



Introduction

- Philippians 2:5–11
- The Greek word for “emptied” is *kenoō*. This Greek word led to the kenotic theory.
- German theologians said that when Christ emptied himself he emptied himself of his divine attributes, limiting himself to human attributes.

Context

- Philippians 2:1–4
- Paul tells the Philippians there is encouragement in Christ, comfort from God’s love, and participation in the Spirit.
- The flow of the passage goes from exaltation to humiliation back to exaltation, and this is related to how the Philippians are to think.

Mind

- In the ESV you still have Jesus as an example, but it also says the mind the Philippians should have is found in their union with Christ.
- 1 Corinthians 2:6-12.
- Verse 10 tells us that God has revealed to his people things no eye has seen, things no ear has heard, and things no one could even imagine. He has done this through the Holy Spirit.
- Romans 12:2

Form of God

The Greek word for form is *morphē*.

The Greek word for *form* in verse eight is *schema*.

Theologians have contrasted these two words by claiming that *morphē* refers to what is intrinsic and essential while *schema* refers to what is outward or visible.



Philippians 3:10

Romans 12:2

Mark 16:12

The word *morphē* “denotes the form, appearance, look or likeness of someone, that by which those beholding him would judge him.”

The Greek word for *image, eikon*, is used interchangeably with *morphē*.

The Greek words *eikon* and *doxa*, the Greek word for *glory* are equivalent terms.

The word *morphē* is one of a group of words that refer to how God appears to an observer, not how God is in himself. Philippians 2:6; Colossians 1:15; James 2:1; John 17:5

When Paul says Christ was “in the form of God” he is saying when we look at the pre-incarnate Christ and we look at God we cannot see a difference.

Equality with God

- Philippians 2:5-7a
- The critical word in this phrase is *harpagmos*, which is translated as “a thing to be grasped.”
- There are four ways the word has been understood.
 1. Christ did *not* have equality with God, and he did not think that was something he should try to grab for himself.
 2. Christ did have equality with God, but he did not hold on to that. Christ gave up his divinity to become human. This is the theology of the “kenotic” theologians of the 19th century.
 3. The word should not be translated as “a thing to be grasped” but as “an act of grasping.” The point being made here is it is beside the point to question whether equality with God was in Christ’s grasp. Certainly, Christ was equal with God. What is important is the action of grasping or seizing. John 13:3-5.
 4. Christ has always been and forever will be equal with God, but he did not consider that equality as something to be exploited to his own advantage. Mark 10:45
- Philippians 2:3
- Matthew 20:25-28



- We know we have moved from serving to being served when we are concerned about recognition for our service, or when we refuse to serve because we think we know more or could do better than the one who is in charge of a particular ministry.

Emptied Himself

- Philippians 2:5-7a
- In Romans 4:14 *kenoō* is translated as *void* in the ESV.
- In 1 Corinthians 1:17 and 2 Corinthians 9:3 the ESV translates it as *empty*.
- In 1 Corinthians 9:15 the ESV translates *kenoō* with the word *deprive*.

Form of a Servant

- The phrase “emptied himself” is sandwiched between “form of God” and “equality with God” and “form of a servant,” “likeness of men,” and “human form.” This shows us emptying is related to the Son of God taking on flesh.
- Some translations say “made himself nothing” instead of “emptied himself.”
- Paul is emphasizing Christ’s humiliation in order to instruct the Philippians in humility towards one another.

Likeness of Men

- The human aspect is further described at the end of verse seven and the beginning of verse eight, which says, “being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form.”
- Paul is emphasizing Christ’s humiliation for the sake of the pride of the Philippians.
- To claim that God became man was shocking, especially to a Jew. John 10:30-33.

Obedient to Death

- Christ’s ultimate act of emptying himself is found in the last part of verse eight, which says, “he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”
- The ultimate emptying was that his death was on a cross.
- Romans disdained executions on a cross. Death on a cross was reserved for slaves and criminals.



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- To the Jew, the cross showed that Jesus was under God's curse.
 - In the *kenōsis* of Christ the eternal Son of God set aside his majesty and glory to become a servant as a man and then obediently took on himself the sinful curse of man.

Conclusion

- We should be confident in this Christ.
- We should be amazed that he would do this for such a self-centered people as us.
- We should be humbled and transformed.
- Philippians 2:9-11