

Christology

by

Jason Dulle

JasonDulle@yahoo.com

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Introduction

Christology is the study of the relationship between the deity and humanity of Christ, as they exist in one person. The Scriptures declare Jesus to be both fully God and fully man simultaneously. The infinite Spirit united with finite humanity to become the Son of God. These two natures seem contradictory. Deity is infinite in knowledge, power, and presence. Humanity is limited in knowledge, power, and presence. How can the two distinct worlds of God and man come together into one existence? This is the very question Christology attempts to answer.

Although the Bible infers that there is a relationship between the deity and humanity of Christ (called the *hypostatic union*), no one passage was specifically penned to explain its mechanics. The New Testament writers simply affirmed that it was true. They taught that Jesus was both God and man at the same time, accepting this truth by faith apart from full understanding. What we must do, then, is meticulously scrutinize all that Jesus said about Himself relating to His identity (His self-concept), and statements made by the writers of the New Testament concerning His dual nature.

No matter how much we do know concerning the mechanics of the incarnation, it must be remembered that we can never truly comprehend it. We can affirm and believe to be true the declarations set forth in Scripture, but we can never truly understand how God, Who is the eternal Spirit, could become a man. We must accept by faith that deity conceived in a woman and united with humanity, and that humanity united with deity, neither nature compromised or overridden by the other.

Paul spoke of the "mystery of the incarnation" (I Timothy 3:16). This mystery is none other than that "God was manifest in the flesh..." (I Timothy 3:16). The incarnation is the greatest miracle to ever occur. A miracle by nature is something unexplainable and mysterious to the human mind. This is why faith must always play a major role in Christology. We can know by faith the Scriptural declarations concerning the hypostatic union (a term referring to the way in which the deity and humanity existed in Jesus) to be true, but we will never fully understand how it is possible, and the mechanical details of how it occurred.

In this discussion I will explain how the person of Christ relates to the work of Christ. Christology fits hand in hand with soteriology (the study of salvation),

because the person of Christ was necessary to perform what was essential to our salvation, namely a sinless sacrifice to atone for sins. God became a man for specific purposes relating to the redemption of mankind.

The deity of Jesus is at the heart of our faith, and rightly so. We follow Him because of Who He is; not a mere man, but God. Unfortunately we tend to focus on Jesus' deity more so than His humanity, taking the latter for granted. By doing so, we bypass the reasons God assumed a human existence in the first place. The lightness in which some view Jesus' humanity results in an attitude that minimizes its genuineness. It is possible to fall into the trap of minimizing the genuineness of His humanity to "protect" the fullness of His deity. This can be witnessed in the way Jesus' prayers are viewed. Some, trying to protect Christ's identity as Yahweh in the flesh have went so far as to deny the genuineness of His prayers, minimizing them to a mere charade He went through to give us an example. This kind of minimizing is not necessary. It only leads to a misunderstanding of the person of Christ, and false concepts of our Savior.

Both the complete deity and complete humanity of Jesus must be emphasized, for both are of utmost importance for our salvation. We can debate over which nature was more important, the divine or human, but it seems best to understand the importance of both. From God's perspective it could be said that the humanity was more important, because without it He could not have died for us on the cross, redeeming us from our sin. Without a body, the eternal Spirit could not be sacrificed. From our perspective it could be said that the deity of Jesus was more important, because if Jesus was just a mere man, His death could not have atoned for the sins of the whole world, even if He was a sinless man. It is best to emphasize both Jesus' deity and humanity, as it relates to His person and to His work. The believers of the first century emphasized both, and so must we. We are not stopping at mere faith in the reality of Jesus' two natures, but we are seeking understanding to the relationship between these natures as they existed in Jesus bodily (Colossians 2:9).

Even though I have, and will continue to speak of the deity and humanity of Jesus as "natures," understand that I am doing so for lack of better terminology. When I talk about His human nature, I am referring to His genuine, complete, and authentic humanity. Jesus Christ was as much of a human being as are we. When I speak of His divine nature, I am not speaking of a divine entity that is somehow different, or of a smaller magnitude than that of the Almighty God. I am speaking of God Himself. Jesus is everything God is, and at the same time is everything we are. When we think of God, we do not think of Him as a nature, but as a person or being. When we see a fellow human, we do not think of them as a human nature, but as a person. "Nature" is only used when we try describing the essence of our being. This term is used in like manner for this discussion. It should be interpreted as "essence of being," and is only being used as a word that I believe best describes the respective aspects of Christ's identity.

Before attempting to reach an understanding concerning the hypostatic union, we must first establish the Scriptural basis for Christ's deity and humanity. The Scriptural teaching of Jesus' deity will be examined first.

The Deity of Christ

The best testimony we can get concerning Jesus' identity is His own. What did Jesus think about Himself? How did Jesus view His relationship to the Father? Jesus made some statements that overtly and boldly *declared* His deity. For example, one time he said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). He did not mean that He was one in purpose with the Father as some scholars suggest, but that He was of the same essence as the Father (deity). The Jews' response to Jesus' statement allows us to see the force of what He said. They took up stones to stone Him (v. 31). Their reasoning was that Jesus, who was a man, had made Himself God (v. 33). This was blasphemy to the Jews and was deserving of the death penalty. They understood perfectly that Jesus was claiming to be the Father Himself. If Jesus was not declaring equality with the Father, it would have been the perfect opportunity to explain what He really meant. Instead He continued to back up His claim (vs. 34-38).

On another occasion Jesus told the Jews, "He that seeth me seeth him that sent me" (John 12:45). A parallel to this statement occurred during Jesus' discourse with His apostles as found in John 14:5-9. Jesus declared to Thomas, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him and have seen him" (v. 7). Philip could not understand this statement, so he asked Jesus to show the Father to all the disciples, and then they would be satisfied. Jesus responded, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" (v. 9). According to Jesus' own testimony, to see Him was to see the Father (God). One can not get a much clearer statement than this as to who Jesus claimed to be.

Other statements which Jesus made, and prerogatives that He exercised *imply* His deity. If Jesus was not God, indeed these statements and allusions He made concerning Himself would have been blasphemous. For example, Jesus forgave sins. He said to the paralytic who was lowered through the roof, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mark 2:15). The scribes present in the room thought Jesus' statement blasphemous saying "who can forgive sin but God alone?" (v. 7). If Jesus truly did not have the power to forgive, and had not truly forgiven this man's sins (which only God can do), then He had the perfect opportunity to clear up the matter when the Jews inquired of His words. Instead of pointing out the scribes misunderstanding of His words, Jesus said, "Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house" (vs. 9-11).

Jesus claimed authority in respect to the Law of God. One such example is the law of the Sabbath. God established the Sabbath for Israel as one of the 613 commandments of the Law of Moses they had to obey. Because God had made the Law, He alone had the power to alter or repeal it. We see Jesus, however, claiming the authority to alter the Sabbath when His disciples were questioned by the Pharisees for picking grain heads on the Sabbath. Jesus' response was to remind them of the time that David ate of the shewbread when fleeing from Saul

(vs. 25-26). The shewbread was strictly for the priests. For anyone else to eat it was a violation of the Law of Moses, but God never punished David. In conclusion Jesus said, "the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" (vs. 27-28).. Jesus clearly claimed the right to redefine the Sabbath, or disregard it altogether if He found necessary, a right that clearly belonged to God alone.

Jesus claimed that He would judge the world (Matthew 25:31-46), but this is only a divine prerogative (Psalm 50:6). Jesus also claimed a relationship with the Father that was unique to Him alone (John 14:23). Jesus claimed to have the power of life when He said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). The Old Testament declares that only God has this power (Deuteronomy 32:39; I Samuel 2:6; II Kings 5:7).

It is particularly interesting to note the response of those to whom Jesus spoke these profound statements. After Jesus told the Jews, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work (John 5:17)," the Jews sought to kill Him. John gave us their reasoning when he said, "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his father, making himself equal with God" (v. 18). The Jews understood that Jesus was laying a claim to be God Himself. The Greek word *isos* is translated here as "equal." It means to be "the same as" something. Jesus put Himself on the same plane, or grounds of deity as the Father.

From our perspective, Jesus' terminology of "Son" and "Father" seem to imply some sort of subordination to God. It gives us the feeling that He is less than God. The Jews, however, did not view this terminology in the same manner. Jesus calling God His "Father" is tantamount to saying He is God. This is clearly witnessed in the above passage.

When Jesus claimed that He and His Father were one (John 10:30), again the Jews took up stones to stone Him (v. 31). When Jesus asked them for what good work they desired to kill Him, they responded, "For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (v. 33). The Jews did not understand Jesus' reference to God as His "Father" to mean that Jesus was less than God, or some sort of a second-rate god. Rather they understood His claim to be that of Yahweh God Himself.

Now that we have heard Jesus' own testimony concerning His deity, let us turn our attention to what the apostles thought of Him. After Jesus' resurrection Thomas said to Jesus, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). The Greek word *kurios*, translated "Lord," is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *adonai*; and the Greek *theos* translated "God" is the Greek counterpart to the Hebrew *elohim*. For Thomas, being a monotheistic Jew, to call Jesus his Lord and God, knowing that the only Lord God was Yahweh (Deuteronomy 6:4), would have been blasphemy if Thomas had not believed that Jesus was Yahweh Himself in flesh.

Peter's bold declaration to Jesus, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16), demonstrates Peter's belief in His deity. Jesus told Peter that flesh and blood had not revealed this truth to him, but the Father which was in

heaven (v. 17). If "Son of God" here only refers to Jesus' humanity, no revelation from the Father would have been necessary. Anybody could have seen that Jesus was a human being by just looking at Him. Even the Jews understood that He was a genuine human being. It is what the Jews could not believe, that Peter understood by the revelation of God; Jesus was divine, being both God and man at the same time.

Paul, who wrote the most concerning Christ's person, said that Jesus "is the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15; See also II Corinthians 4:4). What did Paul mean when He declared Jesus to be God's image? We know that a physical likeness is not in view here because God is a Spirit and therefore cannot have a physical body.¹ The Greek word translated "image" in the King James Version is *eikon*. Its root is *eiko*, meaning likeness, resemblance, or representation. *Eikon* denotes both the representation and manifestation of a substance. Notice that Paul contrasted Jesus' image to that of the *invisible* God. The point Paul was trying to get across to his readers was that Jesus is the visible representation of God to man. That is why Jesus could say, "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9; also 12:45).

For it to be said that Jesus is like God is to say that He is God. God is unique. What likeness could Jesus have had with God other than that of His divine essence? It cannot be speaking of the likeness in which all human beings bear of God (Genesis 2:7), because this would not have distinguished Jesus' likeness with God from ours. The likeness, then, must be that of divine essence. Because the divine essence of God cannot be changed, Jesus' deity could not have been any different than that of the Father's. To have the Father's deity is to be the Father, because His divine essence cannot be fragmented.

Paul could have used other Greek words if all he meant to say was that Jesus was similar to God. If Paul believed Jesus to possess a likeness to God, but not His very essence and being, being some sort of a different substance from Him, he could have used *homoioma*. This word indicates a "likeness," but stresses "the resemblance to an archetype, though the resemblance may not be derived...."² Or Paul could have use *eidos*, meaning "a shape, or form." This word, however, is only an appearance, "not necessarily based on reality."³ Paul used *eikon* instead, to express that Jesus was the exact representation of the Father in His essence and being.

The author of Hebrews said that Jesus is the "express image of his [God's] person" (1:3). The English phrase translated "express image" is from the Greek word *charakter*. It is this word from which we get our English word "character." This is the only occurrence of the word in the New Testament. It means "to impress upon, or stamp." It denotes an engraving from a tool, which impresses an image into that which is being engraved.⁴ This impression, then, is a characteristic of the instrument used to do produce it. What is produced corresponds precisely with the instrument.

The Greek word translated "person" is *hupostasis*. It is from this word that we get the term "hypostatic union," describing the unification of deity and humanity in the man Christ Jesus. *Hupostasis*, although rendered as "person," is more properly

understood as "essence of being, or the substance of a thing." The etymology of this word has to do with "the sediment or foundation under a building."⁵ It is that which underlies, makes up, or supports a thing. In this context, we are talking about what underlies, or makes up God; namely God's essence, or substance.

Hupostasis is translated as "confidence" in II Corinthians 9:4, 11:17, and Hebrews 3:14. In these contexts it is either boasting, or faith in God that is in view. The idea in these verses is that there is a foundation and fullness of essence of the boasting, or in the faith. The only other time the word appears in Scripture is in Hebrews 11:1 where faith is said to be the "substance" of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Here the true meaning of the word can be clearly seen. Faith is the essence, substance, underlying support, or foundation of things that are hoped for.

Jesus, therefore, is not just a representation of God, but is the very visible impression of God's invisible substance and essence. He is God's very nature expressed in humanity as the Son of God. Or to say it another way: He is the corresponding engraving of God's essence of being, in human form. Liddon summed it up best when he said this verse implies that Jesus "is both personally distinct from, and yet literally equal to, Him of whose essence He is the adequate imprint."⁶

Jesus' being the image of God is not the same thing as our being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27; 9:6; I Corinthians 11:7; Colossians 3:10). God's image in us seems to be one of moral, mental, and spiritual capabilities, rather than a representation of His essence. Only Jesus holds that glorious role. Whereas Jesus was God made flesh, we are merely the dust of the earth made flesh (Genesis 2:7). Our very being is different from Jesus' being, and therefore the image of God in which we were made must of necessity be different from the image of God found in Jesus Christ.

In another place, Paul said, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9) The New International Version translates this verse as, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form."⁷ "Dwelleth" is the translation from the Greek word *katoikeo*, meaning "to permanently settle down in a dwelling." "Fullness" is from the Greek word *pleroma* indicating that which "is filled up." It is the fullness of the Godhead that dwells in Jesus, but what is the Godhead? The word is translated from *theotes*, meaning "divine essence, or the very person of God."⁸ Considering the Greek behind this verse, then, Paul said that the fullness of the divine essence has permanently settled in Jesus' body.

This verse gives us some very important truths concerning Christ's deity in relation to His humanity. First of all, we know the fullness of deity in Jesus consisted of a completeness of divine attributes and characteristics, lacking nothing. Jesus did not merely possess some divine attributes, but rather He possessed every aspect of deity. This verse also demonstrates the permanence of the incarnation. Lastly, this verse declares that the deity resident in Jesus was resident *bodily*. This indicates a specific and defined form.⁹

I have only touched the surface of Scriptures declaring and alluding to the deity of Jesus Christ. A whole book could be written on this subject alone. I believe the

Scriptures I have discussed here give a solid foundation as to who Jesus Christ is - the Yahweh of the Old Testament become flesh.

The Humanity of Christ

The importance placed upon Jesus' deity, must also be placed upon His humanity. The full or partial denial of this aspect of Christ's person has caused just as many heretical views in church history as has the full or partial denial of His deity.

As I said in the introduction, the humanity of Christ cannot be minimized under His deity. The incarnation is soteriological, in that it directly affects our salvation. Without His humanity, God could not have saved us, and could not be our High Priest. I will expound upon this in more detail later, but let it suffice for the time being to say that God had to become a genuine, complete, and authentic human being to redeem those who are of genuine, complete, and authentic humanity.

This is explained in Romans 5:12-21 where Paul contrasted Adam to Jesus. Paul called Jesus the "last Adam" (I Corinthians 15:45-49). The analogy between the two only goes as far as their sinlessness is concerned, and their existence as caused by God. Even the latter does not have an exact parallel, because Adam was created from the dust of the earth, whereas Jesus was begotten of God, and conceived in the womb of a woman. The only true parallel between Adam and Jesus is that both were sinless.

Because Adam lost his sinlessness and consequently brought the curse of sin and death upon all mankind, being our representative head, God had to come as a sinless man, and after perfect obedience from this sinless "God-man," reaching as far as His obedience to the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8), is now able to grant His righteousness to all those who are bound by the dominion of sin, thus reversing the curse as brought on by Adam, bringing physical and spiritual life instead of physical and spiritual death (Romans 6:6, 9, 11, 14, 16-18, 20-23; 8:2). Jesus, the last Adam, was sent to reverse the effects of sin caused by the first Adam. This could only be done in the same humanity in which Adam came.

To be human one must have a body, soul, and spirit (I Thessalonians 5:23). Man is made up of a material (body), and an immaterial (soul and spirit) existence. If Jesus was truly human we would expect to find Scriptural testimonies to His possession of these two components of human existence, and upon examination it is found that we do.

Jesus Himself testified that He has a soul when He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death" (Matthew 26:38; See also John 12:27). As to His spirit, Jesus told His Father, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46; See also Luke 2:40; Mark 8:12). Not only did Jesus have a human soul and spirit, but He also had a human will. Jesus said in John 5:30, "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." In the Garden of Gethsemane before His crucifixion Jesus prayed, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not *my* will, but *thine* be done" (Luke 22:42 italics mine). From the account in Matthew we find that Jesus actually prayed this prayer three times (26:38-44). These kind of statements by Jesus can only lead us to the

conclusion that he had a genuine human will that was separate from, albeit completely submitted to, the will of His Father. In no way was Jesus' human spirit or will replaced by a divine spirit or divine will. If this was the case, Jesus could not be truly human at all.

Jesus had a complete human nature, differing only from ours in that He was spared the sin nature by way of the virgin birth and conception by the Holy Ghost. This does not make Him any less human than we, because we know Adam and Eve to be true human beings, and they existed without the sin nature previous to their transgression. If anything, Jesus was more human than we are, because we are tainted by the sin nature. We live an existence that limits our relationship with God. Jesus was not limited by this sin principle or bound by its effects: alienation from God, sickness, disease.

There are a host of Scriptures relating this all important truth. It is important because God needed a perfect, sinless sacrifice to atone for sin. A sinner cannot atone for the sins of other sinners.

Romans 8:3 says, "For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son *in the likeness of sinful flesh*, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." (italics mine) The wording chosen by Paul to express Christ's humanity is very precise. If Paul had said Jesus came "in sinful flesh" he would have denied His sinlessness. If he would have said Jesus came "in the likeness of flesh" he would have denied His authentic humanity. Paul chose the wording he did to communicate the true nature of the incarnation: Jesus was made in genuine, yet sinless flesh (See also Matthew 27:4, 19; Luke 23:41; John 8:29, 46; II Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 7:26; I Peter 2:22; I John 3:5).

In support of Jesus' authentic humanity, Hebrews 2:14 says that Jesus partook of flesh and blood in the same manner as all humans do. Verse seventeen further elaborates upon this when the author said, "Wherefore in *all things* it behoved him to be made *like* unto his *brethren*...." (italics mine)

John thought the confession of Jesus' authentic humanity to be of such importance that he said those who denied such were of the spirit of the antichrist (I John 4:1-3; II John 7). To combat the heresy of docetism (early form of gnosticism) which denied the reality of Jesus' humanity, John asserted that he and others had heard, seen, looked upon, and handled the Word of Life (I John 1:1-3). Jesus' humanity was not a mere charade or facade, but was true and authentic in every way.

The Scriptures declare Jesus to be of the seed of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16), and of the seed of David (John 7:42; Acts 13:22-23; Romans 1:3; II Timothy 2:8). "Seed" is an expression for "offspring" or "descendant." When He is spoken of as being the seed of Abraham, it is identifying Him as a descendant of the Hebrew people (See John 8:33, 37; Romans 11:1-2; II Corinthians 11:22). When He is spoken of as being the seed of David, it is identifying Him more specifically as being through the kingly lineage of David. Because Christ came through David's lineage, He is able to rule as King on David's throne during the Millennium. It is at this time that the covenant God made with David, that a king from his lineage would rule on his throne forever, will be fulfilled (II Sam 7:8-19; Ps 89:3-4, 20-37;

132:11; Jeremiah 33:25-26). If Jesus was not truly human, He could not be king. Peter understood Jesus to be the king prophesied of by David, and that Jesus was a real human when he said that "of the fruit of his [David's] loins, according to the flesh, he [God] would raise up Christ to sit on his [David's] throne" (Acts 2:30).

The fulfillment of the Davidic covenant is why Matthew and Luke gave so much emphasis to Christ's genealogy in the beginning of their gospels. Mary was in the lineage of David, and Joseph, who although was not the physical father of Jesus, but represented His father, was also in the Davidic line. By means of the virgin birth through Mary, God was able to qualify Himself for kingship in Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus was made from a human being, He by necessity received human DNA, genes, and chromosomes. The genetic makeup He received is that from the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Not only was Jesus human, but He was also Jewish, because His mother and her descendants were Jewish. Jesus was born to a Jewish woman, in the nation of the Jews, with Jewish customs, habits, and culture. Jesus was a Jew! He looked and acted like any other Jewish person would. Surely Jesus danced in the folk dances, attended social events (John 2:1-2), and played with other boys in His village.

Although His conception was miraculous, Jesus was born like any other human being is born. He grew physically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually like any other man (Luke 2:40, 52). Sometimes we have the concept that Jesus came out of Mary's womb, looked at Mary and said, "Hi mom, I am God!," then cut off His umbilical cord, and taking off running, He preached to the world. Jesus did not know He was God manifest in the flesh when He was born. His human mind had not come to know or understand that yet. He came to realize this at some point in the future. When and how this occurred is not discussed in the Bible, but we do know that Jesus understood His identity at least by the age of twelve. It was at this time He told Mary, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:42, 49).

Jesus lived a childhood like every other Jewish boy. He had to learn and memorize the Hebrew Scriptures, be potty-trained, fed, taught how to speak, learn a trade, walk, and all the other things children must do. I am sure that Jesus drooled on Mary's shoulder, and wet His pants. As a carpenter, surely He received splinters, and when hitting His hand with the hammer of His day He must have yelled. I am not being sacrilegious, but truthful. This is what must have happened!

Jesus experienced the same physical limitations we do. He experienced hunger (Matthew 4:2; 21:18), thirst (John 19:28), fatigue (John 4:6), and He needed sleep (Mark 4:38). His human body functioned in the same manner as our human body.

The Bible also depicts Jesus as sharing in the same sort of emotional and psychological qualities found in other men. Jesus was not the straight-faced, stoic, emotionless man the movies typically portray Him as. The Bible says He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities (Hebrews 4:15). Jesus thought, reasoned, and felt as any other man would do. It is recorded that Jesus loved. John 13:23 speaks of the apostle "whom Jesus loved" (See also Mark 10:21; John 11:3). Jesus had compassion on those who were hurting or in some sort of

dilemma (Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34), but is seen as joyful at other times (John 15:11; 17:13; Hebrews 12:2).

Not only do we find positive emotions in Jesus, but we also find what we would call "negative emotions." Jesus got angry and was grieved with the hardness of the Jews' hearts (Mark 3:5). When the disciples rebuked those who brought children to Jesus, the Scripture says "he was much displeased" (Mark 10:14). This phrase is from the Greek *aganakteo*. It means "to be moved with indignation." This same word is used in Matthew 20:24 referring to the sentiments of the ten disciples toward James and John after they asked Jesus to sit on His right and left hands in His kingdom. It is used in Matthew 26:8 of the astonished dislike for the expensive ointment which the apostles thought was "wasted," as the woman with the alabaster box anointed Jesus' feet. This word indicates a serious dislike, with a twist of disgustment.

The Scripture also implies that Jesus was lonely. Jesus was sorrowful and troubled in His spirit before His crucifixion (Matthew 26:37). In the Garden of Gethsemane, before His betrayal, Jesus wanted Peter, James, and John to pray with Him (Mark 14:32-34). He obviously did not want to be left alone during this grievous time. The knowledge of what was to befall Him is said to have troubled His soul, and caused great sorrow and heaviness (Matthew 26:37; John 12:27). On the cross He cried, "My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). This is an obvious human cry resulting from the feeling of aloneness.

On two occasions we find Jesus in the Temple at Jerusalem turning over the tables of the money changers (first--John 2:15; second--Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:15). Although the action was premeditated (as indicated that He first took time out to make the scourge--John 2:15) and not done in some sort of uncontrollable rage, nevertheless, it demonstrates Jesus' emotional spectrum. He was truly angry with the people. His anger does not mean that He sinned, because it is possible to be angry and yet not sin (Ephesians 4:26). Jesus' anger was against sin and the hypocrisy of those who claimed to be holy and religious. God is seen as being angry, yet we know that He is not sinning in His anger, so surely Jesus could be angry and yet sinless (Psalm 106:40; Jeremiah 4:4).

Jesus had intellectual limitations. Although we find Jesus knowing things beyond human knowledge at times, we also find Him ignorant in other matters. The same Jesus who knew the thoughts of men (Luke 6:8; 9:47), is frequently found asking questions. Nothing in the context gives us any indication that Jesus asked for any other reason but to gain knowledge of what He did not know. The Jesus that knew the Samaritan woman had five husbands in the past, and was presently living with another man (John 4:18), was the same Jesus who asked the father of the epileptic boy, "How long is it ago since this came unto him?" (Mark 9:21). Jesus honestly did not know! The same Jesus who knew that Judas would betray Him, and Peter would deny Him (Matthew 26:25, 34), is the Jesus Who on another occasion expressly declared His lack of knowledge concerning the second coming when He said, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). Jesus was not trying to hide the day and hour from the disciples. He truly could not tell them because He Himself was ignorant concerning the day and hour.

When the woman with the issue of blood touched the hem of Jesus' garment, He asked, "Who touched my clothes?" (Mark 5:30). He only knew that *someone* had touched Him because He felt virtue come out of His body, but He did not know who that someone was. It was not until the woman identified herself that Jesus was aware of who that someone was. Although at times Jesus had knowledge of past, present, and future events, or motives of men's hearts, other times He was just as limited in knowledge as any other human being.

Jesus also had a religious life. Because I will expound on this later, here I will just give the facts. The Bible says that Jesus went to the synagogue, the Jewish place of worship, and that on a regular and habitual basis (Luke 4:16). He prayed regularly and very intensely at times (Luke 22:44). He prayed all night before choosing His twelve apostles (Luke 6:12). Jesus relied upon God for strength and guidance in the same manner we do.

The Hypostatic Union

Up to this point we have discussed Jesus' deity and humanity, and the fact that these two natures form His identity as the Son of God. I have only touched on the implications and ramifications of this truth. Now, however, I will attempt to explain in more detail how the deity and humanity exist in Christ.

Although He was born into this world like any other man, Jesus was conceived in a very unique way. He did not have a human father, but was begotten by the Holy Ghost (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:34-35). God was His Father. Jesus received His deity from His Father. He did have a human mother, but she conceived in her womb in a way different from any other (Galatians 4:4). Instead of sexual intercourse and fertilization by the sperm of a male, the power of the Highest overshadowed her (Luke 1:35). It was at that point that God became a human as a fetus in Mary's womb. Jesus received His deity from the Father and part of His humanity from Mary (Luke 1:34-35; Galatians 4:4). This will never be fully understood or comprehended, but must be accepted by faith.

I want to focus for a moment on the way in which Jesus was conceived. The traditional view is that it is a mystery that cannot be explained and we can never know how it happened. I disagree with this view because the mechanics of the conception are not said to be the mystery of the incarnation. The mystery is how the all existing Spirit of God could become a human being. Although this mystery occurred at the time of the conception, the conception is not the mystery.

The Scriptures simply affirm that Mary conceived a child of the Holy Ghost without ever addressing how she did. Some would argue on this basis that it is not important for us to understand how the conception occurred since God did not include it in His Word. My response to this objection is that God did not explain the manner in which the deity and humanity existed in Jesus Christ either, yet we still seek to understand this aspect of the incarnation. In fact, the attempt to understand this union is the essence of Christology. Consequently it cannot be said that we should not seek understanding to this matter because it is not specifically addressed in the Scriptures. It is useful to speculate, but at the same time it is realized that no hard lines can be drawn where the Scriptures are silent. Our

conclusions can only remain speculations, yet these speculations can be sound in that they are based upon the rest of Scripture and good logic, harmonizing with the Word of God without ever contradicting it.

It is commonly viewed that Jesus received *all* of His deity from God and *all* of His humanity from Mary. I agree with the first assertion, but the latter can not be true. Jesus could not have received the entirety of His humanity from Mary. If He did, Jesus would have been a female. All that Mary's egg could have offered were X chromosomes. X chromosomes produce females. It takes the presence of Y chromosomes to produce a male child. Only men have this Y chromosome. Without a contribution of this Y chromosome Jesus could not have been born a human male. Where did this genetic influence come from then? The only answer can be that it was supplied by the Holy Ghost in the conception. Erickson noted the same when he said:

Jesus was not produced after the genetic pattern of Mary alone, for in that case, he would in effect have been a clone of her, and would necessarily have been female. Rather, a male component was contributed. In other words, a sperm was united with the ovum provided by Mary, but it was specially created for the occasion instead of being supplied by an existent male.[10](#)

Because God contributed an element necessary to Jesus' human existence, it is necessary to confess that Jesus received part of His humanity from the Father.

Mary was not a mere surrogate mother for a flesh created by God. She was not some sort of incubator which contained a "heavenly flesh." The flesh truly originated from Mary's egg. If Jesus did not receive His humanity from Mary, then He could not be said to have been "of the seed of David." The Scripture clearly affirms the contribution Mary made to the existence of Jesus. Galatians 4:4 says, "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." The Greek word translated "of" in the phrase "of a woman" is *ek*. This word means "out of." Jesus was *made* out of a woman, He was not just *born* out of one. The author of Hebrews said "he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16). David was promised that it was through his genetic line that God would raise up the Messiah to rule on his throne (Psalm 132:11). If Mary was just an incubator for a created flesh, Jesus could have still been considered a genuine human being (Adam was a created man that did not have a human mother but yet he was still completely human), but He would not have been part of the Adamic race. If He was not part of the Adamic race, He could not save those who were separated from God because of Adam's sin (Romans 5:12-21; Hebrews 2:9-10, 14-18). Mary undoubtedly contributed to the humanity of Christ.

There are two Greek words referring to conception. The first is *gennao* which simply means "to beget" or "to be born." It refers to either the conception of the child, or its birth. This word is used in Matthew 1:20 when the angel told Joseph, "for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." The other word is *sullambano* meaning "to take together." When this word is used in the context of conception it specifically refers to the taking together of the sperm and egg that caused the conception. Conception, by definition refers to the penetration of the

female egg by a male sperm.

That God must have contributed to Jesus' humanity at His conception can be seen by the angel's words to Mary when he announced that she would be the mother of the Messiah. He said to her, "And, behold, thou shalt conceive (*sullambano*) in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS ... The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born (*gennao*) of thee shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:31). Speaking of Elisabeth's pregnancy with John the Baptist, the angel continued to say, "And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived (*sullambano*) a son in her old age..." (Luke 1:36). The exact same word used to describe the way in which Elisabeth came to be found with child was also used of the way in which Mary was to be found with child. The angel made no differentiation concerning the way in which they would conceive.¹¹ It is interesting that Luke, who penned these verses, was a medical doctor. As a doctor, he used the precise terminology to explain how Mary conceived. If there was a "taking together" of a sperm and egg in Elizabeth's conception, in like manner there must have been some contribution made by God to Mary's egg causing it to split, and at the same time contributing the Y chromosome needed to produce a baby boy. Whether or not this was "heavenly sperm" can not be known. What must be confessed, however, is that God contributed some element to Jesus' humanity. God did not place His deity within a human body made from Mary, or infuse His Spirit into a human body, but God actually fathered a son. That is why Jesus is commonly referred to as the only *begotten* Son of God.

It is very possible that when the Word became flesh, God actually became the sperm that fertilized Mary's egg. If it was not actual sperm that God used to father the child, it must have been some type of substance that contributed the male components to the components offered by Mary.. If there was no physical substance that caused the conception, how could it be said that God *became* flesh (John 1:14 NKJV). Whatever this substance was, it cannot be said to be created. Jesus was not a created being. If any part of His humanity was created, He could not truly be said to be God. A creation is always separate from the creator. If I paint a picture, I cannot be the picture because I created it. Jesus would have been like a painting if He was created. Jesus, however, was God made known in the flesh. God became a human being at Jesus' conception. God did not create a man, He is a man! He did not merely make a human body, and then live in it. He became the human body.

Some contend that God caused Mary to conceive in some spiritual way, spiritually adding the components necessary to beget a male child. If this were true, then Jesus would have to be considered (at least in part) a created being. He would have only been the Son of God in the same sense as Adam was. Adam was God's son because God created Him. Jesus' sonship was different in that Jesus was *begotten* and *conceived* by the Holy Ghost.

The "component" offered to Jesus' conception would not have been a substance separate from God, but this substance would have contained the essence of His deity that dwelt in Jesus' body (Colossians 2:9). The time at which this substance united with Mary's egg must have been the time that deity and humanity were

brought into one existence, forming what we call the hypostatic union of Christ.

Regardless of how this union actually transpired, we do know that it did occur. Jesus received all of His deity and part of His humanity from God the Father, and the other part of His humanity was inherited from His mother Mary. This view is consistent with Scripture, in no wise contradicting it, and at the same time explains the biological processes that we know are necessary to birth a child. This is not trying to naturalize the mystery of the incarnation (how God became a human being), but is trying to understand the means by which the Holy Ghost conceived in Mary's womb.

Because Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and not of man, He is called the Son of God. Although we too are called sons of God (I John 3:2), our sonship is different than Jesus'. Whereas we are adopted as God's sons (Romans 8:14-17), Jesus was born as God's Son (Luke 1:35). His very being came into existence by the Holy Ghost. Jesus would have never existed without the contributions made by His Father. Since God physically fathered Jesus through the miraculous conception He is God's Son in a physical sense. We are only God's sons in a spiritual sense. Our existence is not dependent on Him.. Our being results from the physical union of two human parents. It is only after this that we can become sons of God through the adoption by His Spirit. The difference between Jesus and us, then, is that Jesus' existence has its dependence on the Father while ours does not. Daniel Segraves expounded on this truth when he said:

The miracle of the virgin conception means that deity and humanity were as inseparable in Jesus as the genetic influence of a mother and father is inseparable in their son or daughter. Just as no human being could exist if all that was contributed to his existence by either his father or his mother were removed, so Jesus could not have existed as the Messiah apart from either His deity (contributed by the Holy Spirit [Luke 1:34-35]) or his humanity (contributed by Mary [Galatians 4:4]).[12](#)

This union demonstrates the permanence of the incarnation. Once God assumed humanity at His conception in Mary's womb, He acquired an identity He would retain for the rest of eternity. Jesus' humanity is not something that can be discarded or dissolved back into the Godhead, but He will always and forever exist in heaven as a glorified human, albeit God at the same time. His humanity is permanently incorporated into the Godhead.[13](#) God did not just live in flesh as a man, but the "Word became flesh" (John 1:14). God is now a man. This does not mean He no longer exists as the omnipresent Spirit, but it does mean that His existence as a man is both authentic and permanent.

Jesus did not merely put on a "robe of flesh" when He came to this earth. He was more than "God with skin on." These types of statements imply a separation of natures within Jesus as though He is two separate individuals living in one body. They imply that the flesh was a mere shell that Deity moved within. The flesh of Jesus was not independent of the deity of Jesus. The deity and humanity as resident in Jesus' existence should not be viewed as some sort of "room-mate situation" where two entities exist in the same area, but are separated from one another in reality. In Christ "the Spirit of God was inextricably and inseparably joined with the humanity...."[14](#)

An example from chemistry might demonstrate this well. A mixture or blend can be separated into its original substances after being blended. Whereas mixtures (physical compounds) can be separated again, chemical compounds form a new substance of which the original substances can never again be separated from the compound. The two natures in Christ should not be viewed as blended or mixed together. His two natures cannot be separated. Sticking with this example from chemistry, it could be said that Jesus' natures were like a chemical compound. Unfortunately, every analogy breaks down at some point, and the same is true of this one. The deity and humanity of Christ did not form a new substance from the two, for each nature retained all of their respective "properties." The deity was uncompromised by the humanity, and the humanity was uncompromised by the deity; both being perfectly preserved in their wholeness and genuineness, yet united in every way. The deity was not obscured by the complete humanity, and neither was the humanity overwhelmed by the fullness of the deity.¹⁵ The fullness of God's deity was manifested in every aspect of His genuine humanity; integrated, and not segregated.

It is commonly said of Jesus that at times He acted as God, and at other times as man. It is explained that as a man Jesus prayed, ate, and slept. As God He healed the sick, raised the dead, and calmed the storms. This seems to imply some sort of duality in Jesus. These activities give indication of the reality of each nature, but it must be understood that Jesus' natures never worked independent of one another. His two natures exist "without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the difference of the natures having been in no wise taken away by reason of the union, but rather the properties of each being preserved,...."¹⁶

The typical way of explaining Jesus' natures splits up their unity and integration, insinuating that one could be "operated" apart from the other. It almost reduces Jesus to Superman who is sometimes Clark Kent and other times Superman after a quick change in a telephone booth somewhere. Jesus does not change over from acting in one nature to acting in the other. He is not like the Wild E. Coyote who holds up a sign saying, "Now I am acting as a man," and at other times He holds up another sign saying, "Now I am acting as God." Everything Jesus did, He did as God manifest in the flesh (Son of God). There can be no separation of Jesus' natures. "The union of the two natures meant that they did not function independently. Jesus did not exercise his deity at times and his humanity at other times. His actions were always those of divinity-humanity."¹⁷

Did God Forsake Jesus on the Cross?

At this juncture here, let me address the idea that God withdrew from Jesus while on the cross. Based upon Jesus' words on the cross, "My God, My God, Why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46), some have come to believe that the deity withdrew from Jesus on the cross. If this were true, the implications are serious. First of all, if God withdrew from Jesus on the cross, Jesus' death was no different than that of the thieves crucified on either side of Him. Jesus died a mere man. It might be argued that Jesus' death was significant because He was sinless, but a sinless death is not all that was necessary to redeem mankind. Second Corinthians 5:19 informs us that it was God in Christ Who reconciled the world to Himself. If

God was not in Christ, or with Christ when He died, then How could God have reconciled the world to Himself? The time at which the reconciliation took place was when Jesus Christ died on the cross. If God left Jesus on the cross He could not have reconciled man. We would still be lost in our sins. What makes the atonement efficacious is that Jesus, Who was God manifest in the flesh, died on the cross.

Another problem with this view is that if God would have withdrew from Jesus on the cross, Jesus would have ceased to exist. As I quoted Segraves earlier, the deity and humanity of Christ were as inseparable as the genetic influence of a mother and father is inseparable in their offspring. Just as no human being could exist if all that was contributed to his existence by either his father or his mother were removed, so Jesus could not have existed apart from the deity contributed by His Father and the humanity contributed by His mother Mary.

When turning to the Scriptures, instead of finding any idea that God left Jesus on the cross, we find that it was through the Holy Ghost that Jesus offered His body as the sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 9:14). It was because Jesus offered His body through the Spirit that His sacrifice could atone for the sins of mankind.

If God did not leave Jesus on the cross, then what did Jesus mean when He said God had forsaken Him? Jesus quoted the words of David as found in the Psalm 22. Jesus' statement must be understood in the context of its usage in this psalm. David said, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so far from helping me*, and from the words of my roaring? (Psalm 22:1 italics mine). David was not claiming that the Lord had truly forsaken him. He merely felt as though He had because He was not offering David any help in his time of distress (See also vs. 2, 4-5, 11, 19, 24). Jesus, likewise, was not claiming that God had actually forsaken Him. He merely felt forsaken because His Father was not offering Him any help to bear the sins of the whole world, nor was His Father delivering Him from the lowest point of His life. Jesus felt all alone on the cross. He felt the consequence of the sin of the whole world. His cry demonstrates the reality of His human emotions, not the departure of His divine nature.

Did God Die on the Cross?

Acts 20:28 says: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock...to feed the church of God, *which he hath purchased with his own blood*." (italics mine) The antecedent of "his" is "God." Paul declared that God shed His blood for the church. Three questions arise from this Scripture: 1. How can it be said that God has blood? 2. Jesus shed His blood by dying on the cross. If this blood is actually the blood of God, did God die? 3. If the blood of Jesus is identified as God's blood, then Jesus' physical humanity was God's. This being true, was Jesus' body still God when in the grave?

We know that it was actually Jesus who shed His blood on the cross, so calling Jesus' blood the blood of God demonstrates the deity of Jesus Christ; however, the implications of this verse do not stop here. If the human blood shed at Calvary can be said to be God's, this indicates that even the humanity of Christ can be said to be divine.¹⁸ When we understand the true nature of the hypostatic union we must

confess that the humanity God assumed in the incarnation has now been permanently incorporated into His eternal existence as Spirit. The Scripture declares this when it says "the Word [God] was *made* flesh." The humanity of Jesus was not the essence of God's being, but because of the hypostatic union the deity was miraculously manifest in every aspect of Jesus' humanity. It is in this manner that the body of Jesus can be said to be the body of God. As a result it might be said that God was born of a virgin, suffered, died, and rose again. This is not to say that Jesus' death was any different than any other man's death. When Jesus died on the cross, He died like any other human being would die. His human spirit separated from His body (Matthew 27:50; James 2:26).

If Jesus' humanity was permanently incorporated into the Godhead, becoming a part of God's existence, then was Jesus' deceased body the body of God? Daniel Segraves answered this question saying, "The fulness [sic] of deity continued to be expressed in His immaterial being even during the time of His death, and at His resurrection His immaterial and material parts were reunited permanently." [19](#) The body of Jesus was even God's body while in the grave.

When it is implied that God died, it must be understood that it is not being alleged that the Spirit of God died. A spirit cannot die. What is being referenced is God's existence as a human being. As a man God could and did die. The way to lessen the impact of this hard-to-swallow truth might lie in the usage of terminology. The term "Son of God" is used in reference to God's existence as a human being throughout the New Testament. This term specifically refers to God's assumption of, and existence as humanity. It was in this state that God died. It seems better, then, to say that the Son of God died. This is consistent with the terminology of the New Testament, and in no way takes away from the truth of Acts 20:28.

The Kenosis

So far we have established two important truths: Jesus is divine and Jesus is human. It has also been shown how these two natures co-exist in the person of Christ. In this section, now, the attention is being turned to the differing aspects and implications of this hypostatic union.

There are two main streams of thought regarding the work and person of Christ. The first, and most commonly accepted theory concerning the manner in which Jesus ministered is that He did what He did because He was God. Jesus had the ability to heal the sick and raise the dead because He was God. He had the ability to know things beyond normal human intellectual capabilities because He was God. He walked on water because He was God. This view of Jesus gives credit to everything Jesus said and did to the fact that He was God in flesh.

The other stream of thought is that He ministered as a man anointed by the Holy Ghost. This view does not discredit, ignore, or deny the *pleroma* of deity dwelling bodily in the man Christ Jesus, but rather views God as willingly deciding from the foundation of the world to limit the exercise of His own deity when He would assume a human existence so that He could live His life as a man on this earth in the same fashion, and with the same limitations faced by ordinary human beings.

I believe the second view to be more Biblical. It is derived from what is called the "kenosis passage" of Philippians 2:5-11. The kenosis passage must be understood in light of Christ's *pleroma* of deity. The two cannot be separated, and are not separated here in this passage of Scripture either. After a thorough exegesis of this passage, I will review the two theories in more detail. This exegesis will lay the foundation for the discussion ahead.

In order to fully grasp the meaning of this important passage, the original Greek must be resorted to. The English translation, although legitimate, is not clearly express the depth of meaning found in the original language.

Paul related the event of Christ's *kenosis* (emptying), not to teach on the incarnation or hypostatic union of Christ's dual natures, but to give the perfect example of true humility and selflessness to the Philippian churches, for the purpose of emulation. Paul wanted them to have love one toward another, be of one mind, be lowly in mind, considering others to be better than themselves, looking to others' needs and not just their own (2:2-4). This intent is seen in verse five where Paul said, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." He set up Christ's kenosis as a pattern to conform to. Although this passage was not intended to just teach the theology of Christ, nevertheless, it does give us some of the best theology on the subject in the Bible. Let us now examine the Greek behind these verses.

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
(Philippians 2:6)

"Who" is the antecedent pronoun of Christ Jesus in verse five. Although verse six says that Jesus existed in this form of God, it is not to be understood that Jesus preexisted the incarnation in human flesh. "Christ" is from the Greek *Christos*, the equivalent to the Hebrew *Messhiac*, meaning "anointed one." This term is a strict reference to humanity, for only as a human being could Jesus said to be anointed. This term is incarnational in its focus. This humanity did not exist until the conception in Mary's womb by the Holy Ghost at about 4 B.C. "Jesus" literally means "Yahweh is become salvation." It was not until the time of the incarnation that God assumed this name (Matthew 1:21). It seems that Paul's reference to the mind that *was* in Christ Jesus was not a mind that existed in the person of Christ Jesus before the incarnation, but *was* the mind in the one we *now know* as Christ Jesus, before the incarnation when He was the Word that was with God, being God Himself (John 1:1), made flesh in the fullness of time (John 1:14).

"Who being in the form of God" is translated from *hos en morphe theou huparchon*. *Huparchon*, translated as "being" is from two Greek words, *hupo*, "under," and *arche*, "a beginning." It involves existence both before and after conditions mentioned in connection with it. In this case it is speaking of the preexistence of the "form of God." *Morphe*, referring to the preexistent "form" of God speaks of "that external form that represents what is intrinsic and essential. It indicates not merely what may be perceived by others, but what is objectively there."²⁰ The emphasis is primarily upon the essence behind the form, but recognizes the visible form also. *Theou* is in the genitive case, indicating possession of. This form was actually possessed by God; His own. The word is

also anarthrous, meaning there is no definite article (the) before it. When the Greek text uses an article with *theos*, it seems to be emphasizing God's person. Without it, however, it is referring to God's being, essential deity, or essence. In this context, Paul was pointing out that this existing form of God was not His person, but His essential deity.

What exactly this form that God possessed was, we do not know. Nevertheless, it was existing in eternity probably until either the incarnation, or the ascension, at which time Jesus' body would have replaced the need for the visible form of God.

This form was at least visible to the heavenly host, for they presented themselves before God in some manner (I Kings 22:19; Job 1:6). Since God is omnipresent, there could not be any specific location at which to gather, unless, that is, God appeared in some type of visible, albeit spirit form.

He goes on to say that Christ "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." This phrase is translated from *ouch harpagmon hesesato to einsai isa theoi*. The meaning of *harpagmos*, translated "robbery," is not easy to determine because the word is only used here in the New Testament. Outside of Biblical Greek, it is still rare, but has the basic meaning of "robbery" or "take advantage of." Although it has commonly been said to mean "retain," such a usage cannot be substantiated.²¹ Others understand *harpogmos* as "a prize to be eagerly grasped."²² Paul Feinberg considers the whole phrase, *ouch harpagmon hesesato*, to be an idiomatic expression, meaning to "take advantage of." This is because *harpagmos* is being used as a predicate accusative with a verb, and carries this meaning in extra-biblical sources.²³ The point seems to be that Christ, who was already existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be taken advantage of.

Isa, from *isos*, has to do with equality and likeness. The picture of Christ is that He was equal to God. *Isa*, from *isos*, has to do with equality and likeness. The picture of Christ is that He was equal to God. This does not mean that there are two distinct beings who are equal to one another in every respect, for this would in effect be ditheism. It must be remembered that this passage is speaking of Jesus Christ (humanity), and showing that His deity is the same deity that pre-existed the incarnation. It is demonstrating that the deity in Christ after the incarnation was the same deity as before the incarnation. It cannot mean that Jesus' deity is equal, but distinct from the Father's because God has no equal (Is 46:5, 9). If equal means a distinct person, then Jesus would not be a distinct person from the Father, but from God Himself, for it says "equal with God," not "equal with the Father." If "God" is referring to the whole Trinity, then Jesus is "equal to the whole trinity yet a distinct person from the trinity." This would not make any sense, even in Trinitarianism. The proper understanding of the meaning of equal is that Jesus' deity is identical to that of God's, i.e. it is God's. According to John 1:1 the Word was God Himself. No place is this made more explicit than in the Jews' use of the word equal in John 5:18. Here they accused Jesus of making Himself equal with God because He said that God was His Father. They did not understand Him to mean that He is another person like God, but that He was God Himself.

This passage is purely incarnational in its focus. What is being discussed is the

preponderance God faced as He considered His incarnation. Thus, in His incarnation, God laid aside the expression of divine essence.²⁴ He did not consider His existence as deity, nor this visible form something to be held on to, but willingly relinquished its exclusiveness to accommodate His existence as a genuine human (vs. 7-8). This does not mean that God laid aside His divine essence. This passage only refers to His willing humiliation by the assumption of a human existence.

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: (Philippians 2:7).

The first two segments of this verse are translated from *alla heauton ekenosen morphen doulou labon*. *Alla*, translated "but," indicates a transition in thought, or a counter thought. In context, this "but" indicates the action taken in response to Christ's relinquishment of His visible form and equality with the divine essence. Instead of retaining this form, Christ "emptied Himself" (*heauton*, "himself," and *ekenosen*, "made of no reputation").

"Made of no reputation" is a not exactly the best rendering of the Greek. The definition of the word *kenoo* is "to empty, or evacuate; to divest one's self of one's prerogatives, abase one's self; to deprive a thing of its proper functions."²⁵ This word has two different senses, both of which could be used here. Used in a metaphorical sense, it means "of no reputation" or "nothing." Used in a metaphysical sense it means "to empty." Paul's usage elsewhere (Romans 4:14; I Corinthians 1:17; 9:15; II Corinthians 9:3—the only other appearances of this word) favors the metaphorical sense. The metaphysical sense is used in the LXX of things being literally emptied out (like a jar or chest). Though either sense could be used here, the metaphorical sense is probably to be preferred because Paul is using the incarnation of Christ for an example of humiliation. The idea would be that "Christ made Himself nothing." This would fit well with Paul's mention of the "empty pride" that the Philippians were asserting just a few verses earlier. Whereas they were trying to make themselves out to be something of importance, Christ made Himself nothing.

Although *ekenosen* relates the fact that Christ did empty Himself, it does not indicate that which He emptied Himself of. *Labon*, a modal adverbial participle, serves this purpose. Being a form of *labano*, the word means "to take." As a second aorist participle, it describes past action on the part of Christ taking place after His emptying (at the incarnation). Christ emptied Himself *by taking* upon Himself the form of a servant. He emptied Himself by adding a new existence to His eternally divine essence.

This does not make any sense to us. Mathematically we know that to empty means to take away. If you are to empty a room of the people in it, you have less people in the room than before, not more. The sum of a subtraction can never be larger than the original integer from which the lower integer was subtracted from. With God, however, it was possible. When Christ emptied Himself, He did not give up His essential deity with all of its attributes and characteristics, but added to that genuine and complete humanity to exist in the form of a servant. God did not lose His divine attributes in the incarnation, but gained human attributes. It can be said,

then, that this emptying was accomplished by adding.

The contrast made by *alla* can be seen by in verse six where Paul said Christ existed in the form of God (*morphe theou*), but contrasts this in verse seven to the existence in which He chose to be found in at the incarnation, that being the form of a servant (*morphen doulou*).

Paul went on to say that Jesus was "made in the likeness of men." The word describing the way in which Christ came to be a man is *genomenos*, the second aorist form of *ginomai*, meaning "to come into existence." Being an aorist tense, again this relates action having taken place in the past. This likeness came into existence at the incarnation, at the time of Christ's emptying. This too, like *labon*, describes the way in which Christ emptied Himself.

"Likeness" does not indicate that Jesus' flesh was only *like* our flesh, but not of the same substance. Paul probably chose to use the word *homoiomati* to refer to His appearance to the ordinary man. Anybody could look at Jesus and see that He was like us in every way. Another possible reason Paul might have chosen this usage of "likeness" was to bypass any idea that Jesus' flesh was tainted by the sin nature inherent in all other human beings.[26](#)

The proper translation/understanding of Philippians 2:6-7, then, is as follows: "[Christ] **Who was continually existing in the essence of deity, did not deem this visible equality with God a thing to be retained: but emptied Himself** (by the abasement achieved through depriving Himself of His proper functions and prerogatives) **of this visible equality with God, taking upon Himself the form of a servant, made in the likeness of men.**"

And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:8).

Kai schemati euretheis hos anthropos, translated as "and being found in fashion as a man" explains the time of this humiliation and humbling/emptying of Christ. I have been saying that what is in view here is the incarnation, and all words referring to action having been performed in the past refer to the incarnation, and here is where this is demonstrated best. It is seen through the connection with, "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." It is obvious that the events in this passage surround the time of Jesus' earthly ministry when He became a man, *uJ*and walked among men, being in solidarity with our kind, namely human-kind.

The point of Jesus' obedience to God, and extent of genuine humanity is the fact that He submitted to the extent of accepting death, even the death on the cross.[27](#)

There is a gradation of humbling God submitted Himself to, of the which Paul gives us in successive order (vs. 6-8). God went from existing in a visible form of deity, to relinquishing this form (but not divine essence) in order to take upon Himself the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. Not only did God become a man, but He even identified with us to the point of death, and this at the hands of His own creation. Not only did He die, but He died the most

despicable death know in that day.

Consequent to this humbling, God also "highly exalted him [Jesus], and [has] given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

This exaltation could not be an exaltation of Jesus' deity, because He was already the divine essence dwelling in flesh. His deity could not be exalted, but His humanity could. It was both glorified, and given the place of honor to sit at the right hand of God.²⁸ God gave Him the honor of having all humanity acknowledge His eternal power and Godhead, majesty and dominion at the judgment.

The only aspect of identity that God could take back to heaven with Him, that He did not possess before the incarnation was the humanity He permanently assumed in His incarnation. As Daniel Segraves said, "As far as we can tell, the only difference in the pre-incarnate and post-resurrection existence of Christ is that now humanity has been permanently incorporated in the Godhead."²⁹

The final point to be made concerning this passage is that all appearances of "God" before the incarnation are anarthrous, indicating that what is in view is the essence of deity, and not the being of God (vs. 6-8). After the incarnation, however, the definite article is used with *theos*, indicating that God's person is in view. This distinction, and the time frame in which the distinction is made is important. The impact of this is as follows: "Before he added a full human existence to his previously unmitigated deity, it would have been inappropriate to imply any distinction within the Godhead. The distinction arises from the assumption of a human persona, even though this persona owed its existence to the incarnation."³⁰ After God became a man, Jesus is seen as being distinct, but not separate from God, His Father.

The Ministry of Christ as it Relates to the Kenosis

In the beginning of this section I spoke of the two prevailing theories which contemplate the way in which Jesus ministered: as a man anointed by the Holy Ghost (anointed-ministry); as God (God-ministry). The examination of Philippians 2:5-11 did not directly address or explain either theory, but paved the path for the discussion of the two.

There are a host of Scriptures which speak of Jesus as being anointed by the Holy Ghost. Even the title ascribed to Jesus numerous times, "Christ," means "anointed one." Turning to the Scriptures, Jesus testified that He was anointed by the Holy Ghost when He quoted Isaiah's prophecy, "The Spirit of the Lord is *upon* me, because he hath *anointed* me to preach the gospel to the poor..." (Luke 4:18 italics mine), attributing its fulfillment to His ministry. Just a few verses earlier it is said that "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee," indicative that He was endowed with a power He did not possess before going into the wilderness where He fasted and was tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1-14). If He ministered as God,

He would have always had all power, and could not have increased in power. Matthew declared that Isaiah prophesied of Jesus' ministry when he quoted Isaiah as saying, "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 shew judgment to the Gentiles" (12:18 italics mine). If Jesus is the fullness of deity incarnated as flesh, how can it be said that God's Spirit is "upon him?" Is He not God? How can God be anointed?

The book of Acts has a great deal to say of Jesus' ministry. On the Day of Pentecost Peter told the Jews, "Jesus of Nazareth, a man *approved of God* among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which *God did by him* in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:..." (Acts 2:22 italics mine). Jesus is said to be a *man* who was *approved of God*. Peter declared that even the miracles Jesus performed were orchestrated by God, Jesus merely being the agent by which they were administered.

In the prayer meeting held by the disciples after Peter and John were released from examination by the Sanhedrin, they prayed to God saying, "Of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed..." (Acts 4:27). Notice two important things here. First of all, the disciples addressed God in this prayer (v. 24), and spoke to Him concerning Jesus as though Jesus had a separate existence, or was a separate being from God. Secondly, the disciples agreed that Jesus was anointed, and that His anointing came from God. Again a distinction is implied to exist between God and Jesus.

When Peter preached to Cornelius, he claimed that "*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him*" (Acts 10:38). This sounds like statements concerning the way in which God would be with and anoint His church (Mark 16:20; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). Jesus received power to do good and heal those oppressed of the devil because of God's anointing upon Him to do so. Peter speaks of God as being *with* Jesus, and not as Jesus being God. Does this mean that Jesus was not truly divine, but was a mere human like us? Does this mean that Jesus is divine, but His deity is inferior to the Father's?

All of the unanswered questions I have posed, derived from these few Scriptures alone, should allow one to see the inherent weakness of the God-ministry view. The view is not only weak, but contrary to Scripture.

The only other logical alternative is to confess that Jesus Christ was anointed by God. We need to understand these Scriptures which speak of Jesus as being a man anointed by the Holy Ghost in light of the God's kenosis. God made a decision before the foundation of the world that He would renounce the exercise of His divine powers, attributes, and prerogatives, for the purpose of living within the limitations a true human being must live in. God did not lay aside His divine attributes (such as omniscience), but made them latent within Him. Although they were existent in Him in their fullness, He willed to restrain their exercisement. "By taking on human nature, he accepted certain limitations upon the functioning of his divine attributes. These limitations were not the result of a loss of divine attributes but of the addition of human attributes."³¹ In this state, Jesus lived His life and

performed ministry as a man anointed by the Holy Ghost, dependent upon His Father for everything He did.

Sometimes we have the idea that because Jesus was God He healed whoever He wanted to, said whatever He wanted to say, and knew things which transcended ordinary human knowledge. Jesus gave us indication as to how He ministered as it is recorded in the gospel of John. Although I will deal with the theological significance later, I am going to deal with the practical significance here. Jesus plainly said of His own ability, "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30). Jesus did not even know what to teach apart from what His Father told Him. The very words He spoke were echoes of what He had first received from His Father (John 8:28, 38, 40; 12:49-50; 17:8). Jesus was a *recipient* of divine revelation, not its originator.

On another occasion Jesus said, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he *seeth* the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son and sheweth him all things that himself doeth" (John 5:19-20; See also 3:32 italics mine).

The importance of this verse is two-fold. First, it reveals that Jesus had no ability of His own, but was in total dependance on His Father; Secondly, this verse shows us the manner in which Jesus depended upon His Father. Jesus *saw* the works His Father was doing and then performed those same works here on earth. Apparently Jesus saw visions and mental pictures of some sort which allowed Him to know the will of God. The actions of Jesus ensued from His knowledge of what was occurring in the Spirit realm. He attempted nothing, and said nothing apart from this knowledge. Nothing in His ministry was done through the arm of flesh. He did not hope that those He prayed for would be healed. He knew they would be healed because it was the will of His Father to do so. If it was not God's will, Jesus would not have attempted to heal them.

A good illustration of this can be seen in Jesus' healing of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:2-9). There were multitudes of sick people who laid there all the time just waiting to be healed. The amazing thing about this story is that Jesus only healed one man. The reason Jesus did not heal the rest could not be due to a lack of faith on their part. Their presence at the pool demonstrated their faith. They were waiting for an angel to stir the waters, believing that the first to get into the troubled waters would be healed. If this is not faith in the power of God I do not know what is! Even if they did not have faith before Jesus healed the impotent man, surely they would have had faith to be healed after having seen the impotent man walk! It simply was not the will of God to heal them. It was only the will of God to heal the one man. On other occasions it was the will of God to heal all those who came to Jesus to be healed, and therefore Jesus did heal them all (Matthew 8:16; 12:15; Luke 4:40; Luke 6:17-19).

Jesus brought the realities of the spiritual realm into the natural realm by faith and obedience to what He saw. Through this obedience He was able to bring about the unity God intended to exist between heaven and earth, between the invisible and visible realms. Jesus was perfectly led of the Spirit, completely fulfilling the will of God on earth (John 5:30, 36). One of the means by which He accomplished this

was through the operation of the gifts of the Spirit.

Jesus had to pray because He relied upon the Holy Ghost for His strength and power. Jesus used the gifts of the Spirit to perform the will of God just as we do. He said Himself that He cast out devils by the Spirit of God (Matthew 12:28). He knew the woman at the well had five husbands in the past because He was given a word of knowledge from the Holy Ghost (John 4:17). Through the discerning of Spirits Jesus discerned the guileless spirit of Nathanael, and the foul spirit in the man at the synagogue (John 1:47; Mark 1:26). Through the gift of faith Jesus calmed the raging storm (Mark 4:39-41). Jesus healed multitudes upon multitudes of sick folk through the gifts of healings. Jesus made the lame to walk by the working of miracles (Matthew 11:5; 15:30). By the word of wisdom Jesus directed the apostles where to cast their nets so that they might catch the most fish (Luke 5:4-10). Through the gift of prophecy Jesus foretold many future events.

Jesus' baptism was the time at which He was anointed by the Father with the Holy Ghost and power for ministry. The Old Testament prophets, priests, and kings were always anointed in some way to signify that they were chosen of God (Exodus 28:41; 29:7; I Kings 19:16). The oil with which they were anointed was symbolic of the Holy Ghost. Jesus, then, in like manner was to be anointed by the Holy Ghost since He came to fulfill the roles of prophet, priest, and king (Psalm 45:7-8; Isaiah 61:1). Instead of being anointed with oil that was symbolic of the Holy Ghost, Jesus was anointed by the Spirit of God Himself.

The priests were washed with water and anointed for the purpose of consecration to their office (Exodus 29:4, 7). This may have some bearing upon why Jesus was baptized in water. Surely He was not baptized because of sin, because He was sinless. He was baptized as a washing for His ordination as the High Priest for all mankind (See Hebrews 7).

This anointing Jesus received does not mean that He became God or the Christ at His baptism. This was merely the point at which God anointed Him for ministry. Jesus had to be anointed for His calling and ministry in the same way we are anointed for ours. Notice that it was not until after this anointing at Christ's baptism that He performed His first miracle (John 2:11; anointed by God in 1:32-33). Why did not Jesus perform any miracles before this time? Why was it that God did not use Him to preach and heal until after He was over thirty years of age (Luke 3:23)? It was because the time for His earthly ministry had not yet come, and therefore God's anointing and power was not with Him to do so. Unless it is in the will of God to heal someone, they will not be healed. If He does not heal the sick, raise the dead, give a word of knowledge, a prophetic word, vision, or revelation, none of these things will happen. We cannot force God to do anything through us. We can only work the works of God in accordance to divine will. God, for whatever purpose, chose not to do anything substantial (pertaining to ministry) through Jesus until He was over thirty years of age.

In accordance with that thought, note that it was not until after Jesus' baptism that He could stand in the synagogue at Nazareth and proclaim the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in Himself saying, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to

heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the LORD" (Luke 4:18; anointed by God in 3:21-23). It was not until after Christ's anointing at His baptism that this Scripture was fulfilled. Before He was anointed at His baptism, it was still prophetic in nature, although the One who would fulfill it was alive and well in the world.

Although Jesus ministered as a man anointed of the Holy Ghost, this does not deny or minimize His unique and special relationship to the Father. Jesus differed from us in His identity as the Son of God. He was God manifest in the flesh. As a result, He had a special relationship to God that we cannot have. I am not talking about our closeness to God, or about the extent to which our ministry can extend in its fruitfulness; we can do all that Jesus did. He even said we would do greater things than He did (John 14:12). Jesus obviously has special privileges as the Son of God that we do not have. These include such things as judging the souls of men, raising the dead, and sitting on the throne as world-ruler during the millenium.

I point this out because some might say, "If Jesus lived His life as a mere man anointed by the Holy Ghost, then how could He have said that He had the power to call for twelve legions of angels to rescue Him from the cross (Matthew 26:53)? Jesus could have called for legions of angels on cross, but He also could have decided not to go to the cross (Matthew 26:42). Theoretically Jesus could have done these things because He was God and had the power to do so, but the fact remains that He did not. Based on the kenosis, we understand that He did not do these things because of His predestined choice to limit His existence to a man anointed by the Holy Ghost while living in this world. Jesus did not take advantage of His powers because His human will was completely submitted to the will of God, so that Jesus always did those things that pleased His Father (John 8:29). What pleased the Father was that Jesus would not rely upon His identity as God.

Another objection might be raised based upon Jesus' exercise of forgiving sins. Only God has the power to forgive sins, so how could Jesus have done so if He ministered as a man anointed by the Holy Ghost? Jesus had this prerogative because of identity as the Son of God, but this prerogative was not peculiar to Him because of this identity, neither was this prerogative arbitrary. Jesus said that we also have the power to forgive or retain sins. He told His disciples, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained" (John 20:23). Does this mean that we have the power to forgive sin? Does this mean we decide who is forgiven and who is not? No. All Jesus meant was that we would pronounce forgiven those who, by faith and repentance, have already been forgiven by God. Those whose sins we retain reflect the unforgiveness of God toward them because of their lack of faith and repentance. We merely represent here on earth the judgment already made in heaven.[32](#)

It was in this same manner that Jesus forgave sin. He could not know the condition of the heart apart from revelation from His Father. Jesus forgave those that His Father forgave. Jesus' decision was not arbitrary, nor did it originate within His own will, but it was the purpose of the Father being carried out in His ministry.

Jesus gave us this same responsibility before He ascended into heaven. If He forgave sin because He was God, then how could He have truly expected us to perform this same responsibility, knowing that we have no divine prerogatives to do so? This can only fortify the fact that Jesus forgave sin in obedience to the direction of the Holy Ghost which allowed Him to know that His Father had already forgiven them. Jesus pronounced forgiven those His Father had already forgiven in heaven. This was done as a man anointed by the Holy Ghost. Jesus knew that we could do the same since we are human beings relying on the Holy Ghost as did He.

The understanding of this restraint, or limitation of deity by divine choice is the hinge to understanding the ministry and work of Christ. It is this very thing that will bring us understanding concerning some of Jesus' statements which seem to imply that He was less than God, some of Jesus' actions, and the terminology of the Scripture as it relates to the relationship between Jesus and God the Father.[33](#)

The Work of Christ as it Relates to the Kenosis

Not only does the kenosis passage have significant bearing upon understanding the ministry of Christ, but it also has significant bearing upon His work. The ministry God needed to fulfill for man is the reason He chose to limit His divine essence when He assumed a human existence..

The New Testament has much to say about Christ's priesthood, or mediatorial role, especially the book of Hebrews. A priest is one who represents the people to God. A prophet, on the opposing hand, comes to the people, representing God and His Word. For example, Paul said that "there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:5). Notice that it is the *man* Christ Jesus who is the mediator. If Jesus' deity served as the mediator, then we would have to believe that His deity was inferior to the Father's. Paul specifically declared that it was the *man* Christ Jesus who served this mediatorial role. In the incarnation, Jesus became the mediator between God (Spirit) and man (flesh) by assuming humanity. He was able to be this Mediator because God united complete deity and complete humanity into one in the person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus declared His mediatorial role when He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

The author of Hebrews stressed Jesus' priesthood to the believers (2:17-18; 3:1; 4:14-16; 5:1-10; 6:20; 7-8; 9:11, 24-28; 10:11-12, 21-22; 13:11-12). Although this is not the only purpose of the incarnation, it is one of the most important to us. We will better understand why God chose to limit the exercise of His deity when we understand His role as High Priest of the New Covenant. Just as any priest must stand in solidarity with those he represents to God, Jesus was also able to stand in solidarity with those He represents to God because He was a genuine human being like us (Hebrews 2:14, 16-17; 5:1-3, 5-6)..

The author declared the purpose of God's incarnation when he said: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation

for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17-18). God became man so that He could be a merciful and faithful high priest for lost humanity. As part of being human Jesus faced genuine temptations (Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-14). God desired to be tempted in the flesh so that He could be a merciful and faithful High Priest for us.

Some see a problem with this because James 1:13 says that God cannot be tempted. They reason that if Jesus was God, He could not have been truly tempted; therefore, it only appeared as though Jesus was tempted. The only other avenue for those who see a problem here would be to confess that Jesus was truly tempted, but He was not truly God. This is not plausible, so denying the genuineness of His temptations is the route usually taken to explain Christ's temptations. In doing so they are actually denying the completeness and genuineness of His humanity.

Denying the genuineness of Jesus' temptation is not the answer to reconciling this apparent contradiction. The answer is found in understanding the nature of the incarnation. Because God assumed a genuine human existence He experienced temptation like any of us do. It cannot be argued that Jesus could not have been tempted because He did not have the sin nature, because Adam and Eve experienced temptation and yet they were sinless. The difference between Jesus and Adam is that Jesus never succumbed to the power of temptation.

Not only did Jesus experience genuine temptation, but He must have felt the full force of its power because He never submitted to it. So often when we are tempted, we give in rather quickly, and thus never feel the full extent of its power. Jesus resisted temptation by the power of the Holy Ghost until it was defeated. The more He resisted, the more Satan would put on Him. It was because Jesus felt the full force of temptation that He "is able to succour them that are tempted."

If Jesus relied upon His deity to overcome the temptations He faced, what kind of victory would that be? If Jesus resisted temptation because He was God it could not be said that He truly faced or felt temptation since God cannot be tempted. Instead of relying upon His deity (it being latent within Him) He relied upon the Holy Ghost as any man must do to overcome temptation. Jesus succeeded where Adam failed, not because He was God, but because He was perfectly submitted to the Holy Ghost. He is our example reminding us that we too can overcome temptation if we rely upon the power of the Holy Ghost. Jesus truly felt our temptations and was able to overcome them through the power of the Spirit, and now is able to sympathize with us, and aid us when we face our temptations.

On this same train of thought, the author declared: "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). Because of this truth, the author admonished, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (v. 16). Here again it is said that Jesus was tempted. It was not a facade or charade, but was genuinely felt by Jesus. Not only was He tempted, but He was tempted in *all points like as we are*.

Although I believe Jesus was tempted by some of the same things we are tempted by (drinking, fornication, stealing, lying, etc.), I do not believe He was tempted by every temptation that we are faced with. Jesus could not have been faced with the temptation to shoot heroine because heroine was not known in that day, and syringes surely were not even developed yet. The culture and technological advancements of a society will affect the ways in which one can be tempted. It seems best to view the *all points* in which Jesus was tempted to refer to the three roots of all sin: the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life (I John 2:16). No matter what temptation one is faced with, it can be traced back to one or more of these three roots of sin.

I am emphasizing that Jesus was truly tempted, because if He was not, then He could not be said to be truly human. Although sinning is not a distinguishing mark of human existence, the ability to be tempted is. If God had not given up the exercise of His divine prerogatives when coming in the flesh, He would not have been a true human being like us. However, He had to be a human being in every way to be able to redeem us from the curse of sin. If Jesus relied upon His deity to function in this life, He could not have truly felt our temptations and thus could not be a faithful high priest for us in things pertaining to God. Because He felt the full magnitude of our temptations He can be touched by the feelings of our weaknesses (infirmities) and give us grace to overcome them.

This willing limitation God imposed upon Himself when He became a man (II Corinthians 5:19) could be likened to the world's fastest sprinter who decides to run in a sack-race. By willingly and intentionally binding himself to the sack the runner will slow himself down considerably. This type of running is a new experience for him. Although his individual physical strength and speed has not diminished, it has been circumscribed by the conditions in which it now exists. The runner is slowed down by the limitation of the sack, not the loss of his running abilities. He could still run just as fast as He always could, but that ability (prerogative) is not accessible because it is limited by the sack.

Or consider if an entire baseball team switched batting stances. All those who were right handed would bat left-handed, and vice-versa. In both of these examples, the essence of ability and strength has not been diminished, but the conditions willingly imposed upon them have limited the exercise of their full potential.[34](#)

The Relationship of Jesus to the Father

The Scripture abounds with statements and terminologies that seem to imply an inferiority of Jesus to God, or the Son to the Father. Even Jesus Himself said that His Father was greater than He (John 14:28). On another occasion Jesus said, "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son and sheweth him all things that himself doeth" (John 5:19-20; See also 3:32). He plainly said of His own ability, "I can of mine own self do nothing" (John 5:30).

The Gospel of John abounds with statements like these. According to Jesus, even

what He taught He received from His Father. The very words were taught to Him before He ever taught them to others (7:16; 8:26, 28, 38, 40; 12:48-50; 17:8). Jesus was the *recipient*, not the *author* of divine revelation. He spoke of the Father as being *with* Him (8:29), as proceeding from and being sent by Him (8:42; 14:24; 16:27-28; 17:8, 18), as returning to Him (16:5, 7, 10), and as being sanctified by Him (10:36). The Father is even said to honor the Son (8:55).

The Scripture commonly refers to God and Jesus as though they are two separate individuals. Jesus continually spoke *of* His Father, and *to* His Father as though they were separate from one another. He told the Pharisees, speaking of His Father, "Of whom ye say, that He is your God" (8:54). Jesus also said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. ... If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:21, 23).

Jesus' lengthy prayer to God for His disciples found in John chapter 17 is overflowing with this type of terminology. In verse three He said, "That they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Here Jesus called the Father "God." Even though Jesus was God, He acknowledged God the Father as superior to Himself and spoke to Him in a manner like any human being would.

Jesus spoke of Himself in the third person. This gives us an indication of the way in which the Hebrews used language. It does not make any sense to us to speak of ourselves by using our own name as though we are speaking of someone else. This peculiar usage of words might help us to understand the peculiarities of these and other Biblical statements.

Did John record all of these statements to show that Jesus was in some way inferior to the Father or separate from Him? It would not seem likely since John's gospel also contains some of the most powerful assertions of Jesus' deity and equality with God. Such statements include "I and my Father are one," "Before Abraham was, I am," and "He who hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Jesus commonly spoke of His relationship with the Father as, "I am in the Father, and the Father in me" (John 10:38; 14:10-11; 17:21). It cannot be said that the Son is the Father, or that the Father is the Son. The Son by definition is both divine and human, while the Father is only divine. Although the deity of the Son is of the same essence as that of the Father, the deity of the Son is inextricably joined with the humanity to form an existence distinct from God's existence as a transcendent Spirit. The deity of the Father is in the Son, but the Son's existence is different from the Father's. There is, therefore, a distinction between the Son and the Father, but there is no separation. The deity of the Son is none other than that of Yahweh Himself, having come down in the form of a servant and in the likeness of men. This is why we find statements like, "He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me" (John 12:44-45). On another occasion Jesus said, "He that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (John 13:20). How is believing on Jesus tantamount to believing in

God? Is it not possible to believe in Jesus, but not believe in God? Or how is it possible to have seen God when one has, in reality, only seen Jesus' physical body? Can't one accept Jesus without accepting the Father? According to Jesus the answer is no.

Jesus made even more profound statements of this nature. Such include "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also" (John 14:6-7). Not only is Jesus the way to the Father, but the Father can only be known through the Son. It would seem to us that the Father could be known apart from the Son, but according to Jesus it is not possible. To the Jews who hated Jesus because of what He said and did He cautioned "He that hateth me hateth my Father also" (John 15:23). Probably one of the best examples demonstrating this point is found in Second John 9 where John said, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." (See also I John 2:23-24) If you accept Christ's person you will have the Father and the Son. All of these Scriptures relay one common truth: knowing the Father is bound up in knowing the Son.

This can be compared to the father-son identities we experience. When a man is born he experiences the role of a son. Although He knows the role of father exists, he has no personal experience of it. Through the process of time he can *add* the role of fatherhood to his identity. Then he is both a son and a father. His added identity as a father does not negate his identity as a son, but simply adds a role with its corresponding characteristics to his existing role as a son.

In the same way, but in reverse, God added another identity to Himself when He became a man. God has always been deity, but in the process of His plan to redeem man he *added* humanity to his deity. His deity was not compromised or mitigated by adding this role to His identity, but nevertheless, His role as exclusive deity and Spirit was changed. God never gave up His eternal, unlimited deity when becoming the Son, just as a father does not give up His identity as a son when he becomes a father. There is no change in his essential person, but there is a change in his life as he now experiences the role he once only knew by concept. The role of father went from being *a priori* (prior to and independent of experience) to *a posteriori* (proceeding from and dependent upon experienced reality). That which was once an abstract concept became an objectively understood reality, empirical (knowledge gained by experience) in nature.

You may know a person as a son without knowing them in their role as father. When the identity of father is added to their identity as a son, knowing the person in their role of father assumes knowing them as a son also. In like manner, but in exactly the reverse order (God assumed Sonship whereas we assume fatherhood), knowing God in His incarnation (deity and humanity) assumes knowing Him in His deity. For His identity as a human was *added* to his identity as Spirit. Knowledge of the Father is bound up in the being of the Son because the Father's essential deity is in the Son. To know Jesus (God in His immanence) is to know the Father (God in His transcendence). Knowing the Son assumes knowing the Father also, but the opposite is not true. You cannot know Jesus by knowing the Father because Jesus' identity goes beyond that of the Father in that the Son has a

component to His existence the Father (God in His transcendence) does not have, namely humanity. (See figure 1) In a sense it can be said that Jesus was more than God; not more in His deity, but more with respect to the addendum of His human existence.

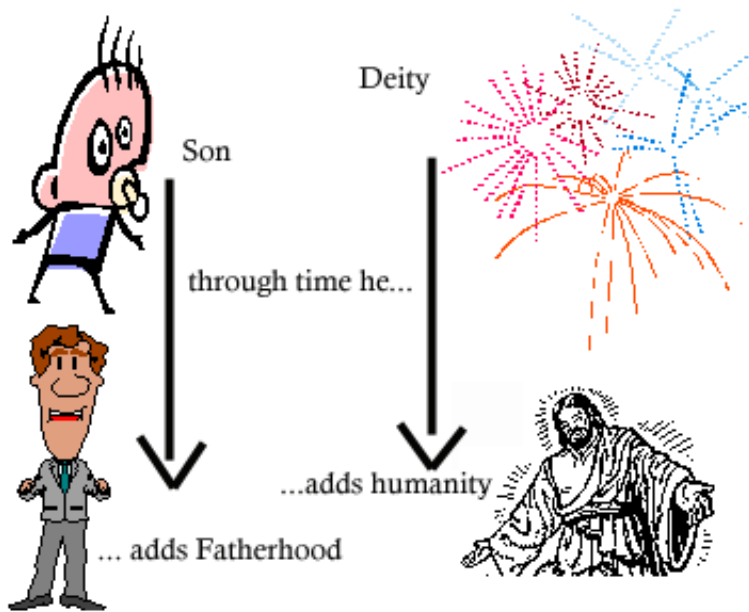


figure 1

Probably the most baffling statements of all are those which speak of Jesus as having a God. These types of statements create a feeling of uneasiness among oneness and trinitarian camps alike. Paul prayed "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" (Ephesians 1:17). Peter also used this same terminology when He said "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy..." (I Peter 1:3). In the Greek language, the definite article appears with "God," but not with "Father." This means that "Father" and "God" are two terms referring to the same individual. The Father of Jesus is also the God of Jesus. If Jesus was God manifest in flesh, how could it be said that He has a God? This seems contradictory. It seems to imply that Jesus is not divine at all, or His deity is inferior to the Father's, and thus the Father is Jesus' God. (See also II Corinthians 11:31; Ephesians 1:3; Hebrews 1:9; Revelation 3:12)

In the benedictions of Paul's epistles especially, something is commonly said to the effect of, "Grace and peace be unto you from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."³⁵ Why this dual usage? Why did the writers of Scripture greet the churches or people they wrote to with peace from God and from Jesus? They seem to be spoken of as separate individuals. It is interesting that we rarely find a mention of the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Ghost in one verse or passage. It is usually just the Father and Jesus that are spoken of. Why is it that the Holy Ghost is always "left out?" There is a purpose for this type of usage among the New Testament writers.

These types of statements cannot be ignored or denied, but we tend to do one of

the either or both. The solution to understanding these types of Scriptures will not be found in denying Jesus' deity, nor will they be solved by positing a Godhead in which two beings known as "God" share equality of deity. The solution lies in the acknowledgment of Jesus' complete, authentic, and genuine humanity;³⁶ a humanity which imposed limitations (accepted willingly and intentionally) upon His deity so that He could live on the same plane as any other human, sharing in all of their experiences.

When God assumed humanity, He acquired a consciousness and identity which He never possessed before the incarnation. He had a human psyche not overwhelmed or consumed by His deity. The exercise of Jesus' human nature (such as His consciousness, spirit, will, mind, emotions, and flesh) in such a way requires that in the incarnation, Jesus be spoken of as possessing an identity distinct from, but not separate from the Father.³⁷ Just as we find a distinction, but not a separation of Christ's two natures, we also find a distinction, but not a separation between God and Jesus; the Father and the Son. This view does not "compromise the deity of Christ or the radical monotheism of biblical theology. But it does give credit to the completeness and genuineness of His [Jesus'] human nature. Any other explanation compromises the completeness of His deity or His humanity."³⁸

All of the above Scriptures demonstrate the relationship between the genuine and complete humanity of Jesus (latent deity in genuine humanity), and the transcendent Spirit of the Father. Because Jesus would not rely upon His deity in order to experience the limitations of humanity, He needed a relationship with God. As pertaining to His humanity, Jesus could say that His Father was greater than He Himself. The Father was greater, not because His deity was greater than that of Jesus' (Jesus was Yahweh become flesh), but in the respect that the Father (God as the all existing Spirit) was not subject to any of the limitations of human existence as was Jesus. In His willing limitation of His deity, living life as a man anointed by the Holy Ghost, Jesus could say that He could of His own self do nothing, but what He saw the Father do. Jesus had to rely upon His Father to give Him what to teach and show Him what He wanted Him to do. In His humanity, Jesus' knowledge was limited so that He did not know the day and hour of the second coming. Finally, in his genuine humanity, it can even be said of Jesus that He had a God! The reason Paul most always only mentioned God the Father and Lord Jesus Christ in His benedictions was because we now know God in two major manifestations: God transcendent as the all existing Spirit, and God immanent as He came in flesh to redeem our souls. Paul and others did not write in this manner to show a separation in the Godhead, but to show the distinction between the existence of Father and the Son because of the addendum of humanity, and yet at the same time the unity of the Godhead.

Relevance to Life and Ministry

No matter how much we do know concerning the mechanics of the incarnation, it must be remembered that we can never truly comprehend it. We can affirm and believe to be true the declarations set forth in Scripture, but we can never truly understand how God, Who is the eternal Spirit, could become a man. We must accept by faith that deity conceived in a woman and united with humanity, and

that humanity united with deity, neither nature compromised or overridden by the other.

Paul spoke of the "mystery of the incarnation" (I Timothy 3:16). This mystery is none other than that "God was manifest in the flesh...". The incarnation is the greatest miracle to ever occur. A miracle by nature is something unexplainable and mysterious to the human mind. This is why faith and mystery must always play a major role in Christology. We can know by faith the Scriptural declarations concerning the hypostatic union to be true, but we will never fully understand how it is possible, and the technical details of how it occurred. We should always maintain an attitude of humility when contemplating how God and man can coexist in the one person of Jesus Christ.

What does the kenosis mean to us practically then? Is it just some bunch of theological garb to get us confused? No. It is the way in which we see how fully God loved us. He loved us so much that He identified with us in every way, even to the point of limiting the exercise of His divine attributes and powers so that He might face the sufferings and challenges we face. The purpose of this limiting was so that He could fully understand what we face in this existence, and after overcoming the temptations and hardships He could become our example and offer help in the time of need. He showed us that since He could rely strictly upon the Holy Ghost for strength and anointing to overcome temptation and be perfectly led of the Spirit, we can do the same. Jesus was not "in a league of His own," but was one of us. He was a man with whom we can identify, a man we can pattern our lives after.

We need not feel that Jesus does not know what we are going through.. When we feel forsaken, so did He on the cross (Matthew 27:46). When we are struggling with the will of God we can rest knowing that Jesus also struggled in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed that His Father would change His will (Matthew 26:36-44). Jesus is our example for ministry, overcoming temptation, and empathizing with others (II Corinthians 1:3-7).

Christology also demonstrates to us how Christ's person affects our salvation. If He was not perfect man and perfect God He could not save us. When we experience salvation, it is not a mere experience, but it is an encounter with Jesus Christ. The early church understand the soteriological implications of Christ's person and fought vehemently to preserve a portrait of Christ that was consistent with the Scriptures and their salvific encounter with Christ. Likewise, our doctrine of Christ is not just a bunch of scrabbling over words and philosophical concepts, but defines our understanding of our salvation-experience with Jesus Christ, the God-man from Galilee.

Footnotes

1. All references to God's hands (Isaiah 48:13), nostrils (Exodus 15:8), or eyes (Proverbs 15:3) must be understood as anthropomorphic expressions trying to relate God to us in human terms. God is not one big body up in heaven. To have a body would indicate limitation in space, but God is omnipresent and is not limited

by any form or body (I Kings 8:27; Psalm 139:7-13). If we are to understand these Scriptures to be physical descriptions of God, we would also be forced to believe that God is part bird because the Scriptures speak of God as having wings (Psalm 91:4). The Scripture declares that God is Spirit (John 4:24), and spirits by definition do not have physical bodies (Luke 24:36-39). [<back>](#)

2. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*. Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985, on PC Study Bible. Computer Software. Version 2.1. BibleSoft. Seattle, WA.. 1993-1996. [<back>](#)

3. Ibid. [<back>](#)

4. Ibid. [<back>](#)

5. A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1932), 5:336. [<back>](#)

6. Liddon, as found in *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* on PC Study Bible. [<back>](#)

7. The Bible. *New International Version*. [<back>](#)

8. Paul penned the epistle to the Colossians around A.D. 64, about 34 years after Jesus' death and resurrection, yet at that time he said the fulness of the Godhead "dwelleth" in Jesus bodily. "Dwelleth" is in the present tense form in the Greek and English. This indicates that in A.D. 64, the fulness of the Godhead was still dwelling in Jesus Christ's physical body. [<back>](#)

9. Daniel L. Segraves, *Systematic Theology I* (Stockton, CA: n.p., 1997), 31.

[<back>](#)

10. Millard J. Erickson, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 752. [<back>](#)

11. The only difference between Elisabeth and Mary's experiences was sexual intercourse. Elisabeth conceived by this method whereas Mary did not. Mary conceived when the Holy Ghost came upon and overshadowed her (Luke 1:35). Sexual intercourse must not be confused with conception. The two events are not same thing. Conception is the uniting of the sperm with the egg. This was the similarity between Elisabeth and Mary's conception. [<back>](#)

12. Segraves, 7. [<back>](#)

13. Ibid. [<back>](#)

14. Ibid., 7. [<back>](#)

15. Ibid., 49. [<back>](#)

16. This is a quote from the Chalcedon Creed adopted in A.D. 451 at Chalcedon. This creed has been the orthodox statement concerning Christology ever since. Although we do not base our faith in or doctrine upon any creed of church history, they can be used for our purposes when they concur with Biblical truth. In this case, the Chalcedon Creed does speak of Biblical truth and therefore I have used it here. [<back>](#)

17. Erickson, 735. [<back>](#)

18. This does not mean that Jesus' humanity was different than ours in any way. The only way in which His humanity could be said to be different from ours is that His humanity only exists by its union with the Spirit of God, whereas our humanity exists by the union of two human parents. The difference between our flesh and His flesh is a matter of origin and subsistence. The origin and subsistence of His flesh is from the conception brought about by the miraculous conception of the Holy Ghost in Mary's womb, while ours is from the genetical influence of two natural parents brought about by a natural conception. [<back>](#)

19. Segraves, 7. [<back>](#)
20. Homer A. Kent Jr., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien. Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 126, as found in Segraves, 11. [<back>](#)
21. Feinberg, "The Kenosis and Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Analysis of Phil 2:6-11," found in *Trinity Journal*, 1980), 41. [<back>](#)
22. Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 108, as found in Segraves, 12. [<back>](#)
23. Paul Feinberg, 34-35. [<back>](#)
24. Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament*, vol. 2. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 64, as found in Segraves, 12. [<back>](#)
25. Wesley J. Perschabacher, ed., *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1990), 236. [<back>](#)
26. Segraves, 13. [<back>](#)
27. Crucifixion was the most dishonorable way of execution among the Romans. It was reserved only for the lowest of criminals. The honorable way to be executed was to be beheaded by the sword (Romans 13:4). To show the extent of Jesus' humbling, Paul pointed out that Jesus not only submitted to the idea of dying for sins He didn't committ, but He gave His life in the most dishonorable form of execution practiced in His day. [<back>](#)
28. The "right hand of God" is not indicative of a locale or physical reality. This is an anthropomorphic expression (expressions relating God in human terminology for the purpose of understanding aspects of His infinity that could not otherwise be expressed to and understood by finite human minds) speaking of exaltation, power, prestige, honor, and strength. This will be elaborated upon later in this paper. [<back>](#)
29. Segraves, 14. [<back>](#)
30. Ibid., 16. [<back>](#)
31. Erickson, 735. [<back>](#)
32. "Apheontai" and "kekratentai" translated "are forgiven" and "are retained" respectively, are in the perfect passive indicative tense in the Greek. The idea of the Greek perfect tense can not be conveyed adequately in a word-for-word translation. Even a thought-for-thought translation sounds awkward in the English language. The Greek perfect tense explains action that began at some point in the past and continued to a point of completion, with results continuing on into the future. The proper translation of apheontai and kekratentai is "shall be having been forgiven" and "shall be having been retained." The originator of the forgiveness or unforgiveness of sins is God. He is the one who began the action in the past. We just carry out the continuing effects of this forgiveness or unforgiveness on earth. [<back>](#)
33. Although commonly stigmatized by Oneness Pentecostals, the term "God the Father" is Biblical. It is used a total of thirteen times in the New Testament, both by Jesus, Paul, Peter, John, and Jude (John 6:27; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 6:23; Philippians 2:11; II Peter 1:17; II John 1:3; Jude 1). We must not be afraid of using Biblical terminology because of false theologies that have been derived from it. Although "God the Father" is Biblical, "God the Son" and "God the Holy Ghost" are not and thus should be avoided. These terms were invented to express an idea of the Godhead not found in Scripture. [<back>](#)

34. The analogies are based on Erickson's analogies, 735-736. [<back>](#)
35. Romans 1:7; I Corinthians 1:3; II Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; Colossians 1:2; I Thessalonians 1:1; II Thessalonians 1:2; I Timothy 1:2; II Timothy 1:1-2; II Peter 1:1-2; II John 3; Jude 1. [<back>](#)
36. Segraves, 37. [<back>](#)
37. Ibid., 38. [<back>](#)
38. Ibid. [<back>](#)

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