

# **“IMMANUEL: THE INCARNATION OF GOD”**

## **PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11 CHRISTMAS 2010**

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*<sup>ESV</sup> **Philippians 2:6-11:** ... Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Although Christ Jesus was equal with God in His essence, power and glory, he made himself nothing, becoming a man for us and for our salvation.

**Jesus is “Immanuel” which means “God with us”.**

Christ Jesus considered his own to be so significant that he laid aside all of His rights as Divine in order to become incarnate to unite Himself with our nature and to reconcile God and man, making us one in Him, holy and acceptable to God.

In the Name ‘Immanuel’ there is heaven and earth, God and man, infinite and finite, and sinful man’s only hope of righteousness and salvation before God.

**Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 8.2:** The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature,(1) with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin;(2) being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance.(3) So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion.(4) Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.(5) (1)John 1:1,14; 1 John 5:20; Phil. 2:6; Gal. 4:4. (2)Heb. 2:14,16,17; Heb. 4:15. (3)Luke 1:27,31,35; Gal. 4:4. (4)Luke 1:35; Col. 2:9; Rom. 9:5; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 Tim. 3:16. (5)Rom. 1:3,4; 1 Tim. 2:5.

*We shall look at some of these aspects of the Incarnation in this sermon:*

**“Immanuel: God with Us”:** The Divinity of Jesus Christ

**“Immanuel: God for Us”:** The Humanity of Jesus Christ

**“Immanuel: God born to live and die for Us”**: The Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ

**“Immanuel: God with Us”**: The Divinity of Jesus Christ

*What does it mean that Jesus was in the “form of God”? (Philippians 2:6a)*

*“Form of God” is the glory of God, or the manifestation of God. The form of God in which the preincarnate Christ was clothed was the very glory of God.*

*The glory of God is a revelation of his power, wisdom, holiness—His Eternal Deity.*

*Glory of God, Image of God, and Form of God are communicating God’s Eternal Deity.*

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 1:1-3**: Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup> **He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.** After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high...

Theologians speak of Philippians 2:6 in the phrase **“form of God”** as referring to **equality with God in substance, power and glory**. It is to say: “One existing in the glory of God” (Moises Silva, Walter Hansen).

“Before the manger...”- The Pre-existence of Christ

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 1:1-3**: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

“In the beginning” (en arche)

- a. Before the creation “in the beginning”, Christ existed as equal with God in power and glory (John 17:3ff)
- b. “In the beginning ***was the WORD...with God, and was God!***”
- c. All things were created through him (John 1:3). Nothing was made or created that has been made or created without him.
- d. He spoke by the word of His power in the space of six days and all was very good.
- e. Jesus Christ formed the stars by the breath of His mouth (What power and glory! Psalm 33:6).

<sup>ESV</sup> **Colossians 1:15-17: He is the image of the invisible God**, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> **For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities- all things were created through him and for him.** <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

- The New Testament writers' main intent is to stress the deity, or "God-ness" of Jesus Christ (compare 1:1, 18; 20:28-31; "I AM statements of Jesus).
- Men today deny his divinity and may accept Jesus as just a "good teacher" or nice religious person. He is called by some to be the first social activist, feminist, pluralist, and everything else under the sun other than ***"very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one essence with the Father."***
- If he is just a good teacher, he is not even that. C. S. Lewis said one time, we can call **Jesus a liar, a lunatic, or Lord**, but we cannot merely call him a good teacher if indeed he was not God.
- Denying Christ's divinity is sinful man's last ditch effort to diminish or rewrite the revelation of God's hope extended to man.
  - Strip Jesus of His Authority- No Obedience
  - Strip Jesus of His Majesty- No Worship
- This is the ultimate question for ourselves, our friends, family and neighbors: **"Who Do You Say Jesus Is?"** How you answer this reveals whether you have a Savior who can truly save: one like you, not like you; One who was with God, and was God!
- Jesus is One full of grace and truth: Only God can offer in its fullness grace and truth!

The Apostle John focuses on Christ's true humanity and deity as one person: the God-Man, Christ Jesus:

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 John 5:20** And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. **He is the true God and eternal life.**

### **Nicene Creed- Divinity**

"And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,  
Begotten of his Father before all worlds,  
God of God, Light of Light,  
Very God of very God,  
Begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father,

By whom all things were made...”

## **“Immanuel: God for Us”: The Humanity of Jesus Christ**

### **Nicene Creed**

“... Who for us and for our salvation,  
Came down from heaven,  
And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary,  
*And was made man...*”

Two aspects of Christ’s humiliation as God-Man:

1. “Made himself nothing...” (took a human nature).
2. “He humbled himself...” (humiliation, sorrow, death, crucifixion).

***What does it mean that in the incarnation that Christ “made himself nothing”? (Philippians 2:7a).***

### **“Kenosis”**

In the context, Philippians 2:7a is referring to ***Jesus putting aside his rights as God.***

The Greek word for “nothing” is: κενόω kenoo {ken-o'-o} Which means: 1) to empty, make empty 1a) of Christ, he laid aside equality with or the form of God

This has puzzled theologians and translators in church history, because “kenosis” (Gk verb: ἐκένωσεν) means **“to empty”**. This has made some translators translate this: Christ “emptied himself” and this has been referred to in church history as “Kenosis Theory”.

Other translations try to translate this in a more orthodox fashion: NIV- “Made himself nothing”; KJV- “Made himself of no reputation”; ESV- “Made himself nothing”. ***This preserves orthodoxy and gets at the meaning of the passage:***

***Jesus as God, but made himself a “nobody”.***

Other translations keep the literal interpretation of the word: ASV, RSV, NAS: “Emptied himself.”

What does it mean that Christ Jesus emptied himself? **What does “kenosis” mean?**

Theologian Donald Mackinnon wrote: “It is the notion of *kenosis* which more than any other single notion points to the deepest sense of the mystery of the Incarnation.”

Summary of debate of how we arrive at the correct meaning:

- Jesus was in the very form of God (Phil. 2:6); he was equal with God, and was God.
- Yet Christ did not insist on his rights. Christ Jesus as equal with God had a right to be recognized, revered, and served by angels; to be immune from poverty, pain and humiliation. He did not insist on those rights (but showed a humility, see last week’s sermon).
- Christ emptied himself means *Christ made himself of no reputation (KJV)* or *Christ made himself nothing (NIV)*.
- Summary: Christ emptied himself, or made himself nothing; Christ emptied himself or made himself nothing particularly by becoming a servant.

Theologian Don Macleod writes insightfully on the reality of kenosis in our Lord’s life:

“Every moment in that journey from Bethlehem to Calvary was chosen; and every moment on the cross, from the third hour to the ninth hour, was chosen. Every day of the Lord’s life **he re-enacted the kenosis, renewing the decision which had made him nothing and choosing to move further and further into the shame and pain it involved.** He loved his own, and when eventually it became clear what that love would cost he went forward, trembling, to be what his people’s sin deserved” (*Person of Christ*, Contours of Christian Theology, IVP, pg. 218).

Encouraging application and assurance for us in Jesus:

Puritan theologian Richard Sibbes wrote: “Jesus is poor with the poor, afflicted with the afflicted, persecuted with the persecuted. He is deserted with them that be deserted: ‘My God, my God why have you forsaken me?!’ He suffers with them that suffer; he has gone through all the passages of our lives.”

This is what is meant by he “made himself nothing” or “emptied himself”.

HE IS IMMANUEL. HE HAS BEEN THERE FOR YOU WHO BELIEVE.

Pain. He has been there.  
Grief...  
Sorrow and sadness...  
Poverty...  
Needs. He has been there.  
Behold! Immanuel.

Sibbes: “***Fear not to die; fear not to go to the grave, Immanuel has been there.***”

***“He humbled himself”***

***What is the significance of Christ “taking the form of a servant”? (2:7b).***

It is important to note that God did not give up anything; ***he did not lessen himself*** by putting away any bit of his Godhead or Deity (as if that were possible or even imaginable!). Christ Jesus added to Himself, by uniting His Eternal Self to a human being.

We confess: God and man in one person; two natures, one person, one Christ Jesus.

The Incarnation was the first time that God was permanently with man as a man, forever to be and remain a man *for us*.

Christ was present in the prophets, priests and kings as types of His presence in the Old Covenant.

God would take upon Himself the shape of a man as a representation of His presence, like when he talked with Abraham and the Patriarchs. But this was not God with us in our nature. For God took up human nature for a time, then laid it aside again.

***When God became Immanuel to be eternally GOD WITH US,  
he took up our nature never to lay it aside again!***

***Christ Jesus was born in our nature, lived in our nature, died in our nature, was crucified in our nature, became a curse for us in our nature, buried in our nature, rose in our nature, is in heaven in our nature, and forever will abide there in our nature!***

Only God could save...only God could do what needed to be done to save God's people and renew the world as far as the curse is found.

He is also the human son, or the “Son of Man”.

***The significance is “FOR US”:***

Theologian Donald Macleod writes of this phrase “form of a servant”: “Christ became a servant as surely and as truly as previously he had been God. The term *doulos*, too, is important. Christ came into an entirely new relationship with the Father. From eternity he was a Son. Now, he becomes a servant, under the law, bound to obey, charged with a work given him to do (John 17:4) and threatened with the direst consequences for himself and all connected with him should his obedience falter. He became a slave, without rights; a non-person, who could not turn to those crucifying him and say, ‘Do you not know who I am?’” (*The Person of Christ*, Contours of Christian Theology, IVP, pg. 216).

- Humility: “...He humbled himself” (Phil. 2:8)

- Jesus Christ was no great philosopher or king; he held no high position; he had no pillow or “penny” to his name; he was homeless, and yet holy for us.
- No outward glory in appearance.
- No halo or glow to his person.
- No fanfare and triumphant announcement as Sovereign King and Lord. Rather, he appeared to:
  - Shepherds
  - Animals in a manger
  - Wise men outside of the covenant came from afar to visit and offer him gifts
  - To those who had eyes to see the beauty and glory of God.

This is why we must consider others more significant than ourselves!

*<sup>ESV</sup> Philippians 2:3-4: Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

- Servant of YHWH- God and man in the Old Testament.
  - Faithful Second Adam
  - Faithful Israelite – “True Vine” (John 15)
  - Anointed for service as Prophet, Priest and King to fulfill all offices in God’s righteous perfection on behalf of sinful man.

A servant is not greater than his master.

We are called to serve, to die, to suffer.

And to be exalted in our resurrection with Him!

BEHOLD *THEANTHROPOS-GOD MAN, the Lord Jesus Christ*

\ Some theologians have made the helpful distinction between Christ’s divine nature and human nature in the one Christ by using this memory help:

**Christ’s Deity- OMNIPRESENT, OMNISCIENT, OMNIPOTENT**

**Christ’s Humanity- LOCAL, LEARNING, LIMITED**

*Richard Sibbes: "Christ was one in our nature, that he might bring God and us into favor, that we may be forever with him in heaven, that we may be forever with the Lord, which is the accomplishment of all the promises of God!"*

**"Immanuel: God born to live and die for Us"**: The Virgin Birth

***What is the significance for us that Christ was "born in the likeness of men" and "being found in human form" (Philippians 2:7c-8a)***

***Jesus Christ was Son of God and son of Mary!  
Deity and humanity in hypostatic union!***

Jesus Christ is called the "only begotten Son" because He is the Eternal Son; he is also Mary's son.

***"For unto us a child is born (humanity); unto us a son is given (deity)" –  
Isaiah 9:6***

Although man was created in His likeness, after the fall of man into sin, God would graciously come to us to take upon Himself Adam's flesh without Adam's sin.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 1:26a, 27a** Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him...

By the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ Jesus took to himself the flesh and blood of the Virgin Mary so as to be the true seed of David (as heir of David's throne, Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5; Luke 1:27).

It was prophesied as hope during Isaiah's time that a virgin would conceive and his name would be "Immanuel" which means "God with us".

<sup>ESV</sup> **Isaiah 7:14** Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

The Apostle Matthew shows how this prophecy is fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 1:21-23**: She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." <sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: <sup>23</sup> "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

The Apostle Luke tells us specifically that Mary was from David's lineage, so that God's purpose would be fulfilled:



<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 1:27** to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. And the virgin's name was Mary.

We are taught that although Jesus Christ would actually be the Son of the Most High God, he would be conceived by the Holy Spirit of the flesh and blood (true humanity) of Mary:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 1:34** And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup> And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy- the Son of God.

God's eternal Son, who is and continues to be God (God cannot cease to be God; he cannot empty Himself of his own Glory or Deity), made himself man.

**Isaiah 49:1b, 5:** The LORD called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he named my name....And now the LORD says, he who formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him; and that Israel might be gathered to him- for I am honored in the eyes of the LORD, and my God has become my strength...

**But Mary's son was "holy"** (Luke 1:35b). Mary imparted to her Son Jesus all that other mothers impart to their children, except her sin. This means that although Christ Jesus was born in the likeness of men, he was like his brethren in every way but **without sin**.

Christ took Mary's true substance, but the power of the Most High would cause Mary to conceive without taint of original sin: "the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God, Luke 1:35b):

<sup>ESV</sup> **Hebrews 2:14, 17, 4:15:** Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise *partook of the same things*...Therefore ***he had to be made like his brothers in every respect***, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people....For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but ***one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin***.

***Christ was free of actual sin.***

***Christ was free from inherent sin*** (he did not lust and never experienced discontentment and thanklessness).

Jesus Christ was "made like his brothers in every respect" yet "without sin". Christ Jesus was sinless.

As Puritan Richard Sibbes wrote: "[Christ Jesus] was to come 'from' Adam, but not 'by' Adam; for He was to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit."

As a human being, Jesus was subject to all the infirmities and needs of real humanity (he thirsted, he was tired and fatigued, he suffered, he wept, he learned, etc.).

Christ Jesus had to be conceived without sin. When Christ took our nature he purified and sanctified it by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary. This is our strength and confidence in our sanctification because we are united with Jesus Christ, the God-Man (cf. Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13). This was the point of the Apostle Peter in his first epistle:

***ESV 2 Peter 1:3-4: His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,<sup>4</sup> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.***

This purification and sanctification is the root of our purification and sanctification; we are truly made partakers of the divine nature.

As Richard Sibbes wrote: “God became man that he might make man like God, partaking of his divine nature, in grace here and glory hereafter.”

What once influenced us in our sinful nature (flesh) has been overcome by Christ’s victory! We can now be influenced by Christ’s divine nature in our union with him!

*“I know nothing in the world more useful, no point of divinity more pregnant, no greater spring of sanctifying our duties as Christians, than that God and man were made one, to make God and us one. Christ Jesus married our nature, that He might marry our persons so purely and intimately.... Christ Jesus sanctified his natural body by the Holy Spirit, and he will sanctify us by the same Spirit.” – Richard Sibbes*

The Apostle Paul employs this great and majestic Christology in Philippians 2:6-11 in order to teach God’s people how to live:

***“Have this mind which is yours in Christ Jesus...” (Phil. 2:5).***

From humiliation to exaltation... from cross to glory!

Remember to be like Christ in all you do and say by His grace! You have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5), encouragement from Christ, love from God, and the fellowship of the Spirit in union with the God-Man (Phil. 2:1-2).

God has done so much for us since the foundation of the world, how could he ever desert us?

We have cost God so much, will he ever hold back anything that we need?

Oh, the great price he has paid for us- -will he deny us now?!

NO! Christ considered us SIGNIFICANT!

Immanuel came to be GOD WITH US, GOD FOR US, GOD IN US; GOD BORN FOR US, GOD LIVING AND DYING FOR US, GOD BETWEEN US AS THE ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

We need to be encouraged and persuaded that God will continue the good work that He has begun in us- -and complete and perfect it (Phil. 1:6), because He loves us.

If in God's wisdom, he sent IMMANUEL to show us the way to heaven, to life, to tell us the truth, and grant us all we need for life and godliness, *is there anything he cannot do in your life? Is there anywhere in your life you cannot trust him?*

*<sup>ESV</sup> **John 17:3-6:** And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup> I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed. <sup>6</sup> "I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word.*

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