

Resources:

Pastor David Thompson. *Christology #13*. Texas Corners Bible Church.

Charles Ryrie. *Basic Theology*. Pg. 299-302

John Miles. *Doctrine 2 notes*. FSB. Pg. 6

Pastor Tom Harves. *Philippians notes*. FSB. Pg. 24-25

Philippians 2:5-9

"[5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,"

What I intend for us to learn tonight is this:

IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH THE ETERNAL PLAN OF THE TRIUNE GODHEAD, JESUS CHRIST HAD TO EMPTY HIMSELF.

Now that statement prompts us to ask the critical question regarding this text:

Of what did Christ empty Himself? If Jesus emptied Himself, what did He empty Himself of?

That is our question for the evening that we intend to answer.

When you look at the word that the translators used to say "emptied," you find that they are using that word in English to express the word in Greek known as "keno-o". This word, according to James Strong's Definitions, means to make empty, i.e. (figuratively) to abase, neutralize, falsify: - make (of no effect, of no reputation, void), be in vain. This word is translated into English in other parts of the Bible as make void, make of none effect, make of no reputation, and be in vain. The verb simply means to make empty.

The word keno-o is where we get this term "Kenosis" from. So if you ever hear someone refer to the Kenosis, just know that they are referring to Philippians 2:7 where Paul wrote that Christ emptied Himself.

There have been a lot of suggestions thrown out over the years that people have come up with to answer this question and some of those suggestions are false.

False suggestion #1 - Jesus gave up the form of God. He emptied Himself of His deity to be a man.

This idea is false because it tries to separate the deity of Christ and the Humanity of Christ. Jesus did not stop being God when He became a man.

The other issue with this suggestion is that there is nothing stated in Philippians 2 about Jesus subtracting His deity. Rather than subtraction, the text indicates addition. Jesus added humanity to Himself in order to be the God-man.

False suggestion #2 - Jesus restricted His Deity in order to become a man.

This idea says that Jesus limited all of His divine attributes in order to fit into humanity. The problem with this idea is that it makes Jesus less than Deity, and it ruins the Biblical claim of the divine attributes. If Jesus is all-powerful, than He needs to be all powerful, not just kind of all powerful. If Jesus has a limited omnipotence, than He can't be fully Deity, because full Deity, according to the Bible, requires full omnipotence.

False suggestion #3 - Christ gave up some of His Divine attributes when He became a man.

This idea would state that Jesus, in order to be a man, had to give up being omnipresent (everywhere present), omniscient (all knowledge), and omnipotent (all power). The problem with this suggestion is that Jesus did display all three of those divine attributes while he was walking on earth as a man.

He displayed omnipresence. **John 1:47-48**

He displayed omniscience. **John 2:24-25**

He displayed omnipotence. **Mark 4:39; John 11:37-44**

The other issue with this is that God is an unchanging God. If Jesus was in the form of God before the incarnation and then He gave up attributes of Deity, that would make a change in God, but the Bible clearly states that God does not change. **James 1:17**

Also, Jesus is stated in the Bible as unchanging. If Jesus possessed all attributes of Deity at one point in time, but then stopped having those attributes, the Bible could not say He is unchanging, but the Bible does claim Jesus is unchanging. **Hebrews 13:8**

False Suggestion #4 - Christ gave up all of His divine attributes.

In light of what we just studied about our stance that Jesus did not give up some of His divine attributes, we certainly do not agree with the idea that He gave up all His attributes. We have already given enough evidence to support our stance on this suggestion.

Now that we have eliminated those four false suggestions, let's move on to consider true statements that are consistent with the text of **Philippians 2**.

True Statement #1 - Jesus existed in the form of God prior to the incarnation. **2:6a**

This text states very plainly that before Jesus was born as a human, He was seen in the heavenly realm as God of very God. Whatever the form of God was and is in the spiritual realm, Jesus was that form. The angels saw Jesus in the form of God. The form, or appearance of Jesus, before He became human was that of God. And Jesus claimed this reality and knew this Himself (**John 17:5**). Jesus had the visible glory of God as part of His appearance.

True Statement #2 - Jesus did not count equality with God as a thing to be grasped. **2:6b**

What this means is that He was willing, for a time, to not be seen in appearance as God. He did not see His exalted state as equality with God a thing that He needed to hold on to. He was willing to step down from that in the sense that He would not be seen in the form of God for a time. That means that He was willing to take on a form in which people would not see Him as God. That is exactly what happened in the incarnation.

True Statement #3 - Jesus emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant. **2:7a**

Verse 7 is the specific phrase that refers to Him emptying Himself, and it appears that it is referring to Him stooping to a level where He would place Himself under the authority of another. He would become a servant. He would live submitted to the authority and direction of another, just like a good servant would do.

True Statement #4 - Jesus took the form of a servant by being made in human likeness. **2:7b**

What "taking the form of a servant" looked like as compared to being "in the form of God" is that Jesus would be human. Humans are God's creation and are made to serve God's plan and purpose. Jesus took the form of a servant by being born in the "likeness of men."

Referring to this phrase "likeness of men," Charles Ryrie said, "'likeness indicated two things: first that He was really like men, and second that He was different from men. His humanity subjected Him to trials and limitations; yet the work 'likeness' guarded against concluding that He was identical with men. He was different because He was sinless (see Romans 8:3). Further, He was found in appearance (schema) of a man. This word refers to that which is outward; i.e., in actions, dress, manners, and all appearances, He was a man. Thus He humbled Himself and became obedient to death on a cross, the epitome of shame."

True Statement #5 - Jesus, as a human, humbled himself to obedience. **2:8a**

When Jesus showed up on earth, His appearance indicated that He was a man, but becoming a man was not the ultimate sign of His humility. Not only did He become a man, but He went to the furthest extent of humility as a man can go. He became an obedient servant. What we have is

the Eternal Almighty God of the Universe, the second member of the triune Godhead, living on earth in humanity and doing so with perfect submission to the authority of another.

The authority He submitted to was the will of the Father. Jesus demonstrated perfect obedience to the will of God the Father. What that practically looks like is that He did nothing on His own while He was on earth. He did not exercise Divine omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, or any other divine attribute without exercising it as an assignment from God the Father. He was completely in tune with the will of God the Father and perfectly exercised His Divine attributes only when it was in step with the instruction of the Father. Jesus said He only does what He sees the Father do (**John 5:18**), and He only said what the Father told Him to say (**John 12:49**).

True Statement #6 - Jesus' obedience culminated in His humiliating death on a cross. **2:8b**

Ryrie called Jesus' death on a cross the epitome of shame, and I would agree. He was laughed at, spit on, beaten, slapped, made fun of, stripped naked, lifted up on a piece of wood for all to see so they could watch Him die the most brutal death while no one stepped in to help. The one who was in the form of God, willingly added humanity to Himself, and perfectly served as an obedient slave to the will of God the Father, which led Him all the way to death on a cross in which He who knew no sin had to become sin for us.

"Of what did Christ empty Himself of?"

Christ emptied Himself in four ways.

Way #1 - Jesus Christ emptied Himself of His visible glory. 2:6-7

He went from being seen "in the form of God" to the "form of a servant." Jesus was seen in the appearance of God prior to His birth, but this text indicates that He was seen in the form of a servant, the likeness of men after His birth. This text does not say that He stopped being God, but that His Divine appearance was emptied to that of a man.

Way #2 - Jesus Christ emptied Himself of His Exalted State.

Jesus went from existing as "equal with God" to being an "obedient servant" of God. Prior to Jesus being born in human flesh, He was exalted as equal with God the Father. Upon Jesus becoming a man, He was emptied of that exalted state to the status of a servant of God the Father.

Way #3 - Jesus Christ emptied Himself of the independent use of His Divine attributes.

Jesus never gave up His Divine attributes. Instead, Jesus emptied Himself of the independent use of those attributes. If Jesus was going to manifest that He was God while on earth, He was not going to do it on His own, He was going to do it as an obedient servant of God the Father. He

submitted His attributes to the Father during the time He was on earth as a human. He acted by the Spirit, under the instruction of the Father.

Way #4 - Jesus Christ emptied Himself by being poured out completely in death.

Jesus was and is the eternal God, but He voluntarily added humanity to Himself, making it possible for Him to die. The apostle Paul described his own pending death as, "being poured out as a drink offering" in 2 Timothy 4:6. The prophet Isaiah described the death of the one who was pierced for our transgressions (Jesus) by saying, "he poured out his soul to death. (Isaiah 53:12). In other words, Jesus emptied Himself by doing all that was necessary in order for Him to die, pouring Himself out for the will of the Father. His life was completely and fully spent to glorify the Father and do His will. He had nothing left. He emptied Himself.

I'll give one more helpful quote from Charles Ryrie, "Thus the kenosis means leaving His pre-incarnate position and taking on a servant-humanity."

So our final statement regarding the self-emptying of Christ can be stated this way:

IN ORDER TO ACCOMPLISH THE ETERNAL PLAN OF THE TRIUNE GODHEAD, JESUS CHRIST HAD TO EMPTY HIMSELF OF HIS VISIBLE GLORY, HIS EXALTED STATE, HIS INDEPENDENT USE OF HIS ATTRIBUTES, AND EVEN HIS OWN LIFE - HE DIED.