

Philippians – Attitude of Christ – The Supreme Example – Philippians 2:5-11

FBC Nacogdoches – Sunday, July 16, 2017 – A.M. Message

Description

— In today's world, crazy confusion exists concerning exactly who Jesus Christ is. Is he a clever teacher? A philosopher? A prophet? A miracle worker? A political leader? Or is he something more? In this message we will study the words of an ancient hymn sung by the very first Christians and the people who knew Jesus best. We will learn from their words the true identity and description of Jesus from Nazareth, and we will see how this impacts our lives.

Introduction

- There is much confusion today about who Jesus is.
 - Secular people will suggest that he was...
 - A teacher
 - A philosopher
 - A political leader
 - Religious people have even more varied opinions...
 - Muslims
 - Jesus is a prophet of Allah.
 - Jehovah Witnesses
 - Jesus is supernatural but not divine.
 - Jesus is a creation of the Father.
 - Mormons
 - Jesus is the offspring of the heavenly Father and heavenly Mother.
 - He progressed to deity in the spirit world.
 - One of potentially thousands of “Sons of God.”
 - Even many people who would include themselves in the Christian camp have different views...
 - **Lucky charm**
 - **Fire insurance**
 - **Law giver**
- This confusion is not new to our day.
 - Throughout history there have been many varied beliefs and views about Jesus.
- BUT...
 - We have a very valuable treasure that answers the question clearly and profoundly.
- The treasure...
 - The people of first century were an oral people.
 - **No computers.**
 - **Few if any books...**
 - If there was something important to remember and communicate, they would put it to verse.
 - Song or poem
 - They would memorize it.
 - The very earliest Christians did this with Jesus.
 - They, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote a song or poem that described the character and nature of Christ.
 - This was very early.
 - Perhaps before the Gospels were written.
 - Maybe before Paul was converted.
 - Likely written by people who new Jesus face to face.
 - Just six verses long. (Four sentences in the CSB.)
 - Paul uses this to illustrate a point to the Philippians.
 - We will see the point Paul was making shortly.
 - But for now, let's just listen in on best description of Jesus found in Scripture.
 - Let's learn who Jesus is from the very song his first followers used to teach their children and their loved ones.
 - Let's marvel at Jesus for a while!
- Read **Philippians 2:6-11**.
 - **Philippians 2:5-11** is one of the most amazing passages in the Bible.
 - Dr. F. B. Meyer wrote of this section, “In the whole range of Scripture, this paragraph stands in almost un-approachable and unexampled majesty.”
 - The hymn answers three questions.

A Picture of Jesus Christ

I. Who is Christ? (*Philippians 2:6*)

— Read **Philippians 2:6**.

— Jesus is God.

A. He has always existed.

— **Philippians 2:6a** | *who, existing in the form of God...* (CSB)

— The word “existing” points to the past, present, and future.

— **Philippians 2:6a** | *who, although He existed in the form of God...* (NASB95)

— Alluded to in...

— **John 8:58** | *... before Abraham was, I am.* (CSB)

— **John 17:5** | *Father, glorify me in your presence with that glory I had with you before the world existed.* (CSB)

— **Hebrews 1:8** | *To the Son: Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of justice.* (CSB)

— **Colossians 1:17** | *He is before all things, and by him all things hold together.* (CSB)

— Nailed down in...

— **John 1:1** | *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* (CSB)

— No matter how far you go back, Jesus was existing.

— James Leo Garrett points out that those who get Jesus wrong start by getting his eternity wrong.

— **Volume 1 of Systematic Theology, page 693.**

— He goes on to talk about Arianism.

— Fourth century heresy that denied the divinity of Jesus

— Most important early Christian heresy

— If we look at modern heresies we see the same thing.

— **Jehovah's Witnesses**

— **Mormons**

— **Unitarians**

— **Muslims**

— We must get this right...

— Jesus, though he is “God’s Son” was not created by the Father.

— Jesus is not a part of creation; he is the source of all creation.

— Jesus did not come into existence at the incarnation.

— Jesus was not promoted to the status of Son of God from the ranks of the angels or of men.

— Jesus has no beginning; no point of origin.

— He is the eternal God in every direction!

B. He has the characteristics of God.

— **Philippians 2:6a** | *... existing in the form of God...* (CSB)

— Form (μορφή)

— Two Greek words that Paul could have used.

— One denotes an essential form of something which never alters, a form which corresponds to an underlying reality.

— The other suggests an outward form which may change from time to time and from circumstance to circumstance.

— **I like to look at old picture of my kids and see how their appearance has changed.**

— Paul chooses the first term.

— Jesus has the exact same characteristics that the Father has.

— Capabilities

— All power

— All knowledge

— Nature

— Faithful

— Immutable

— Good

— Just

— Loving

— **Colossians 1:15** | *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.* (CSB)

C. He is equal with God.

— **Philippians 2:6b** | *... equality with God...* (CSB)

— The Greek word for “equal” (εἶμι) defines things that are exactly the same in size, quantity, quality, character, and number.

- We see this in so many places in Scripture...
 - **Colossians 1:19** | *For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, (CSB)*
 - **Hebrews 1:3a** | *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word. (CSB)*
- However you measure it, Jesus is equal with the Father.
 - Riches
 - Power
 - Honor
 - Freedom
- Don't think of Jesus as...
 - A junior version of the Father...
 - A limited version of the Father...
 - An emissary for the Father...
- Think of Jesus in the terms that he presented himself...
 - **John 5:18** | *This is why the Jews began trying all the more to kill him: Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God. (CSB)*
- This is very important!
 - John writes of those who deny that Jesus is divine...
 - **1 John 2:22** | *Who is the liar, if not the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This one is the antichrist: the one who denies the Father and the Son. (CSB)*
 - **1 John 2:23** | *No one who denies the Son has the Father; he who confesses the Son has the Father as well. (CSB)*
 - John writes of those who deny that Jesus was fully human...
 - **2 John 9** | *Anyone who does not remain in Christ's teaching but goes beyond it does not have God. The one who remains in that teaching, this one has both the Father and the Son. (CSB)*
- Every generation of Christians must fight for the clear identity of Christ.

II. What did Christ do?

- Read **Philippians 2:6b-8**.
 - Here is where we get to really marvel at Jesus.
- A. He relinquished his rightful place.**
 - **Philippians 2:6** | *who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited. (CSB)*
 - Jesus did not see his status as an opportunity to benefit himself, but others.
 - We need to see how extraordinary and unlike us this is.
 - **If someone wrote you a check for a million dollars...**
 - **If you had a free day off with no responsibilities...**
 - **If you were king for a day...**
 - Jesus saw his privilege as an opportunity to bless you and me!
 - He did not consider being God grounds for getting but for giving.
- B. He emptied himself.**
 - **Philippians 2:7a** | *Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity. (CSB)*
 - He didn't empty himself of any of his divinity.
 - That would have been impossible.
 - Jesus set aside his privileges in several areas...
 - Heavenly glory
 - Gave up face-to-face relationship with the Father.
 - **John 17:5** | *Now, Father, glorify me in your presence with that glory I had with you before the world existed. (CSB)*
 - Independent authority
 - During his incarnation, Christ completely submitted himself to the will of his Father.
 - Divine prerogatives
 - He set aside the voluntary display of his divine attributes.
 - Eternal riches
 - While on earth, Christ was poor and owned very little.
 - Favorable relationship with God
 - He felt the Father's wrath for human sin while on the cross.
 - **In this particular part of Africa the chief is the strongest man in the village. As the chief, he also wears a very large headdress and ceremonial robes. One day a man carrying water out of the shaft of a deep well fell and broke his leg, and lay helpless at the bottom of the well. To get down to the bottom, one would have to climb down, using the alternating slits that go all the way down the deep well, and**

then climb back up. Because no one could carry the helpless man up like this, the chief was summoned. When he saw the plight of the man, he laid aside his headdress and his robe, climbed all the way to the bottom, put the injured man on himself, and brought him to safety. He did what no other man could do. That's what Jesus has done for us. He came to rescue us. And He laid aside His heavenly glory, like the chief did with his headdress, in order to save us. Now, did the chief cease being the chief when he laid aside his headdress? Of course not.

C. He condescended.

— **Philippians 2:7b** | ... *taking on the likeness of humanity.* (CSB)

— I do not know how to get that message over to the ants—except by becoming an ant. Now suppose that I had the power to become an ant. (If I could do it, I would not do it because I know some folk who would step on me if I were an ant!) But listen, if I could become an ant—from where I am now down to the position of an ant—that would be humiliation, wouldn't it? I'd hate to become an ant. But, my friend, that is nothing compared to what my Lord did when He left heaven's glory and became a man, when He took upon Himself our humanity, when He was made in the likeness of men.

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D. He humbled himself

— **Philippians 2:8** | *he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death— even to death on a cross.* (CSB)

— Crucifixion was not simply a convenient way of executing prisoners.

— It was the ultimate indignity, a public statement by Rome that the crucified one was beyond contempt.

— The excruciating physical pain was magnified by the degradation and humiliation.

— No other form of death, no matter how prolonged or physically agonizing, could match crucifixion as an absolute destruction of the person.

— It was the ultimate counterpoint to the divine majesty of the preexistent Christ, and thus was the ultimate expression of Christ's obedience to the Father

III. How is Christ exalted?

— **Philippians 2:9-11**

A. He was exalted by God.

— **Philippians 2:9** | *For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,* (CSB)

— The name is Lord.

— It refers to a rank, a status, a position.

B. He will be exalted by all.

— **Philippians 2:10-11** | *so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow— in heaven and on earth and under the earth— and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* (CSB)

— Jesus means Savior.

— **Matthew 1:21** | *She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.* (CSB)

— If there is to be a Savior, He's got to come from the outside.

— **There are those who want to throw out a lifeline. But to do that is like being on a ship that is sinking, and somebody on the top deck says to those down in the steerage, "Let me throw you a lifeline." But the top deck is going down too! You see, the rope has to come from some other place than the human ship. No human being can be a Savior. "You shall call His name Jesus because He is going to save His people from their sins."**

— How can He save His people from their sins?

— Because He will be Emmanuel, God with us.

— That little Baby who came yonder to Bethlehem is God with us.

— The name of Jesus: Lord

— Every person will call him Lord when they see him in his holiness, majesty, and power.

— Why does he shroud his holiness, majesty, and power today?

— Love is voluntary.

— **If I have a gun and ask you to listen attentively and shoot a couple people...**

— One day for many, it won't be love it will be acquiescence.

— Gospel presentation

Conclusion

— What was Paul's point? Why did he share this familiar song/poem with the Philippians?

— **Philippians 2:5** | *Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus,* (CSB)

— What is that attitude?

— **Philippians 2:3-4** | *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of*

others. (CSB)

- I know many of you wrestled with last week's challenge to "not complain."
 - **Philippians 2:14**
 - Today we learn the basis of that commitment.
 - Like Jesus, be so focused on the well-being of others that your personal gripes become non-applicable.
 - Memorize **Philippians 2:3-4**...
 - Every time we put someone ahead of ourselves, we portray the attitude of Christ.
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Outlines

- Introductions
 - Importance of standards...
 - The five perspectives of the cross...
 - Sing: "Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. There's just something about that name."
 - I love to read biographies...
 - No question, Jesus has been the most influential person to ever live...
 - If you could go back and meet anyone in history, who would you choose?
 - There is much confusion about who Jesus is...
- #1
 - Who is Christ?
 - The nature of Christ
 - What did Christ do?
 - Emptied
 - Humbled
 - How is Christ exalted?
 - By the Father...
 - By people...
 - By you?
 - Adopt same attitude.
 - Memorize Philippians 2:3-4.

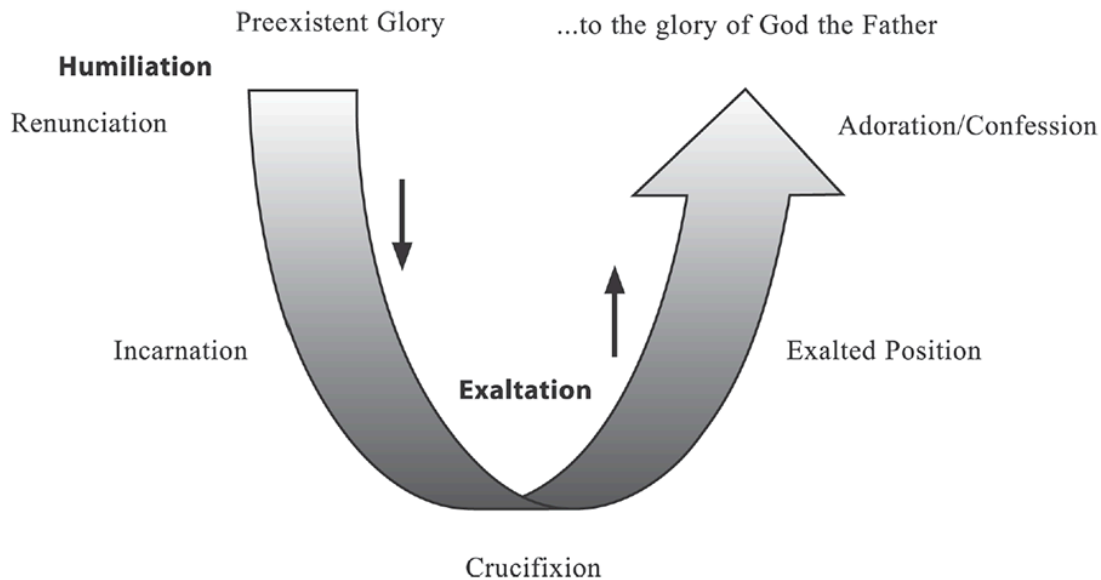
Thoughts

- Jesus is our example par excellence.
 - So in this message we are just going to hold him up.
 - We are going to exalt him, be amazed by him...
 - That is what Paul does for the Christians at Philippi.
- To confess Jesus as Lord is to reject other things/persons as lord.
- Chorus to song: How Many Kings
 - How many kings step down from their thrones?
 - How many lords have abandoned their homes?
 - How many greats have become the least for me?
 - And how many gods have poured out their hearts
 - To romance a world that is torn all apart
 - How many fathers gave up their sons for me?

General Notes

- Philippians 2:5-11 is one of the most amazing passages in the Bible.ⁱ
- Dr. F. B. Meyer wrote of this section, "In the whole range of Scripture, this paragraph stands in almost un-approachable and unexampled majesty."ⁱⁱ
- D. A. Carson points out that **the cross can be viewed from five perspectives**.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - From **God's perspective**, Jesus died as a propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2). He absorbed God's wrath and turned away God's anger from us.^{iv}
 - From **Christ's perspective**, Jesus obeyed His Father perfectly, saying, "Not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). He carried out His assignment to "give His life—a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). This text in Philippians highlights Christ's perfect obedience (also a major theme in John's Gospel). He became "obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross" (2:8).^v
 - From **Satan's perspective**, the cross means the accuser's defeat (see Rev 12:11).^{vi}
 - From **sin's perspective**, the cross is the means by which our debt is paid.^{vii}

- Finally, from **our perspective**, while acknowledging all of these truths, treasuring the love and justice of God as well as the substitutionary life and death of Jesus—His victory over Satan and sin—**we must also note that the cross serves “as the supreme standard of behavior”** (Carson, *Basics*, 42). It’s the primary point that Paul makes here in Philippians 2:5 (ibid.).^{viii}
- **Unity isn’t the result of preaching on unity; it’s the result of people adoring and emulating Jesus.** The more we behold His glory and imitate His character, the more unified we will be as a church.^{ix}
- Most teachers break down the text into two main stanzas, Christ’s humiliation (2:6-8) and Christ’s exaltation (vv. 9-11).^x



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- Let’s consider the humility of Christ in three parts: (1) humble renunciation, (2) humble incarnation, and (3) humble crucifixion.^{xi}
- While the story of the cross is recorded in the Gospels and explained in the Epistles, it is only in this passage that the Crucifixion is seen through the eyes of Christ Himself.^{xii}
- We find here **seven steps downward**. Then we have listed for us **seven steps upward**, the exaltation of Christ.^{xiii}
 - The *first* step downward was when He left heaven’s glory. He came down and down and down to this earth, all the way to where we are. You and I cannot even conceive of what a big step it was from heaven’s glory all the way down to this earth. Absolutely, it is beyond human comprehension to understand what our Lord really did for us.^{xiv}
 - Now we see the *second* step down. **But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men [Phil. 2:7].** “Made himself of no reputation” means *to empty*—the Greek word is *kenoō*. The kenosis theory derives its name from the word *kenoō*. Christ emptied Himself.^{xv}
 - I believe that **He emptied Himself of the prerogatives of deity**. He lived on this earth with certain limitations, but they were self-limitations. There was never a moment when He wasn’t God. And He was not less God because He was man, yet He emptied Himself of His prerogatives of deity.^{xvi}
 - The *third* step downward in the humiliation of Christ is this: “And took upon him the form of a servant.”^{xvii}
 - The *fourth* step in His humiliation is this: “And was made in the likeness of men.”^{xviii}
 - When we first came to California in 1940, we had the experience of living in a place where the bugs and the ants are not killed off in the wintertime. We got here the first of November and had not been here long until I found in the kitchen one morning a freeway of ants coming into the sink. They were coming down one side and going back on the other side. Also I found they had discovered the sugar bowl, and they had a freeway in and out of it. I don’t know about you, but I don’t want ants in the sink and I don’t want ants in the sugar bowl. So I began to investigate and learned that the thing we had to do was to kill them. Now I’m just not sadistic; I’m not brutal; I don’t like to kill things. But I began to kill ants. I got ant poison, and we got rid of ants. Then when we moved over to our own home, here were ants. They had found out where we’d moved. I have a wonderful Christian friend who is in the

bug-killing business. He comes to my place twice a year, sprays everything—under the house, under the eaves, the trees—everything, and you can't find an ant on my place. Now I do not know this to be a fact, but I have a notion that the ants had a protest meeting around my lot. Maybe they carried banners that read, "Down with McGee. He hates ants!" But, frankly, I don't hate ants. That's not my hang-up at all. If I had some way of communicating with those ants and getting a message to them, I'd say, "Look here. I don't hate you. Just stay out of the sugar bowl, and stay out of the sink. I'll put sugar and water outside for you—I'd be glad to do that if you'd just stay outside." But I do not know how to get that message over to the ants—except by becoming an ant. Now suppose that I had the power to become an ant. (If I *could* do it, I would *not* do it because I know some folk who would step on me if I were an ant!) But listen, if I could become an ant—from where I am now down to the position of an ant—that would be humiliation, wouldn't it? I'd *hate* to become an ant. But, my friend, that is nothing compared to what my Lord did when He left heaven's glory and became a man, when He took upon Himself our humanity, when He was made in the likeness of men.^{xix}

- The *fifth* step in our Lord's humiliation is that He humbled Himself.^{xx}
- We come now to the *sixth* step in His humiliation: "and [He] became obedient unto death."^{xxi}
- The *seventh* and last step in the humiliation of Christ is "even the death of the cross."^{xxii}
- Here is the *first* step up: "God also hath highly exalted him."^{xxiii}
- Now the *second* step: "and given him a name which is above every name."^{xxiv}
- The *third* step: "That at the name of Jesus"—*Jesus* means "Savior."^{xxv}
 - Before His birth in Bethlehem, the angel said, "... thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Now notice the reference to prophecy: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matt. 1:22–23). Can you show me any place in the Bible where He was called Emmanuel? When I entered the ministry, I had no problem with "Behold a virgin shall conceive." Since He is God, how else could He get into the human family except by a miraculous birth? But the thing that did cause a problem in this verse was, "He shall be called Emmanuel" because I couldn't find any place where they called Him Emmanuel. "Well, then," you may say, "that prophecy was not fulfilled." Oh, my friend, this is one of the most wonderful fulfillments of prophecy you can imagine. The angel said, "Call Him Jesus because He'll save His people from their sins." Now think through this. You couldn't call me *Jesus*—I can't even save myself. Neither would it be accurate to call you *Jesus* because you can't save yourself. You see, all of us are in the same ship today. The human family is on a sinking ship, and it's going down. If there is to be a Savior, He's got to come from the outside. There are those who want to throw out a lifeline. But to do that is like being on a ship that is sinking, and somebody on the top deck says to those down in the steerage, "Let me throw you a lifeline." But the top deck is going down too! You see, the rope has to come from some other place than the human ship. No human being can be a Savior. "You shall call His name *Jesus* because He is going to save His people from their sins." How can He save His people from their sins? Because He will be Emmanuel, God with us. That little Baby who came yonder to Bethlehem is God with us. He took upon Himself, not the likeness of angels, but our humanity. He is Emmanuel, God with us. And because He is that, He can be called Jesus. And friend, nobody else can properly be called *Jesus*.^{xxvi}
- Now notice the *fourth* step of His exaltation: "Of things in heaven."^{xxvii}
- And the *fifth* step: "And things in earth."^{xxviii}
- And the *sixth* step: "And things under the earth."^{xxix}
- Here now is the *seventh* and final step of Christ's exaltation: **And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father [Phil. 2:11].** Every tongue shall "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."^{xxx}

Philippians 2:5

- The goal of Christianity is Christlikeness in thought and deed (cf. Col. 3:16).^{xxxi}
- Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. (MSG)^{xxxii}
- There's also a corporate element to this example. Some translate it as "yourselves," and others give a more dynamic equivalent or paraphrase, "in your relationships with one another" (NIV). Paul isn't simply speaking to the private

experience of individuals. He is writing about unity in the church, which comes through adopting a humble, Christ-like mind-set.^{xxxiii}

- While we may emulate many role models in life, we must remember that Jesus is the *example par excellence*. The following verses unpack His humility, His perfect life, His crucifixion, and His exaltation.^{xxxiv}

Philippians 2:6

- “Who, existing in the form of God” (v. 6a). Notice, in these opening phrases, some very important doctrinal points. When Paul uses this first phrase, he touches on both the *preexistence* of Jesus and the *divine nature* of Jesus. The divinity of Jesus is also expressed in the second half of the verse: He “did not consider *equality with God* as something to be used for His own advantage” (v. 6b; emphasis added). John writes that Jesus was “calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God” (John 5:18).^{xxxv}
- Those who in Christian history have denied his deity have usually denied his preexistence; Arius, as noted, did make a place for created, but not eternal, preexistence.^{xxxvi}
- Other biblical writers highlight Jesus’ preexistence in many different passages (John 1:1-2,14; 8:58; 17:5; Col 1:15; Heb 1:2-3).^{xxxvii}
- There never was a time when Jesus didn’t exist. He had no point of origin.^{xxxviii}
- Once in a while you might meet someone who will try to convince you that the Bible does not teach that Jesus is God. But the Bible consistently affirms what Paul was telling the Philippians:
 - No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. (John 1:18)
 - Jesus said ... “He who has seen Me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9)
 - He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. (Col. 1:15)
 - For it pleased the Father that in Him [Christ] all the fullness should dwell. (Col. 1:19)
 - And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh. (1 Tim. 3:16)
 - God ... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son ... who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person. (Heb. 1:1–3)^{xxxix}
- Paul also could have chosen one of two Gr. words for “form,” but he chose the one that specifically denotes the essential, unchanging character of something—what it is in and of itself.^{xl}
- **μορφή^a, ἥς f**: the nature or character of something, with emphasis upon both the internal and external form—‘nature, character.’^{xli}
- *Morphe* (“form”) doesn’t speak of external appearance or outward shape but of the essential attributes and the inner nature of Jesus. Paul uses the same word in verse 7 to say that Jesus was in very nature a slave. He was fully human and fully divine.^{xlii}
- The Greeks had two separate words for “form,” and both are used in the hymn. One denotes an essential form of something which never alters, a form which corresponds to an underlying reality. The other suggests an outward form which may change from time to time and from circumstance to circumstance. The former, which appears in verses 6–7 (elsewhere in the New Testament only in Mark 16:12), is translated *nature*.^{xliii}
- **Ebionism** denied the divine nature of Christ. **Arianism** denied the fullness of the deity of Christ. **Docetism** denied the humanity of Jesus. **Apollinarianism** denied the full humanity of Jesus. **Nestorianism** denied the unity of the natures in one person. **Eutychianism** denied the distinction of the natures. In AD 451, leaders in Chalcedon wrote a creed affirming both Jesus’ full humanity and His full deity, united in one person. In so doing, they rejected all six of these Christological heresies.^{xliv}
- The Gr. word for “equal” defines things that are exactly the same in size, quantity, quality, character, and number. In every sense, Jesus is equal to God and constantly claimed to be so during His earthly ministry (cf. John 5:18; 10:33, 38; 14:9; 20:28; Heb. 1:1–3).^{xlv}
- In every generation, we must contend for the biblical view of the person and work of Christ. We still hear things like “He was a prophet,” “He was a good man,” “He was a fine example,” “The idea of Jesus is what matters.” Like Athanasius, we must boldly defend the glory of Christ. We must also teach these things to our children, who are growing up in a world that is fine with a phantom Christ, Christ as a mere man, or Christ as a funny, religious sage.^{xlvi}
- He did not consider being God grounds for getting but for giving.^{xlvii}
- He could have clutched His rights, His blessings, and His benefits as King of glory. But He lived open-handedly, showing us what benevolent generosity and service look like. Do you have a hard time letting go of your possessions?

Do you find it hard to relinquish your rights to be mad at someone for the good of preserving a relationship? If we applied Jesus' mind-set to marriage and other relationships, imagine what our lives would be like.^{xlviii}

- **Did not consider equality.** "Yet *did not regard it as a prize*, a treasure to be clutched and retained at all costs."^{xlix}

Philippians 2:7

- Sometimes we say, "remaining all that He was, He became what He was not." He added humanity; He didn't surrender deity. The wedding of the two natures was permanent. "Jesus will remain fully God and fully man, yet one person, forever" (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 543).ⁱ
- While we may not be able to fully understand this, we do know that Christ surrendered *that which He loved in order that He might serve those whom He loved*.^{li}
- In this particular part of Africa the chief is the strongest man in the village. As the chief, he also wears a very large headdress and ceremonial robes. One day a man carrying water out of the shaft of a deep well fell and broke his leg, and lay helpless at the bottom of the well. To get down to the bottom, one would have to climb down, using the alternating slits that go all the way down the deep well, and then climb back up. Because no one could carry the helpless man up like this, the chief was summoned. When he saw the plight of the man, he laid aside his headdress and his robe, climbed all the way to the bottom, put the injured man on himself, and brought him to safety. He did what no other man could do. That's what Jesus has done for us. He came to rescue us. And He laid aside His heavenly glory, like the chief did with his headdress, in order to save us. Now, did the chief cease being the chief when he laid aside his headdress? Of course not. Did Jesus cease being God when He came to rescue us? Of course not (Chapell, *Using Illustrations*, 11–12).^{lii}
- Jesus did, however, renounce or set aside His privileges in several areas:^{liii}
 - 1) **heavenly glory**—while on earth He gave up the glory of a face-to-face relationship with God and the continuous outward display and personal enjoyment of that glory (cf. John 17:5);^{liv}
 - 2) **independent authority**—during His incarnation Christ completely submitted Himself to the will of His Father (see note on v. 8; cf. Matt. 26:39; John 5:30; Heb. 5:8);^{lv}
 - 3) **divine prerogatives**—He set aside the voluntary display of His divine attributes and submitted Himself to the Spirit's direction (cf. Matt. 24:36; John 1:45–49);^{lvi}
 - 4) **eternal riches**—while on earth Christ was poor and owned very little (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9);^{lvii}
 - 5) a **favorable relationship with God**—He felt the Father's wrath for human sin while on the cross (cf. Matt. 27:46; see note on 2 Cor. 5:21).^{lviii}
- Paul is not saying that Christ became less than God or "gave up" some divine attributes; he is not even commenting directly on the question of whether Jesus was fully omnipotent or omniscient during his time on earth. Nor is he saying that Christ ever gave up being "in the form of God." Rather, Paul is stressing that Christ, who had all the privileges that were rightly his as king of the universe, gave them up to become an ordinary Jewish baby bound for the cross.^{lix}
- A. T. Robertson explained it this way: "Of what did Christ empty Himself? Not of His divine nature. That was impossible. He continued to be the Son of God.... Undoubtedly, Christ gave up His environment of glory."^{lx}
- The "emptying" consisted of his becoming human, not of his giving up any part of his true deity.^{lxi}
- **the likeness of men.** Christ became more than God in a human body, but He took on all the essential attributes of humanity (Luke 2:52; Gal. 4:4; Col. 1:22), even to the extent that He identified with basic human needs and weaknesses (cf. Heb. 2:14, 17; 4:15).^{lxii}

Philippians 2:8

- **Crucifixion was not simply a convenient way of executing prisoners.** It was the ultimate indignity, a public statement by Rome that the crucified one was beyond contempt. The excruciating physical pain was magnified by the degradation and humiliation. No other form of death, no matter how prolonged or physically agonizing, could match crucifixion as an absolute destruction of the person (see note on Matt. 27:35). It was the ultimate counterpoint to the divine majesty of the preexistent Christ, and thus was the ultimate expression of Christ's obedience to the Father.^{lxiii}

Philippians 2:9

- The honor Christ received for His work on earth was great.^{lxiv}
 - **He is honored by Deity.** "Wherefore God also hath high exalted him" (Philippians 2:9). Christ was honored by God.^{lxv}

- **He is honored by designation.** “Given him a name which is above every name” (Philippians 2:9). The word translated “name” in “given him a name” means a title, which speaks of one’s “office, rank, dignity” (Wuest). Because of Christ’s work on the earth, especially in regards to Calvary, God has honored Christ with a title, office, and rank above all others.^{lxvi}
- **He is honored by deference.** “Every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth” (Philippians 2:10). There will come a time when there will be no stiff knees regarding Jesus.^{lxvii}
- **He is honored by declaration.** “Every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:11).^{lxviii}

Philippians 2:10

- The entire intelligent universe is called to worship Jesus Christ as Lord (cf. Ps. 2). This mandate includes the angels in heaven (Rev. 4:2–9), the spirits of the redeemed (Rev. 4:10, 11), obedient believers on earth (Rom. 10:9), the disobedient rebels on earth (2 Thess. 1:7–9), demons and lost humanity in hell (1 Pet. 3:18–22).^{lxix}

Cross References

- **John 5:18** | *This is why the Jews began trying all the more to kill him: Not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God. (CSB)*
 - **Romans 15:3** | *For even Christ did not please himself. On the contrary, as it is written, The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me. (CSB)*
 - **Hebrews 1:3** | *The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact expression of his nature, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (CSB)*
 - **Colossians 1:15** | *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. (CSB)*
 - **Galatians 3:13** | *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, because it is written, Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree. (CSB)*
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