

Philippians Series

Lesson #041

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Dean Bible Ministries

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Who Was Jesus Before He Came? Philippians 2:5–11



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.’ ”

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.**

“[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.

1. Jesus' incarnation is explained as the ultimate illustration of humility and service with the absence of all self-centeredness.

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

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

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]

2. 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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**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”**

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, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,” [NKJV]

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?

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.)

ESSENCE OF GOD

HOLY

Sovereign

Omniscience

Righteousness

Omnipresent

Justice

Omnipotent

Love

Veracity

Eternal Life

Immutability

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.”

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]

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.”

**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 made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.” [NKJV]

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 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
empty, to render
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**ἑαυτοῦ; *heautou*,
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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.”

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:”

- 1. The basic meaning of the verb *kenoo* is to empty, to divest of position or prestige (Php. 2:7) [BDAG].**
- 2. The *kenosis* is in relation to the incarnation of the eternal Second Person of the Trinity, the Son, in a finite human body bounded by space and time. Undiminished Deity adjusted or adapted itself to finite humanity.**
- 3. This occurred without either giving up or losing any attributes of Deity or reducing humanity.**
- 4. The result was the hypostatic union: Jesus of Nazareth, was undiminished Deity and true or genuine humanity in the likeness of the first Adam.**

1. The Son of God willingly veiled His pre-incarnate glory by restricting the outer appearance and privileges 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.”

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]

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)

The Unity of God

The Unity of God

1. God is One. God is One, He is a unity.

Deut. 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!”

אֶחָד *ʾechad* masc sing abs card one (m), a unity of
This word occurs 960 times as a noun, adjective, or
adverb, as a cardinal or ordinal number, often used in a
distributive sense. It is closely identified with יָחַד *yachad*
“to be united”

The word does not mean an absolute singularity!

Judg. 20:8, “So all the people arose as one man, saying, ‘None of us will go to his tent, nor will any turn back to his house;’”

Ex. 26:6, “And you shall make fifty clasps of gold, and couple the curtains together with the clasps, so that it may be one tabernacle.”

Gen. 2:24, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

Matt. 22:36, “ ‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?’

Matt. 22:37, “Jesus said to him, ‘*You shall love the LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.*’ ”

2. This *oneness* of God means three things:

God is a unity: there is not more than one God.

God is a simplicity: there are not two or more parts in God.

God is a Triunity: there are three Persons with the nature of being one God.

3. Biblical basis for God's unity

Gen. 1:1, “In the beginning God [*Elohim*] created the heavens and the earth.”

Isa. 44:6, “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.’ ”

Isa. 45:18, “For thus says the LORD, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited: ‘I am the LORD, and there is no other.’ ”

1 Cor. 8:4, “Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one.”

Eph. 4:6, “one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

4. Theologically God must be a unity.

Infinity implies unity. God is infinite in His being. There cannot be two or more infinite beings. Having more than one infinite is impossible, any more than there can be two Alls, or two everythings, or two infinities, such as God and the universe. Therefore the universe cannot be infinite.

- 5. God's unity means polytheism, the existence of many gods, is false.**
- 6. The unity of God contradicts three gods, three distinct beings in the Godhead. Monotheism asserts one infinite Being who exists as three Persons, not three beings.**
- 7. The unity of God was never challenged in the early Church.**

Tertullian [coined the term *trinitas*]

“I testify that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are inseparable from each other. ... My assertion is that the Father is one, the Son is one, and the Spirit is one—and that they are all distinct from each other.”

The Plurality

- 1. The word *trinitas* was coined by Tertullian in the late second century. There is only one God existing in three Persons.**

The Plurality

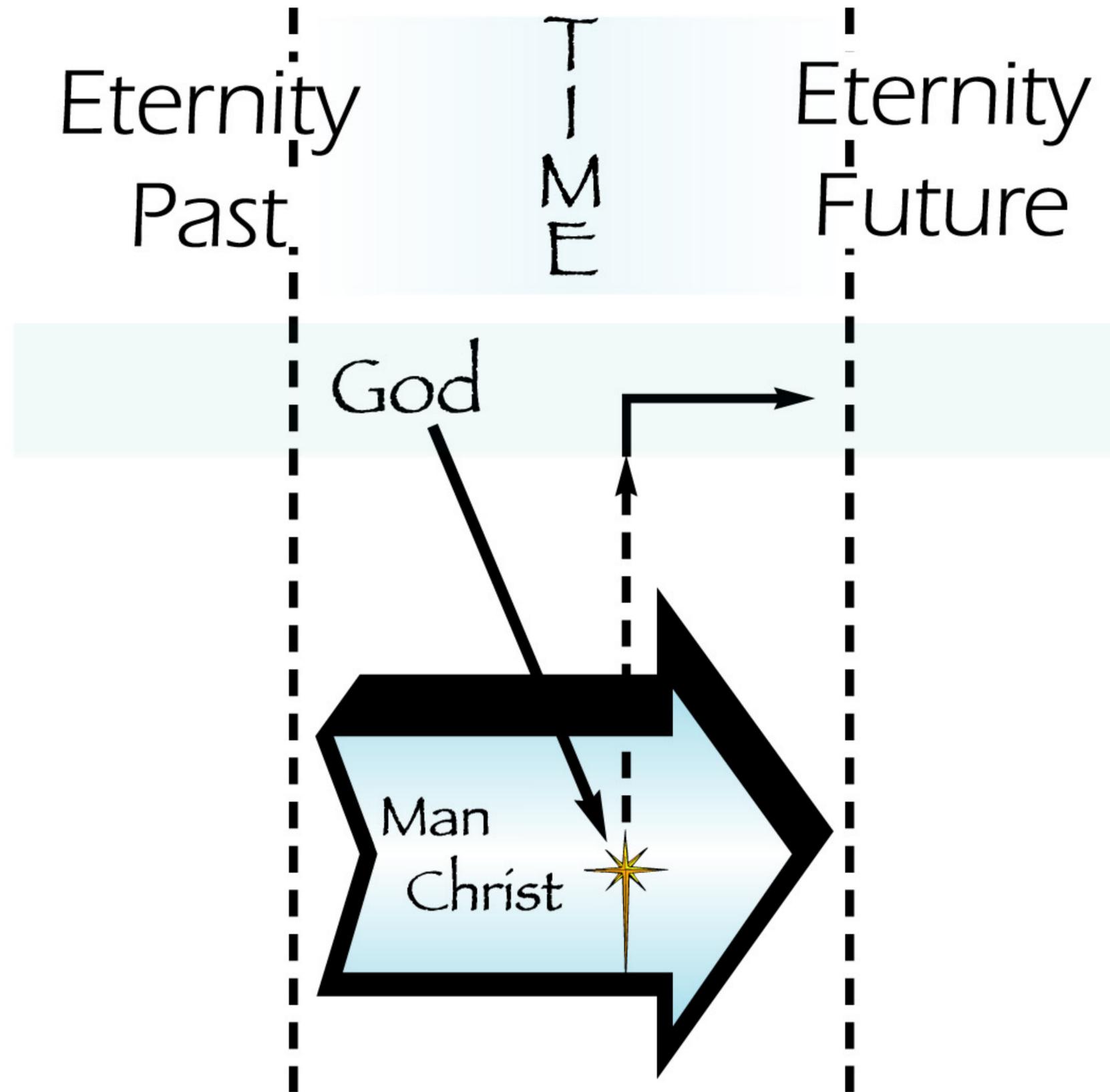
2. The early Church struggled to explain this. The Scriptural evidence is that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. Three Persons. So how to explain this?

The Plurality

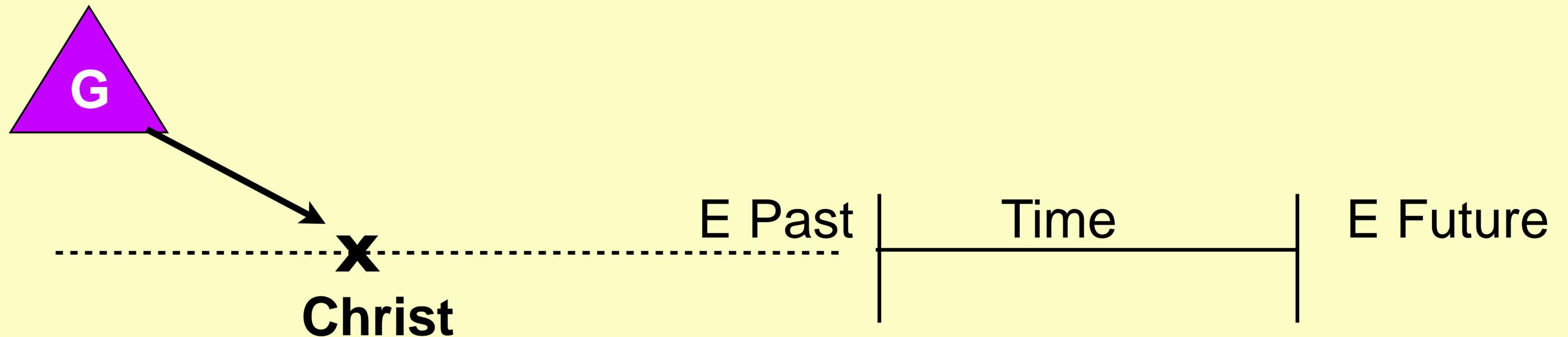
There were basically two options:

Option 1: Dynamic Monarchianism (or adoptionism), which is the heresy of unitarianism: God the Father infused or imparted deity to Jesus at sometime during His life on the earth. This denies the absolute or undiminished deity of Christ saying that Jesus was a human endowed with divine powers.

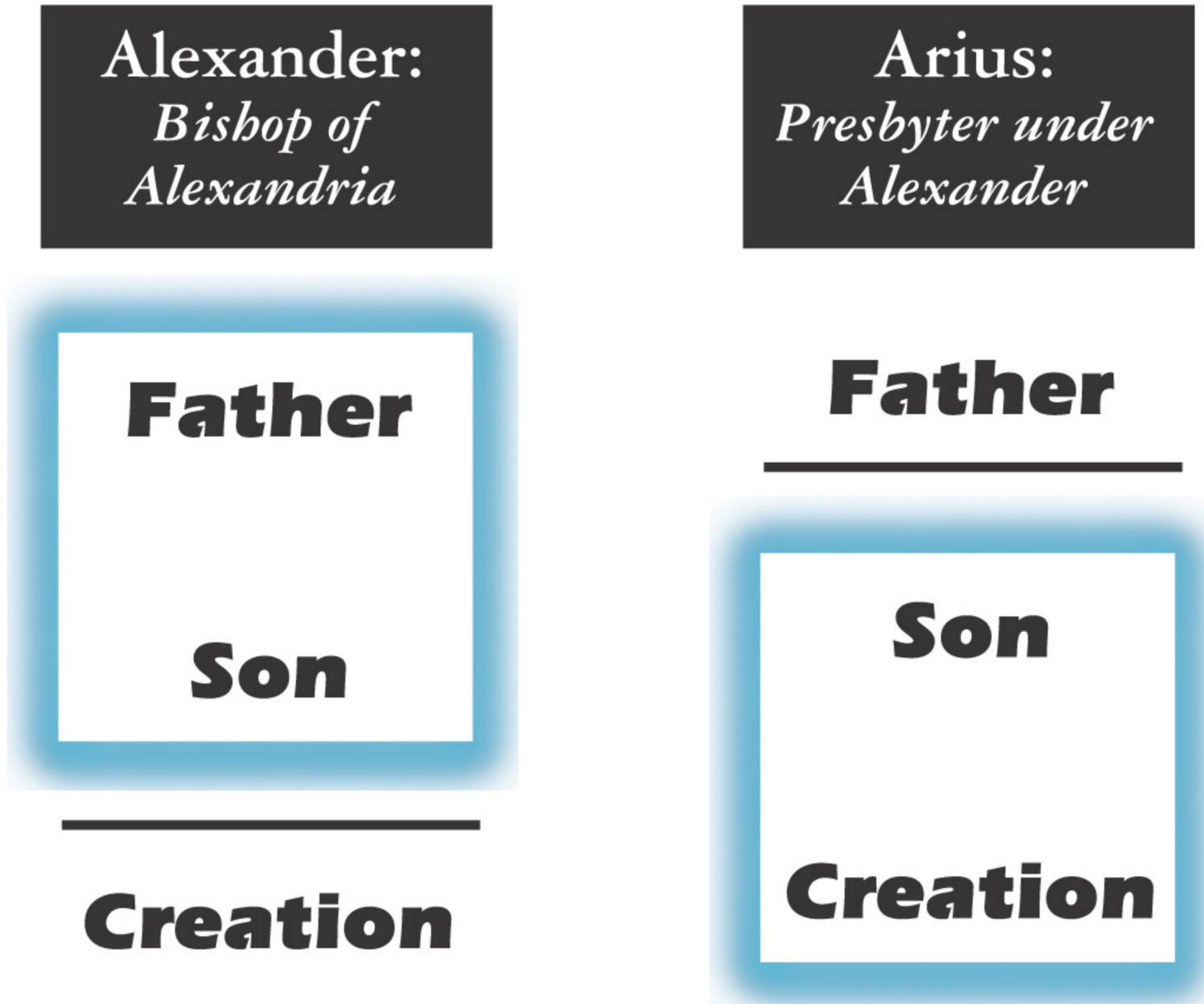
Adoptionism: An Attempt to Explain Christ



Arianism: A form of dynamic monarchianism is Arianism, which explained the relation to the Father by saying the Son was created in eternity past. Thus the Son was not full deity.

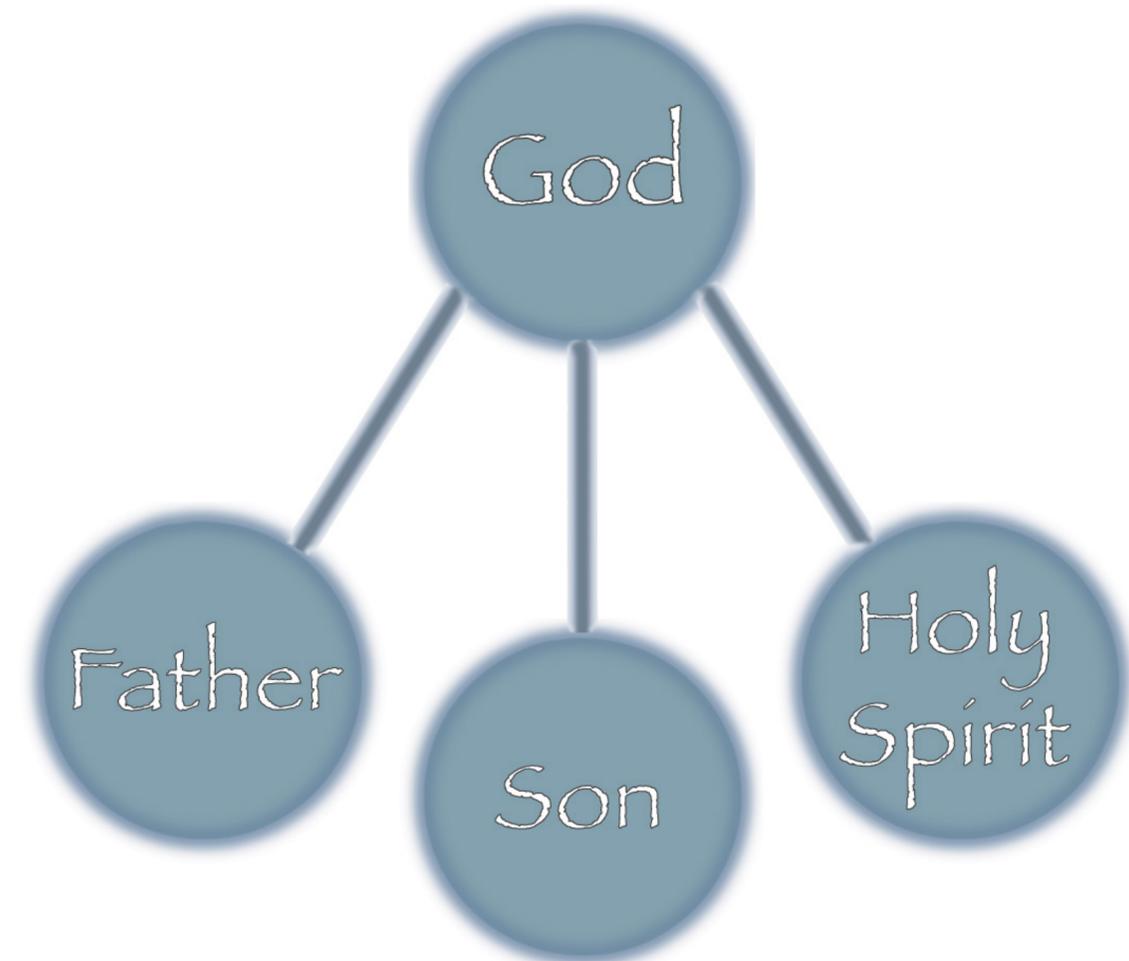


Arianism: The Opponents and the Issue



Modalism: The terms “Father,” “Son,” and “Holy Spirit” merely describe different modes that the one God manifests Himself. This heresy does not give the Son or the Holy Spirit independent personhood. God is one in Person and one in Nature, with different ways of appearing.

Modalism: An Attempt to Explain Christ



Adoptionism and Modalism Compared

ADOPTIONISM

(Dynamic Modalism)

Stress Oneness
of God

Deny Deity
of Christ

Affirm Humanity
of Christ

Holy Spirit
=
a power

MODALISM

(Modalistic Monarchianism,
Sabellianism, Patripassionism)

Stress Oneness
of God

Affirm Deity
of Christ

Deny Humanity
of Christ

Holy Spirit
=
a mode of
God's existence

4. It was at the Council of Nicea that the understanding of the relationship of the Son to the Father was first articulated.

The Nicene Creed (325)

We believe in one God, the Father All Governing, creator of all things visible and invisible;

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father as only begotten, that is, from the essence [reality] of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten not created, of the same essence [reality] as the Father, through whom all things came into being, both in heaven and in earth; Who for us men and for our salvation came down and was incarnate, becoming human. He suffered and the third day he rose, and ascended into the heavens. And he will come to judge both the living and the dead.

And [we believe] in the Holy Spirit.

“I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

**“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,
begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light,
very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance
[*homoousias*] with the Father, by whom all things were made.**

“Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.”

“And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life; who proceeds from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets.

“And I believe one holy catholic and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.”

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- **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)**