

Deity in Humanity; Part One

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I invite you to open your Bibles to the book of Philippians this morning. If you will turn to the book of Philippians we are continuing our verse by verse study of this epistle. We have moved on now from chapter one into chapter two. Philippians chapter two and this morning we are going to be beginning what my hope will be a two part sermon entitled, “Deity in Humanity.”

This is a continued theme from chapter one as Paul is dealing with the conflict in Philippi and the disunity there that has resulted and has spent a great deal of his penmanship devoted to this particular topic of unity, a very important topic, indeed. And we talked about unity in adversity and then last week we discussed unity in humility as we looked at probably one of the most practical sermons that has been preached at this place, looking at the various manifestations and practical ways, subtle ways in which pride manifests itself.

But this morning we depart from the intensely practical to plumb the depths of the deeply theological. And there is a phrase in the Church—imperatives always must flow from indicatives—that is, we don’t dare change a behavior until we find out what the Bible has to say about it. And this morning we are going to get the theology behind all of the practical things that we have been discussing over the past few weeks with regard to the issue of unity in the Church as we look at deity in humanity.

I am going to read Philippians chapter two verse five through 11.

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.¹

¹ Philippians 2:5-11.

Let's pray.

Lord, clearly you have put on our plate this morning a very, very profound theological truth. Help us, Lord, now in the understanding of our minds, the limited way in which we approach these massive texts in Scripture. Help us in the fallenness of our minds grapple with words like "infinity" and "eternity," things that aren't within the context of our being, our world, our life. Help us to understand this great and glorious topic that you have for us this morning we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

I am going to take this in two parts. The first part will be the descent which will cover verses six through eight, those three verses. And next week will be the ascent which is verse nine through 11.

Originally I set out to try to cover verse five through 11 in one sermon. That was foolish. It is not going to happen. I will be doing well to get past actually one clause.

"Although He existed in the form of God,"² would be enough for us to grapple with for the next month. But I am going to do my best to explain what is taking place here, because within these few verses we have before us one of the most difficult passages in the entire New Testament to interpret. One commentator even said that every word from this passage has formed its own theology. This is a challenge, to say the least. There is no passage outside of, perhaps, the book of Revelation that is more challenging to try to really explain and be responsible to the original intention of the Holy Spirit.

So let me just begin by saying that mankind has a problem. When we look at Scripture from Genesis to Revelation we understand that throughout Scripture we have a very, very deep and fundamental problem and that is sin. In Genesis chapter three we already find Adam and Eve succumbing to sin and we have what is known as the fall take place. And from there humanity has struggled.

It isn't very many chapters... as a matter of fact, the very next chapter we already have the case of one brother rising up and killing another brother. We have got the first case of murder going on. And from there in chapter six and verse five we learn that evil is pretty much pervasive throughout the entire world already. Every intention, every thought of mankind—and Genesis six and verse five tells us—was evil continually as wickedness had spread across the entire globe.

That is a problem.

In Psalm 14 verse one to three we see the Lord looking down from heaven to see if there is anybody that does good, if there is any that pursues understanding or righteousness and there isn't one. It says, "No, not even one."

² Philippians 4:6.

They have all turned aside. We have all together gone astray. That is a problem. We have got a big problem.

We look at Psalm 51 and verse five where David shows us that from the womb we are sinful.

We look at Romans three verses 10 to 18 which repeats Psalm 14. It repeats the fact that we have a very, very pervasive sin problem. Our throats are an open sepulcher or grave. Off our tongue is the poison of asps. That is the condition we are in. All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory, verse 23 of Romans three reminds us.

Romans one is very, very graphically depicting our condition in our fallen state.

So what can be done? What can be done? Well, what God decided to do is here before us in our text. The Son arose, if you will, from his rightful place next to the Father, shed his priestly robe and said, "I will go. I will save them." And the Father sent him in the fullness of time.

He began and descent and that is what we are looking at this morning. This is what is known, of course, as the incarnation. That is, God becoming man. That is what we have in our text this morning. We have God becoming man and we have Jesus Christ taking the descent from his place on high next to the Father that as I thought about it was even greater were a man to travel to the farthest star in the known universe and somehow through a quirk of nature there happened to be a gravitational pull from earth that could read that far and he fell from that place, spending thousands of years tumbling through space, traveling thousands and thousands of light years, finally landing on earth. That would be equivalent to dropping a pencil from your hand and letting it hit the floor compared to the descent that Jesus Christ made to solve this problem of sin in our lives.

Think about that. It is infinitely more, this descent that he made, this humiliation, this condescension.

We are going to try to wrap our minds around it this morning, but it won't be easy. It is going to be very difficult. Theologians have wrestled with this concept of the incarnation for years and they will continue to do so. But what is most important, given our text this morning, is that we want to be sure and keep it in the context. Because Paul says in verse five, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."³ And from there he unpacks the attitude that was in Christ Jesus.

But remember, the objective is in verse five. We are to have that same attitude. The attitude that Jesus had when even though he existed in the form of God he didn't regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but, instead, emptied himself taking the form of a bondservant, being made in the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the

³ Philippians 2:5.

cross. All of that to say that we ought to have the same mindset that Jesus has. So that is what you need to keep in mind as we go forward.

We are going to be talking about and unpacking what Jesus Christ did as much as a human can discuss or unpack something in an hour's time with a fallen human mind. We are going to do the best that we can to do that, but just remember that the purpose of all of this unpacking is that in the overall context Paul is dealing with this problem of disunity. That hasn't changed. He is looking for ways to get the folks in Philippi to humble themselves, to stop the conflict, to stop the disunity. And in so doing... he started this way back in the first chapter, as I said, and this theme continues on through chapter two. And now in his attempt to do that, he unfolds one of the greatest Christological passages in the entire New Testament.

But what I want you to think about is the context He is doing that for a very practical reason. He is doing that not just for a theology lesson this morning. He is doing that so you will take on the very mindset of your Lord Jesus Christ, because if we could do that—and I have been repeating this over the past few weeks as we have had this as our topic—we would not have a problem with disunity or conflict.

So last week we spent the time looking at pride which interrupts all of these objectives that Paul is enumerating here. And now we want to take a look at the mindset that Jesus Christ has, that we, too, might have the same. This passage which sounds the depths of the incarnation has a very, very useful purpose for us here this morning.

So this is one of the greatest texts that we can find in the New Testament that has to do with the nature of Jesus Christ. And I have got to tell you. I have, in the seven and a half months that Grace Bible Fellowship has existed, I can't recall in this short time struggling more with a passage of Scripture. This is a mountain of a passage.

I was telling someone that when Barbara came into my study last night I was still going at it. What had started on Thursday was still going last night at supper time, locked up.

And she came in to see how things were going as loving, godly wives will do. And I turned with... she caught me. After all the time I turned and with anguish on my face I said, "Why he is pleased to torment me in this way is beyond me."

If you grapple with these words, you know what I am talking about.

Attitude, verse five.

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."⁴

Keep on thinking, "in you which was also in Christ Jesus," is one way of putting it. And what was that way? What way was he thinking?

⁴ Ibid.

In one word, humility. Apart from himself is how he was thinking, outside of himself. If God was always or ever concerned about himself only, do you think that he would have sent his Son?

Jesus provides for us the supreme example of humility. He urges humility in the Philippians in our passages here as we are going through it.

Life would put it this way. Reflect in your own minds the mind of Christ Jesus. And what was that mind? What was that disposition? Well, Jesus said in Matthew 11:29, he put it this way, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and YOU SHALL IND REST FOR YOUR SOULS."⁵

What a statement from the Savior.

"Have this mind in you..."

Mueller said that pride is the most naked form of selfishness which is the essence of sin. If we could get this, folks, if we could get this, we would have it. We would have it. If we could get this mind that was in Christ that allowed him that emptying of himself, we would have all that he was from us. We would not have a problem with conflict or disunity.

So we have the eternal plan of salvation in this entire passage in two parts as I have said. And we are going to look at part one, the descent, this morning. We are going to look at verse six which is his divine possession, first of all and then, second, verse seven will be his earthly expression and, third, from verse eight is his humble [?]. I don't know, it rhymes with the rest of them. We will get there when we get there.

Verse six, his divine possession.

"Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped."⁶

All right. So the first thing that has to come to your mind as you are trying to work this passage out is in my understanding as a Christian from Scripture we have a God that does not what? Change. If you are asking the right question, that is the right one to ask right now. How could God, Jesus being God, change from one form to another? How could he become man? And that is the great issue to be grappling with here. That is the great issue that theologians and Bible commentators grapple with.

Malachi three and verse six says, "For I, the LORD, do not change."⁷

⁵ Matthew 11:29.

⁶ Philippians 2:6.

⁷ Malachi 3:6.

Hebrews 13 and verse eight says, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever.”⁸

James 1:17 says, “Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.”⁹

What do you do with that?

Well, you admit that God’s essence or his being does not change. It cannot change or it finds itself in violation of the passages that I just read, ok? God’s essence or being cannot change. That is not what is being said in this verse.

“Although He existed in the form of God.”¹⁰

This word “form” is the issue. That is what is at issue here. It is μορφή (mor-fay’) in the Greek, M O R P H E, μορφή (mor-fay’). You have heard the term to morph from one thing to the next, God’s essence or being cannot do that.

So what took place when God the Son, the second member of the trinity became man? What changed?

Now let me just give you a little bit of background very quickly on this term μορφή (mor-fay’). It has to have the ability to change because of how it is used in other passages.

You are familiar, for instance, with Romans 8:29 where it says that we are conformed into the image of the Son, into the image of Jesus Christ. It is the same word.

Or in 2 Corinthians—and I have got two here that you are very familiar with—2 Corinthians 3:18 where we are transformed from glory to glory to the image and likeness of Christ. So that transformation is the Greek word μορφή (mor-fay’). So there is some changeableness about it.

Here is the important thing to recognize from the passage. If you get this, hopefully the rest will fall into place. Look at the text and see what it says.

“Who, although He existed in the form of God...”¹¹

Some of your passages say, some of your translations say, “Being in the form of God.”¹² I prefer that actually. The New American Standard which is usually what I am

⁸ Hebrews 13:8.

⁹ James 1:17.

¹⁰ Philippians 2:6.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

accustomed to using says, “although He existed,”¹³ sounds as though it is expressing something past tense. And while that is true, it doesn’t carry the whole idea of what is called a present, active participle which is ὑπαρχῶ (hoop-ar’-kho). It comes from the words ὑπο (hoop-o’) which means under and αρχη (ar-khay) which means beginning. He is under the beginning, therefore he always was.

So what is happening there is although he existed, or being in the New King James and the NIV, forms this word that captures the idea that although the essence and being of God remains the same, the expression of that essence or being is what is changed when he becomes a man or when he takes on the form of a bond servant.

“Continuous,” one said, “of a previous state or existence. It stresses the essence of a person’s nature, that which is absolutely unalterable, inalienable and unchangeable. ὑπαρχῶν (hoop-ar’-khon) is that present active participle which holds his nature in place even though he changes the outward expression into a man.”

William Barclay called it, “The outward manifestation of an inner reality.”

That is what we are talking about. The Lord’s possession of divine essence did not cease. That has been the foundation of many heresies in what is called the kenosis theory. The kenosis comes from the Greek word that is emptying here. And may say, “Well, he cannot have become a man unless he departed from some part of his deity.”

That is not what is being said here.

“ὑπαρχῶν (hoop-ar’-khon) is a word that speaks,” this is from Weist, “of an antecedent condition protracted into the present.” All that to say it is a condition that he had that he holds on to.

Every bit that he possessed as deity is held on to as he takes the form of a human servant. Ok? But there is something else that you should know about this term μορφή (mor-fay’) that helps me, anyway, in terms of understanding it.

First of all it is a Greek philosophical term. We do not have in English a word that accurately translates this idea of μορφή (mor-fay’).

I am going to read something from Vincent that I found the most helpful.

“We must here dismiss from our minds the idea of shape,” because whenever we talk about the word ‘form’ or even if we use the Greek word μορφή (mor-fay’) you are thinking of something that is molding or changing. You are thinking of shape. That is not what this word means in Greek.

¹³ Ibid.

To continue, “The word is used in its philosophical sense to denote the expression of being.”

Ok, now we are getting somewhere. So this germ carries the idea of the expression of the being though the being doesn't change. Ok? So everything that he possessed in deity did not change, but the expression of that changed. He showed up as a man. Ok?

It denotes that expression of being which carries in itself the distinctive nature and character of the being to whom it pertains and is, thus, permanently identified with the nature and character. As applied to God the word is intended to describe that mode in which the essential being of God expresses itself. It is like the light from a fire. You know about the fire from the light of it that issues forth whether it is a bright fire or what type of fire it is is expressed through the light that it gives, the light, the heat. That is μορφή (mor-fay').

The essence of the fire doesn't change just because the light might change. That is what is going on here when you have that particular present active participle in front of the word μορφή (mor-fay').

This is very theological. It is not going to stay this way all morning. I am doing my best to make this as simple as possible for you, but this is a mountain of a concept. This condescension of Christ, the humiliation of Christ, the incarnation of Christ is monumental. It is huge.

So form can never deviate from giving expression to the essence or being.

Is everybody with me? All budding theologians here. Clear as mud.

We don't have a word that adequately conveys the idea of μορφή (mor-fay'). Form does not do it because what is going to be conjured up in your mind is a shape and that is not what it is talking about. So form in another way of saying it is that outward expression which a person gives of his inmost nature. This expression is not assumed from the outside. So shape doesn't work.

They have another Greek word that we are going to look at that does. It is called σχημα (skhay'-mah). This is a different word than that which speaks of the outside shape of something. It precedes directing from within.

Weist had a good illustration. He said, “I went to the tennis match yesterday. The winning player's form was excellent.”

He is not talking about the shape of the person. He is talking about their form which is giving expression to the ability, the essence of that particular player is expressed in his or her form, ok?

Everybody is right on track with this.

Ok.

Now when he was in heaven before he became a man, he had a particular expression or μορφή (mor-fay') then. But it was one in which human beings cannot perceive, only the angels, the angelic host, those spirit beings were able to see that particular expression of God. If it showed up... if you were able to take a rocket ship and if you were able to go to the third heaven to look you couldn't see it. You haven't been given the equipment. Do you see?

Let me read you this. Here is a more detailed way of saying this.

“This expression of the essence of his deity which our Lord gave in his pre incarnate state, before he was a man,” listen to this, “was given through a spiritual medium to spiritual intelligences, the angels. Human beings in their present state of being cannot receive such impressions since they are not equipped with the spiritual sense of perception which the angels have.”

Well, now, how about the mount of transfiguration? Listen to this.

He goes on and this is Weist.

“What Peter, James and John saw on the mount of transfiguration was an outward expression of the essence of deity that given through a medium by which the physical sense of the disciples could receive the expression given. But when the believers receive their bodies of glory they will be equipped,” we will be equipped, “to receive the expression of deity which the angels received and through a like spiritual medium,” end quote.

Isn't that fascinating? Before he ever became man he had a particular μορφή (mor-fay') or ay of expressing himself that all of the angels could behold. And, of course, Isaiah was able to have that peeled back much like the disciples were on the mount of transfiguration when Isaiah saw the Lord high and lifted up, didn't he? He was given the ability to see that which we cannot see now.

Folks, what I am getting at is he had to become a man for more reasons than that would be the only way he could serve as a sacrifice for us. You could not have perceived him any other way.

“In his pre incarnate state Christ possessed the attributes of God and so appeared tot hose in heaven who saw him. Here is a clear statement by Paul of the deity of Christ,” That is Robertson.

But we know this. John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”¹⁴

He was always existent.

“I and the Father are one,”¹⁵ says John 10:30.

John 8:58. “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.’”¹⁶

Now in verse eight where it says that, “being found in appearance as a man,”¹⁷ that word “appearance” there some of your Bibles says “fashion” is that other word σχημα (skhay'-mah). That does mean shape. That is the outward form which changes from time to time and experience to experience.

Let me put the two words together for you so that you can see the distinction.

Essential μορφη (mor-fay') of any human being is humanity. Ok? This never changes, but his σχημα (skhay'-mah) is continually changing.

This is the way one writer helped me understand it. A baby, a child, a boy, a youth, an old man always have the μορφη (mor-fay') of humanity, but the outward σχημα (skhay'-mah) changes all the time. See that?

So he showed up in a man that grew in stature, who was originally a baby and became a small boy, grew into youth and grew as a man. That would capture the idea behind the word σχημα (skhay'-mah). But he was always in that essence fully and completely human at every stage of his life. That is μορφη (mor-fay').

Expressed now coming from deity, coming from on high, he is now expressing himself in full humanity, full 100 percent man without the sin. And, at the same time, his divestiture of that which he emptied or gave up included nothing of the essence of his deity. He possessed it all.

We are going to look at the things that he willingly laid aside in a moment.

Something from Hendrickson helped me. Listen to this when we are looking at μορφη (mor-fay') over against σχημα (skhay'-mah) or the essence of something being expressed and the outward shape of something.

¹⁴ John 1:1.

¹⁵ John 10:30.

¹⁶ John 8:58.

¹⁷ Philippians 2:8.

“A deformed individual is generally in a worse condition than a disfigured person.”

A deformed individual is generally worse off than a disfigured one. Why? Because even though an accident or something that takes place might deform them, that is just the outward part. But if you have something from within that is causing a disfigurement, they are generally in worse shape. Does that make sense?

I can tell by your furrowed brows that it doesn't. Well, it helped me anyway.

It is according to Zodiates it is the utterance of the inner life, *υπαρχω* (hoop-ar'-kho), that is the word before it.

“Although He existed in the form of God.”¹⁸

υπαρχω (hoop-ar'-kho) involves continuing to be that which was before. He did not change being God, though the outward expression changed when he became a man. Ok?

In his incarnation Jesus took upon himself the form or *μορφη* (mor-fay') of a servant by taking upon himself the shape or *σχημα* (skhay'-mah) of a man.

Ok, I beat that to death. So I am going to walk away from it. If you still don't get it, join the rest of us. No, hopefully that is at least helpful on some level.

But he also says there he, “did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.”¹⁹

Some of your verses say, “robbery,” *αρπαγμος* (har-pag-mos') which means to seize something. He didn't consider his deity or his place, the things that he divested himself of as something that had to be held on to at all costs. No, he said, “I am willing to let go of these things in order to take the form of a man so that I might serve as their sacrifice.”

If a person refuses to cling to something, he empties or divests himself of it.

Most commentators agree that when one empties himself, he empties himself of something. But what? What?

So hopefully I have made it clear that he gave up nothing in terms of his being or essence of being deity. He was fully God and fully man when he arrived on the scene. Except the difference with this man is he had no sin. Ok?

“Possession of the divine essence is not spoken of here, but the expression of the divine essence is referred to, although possession is implied by the expression,” says Weisst.

¹⁸ Philippians 2:6.

¹⁹ Ibid.

So now let's move on as we are putting this together to the second part, his earthly expression, verse seven, his earthly expression.

So we have got his divine or heavenly possession. We have agreed that as he showed up as man he didn't let any of that go. He retains that, although the expression of that deity is now taken the form of a servant, same word, form, μορφή (mor-fay') of a servant, but in the appearance of a man, verse eight. That is outward shape. That is σχημα (skhay'-mah).

All right. Verse seven.

“But emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.”²⁰

Alexander Maclaren wrote this.

“To be born was his supreme act of condescension. It was love which made him assume the vestiture of human flesh. To die was the climax of his voluntary obedience and of his devotion to us.”

Do you realize in the span that I have this morning what I am trying to do? I am trying to explain to you something that started out in the heavenly places with God himself and came all the way down and became a man. That is nearly impossible. All we can hope to do is grab parts of this and, by God's grace, hopefully we will come away with a little bit better understanding than when we first came in.

But this is huge. This is huge. He emptied himself. I told you this comes from a Greek word κενωω (ken-o'-o) which means to empty and this is where you hear the theological term kenosis, the kenosis theory.

What is it that Jesus emptied himself of? It is to debase, to neutralize, to make of no reputation some of your versions have it put that way. He was of no repute, no reputation. He was void. He was empty of any high standing.

So instead of asserting his rights to the expression of the essence of deity, our Lord waived his rights to that expression being willing to relinquish them. This is, again, Weist, if necessary. He didn't consider it something that he needed to hold on to at all costs, or as theologians say, at all hazards, no matter what happens.

I don't know what you are going to do, you are fallen down there, but I can't come down because I am God.

²⁰ Philippians 2:7.

That is, he said, he did not consider it something that needed to be grasped or seized or held on to. He willingly let go and went down and descended and descended and descended and descended and descended way, way down to become man.

I can't wrap my mind around that, but that is what he did. That is what the Scripture says that he did.

“He did not consider the exercise of that expression such a treasure that it would keep him from setting the expression aside,” said Weist, “and making himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant,” same word. But it doesn't have that present active participle in front of it. He took the form of a bond servant, the outward expression of a servant. Instead of the way the angels and all the angelic hosts perceived him when he was in glory with the Father on high. He let go of that to take the form of a servant. And being found in the appearance as a man. Mind boggling. Mind boggling.

“The text does not say...” This is Gordon Clarke, “that Christ discarded his pre incarnate form. It says that he humbled himself by adding to himself a second form.”

So he didn't remove the second person of the trinity, his role as the Son, to become a servant. He added that. It was a different form, a different type of expressing that inner being or essence that never changes. He is a servant.

And the first thing that came to my mind that I want you to grab a hold of and take with you till I unpack is it: Whose servant was he? Because if you are tempted like me, you wan to say, “mine,” don't you? 'fess up. He is our servant. He came to serve us, didn't he? Oh, there is the washing the feet and so on.

No. It is much more profound than that. It is much more profound.

“He is adding a second form, adding this,” finishing with Clarke, “adding this second form was, indeed, a humiliation, but it was not suicide.”

I like the way Clarke writes.

“The person, nature or essence remained,” end quote. Ok?

“And being made in the likeness of men.”²¹

There is another word, ομοιωμα (hom-oy'-o-mah).

Being made in the likeness of something, the figure, an image, a likeness, a representation, likeness, that is, resemblance such as amounts also to equality or identity.

John MacArthur had to say this or had this to say.

²¹ Philippians 2:7.

“That which is made to be like something else, not just an appearance, but in reality.” Now listen to this. “He became exactly like all other human beings having all the attributes of humanity, a genuine man among men,” end quote.

Completely and entirely in this former expression, appearing now in the likeness of men, not just like them, not just a representation, not just an outward form, but in every sense of the word he was human, completely human. There was nothing unhuman about him except that he had no sin and he had no human father to sire him.

But he was that perfect representation of perfect, unfallen, untarnished, unadulterated perfectly pure humanity. That is how he showed up and he showed up in a form of a bond servant, in the likeness of a man.

“Instead of giving outward expression of his deity to the angels in his pre incarnate glory,” says Weist, “he gives outward expression of his humility in becoming the servant of mankind. The one expression was set aside so that the other could become fact,” end quote.

Notice, I am quoting a lot of different respectful theologians because I don’t want to be alone in this task this morning. This is... this makes me tremble. But I think there is some very, very gifted people that have helped me to understand this and I am sharing them with you today.

He gave up that one outward expression that only angels could perceive of his deity without divesting any part of his deity, maintaining that being or essence he took on a different form which is that of a servant. He added that on and showed up in the appearance and likeness as a man.

Just absolutely amazing. He emptied himself by taking something on to himself. The master now becomes the servant, amazing. He retained the form of God while in the form of a servant or salvation would not be possible. Right?

Matthew 20 verse 28.

“Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”²²

Whose servant is he?

Isaiah 52 and verse 13.

“Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up, and greatly exalted.”²³

²² Matthew 20:28.

²³ Isaiah 52:13.

Whose servant was he?

Isaiah 53 and verse 11.

“As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.”²⁴

Whose servant was he?

Behold, New Testament, Matthew 12 and verse 18.

“BEHOLD, MY SERVANT WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN; MY BELOVED IN WHOM MY SOUL is WELL-PLEASED; I WILL PUT MY SPIRIT UPON HIM, AND HE SHALL PROCLAIM JUSTICE TO THE GENTILES.”²⁵

Whose servant was he?

Can you tell me?

His Father. Thank you. His Father. His Father.

I am going to read five verses in rapid succession all from John.

John 4:34. “Jesus said to them, My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.”²⁶

John 5:30.

“I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”²⁷

John 6:38. “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”²⁸

John eight and verse 50. “But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.”²⁹

John 17:4 in his prayer to the Father. “I glorified Thee on the earth [speaking to the Father], having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do.”³⁰

²⁴ Isaiah 53:11.

²⁵ Matthew 12:18.

²⁶ John 4:34.

²⁷ John 5:30.

²⁸ John 6:38.

²⁹ John 8:50.

³⁰ John 17:4.

Have this mind in you also that was also in Jesus Christ who although he existed being in the form of God, did not consider it something that he had to hang on to at all costs in terms of his outward expression. He must enjoy that expression, don't you think, with the angelic hosts? No presence of sin or impurity, nobody living as his enemy, nobody sinning, nobody violating, no hatred, no sin, strife. He let go and descended, condescended down, down, down, down into the form and the expression of a bond servant and showed up in the likeness and appearance as a man.

We have got a lot to appreciate here, don't we? We have got a lot to appreciate. That is Paul's point. If I can't get you to settle these issues among you, have this attitude in you which was in Christ Jesus who although he was being God did not consider it something that he would be unwilling to let go of for your sakes to condescend and come down into this place, into this mess, though he did willingly.

Have that mind in you.

So I ask you. Of what did he empty himself? Of what? He is 100 percent God we are saying and 100 percent man with no comingling, no divided person. He is 100 percent and 100 percent. What did he empty himself of?

Well, Weist says, "He set aside the outward expression of his deity when expressing himself as a bond slave. It was the outward expression of the essence of his deity which our Lord emptied himself of during the time when he was giving outward expression of himself as a bond slave," end quote. Thank you very much.

What did he empty himself of?

Number one, his favor, his right standing to the law. That is, he never sinned, right? There was never any guilt on his account. Now you are getting it. Before his incarnation he always enjoyed a favorable position in relation to the law. There was never anything to have to deal with, in other words. But I read to you in the opening that there is a problem down here with the creation. Man's inhumanity to man, man's utter offense toward God, somebody must do something. They are all dead and dying. That is going to put you in a very, very difficult situation, Jesus. What will be your relationship to the law should you decide to come? You will be a man. You will then be available to serve as a sacrifice. But that would mean, Jesus, that all of the law that has been offended, all of the wrath that goes on into eternity is laid on him. This favorable position that he had relative to the law he let go.

Need some texts?

Isaiah 53:3-6.

"He was despised and forsaken of men."³¹

³¹ Isaiah 53:3.

Folks, keep in mind while I read this the position that he had before he came. Think about it.

He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.³²

Why? Allow that word, that one word question to ring around in your mind, to penetrate your heart. Why would he do this? He had a position of favor, a position relative to the law where there was no guilt to bear. He was perfect and he remained perfect. But relative to the law he took it all.

Hendrickson said, “From the infinite sweep of eternal delight in the very presence of his Father he willingly descended into this realm of misery in order to pitch his tent for a while among sinful men, he before whom the seraphim covered their faces. The object of the most solemn adoration voluntarily descended to the realm where he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.”

Do you think he gave up just a little bit?

At that point I am ready to say he gave it all up. Aren't you? That is the way it seems, while in heaven he had no burden of guilt to bear. None of it rested on him.

But then 2 Corinthians 5:21 says something equally as profound.

“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”³³

Why? Why would he do that?

Second, he emptied himself of his glory. Not only his favor, but his glory. He said in that prayer to the Father, ““And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself.”³⁴

He is about to be finished with this.

³² Isaiah 53:3-6.

³³ 1 Corinthians 5:21.

³⁴ John 17:5.

“...with the glory which I had with Thee [past tense] before the world was.”³⁵

Anticipating τετελεσται (te-tel'-es-tai), “It is finished.”³⁶

“I can come back.”

His glory was not lost or forfeited. Just know that it was veiled in humanity. It as veiled.

Did his own brothers know who he was? His own brothers? Did the brilliant religious people of the day know that their Messiah was there, that God was there?

Not only his favor, but his glory, also, three, his majesty. He went from this, listen.

In the year of King Uzziah's death, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings; with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke.³⁷

He went from that to this. “For he grew up...”³⁸

He is now into humanity.

For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.³⁹

Look at the contrast. Someone who you could not avoid, who caused Isaiah to fall on his face like a dead man and beg, “Woe is me. I am undone.”⁴⁰ In the presence of such glory and majesty and holiness, to this, Isaiah 52:14.

“Just as many were astonished at you, My people, So His appearance was marred more than any man, And His form more than the sons of men.”⁴¹

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ John 19:30.

³⁷ Isaiah 6:1-4.

³⁸ Isaiah 53:2.

³⁹ Isaiah 53:2-3.

⁴⁰ Isaiah 6:5.

Mark 9:12 says, “that He should suffer many things and be treated with contempt.”⁴²

John 1:10-11.

He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.⁴³

This he willingly did in the emptying.

John 9:28. “And they reviled him, and said, ‘You are His disciple, but we are disciples of Moses.’”⁴⁴ The Pharisees speaking here.

Verse 29. “We know that God has spoken to Moses; but as for this man, we do not know where He is from.”⁴⁵

“We don’t know where he is from?”⁴⁶

From Pilate.

“But you have a custom...”⁴⁷

He is on trial, standing him up.

“But you have a custom, that I should release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?”⁴⁸

What did they say?

“Therefore they cried out again, saying, ‘Not this Man, but [who?] Barabbas.’ Now Barabbas was a robber.”⁴⁹

“Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, ‘Behold, the Man!’”⁵⁰

And he was every bit a man, not the man. He was man. Not a man, he was man, perfect

⁴¹ Isaiah 52:14.

⁴² Mark 9:12.

⁴³ John 1:10-11.

⁴⁴ John 9:28.

⁴⁵ John 9:29.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ John 18:39.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ John 18:40.

⁵⁰ John 19:5.

humanity. That was the expression that he chose that he might serve for the Father on the cross that you and I might have eternal life.

He emptied himself of his riches, four.

Matthew eight verse 20.

“And Jesus said to him, ‘The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.’”⁵¹

Listen to this. As one commentator reminds us, “He owned nothing, not even the clothes on his back. Everything he had, including his life, belonged to his master. Jesus did own his own clothes, but he owned no land or house, no gold or jewelry. He owned no business, no boat and no horse. He had to borrow a donkey when he rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. He had to borrow a room for the Last Supper and even was buried in a borrowed tomb. He refused any property, any advantages, any special service to himself relative to his glory. The King of kings and Lord of lords willingly became the bond servant of bond servants. The one who was in the beginning with God and through whom all things came into being claimed as his own nothing that he created,” end quote.

Do you realize how mind boggling this is? Jesus was creating human beings while he was a man. He was still omnipresent. How is that? He was still omniscient. How is that? He is still creating, still knitting people together in their mother’s wombs while we are slapping his face. Mind boggling. Just start there and take your mind down that road a ways and it is absolutely mind boggling.

2 Corinthians 8:9 says, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became [what?] poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”⁵²

Third, finally, this will be brief. This is what I couldn’t remember in the beginning. His obedient humiliation, verse eight, his obedient humiliation.

“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”⁵³

This is... we can only peel the edge on this. We can’t possibly plummet these depths. We can look with awe and wonder. That is the best we can do.

Crucifixion was, arguably the most excruciatingly painful, number one, and, number two, most shameful ways that man, wicked man could ever conjure up as far as an execution and punishment. It was horrible. It was terrible. And it was shameful.

⁵¹ Matthew 8:20.

⁵² 2 Corinthians 8:9.

⁵³ Philippians 2:8.

Don't think this point as lost on Paul. Remember Paul was two things. Paul was a Jew. So Paul would have, as he penned these words, he would have realized as a Jew what a shame it is for someone to be crucified or hung on a tree because the Scripture says, "Cursed is anyone who is hung on a tree."

Now he is promoting this same man, this God man Jesus as the Messiah. Don't think this is lost on Paul when he writes, "Even death on a cross,"⁵⁴ because he was not only a Jew, he was a Roman citizen.

Folks the man, the fallen man that wrote this letter could not be crucified because he was a Roman citizen. Even Paul could not be crucified because he was a Roman citizen. Yet the Lord of glory was.

How did Paul feel when these words came out of his mouth? He became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross, something I won't have to endure and something I know from my Jewish studies with Gamaliel is the most heinous, humiliating, accursed way to die. That couldn't possibly be the Messiah, thought most of the Pharisees.

"He came to die. He was mocked, falsely accused, spat upon, beat with fists, scourged and had part of his beard painfully plucked out. Yet he was never defensive, never bitter, never demanding, never accusing. He refused to assert his rights as God or even as a human being," end quote.

I don't know where else to take you this this morning. In our culture we have an hour or so. I haven't even scratched the surface and we will move along. Oh, we have got a wonderful place to go from here. We get to go to his glorious exaltation because the Father is very careful to exalt him for what he has done. That we will look at next time. But I haven't even scratched the surface here this morning in terms of the impact, in terms of the import of what Christ did in his incarnation, in his condescension, in his humiliation.

Let me read two more passages, one more quotation and I will let you go.

Matthew 27:27-31.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. And they stripped Him, and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they kneeled down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. And after they had mocked Him, they took His robe off and put His garments on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Philippians 2:8.

⁵⁵ Matthew 27:27-31.

They wouldn't even let him keep the cheap, soiled, perhaps discarded king's garment that they threw on him just for the purpose of mocking him. They stripped that back away, took it back away from him. They gave him his own clothes.

They beat him on the head. This, our κεφαλή (kef-al-ay') our exalted head, the head of the Church. When he for our sakes took the expression of that deity into the form of a bond servant, in the appearance of a man we took that head and we beat it. He is our κεφαλή (kef-al-ay'). He is our exalted head. And we beat it beyond recognition. We slapped it and spit on it and plucked its beard.

Isaiah 53:10-12.

“But the LORD was pleased To crush Him.”⁵⁶

Are you absolutely mind boggled yet? I am.

...putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.⁵⁷

This is our Lord, our precious God, our Savior.

I haven't scratched the surface of what he did. I will go from here and ask the Lord's forgiveness for any ineptitude, things that I have surely gotten wrong. This is so profound, at one point over the past three days I wanted to depart from it all together and tell you this morning, “I cannot treat this passage.” Would you want to? I am just a man, nowhere near the man he was.

We need to return to our context, because there is a point here for us this morning, wasn't there? A lot of theology, but there was a purpose here. Remember what it was?

Have this attitude in you.

Paul Reese wrote, “Look at him. This amazing Jesus, he is helping Joseph make a yoke in that little carpenter's shop in Nazareth. This is the one who apart from his self emptying could far more easily make a solar system or a galaxy of systems. Look at him again dressed like a slave with towel and basin for his menial equipment. He is bathing

⁵⁶ Isaiah 53:10.

⁵⁷ Isaiah 53:10-12.

the feet of some friends of his who but for their quarrelsomeness should have been washing his feet. He humbled himself.

“‘Don’t forget this,’ cries Paul to his dear friends at Philippi. ‘Don’t forget this when the slightest impulse arises to become self assertive, self seeking and so to break the bond of your fellowship with one another.’”

In a very few short words in our epistle he is going to name two women who are fighting in the church. They are in the eternal record now because of their bickering. How would you like that if that were your name? He names names. He names names.

Have this mind in you, have this attitude which was in our Lord, our exalted living head who did not consider it robbery, a thing to be grasped or clutched even though he was, I am sure, well satisfied, being in the form of God. He let go. He emptied himself. Nothing of his deity, setting prerogatives, majesties aside, the free exercise of independent use of some of his attributes, but still fully God and fully man, taking the form of a servant, a bond servant and being found in the likeness of men, appearing as a man. He humbled himself becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.

Will you consider this? Will you?

The next time you have a point that has to be made, the next time that you had yet another expectation disappointed, the next time you have got to exercise your right, will you remember this man?

Let’s pray.

Father, we thank you. Lord, I do ask for forgiveness for where I may have mishandled something, mistreated. I know, Lord, that even in an imperfect presentation your will is being accomplished. Your Word does not return void and even here in this place among these hearers and those who are listening to this recording, your purposes are being accomplished because your purposes and abilities I am thankful transcend my abilities. You overcome those weaknesses, those failings. I readily admit, oh Lord, that this is too much, too much to handle in a single morning. We are accustomed to only sitting and listening so long and these are such profound and difficult things to listen to. We must end. Forgive us, Lord, but was ask you that as we do depart from this place you will cause a remembrance of these things in our mind and in our hearts. Be pleased with our lives for what you have done here today and what you will do. Oh, Lord, I beg of you. For the unity in this place that is produced only through humility, may we have the mind of Christ? And may you be glorified now and forever for it is in his precious name we pray. Amen.