

Philippians Series

Lesson #040

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Dean Bible Ministries

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Who Was Jesus? Philippians 2:4–11



Matt. 16:13, “When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, ‘Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?’”

Matt. 16:14, “So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’”

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Matt. 16:14, “So they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’”

Matt. 16:15, “He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’

Matt. 16:16, “Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’

Matt. 16:17, “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.’ ”

Matt. 16:18, “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.”



John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

John 10:30, “I and My Father are one.”

John 14:9, “Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, “Show us the Father”?’ ”

Are Jesus and the Father simply two different ways the One God reveals Himself?

Prov. 8:22, “The LORD possessed me [wisdom] at the beginning of His way, before His works of old.

Prov. 8:23, “I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth.

Prov. 8:24, “When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water.

Prov. 8:25, “Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth;”

Mark 10:18, “So Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.’ ”

1 Tim. 2:5, “For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus,”

We learned that:

- 1. Php. 2:5–11 was written in context to provide an example of humility and serving one another, which is stated in Php. 2:1–4.**
- 2. That Christ Jesus preexisted His incarnation as undiminished Deity.**
- 3. The focus in the description of Christ is on His willingness to restrict His use of divine prerogatives to take on the form of a human, with the essence of a servant, which is to be the kind of thinking that should characterize our thinking.**

The emphasis in all of these descriptions relates to the care, concern, comfort which we have been given in Christ.

God's grace in action has provided this comfort and care to all of us, and none of us deserve it.

Therefore, there is no basis at all for superiority, for arrogant ambition, or inordinate competition in the body of Christ.

We are all to serve one another from humility and concern for others more than self.

Our example for serving through humility is Christ!

What we are to learn:

- 1. With our new identity, the identity of the “new man,” being “in Christ” we have received grace, unmerited favor, none is better or worse. There is no basis for pride or arrogance or selfish ambition or self-serving.**
- 2. As a result, we should think in terms of unity—one minded—and if that is not possible there must be division at times.**

“[Philippians 2:5–11 introduces] the action of Christ in proceeding from glory to become Man and suffer on the cross ... as an illustration of the mind of Christ. In the accompanying explanation, the apostle gave one of the most concise theological statements of the incarnation to be found anywhere in the Scriptures.”

~John Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 138.

Php. 2:3, “Not thinking according to selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” [RD]

**ταπεινοφροσύνη *tapeinophrosunē*
humility**

**ταπεινόω *tapeinoō*
3 sing aor act indic
to humble, humiliate
Php. 2:8, “He
humbled Himself ...”**

Matt. 11:29, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly [humble] in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Luke 14:11, “For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

**ταπεινός *tapeinos*
masc sing nom
humble; humility**

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Php. 2:8, “He
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Prov. 3:34, “Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the humble.”

Quoted in 1 Pet. 5:5, 6; James 4:6

Each is associated with commands to be humble.

James 4:6, “But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: ‘God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble’.”

Eph. 4:2, “with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love,”

Col. 3:12, “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;”

1 Pet. 5:5, “Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘*God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble*’.”

**ταπεινοφροσύνη *tapeinophrosunē*
humility**

Php. 2:3, “Nothing through selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility of mind let each think others better than himself.”

[RD]

ταπεινοφροσύνη *tapeinophrosunē*

fem sing dat

humility

Php. 2:8, “And by (or when?) being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” [RD]

ταπεινῶ *tapeinoō*

aor act indic 3 sing

“to humble, to see oneself in proper relation to reality, to place under authority”

MAJOR QUESTIONS THE POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCH STRUGGLED TO ANSWER:

What was Jesus before He came? If He was eternal God, then are there not two gods, or three?

If He was created, then how can He be God, if He is not eternal?

How do we understand these apparently contradictory passages?

1. The illustration, the picture, the example for us of humility.

Php. 2:5, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,” [NKJV]

Php. 2:5, “Let this mental attitude be among yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,” [NKJV]

φρονέω *phroneō*

present active

imperative 2P

MajT has a present

passive 2P

**“to think, reason,
mental attitude”**

Who Was Jesus Before He Came?

Php. 2:6, “who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,” [NKJV]

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1. What does it mean “being in the form of God?”

What does “being” indicate? past, present?

What does form mean? shape? or something else?

What does robbery have to do with equality with God?

Php. 2:6, “who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,” [NKJV]

**ὑπάρχω *huparchō*
present active participle
anarthrous adverbial
concessive participle,
“although existing
eternally”**

**ἡγέομαι *hēgeomai*
aorist middle indicative
deponent 3S
“to engage in an
intellectual process,
think, consider, regard”**

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At a point in the distant past, Christ Jesus existed continuously in the form of God, at some point He considered that full form of God was not something to be grasped after.

Php. 2:6, “who, though existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,”

**ὑπάρχω *huparchō*
present active participle
anarthrous adverbial
concessive participle,
“although He existed
eternally”**

**μορφή *morphē*
“form, outward
appearance, shape
or expression;
used of the nature
or essence of
something”**

The Form of God

His being (subsistence existing) in the form of God does not indicate that once He *emptied* Himself, that He no longer possessed the full range of divine attributes.

Chafer: “all passages which affirm His Deity after the incarnation—and there are many—establish the fact that Deity was not surrendered or any attribute thereof when He became flesh. A change of position or relationship is implied, but no surrender of essential Being is indicated, nor is such a surrender possible (cf. Rom. 1:3, 4; 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 4:4).” (We will look at these later.)

Col. 1:19, “For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell,”

Col. 2:9, “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;”

1 Tim. 3:16, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.”

Titus 2:13, “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,”

John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

John 17:5, “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”

WHO (Lord Jesus Christ), although eternally existing with identical essence to God did NOT think ...

*Is this thinking, this mental attitude,
part of His Deity . . . or His humanity?*

Php. 2:6, “WHO (Lord Jesus Christ), although [He] eternally existing with identical essence to God did NOT think it robbery to be equal with God,”

ἄρπαγμός *harpagmos*

accusative masculine singular

“grasp, seize, snatched”

**1. a violent seizure of property,
robbery**

**2. equivalent to *harpagma*,
something to which one can
claim or assert title by gripping
or grasping**

Php. 2:6, “WHO (Lord Jesus Christ), although [He] eternally existed with identical essence to God did NOT think EQUALITY WITH GOD A CLAIM TO BE SELFISHLY GRASPED AFTER.”

2. What was Jesus When He Came?

Php. 2:7, “but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.” [NKJV]

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Php. 2:7, “but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” [ESV]

Php. 2:7, “but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men.” [NASB95]

Php. 2:7, “Instead He emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men. And when He had come as a man in His external form,” [HCSB]

**Php. 2:7, “but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.”
[NKJV]**

**ἀλλά; *alla*,
“But,”
strong contrastive
conjunction**

**Php. 2:7, “but willingly limited Himself by taking the form of a servant/slave, and coming in the likeness of men.”
[RD]**

**ἀλλά; *alla*,
“But,”
strong contrastive
conjunction**

**κενόω *kenoō*,
aorist active
indicative 3S
“to make empty, to
empty, to render
void; to divest
Himself” ~BDAG**

**Christ performed the
action on Himself**

**ἑαυτοῦ; *heautou*,
reflexive pronoun
accusative
masculine 3S
“Himself”**

Php. 2:7, “but willingly limited Himself by means of receiving the form of a servant/slave, and coming in the likeness of men.” [RD]

**ἀλλά; *alla*,
“But,”
strong contrastive
conjunction**

**λαμβάνω *lambanō*
Aor act part masc sing
nom to take, receive,
choose;
an adverbial ptcp of
means.
“By MEANS of receiving
”
...**

**κενόω *kenoō*,
aorist active
indicative 3S
“to make empty, to
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**ἑαυτοῦ; *heautou*,
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“Himself”**

Php. 2:7, “but emptied Himself, [by] receiving the essence of a servant/slave, and being made in the likeness of men.”

μορφή *morphē*

“form, outward appearance, shape or expression; used of the nature or essence of something” (Php. 2:6)

Php. 2:6, “WHO (Lord Jesus Christ), although eternally existing with identical essence to God did NOT think it robbery to be equal with God,

Php. 2:7, “but willingly restricted Himself, [by] receiving the nature of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.”

The challenge:

What does it mean that the Second Person of the Trinity *emptied* Himself?

Chafer: “The *Kenosis Theory* is usually an extreme view of Christ’s self-emptying, which self-emptying took place at the incarnation when He exchanged what may be termed His eternal mode of existence for that related to time, from the form of God to the form of a servant or bonds slave. Certain penalties or forfeitures were involved in this exchange, which by the unbelieving have been enlarged beyond the warrant of the Scriptures.”

Chafer (cont'd)

“Naturally, the phrase *emptied Himself* may suggest, to those whose minds so demand, the notion that He divested Himself of all divine attributes. Devout scholars cannot accept this conception and they evidently have not only the support of the context but that of all Scripture.

“The *kenosis* question is not so much concerned with the *humiliation* of Christ as it is with the *condescension*. The question inquires. How much did He release?”

Apparent human limitation verses:

Mark 13:32, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

Luke 2:52, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

Heb. 5:8, “though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.”

**But do these verses indicate an absence of divine attributes?
Or are they part of the unique one Person with two natures?**

A frequently cited definition:

In hypostatic union, while not relinquishing any attribute of His deity, Jesus Christ willingly restricted the [independent use of His divine attributes](#) in compliance with the Father's plan for the Incarnation (Heb. 2:6–11; 10:5–7). Thus He established in His humanity a prototype spiritual life which is the precedent for the operational spiritual life of the Church Age believer.

John Walvoord: *Jesus Christ Our Lord*, 144-145.

“The act of *kenosis* as stated in Philippians 2 may therefore be properly understood to mean that Christ surrendered no attribute of Deity, but that He did voluntarily restrict their independent use in keeping with His purpose of living among men and their limitations. The summary which is given by A. H. Strong sets forth the true doctrine in comparison to the false in these words:”

“Our doctrine of Christ’s humiliation will be better understood if we put it midway between two pairs of erroneous views, making it the third of five. The list would be as follows:

- (1) Gess: The Logos gave up all divine attributes;**
- (2) Thomasius: The Logos gave up relative attributes only;**
- (3) True View: The Logos gave up the independent exercise of divine attributes;**
- (4) Old Orthodoxy: Christ gave up the use of divine attributes;**
- (5) Anselm: Christ acted as if he did not possess divine attributes.”**

1. The Son of God willingly veiled His preincarnate glory by giving up the outer appearance of God in order to take on the form and function of a finite human body.

Jn. 17:5, “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” [NKJV]

2. Christ willingly submitted to the Father's will to restrict the use of His divine attributes in relationship to the tests, temptations, and struggles He faced in His incarnation.

Heb. 10:5, “Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘*Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me.*’

Heb. 10:6, “ ‘In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure.’

Heb. 10:7, “Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come—In the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God.’ ” [NKJV]

3. Only two times out of probably dozens or hundreds of miracles is it stated that He performed these in the power of the Holy Spirit. In many miracles, Christ performed them in His own omnipotence to demonstrate that He was fully God.

Matt. 12:28, “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

Luke 4:14, “Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region.

Luke 4:15, “And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.”

Php. 2:7, “but willingly restricted Himself, [by] receiving the essence of a bond-servant, and by having come into existence in the likeness of men.”

γίνομαι *ginomai*

aorist middle participle;

“To come into being, to come into existence.”

“... And by means of coming into existence”

contrast with His Deity which

“existed” eternally, vs. 6

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**contrast with His Deity which
“existed” eternally, vs. 6**

**ὁμοίωμα *homoiōma*
dat neut sing
likeness, the essence
of humanity**

He Willingly Restricted Himself

**by Receiving the Essence (Nature)
Of A Servant/Slave**

And

by Coming Into Existence

In

**The Essence
Of A Man.**

4. What Kind of Man was He? What did He do?

Php. 2:8, “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.” [NKJV]

Php. 2:8, “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.” [NKJV]

εὕρισκω *heuriskō*

aor pass part masc sing

nom

to find

“by being found ...”

Php. 2:8, “And by (or when?) being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” [NKJV]

**εὕρισκω *heuriskō*
aor pass part masc sing
nom
to find**

“by being found ...”

**σχῆμα *schēma*
dat neut sing
form, outward form
“the generally
recognized state or
form in which
something appears”**

Php. 2:8, “And by (or when?) being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” [RD]

ταπεινῶ *tapeinoō*

aor act indic 3 sing

“to humble, to see oneself in proper relation to reality, to place under authority”

Php. 2:8, “And by (or when?) being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” [RD]

ταπεινῶ *tapeinoō*

aor act indic 3 sing

“to humble, to see oneself in proper relation to reality, to place under authority”

γίνομαι *ginomai*

participle aorist middle

**deponent nominative
masculine singular**

“he humbled himself *by becoming obedient up to death, even the death on the cross*”

**Php. 2:9, “For this reason also, God highly exalted Him,
and bestowed on Him the name which is above every
name,”**

Who was Jesus when He came?

Who was Jesus before He came?

Who was Jesus before He came?

Understanding Who God is: Unity and plurality

Did Jesus pre-exist creation? And if so, is He eternal?

Distinguish preexistence from eternality of Christ

- **Passages which indicate His eternality**
- **Passages in the Old Testament which teach His preexistence**
- **Passages which predict the coming of the Messiah**
- **Passages which indicate His humanity**
- **Passages which indicate His Deity**
- **Passages in the gospels which indicate His humanity and His Deity**
- **Passages in the Epistles which indicate His humanity and Deity (The Arian Controversy, Council of Nicea)**