:27, 53, 62). He was also referred to as a “*man*” (John 8:40; 1 Timothy 2:5).

Lastly, He possesses the nature of humanity. Jesus Christ had emotions. We see Him displaying anger (Mark 3:5), compassion (John 13:23) and sorrow (John 11:35). Jesus has the limitations that are common with a human nature, such as, hunger (Matthew 4:2), thirst (John 19:28), fatigue (John 4:6), exhaustion (Luke 22:43), being bound by time (Mark 11:13) and even experiencing death (John 19:30).

Question: Since Christ possessed the fullness of humanity, was He able not to sin or was He not able to sin?

Answer: Christ was not able to sin. The union of deity and humanity is a complete union where neither nature loses something to the other; where both natures retain their attribute while functioning together in Christ.

Remember, Jesus Christ had a perfect human body and never sinned but that does not mean that He was never tempted. In fact, His temptations were far worse than we suffer. When we are tempted, sometimes we give in to the temptation and sin. At that point the temptation is over. However for Jesus Christ, He suffered the full extent of the temptation and never sinned.

The Exaltation of the Humanity of Christ

The exaltation of the humanity of Jesus Christ deals with the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. The purpose of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ was accomplished voluntarily and obediently by the second Person of the Godhead for the substitutionary atonement of the sins of the human race. Historically it is known that Jesus Christ would have died on a cross not a stake, and that it was Jesus Christ on that cross.

The resurrection is evidenced by the scriptural testimony (1 Corinthians 15), multitudes of eyewitnesses (vs. 6-7) and historical documentation. Josephus, a Jewish historian for Rome wrote the following:

Now, there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works—a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; (64) and when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.²

It is important to note that Jesus was physically born into this world, physically He died and physically He rose from the dead to ascend into Heaven.

In order for Jesus Christ to be that spotless lamb on our behalf, he had to be one of us. This is why Jesus Christ had to be fully man. As we saw in the courtroom scene, the person making the payment for punishment must be capable of making the full payment. I cannot send my pet rabbit to prison to serve out my jail term. The reason is he is not human. However, one of you can serve it for me because you are like me, a human being. Therefore, in order for Jesus Christ to be able to make payment for our sin He had to be fully human.

² Josephus, F., & Whiston, W. (1996, c1987). *The works of Josephus : Complete and unabridged*. Includes index. (Ant 18.63-64). Peabody: Hendrickson.

Illustration: I cannot communicate with my daughter's pet rabbit. Let us say her rabbit got loose one day in the woods and does not know the dangers or how to feed itself. What can I do? Even though I may love the rabbit and be concerned for the rabbit and want to save the rabbit from some horrible death, I cannot because I have no means to communicate with it. In order for me to convince the rabbit that he needs to come back home I would need to be a rabbit, so that I can reach out and communicate to the rabbit. To show the rabbit the way home would first have to be a rabbit. This is what Jesus Christ did for us by becoming a man.

Transition: This makes Jesus Christ the most unique and individual in all of history in the entire universe. Jesus Christ alone is able to make payment for the sin of human beings. It is only Jesus Christ who is in a unique position as being both fully God and fully man to be able to bridge the gap between God and man. Only Jesus Christ can make payment for our sins. That is why all other religious teaching is false. Because they do not have a true means a forgiving sin. Jesus Christ is the God-man.

3. Jesus Christ the God-Man

Although it has been difficult for men to understand throughout the ages, the Scriptures teach that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully Man; two natures in indivisible oneness. It is usually one of the two natures of Christ that are attacked or misunderstood. It is important to realize that Jesus Christ has two natures, one fully man and one fully God. Part of the reason for the confusion is that Jesus at times speaks from the limitations of His humanity even though He is God (Matthew 4:2; Luke 22:43; John 4:6; 19:28).

If Jesus Christ being in the "form of God" (Philippians 2:6) means that He is less than God and only in external appearance of God, then He being in the "form of a bondservant" and in the "likeness" and "appearance" of a man, would not be human but less than human. The two uses of the word "form" (morphe) makes it clear that Jesus was either both God and man or He was neither God and man. The description of His deity and humanity is the same. J.B. Lightfoot detailed that the Greek word morphe connotes the intrinsic an essential nature of an object.

Jesus Christ's "emptying" of himself in Philippians 2:7, was a self-imposed emptying that was not the giving up of His nature but focused on the making Himself nothing by taking on the nature of man. The focus is not on giving something up but the putting something on. Being God the thought of becoming man is the making Himself of nothing. It is not that Christ stopped being God. The emphasis of this text is on the fact that Jesus Christ not only became a man, but a bondservant.

Charles Ryrie states, "The self-emptying permitted the addition of humanity and did not involve in any way the subtraction of Deity or canceling the use of the attributes of Deity. There was a change of form but not of content of the Divine Being. He did not give up Deity or the use of those attributes; He added humanity."³ Ryrie also states that in order for Jesus to become a man, "He had to empty Himself of His preincarnate position, yet without diminishing the Person. There was no way He could become a man and remain in the position He had in His preincarnate state. But He could and did become a man while retaining the complete attributes of His preincarnate Person, that is, of full Deity."⁴

³Ryrie, C. C. (1999). *Basic theology : A popular systemic guide to understanding biblical truth* (301). Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press.

⁴Ibid.

In what sense does Paul mean that Christ emptied Himself at the incarnation? "Emptied" may be a misleading translation because it connotes Christ's giving up or losing some of His divine attributes during His earthly life, and that was not the case. A better translation of this word would be "made himself nothing" as the ESV translates it or "made Himself of no reputation" as the NKJV translates it. That carries the connotation that Jesus was adding something to Himself not ridding Himself.

Some conservative theologians suggest that kenosis means the veiling of Christ's pre-incarnate glory. Some suggest it means the voluntary non-use of some of his attributes of deity. Although this was true on occasion certainly not always throughout his life, see John 1:48; 2:24; 16:30. Philippians 2 does not discuss at all the question of how or how much of Christ's glory was veiled. Nor does it say anything about the use or restriction of divine attributes. It does say that the emptying concerns God becoming a man to be able to die. Thus, the kenosis means Jesus leaving His preincarnate position and taking on a servant -humanity. In the kenosis, Christ emptied Himself of retaining and exploiting His status in the Godhead and took on humanity in order to die.

Transition: Let us answer some questions and objections.

Questions and Objections

Did Christ cease to be God when He died on the cross and said "My God, My God, why has Thou forsaken me"?

Did Jesus retain the full attributes of fully God while on the cross?

What does it mean that Jesus bore our sins?

Did He bare the punishment of our sins or did He actually become sin?

On the cross Jesus said, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* (Matthew 27:46). Many Christians believe this signifies the one and only time that there was a split between the first two persons of the Trinity, that is, between the Father and the Son. The argument asserts that when Jesus "became sin", the Father was unable to look upon him; hence he "forsook" Jesus. This argument seeks to emphasize the great cost to Christ on our behalf. He was even willing to endure separation from the Father to accomplish our salvation. However, I believe such an interpretation, while well intentioned, has heretical implications. It is a denial of belief in one eternal, indivisible God.

First, if the Father cannot look upon sin, meaning that he had to turn away from the Son on the cross (and I have found no verse which says that), then what does that say about the character and deity of Jesus? Is Jesus somehow less than God, so that he can "look upon" the sin that was laid on him on the cross? Or does He simply have a stronger stomach for sin than the Father? Or perhaps Jesus is more merciful than the Father, able to suffer what the Father cannot even face? It is interesting that in Genesis 6:5, God looked upon the sin of mankind. When scripture says that God cannot "look" upon sin, contextually it means he cannot look with approval upon sin. His consistent reaction to sin is just judgment - against the unrepentant sinner, or through the atonement of Jesus Christ, the one who died in our place and on our behalf.

Second, Jesus quoted the beginning of Psalm 22 when he stated *"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"*. The psalm is referred to previously in the same passage. The common Jewish way of designating an entire psalm was to refer to the opening lines, since the psalms were not numbered at that time. He was Himself God and always in

perfect obedience to the Father. Instead, he referred to the psalm in its entirety as a messianic psalm. He knew God had not actually forsaken Him as is clear from the same psalm, which says, *"He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; nor has He hidden His face from Him; But when He cried to Him, He heard"* (verse 24). In fact, Jesus was declaring to his accusers that they were in the midst of fulfilling this psalm, which was commonly understood in His day to refer to the coming Messiah, the Suffering Servant (Psalm 22:14-18). The psalmist himself understood that the "forsaking" of God was not abandonment, but a lifting of His Sovereign protection according to His divine plan so that the threats of his enemies could be carried out in fulfillment of prophecy. In fact, there were many times during Jesus' public ministry when His enemies sought to kill him (John 5:16; 8:59). They were not able to because, as He said, His "hour" was not yet come (John 12:23-28). He declared to Pilate, *"You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin"* (John 19:11). On the day of Pentecost Peter declared that no one could have crucified Christ in defiance of God's power: *"Him, being delivered by the determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it"* (Acts 2:23-24).

Third, when 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that God made Jesus *"to be sin"*, it means that God made the penalty for all sin to fall upon Jesus, not that Jesus himself could become sin, e.g., sinful. As perfect God and perfect man, He could not sin nor become sin. 1 Peter 1:19 calls Jesus *"a lamb without blemish and without spot"*. If Jesus became sin or sinful then He was not the perfect sacrifice required and we then are still died in our sin.

Fourth, is it reasonable to assume that the Father would desert the Son who was acting in obedience to him through every moment of existence, *"obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross"* (Philippians 2:8)? Is it consistent with the character of God for the Father to reward Christ's obedience with rejection? On the contrary, Ephesians 5:2 says Christ's sacrifice was *"an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma."*

Fifth, it is actually or ontologically impossible for there to be a "split" between any persons of the eternal Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity, simply defined, is that within the nature of the one true God there are three eternal, distinct Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three Persons are the one indivisible God. Any "split" in the Trinity would result in the destruction of the very being of God.

In conclusion, it is fallible humans who think the Father would reject the Son on the cross. The bond between the Father and the Son is inseparable, not only because of their Deity, but because of the complete agreement between their wills, desires, mercy, justice, and love for mankind, exemplified in Christ's great sacrifice on the cross. Isaiah 53:4, a prophetic utterance concerning Jesus Christ, records the erroneous reaction of men to Christ's humiliating death: *"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted"*. Christ's declaration on the cross, far from being an admission of separation or abandonment, is a powerful affirmation of God's essential unity, perfect justice, sovereign power and matchless grace.⁵

⁵ See "Did the Father Leave the Son on the Cross?" By Bob Passantino, © 1991 (www.answers.org/theology/forsaken.html)
www.StrivingForEternity.org

Conclusion

In order for us to properly understand, what Paul is saying in Philippians 2:6-11 in discussing the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus Christ we need to understand properly the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. The purpose of this message was to explain the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Paul's purpose in Philippians 2:6-11, is to use Jesus Christ as an example of humility for the purpose of unity within the church. We will not live the unity that Paul is explaining in this example of Christ if we do not understand how unique Jesus is. Jesus Christ alone is the God-man that can save us from our sins.

This doctrine is so important, that if we have a false understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what he did, we are dead in our sin. Although this is one of the most difficult doctrines to understand, it is essential to our salvation. We cannot comprehend everything about God. If we could understand everything about God, we would be a God. God is greater than us. God's ways are above our ways (Isaiah 55:9). God's thoughts are above our thoughts (Isaiah 55:9). God is infinite and we are only finite. Therefore, if all of your questions have not been answered in this message, continue to study to show yourself approved (2 Timothy 2:15). However take to heart the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 29:29, which says, *“the secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law”*.