Theology for Life

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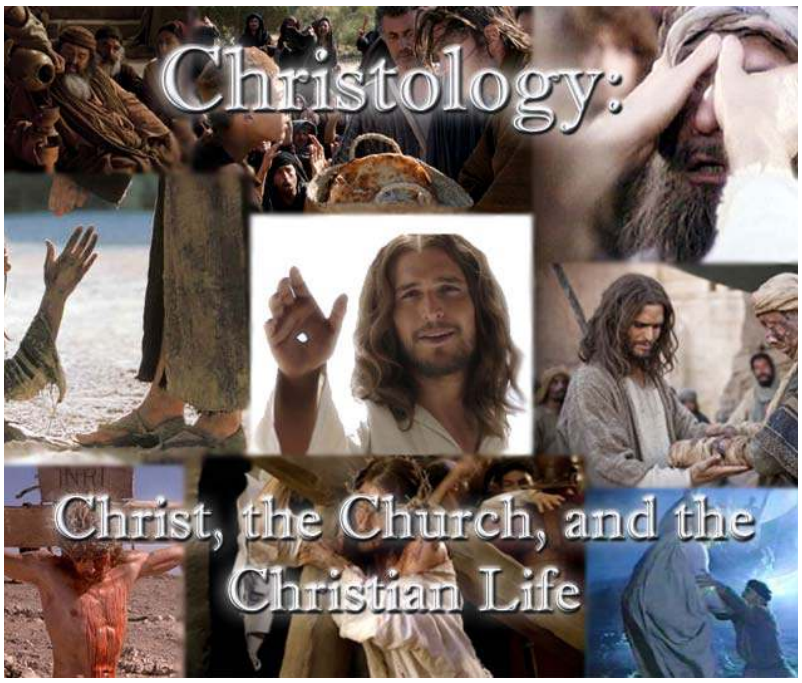

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Over the past six years I've lived in Boise, Idaho, an area that is predominately Mormon. Before this, however, I lived for 26 years in the greater Seattle, Washington area. While Boise's predominate religions are Mormonism and Catholicism, in Seattle the most highly followed religions are liberal Christianity, Atheism (although some would argue that it's not a religion), and New Age/Occultism. The difference in these cities couldn't be starker. The variety of views throughout the United States and world regarding the person and work of Christ is massive. Many people view Christ as either a "good person", prophet, or teacher. Jesus is all of those things to be sure, but He is so much more.

Consider in the Gospel of John alone. Seven times John uses the "I Am" statement in reference to describe an aspect of who He is. All of the world's religions except biblical Christianity diminish some aspect of the deity of Christ. Biblical Christianity stands on who the Bible proclaims who Jesus is and what He has done. While the deity of Christ doesn't say everything about who Jesus is and what He's done it does articulate a crucial aspect of Jesus work. The deity of Christ proclaims that Jesus is fully God and fully man. We know this because Jesus taught it, the Apostles proclaimed it and the early church defended and contended for the deity of Christ. The Church throughout its history has also proclaimed,

defended and contended for this truth.

In this issue of Theology for Life, we are going to explore the person and work of Christ. Theologians use the fancy word "Christology" to express this truth. As we explore the person and work of Christ you'll learn why a fully rounded understanding of Christology is so important, not only from Scripture, but also from church history, and how this doctrine relates to your life.

A robust and biblical understanding of the person and work of Christ is absolutely essential to a healthy Christian Church, the Christian life, and to the spread of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this magazine issue, you'll learn not only how the person and work of Christ is under attack, but also how Jesus is fully God and fully man, the incarnation of Christ, and other biblical topics beneficial to your Christian growth. As you read this magazine, we encourage you to share the Issue with your friends. We also encourage you to provide feedback on the articles, or submit questions. Thank you for reading and supporting the work of Theology for Life. We also want to especially thank our partners, B&H Publishing and Beeson Divinity School, for their partnership with Theology for Life. My prayer is that the person and work of Jesus Christ would become more precious to your heart, mind, and soul as you absorb the words printed here.

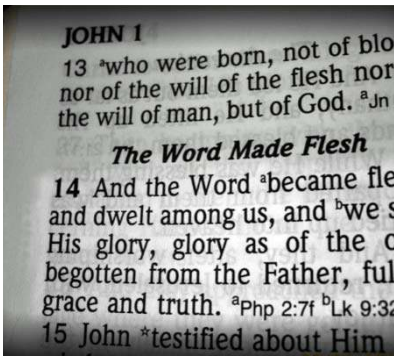
In Christ Alone,

Dave Jenkins

Executive Editor
Theology for Life Magazine

The Hypostatic Union: Its Construct and Importance for the Believer

By Michael Boling


JOHN 1
13 *who were born, not of blo
nor of the will of the flesh nor
the will of man, but of God. [a]Jn
The Word Made Flesh
14 And the Word [a]became fle
and dwelt among us, and [b]we s
His glory, glory as of the o
begotten from the Father, ful
grace and truth. [a]Php 2:7f [b]Lk 9:32
15 John *testified about Him

The *hypostatic union*, while arguably not at the forefront of most believers' minds when it comes to matters of theology, is nevertheless a vitally important doctrine, especially regarding the study of the person and work of Christ known as Christology. While certainly on what can be considered the more "nerdy" side of the theological spectrum, the doctrine of Jesus being fully God and fully man, and how it relates to the message of salvation within Scripture, is a doctrine with which more believers should be familiar.

"While certainly on what can be considered the more "nerdy" side of the theological spectrum, the doctrine of Jesus being fully God and fully man, and how it relates to the message of salvation within Scripture, is a doctrine with which more believers should be familiar."

In this article, we will define the hypostatic union and take a brief look at the history of the doctrine, with the focus being why this doctrine is important for theology as a whole.

Additionally, we will outline

"...the hypostatic union sheds light on the person and work of Jesus Christ..."

how the hypostatic union sheds light on the person and work of Jesus Christ, most notably his full divinity and full humanity and how both aspects reveal who Jesus is, what He has done on our behalf, and what He continues to do for us today.

Hypostatic Union Defined

The term *hypostatic* is derived from the Greek word *hypostasis* meaning "*personal*". Thus, the hypostatic union is the "personal union" or joining of the two natures of Jesus, namely his divine and human natures. Theologian Louis Berkhof helps shed some further light on the terms *nature* and *person* as they relate to the doctrine of the hypostatic union. He aptly comments the "term nature denotes the sum-total of all the essential qualities of a thing, that which makes it what it is... The term person denotes a complete substance endowed with reason, and, consequently, a responsible subject of its own actions." To break that down a bit further, the nature of something includes the entirety of that something to include all its qualities or attributes. Since Jesus retained all of his divine attributes, his nature remained fully God. Moreover, the person of Jesus must include the reality that being fully human, he had the capability of reason and was responsible for his own actions.

While the specific phrase "hypostatic union" cannot directly be located in Scripture, the dual nature of Christ is nevertheless clearly evident. Furthermore, the hypostatic union is a doctrine widely accepted by the Church as accurately reflecting Jesus as both God (fully divine) and man (fully human). Douglas Kelly rightly notes the importance of this doctrine by stating, "In order to be the Mediator between God and mankind, so as to bring them back together, thereby saving lost

humanity, Christ had to become man, while remaining at the same time God."

History of the Doctrine

Council of Chalcedon

The Church had long affirmed the incarnation of Jesus, but the question remained as to how he could be fully God and fully man. Previous attempts by individuals such as Nestorius suggested Jesus existed as two different persons – Jesus as the man, and Jesus as God. This approach was rejected at the Council of Ephesus under the belief it created too much difficulty for Jesus to be treated as a human being. Another approach presented by Eutyches went the opposite direction with the emphasis placed on the union of the two natures of Jesus combining into one nature following the incarnation. Due to the obvious need to solidify a biblical stance on this important issue, over 500 bishops met at Chalcedon. Their goal was to develop a "coherent Christological position that walked the line between the Nestorian heresy (two persons in Christ) on the one hand and the Eutychean heresy (only one nature in Christ) on the other."

"...over 500 bishops met at Chalcedon."

What the Council of Chalcedon developed was founded upon earlier councils and creeds while further elaborating and identifying a needed distinction between the ideas of what comprises a person and the nature of something. It was determined Jesus had two natures in one person, both necessary for him to be fully God and fully man. In relation to the incarnation, the Council stated Jesus did not assume the human person; conversely, he assumed the human nature which was an important distinction. While the Council established was a helpful set of boundaries by which to better approach the reality of Jesus being both fully God and fully man

without veering to the extremes of either Nestorianism or Eutychianism.

Chalcedonian Creed

The essence of the Council's position is found in the Chalcedon Creed, which in part declares Jesus should be "recognized in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence." The Council of Chalcedon helped center the focus back to the biblical truth of the divinity and humanity of Jesus, two issues we will now examine in relation to their biblical and practical importance for the believer.

Application and Importance of the Hypostatic Union

Fully God

John 1:1 declares, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word refers to Jesus as the *Logos*, a term affirming His divinity. We also find the declaration that Jesus is fully God in Revelation 1:8 which states, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End," says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." Thus, Jesus is clearly God from all eternity past and into eternity future. Being fully God, Jesus has all of the divine attributes attributed to God throughout Scripture. Theologian John Frame rightly notes, "Jesus, like God the Father and the Holy Spirit, is perfect love, righteousness, holiness, omniscient, omnipotent, eternal, immense, self-contained." The Apostle Paul affirmed the deity of Jesus in Colossians 2:9 stating, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." There is no doubt within Scripture that Jesus is the Son of God and thus fully divine in His nature.

Fully Man

We also find in Scripture the full humanity of Jesus through the incarnation. Passages such as Philippians

2:8 note, “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” This concept of Jesus being found in appearance is far more than Him merely looking like a man at first glance with the possibility of Him in actuality being something different than a man. The Greek word translated as appearance is *schema* which means “…the habitus, as comprising everything in a person which strikes the senses, the figure, bearing, discourse, actions, manner of life.” As noted earlier, this refers to His human nature and person, the sum total of who He was to include the capability of reason and responsibility for actions. The incarnation then is the act of Jesus as God becoming human, God in the flesh.

Necessity of the Hypostatic Union

Now that we have established the theological validity of the hypostatic union, let’s take a moment to answer the needed “so what” aspect of the doctrine by taking a look at some elements of why Jesus being fully God and fully man is of the utmost importance. First, Jesus became flesh to be our Savior. Hebrews 2:14-15 states, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Perhaps one of the most well-known passages in Scripture, John 3:16, also notes why Jesus came to earth in the flesh: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Douglas Kelly rightly comments, “In taking on our flesh and giving himself to be our ransom, he shows us who God is, as the one who ‘spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all’ (Rom. 8:32).”

Second, since Jesus

is both fully God and fully man, he is uniquely qualified to be the mediator between God and Man. The Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 2:5 states, "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." The role of a mediator is to guide both parties towards a resolution. When used in reference to Jesus as our Mediator, the resolution involves the restoration of relationship between God and man. Jesus came to mediate a New Covenant through His shed blood on the cross. Puritan theologian, William Ames, once noted, "It was necessary that Christ the Mediator should be God, and man: for unless he had been God, he could not be the spiritual King of our souls, dispensing life and death eternal: and unless he had been man he could not have been a head of the same kind with his body." Without the hypostatic union of Jesus being fully God and fully man, he would not be able to execute His office of Mediator.

Third, Jesus serves as our great High Priest before God. Hebrews 2:17 outlines this priestly office stating, "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." The Old Testament priests had to continually offer sacrifices to God with the high priest going once a year into the Holy of Holies to intercede before God on behalf of the people. Since the sacrifices were but a mere shadow of things to come, a perfect sacrifice was promised. As noted by John Frame, "Jesus as Priest offers the greatest sacrifice, his own body, and he now lives forever to make intercession for his redeemed people." Being fully man, Jesus is able to sympathize with those he represents. Hebrews 4:15 states, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just

as we are--yet he did not sin." As the Son of God, Jesus was sent by His Father to be the perfect sacrificial atonement for our sins and as a result, also appointed by God for that office. Thus He is uniquely qualified to be our Great High Priest before the throne of God.

Finally, the hypostatic union is important in order for Jesus to fulfill the prophecy of a King that would come through the line of David, the long promised Messianic King. As God, Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords as noted in Revelation 19:16. Furthermore, as declared in Luke 1:33, His throne endures forever and His kingdom has no end. As King, all glory and honor are due His name. Moreover, Jesus being fully man fulfills the prophecies revealed in Scripture of Jesus as being from the "line of David". Isaiah 9:7 promised "Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this." Theologian John Owen reminds us that His "being clothed with our nature derogates (detracts) nothing from the true reason of divine worship due unto him, but adds an effectual motive unto it. He is, therefore, the immediate object of all duties of religion, internal and external; and in the dispensation of God towards us, none of them can be performed in a due manner without a respect unto him." In the hypostatic union, we see Jesus as eternal King, and as the King who will sit on the throne of David forever.

A Final Note...

The doctrine of the hypostatic union is far more than some dry and dusty theological term to be studied by theologians surrounded by a giant pile of scholarly works (although such people are prone to use the term). In reality, this doctrine is of great importance to the subject of Christology as a whole, and for believers to better grasp what Christ

did on our behalf. To properly understand the person and work of Christ, as believers, we must appreciate Him as being both fully God and fully man. As both God and man, He alone is our Savior, Mediator, Priest, and King. It was necessary for Jesus to voluntarily come in the flesh to fulfill the will of His Father—that being the redemption and reconciliation of humanity to God through the cross. Unless Jesus was fully God and fully man, this act of redemption would have been incomplete. As both God and man, He came to earth, lived a sinless life, died on the cross, rose again, intercedes for us before God, and will one day return as the conquering King.

As we ponder the wonder and magnificence of this doctrine, may we be reminded of the words of John Owen who stated, "It is true, it is the person of Christ as God and man that is the proper and ultimate object of our love towards him; but a clear distinct consideration of his natures and their excellencies is effectual to stir up and draw forth our love towards him."

Mike Boling is the Associate Editor for Servants of Grace Ministries.

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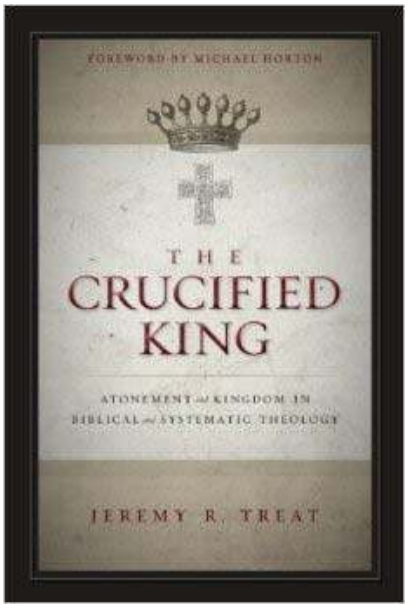
A Book Review:

The Crucified King: Atonement and Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology

By Jennifer Guo



In both academia and the Church, there has been an unfortunate separation of the doctrines of Kingdom of God and the atonement of Christ. Books both popular and scholarly tend to exalt one with the virtual neglect of the other. This dichotomization in theological doctrines unsurprisingly seeps into life and practice, clearly demonstrated in church and para-church ministries where either the Kingdom or atonement is emphasized to the near-exclusion of the other. In the most extreme forms, the result is either a "social gospel"—where, in the words of H. Richard Niebuhr, "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a Kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a Cross"—or one that completely ignores the Kingdom, relegating it entirely to the future. Both the cross-less Kingdom and the kingdom-less Cross are truncated gospels.

Overview

In the book, *The Crucified King: Atonement and*

Kingdom in Biblical and Systematic Theology, Jeremy Treat provides an in-depth study of the biblical and theological relationship between the kingdom of God and the atoning death of Christ on the cross. "[The] answer lies ultimately in Jesus, the crucified king, as properly understood within the story and logic of redemption" (25).

"...the book addresses atonement and kingdom from the perspective of biblical theology..."

Here "the story" of redemption refers to biblical theology and "the logic" of redemption refers to systematic theology. Because the cross-kingdom divide has much to do with the divide between biblical and systematic theology (the former emphasizing the Kingdom of God whilst largely neglecting the doctrine of atonement, and the latter focusing on the doctrine of atonement whilst paying little attention to the theme of the Kingdom of God), a holistic, integrative treatment of the themes of kingdom and atonement "... will bridge this gap between biblical studies and systematic theology, incorporating insights from both disciplines for both doctrines" (27).

Part One of the book addresses atonement and kingdom from the perspective of biblical theology, tracing the relationship between these two motifs as it unfolds in the storyline of Scripture. Chapter One provides a panoramic sweep of the Old Testament, tracing the unfolding themes of victory and suffering. Ultimately, this chapter demonstrates that "the victory and suffering of the *protoevangelium* gradually develop into royal victory *through* atoning suffering (p. 67, emphases original). Chapter Two closely examines the book of Isaiah, where victory and suffering most clearly converge. By examining the "Suffering Servant" in the broader context of chapters 1-39 and 56-66, as well as its immediate context of chapters 40-55, Treat demonstrates that the Suffering Servant is the Messianic King who will bring about a new exodus, thereby establishing God's Kingdom by means of his atoning death (85).

In Chapter Three, Treat looks at Mark's integration of these two doctrines as Kingdom by way of the cross – the kingdom mission of Jesus culminates in the cross. Chapter Four deals with how Colossians 1:15-20 and Revelation 5:5-10 interlink the blood of the cross and the Kingdom of Christ. Chapter Five summarizes Part One and furthers the argument through four key points for understanding the kingdom and cross in biblical theology. The main thesis of Part One is that "the kingdom of God is established on earth by the atoning death of Christ on the cross" (139).

Part Two moves on to look at the relationship between atonement and the Kingdom from the perspective of systematic theology. "At the most basic level, the kingdom and the cross are held together by the Christ. Therefore, the doctrines of Christology, atonement, and kingdom must each be properly understood, especially in relation to one another" (149). Part Two deals with each of these doctrines in turn. In Chapter Six, Treat offers a reconsideration of the often over-systematized doctrines of the two states and three offices of Christ that are in part responsible for the cross-kingdom divide and argues for the *kingship of Christ on the cross*. This challenges the dominant view that Jesus became king in the resurrection or session.

Chapter Seven lays the groundwork of addressing the atonement by examining the reductionism and relativism that pits atonement theories (particularly *Christus Victor* and penal substitution) against each other, surveying recent developments in the relationship between *Christus Victor* and penal substitution, and proposing a model for integration of the two. In Chapter Eight, Treat sets forth his proposal for integrating the two atonement theories – *Christus Victor* **through** *penal substitution*. This model provides a royal picture of the atonement that is both victorious and upholds the justice of God. Chapter Nine completes the picture of Jesus as crucified king by arguing for the cruciform nature of the Kingdom.

Assessment

The Crucified King is a revision of Treat's dissertation at Wheaton College, under Kevin Vanhoozer, which earned him a PhD. It is moderately academic, but accessible to interested laymen, especially those who have done some prior reading in biblical and systematic theology. Greek and Hebrew words are not transliterated, but they don't appear frequently and do not present a significant hindrance to one without proficiency in biblical languages.

This is a significant book because of the comprehensive, detailed way in which Dr. Treat integrates the biblical motifs of kingdom and atonement. While his thesis is not new, no one has worked it out in this much detail. And certainly, no one has done so by integrating the disciplines of biblical and systematic theology, so frequently torn asunder – this also makes *The Crucified King* a landmark and truly unique work.

***The Crucified King* will convince the reader of the importance** of holding together both *penal substitution* and *Christus Victor*, both the doctrine of atonement *and* the Kingdom of God. In both cases, focusing on one and neglecting the other results in a truncated gospel. Any with interest in kingdom, atonement, biblical theology, and/or systematic theology would greatly enjoy this book. *The Crucified King* is a must-read for all who love the gospel and value deep, robust biblical and theological study.

Jennifer Guo works in accounting by day and read books by night. If she has free time and is not reading, she's probably sitting at a piano worshiping God through song. She loves ministry and serves in various capacities in church and in campus ministry at a local university. She's also part of a performing arts ministry called The LION Players.

Jesus' Growth in Knowledge and Wisdom

By Craig Hurst

Orthodox Christians affirm that Jesus is God and possesses deity equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit. That is, the three persons of the Trinity share in the same divine essence and thus the same divine attributes. Some of these divine attribute are classified as *incommunicable* in that only the Godhead (the three persons of the Trinity) possess them and they cannot be shared with, or possessed by, non-deity (humans). These incommunicable attributes include *omnipotence* (all-powerful), *omnipresent* (all-present), *eternality* (with no beginning or end), *unchangeableness* (His essential nature does not change) and *omniscience* (all-knowing). Since Jesus shares the same essence as the Father and the Holy Spirit, then He ought to share in these divine incommunicable attributes, namely, for the purposes of the following discussion, *omniscience*.

Presenting the Problem

The astute Christian will possibly pick up on the problem that Bible believing Christians face when it comes to the person of Jesus. The potential "problem" for orthodox Christians is that the Gospel writers (and Jesus) present Jesus as *not* knowing things (thus not possessing omniscience) and *growing in wisdom and knowledge*. So we must ask ourselves, are we justified based on the testimony of Scripture, in saying that Jesus is God since He is clearly not omniscient? Does *our* theology of Jesus not line

up with *Scripture's* theology of Jesus? Are we asking Jesus to be more than Scripture tells us He is? Further yet, is Jesus less than God because He "grows in wisdom and knowledge"? Perhaps the answer to these questions lies within the unique nature of Christ as the God-man.

There are a number of directions one could go in attempting to answer these questions. Since space is limited here, we will explore one way to address the problem—the unique divine/human nature of Jesus as God incarnate helps us to answer the so-called *problem* of Jesus lacking omniscience. For the sake of space, we will assume that Jesus is God as taught by the writers of Scripture (John 1:1; Col. 1:19; Heb. 1:3) and Jesus Himself (Matt. 22:44; John 8:57-59). First, we will examine some texts that help us to see the issue at hand. And finally, we will look at a proposed solution to the *problem*.

Examining Relevant Texts

Despite the number of relevant texts that pertain to this issue, the focus of this article will remain on a few key areas. The first text to examine is located within the heart of the first story we have of Jesus. At twelve years of age Jesus' parents took Him to the temple for the Feast of Passover. While heading home they realized Jesus is no longer with them. After searching for Him in the caravan without success, they finally return to the city and find Him in the temple with the Jewish Rabbis—teaching and being taught. Luke 2:46-47 sets the stage:

> *"After three days they found Him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers."*

Most of the time when we read these verses, we are

amazed by the fact that the teachers of the temple marveled at the wisdom and knowledge of a young boy's understanding of Scripture. What we tend to overlook is that in addition to Jesus amazing all who heard Him with His answers, Jesus *listened to* and *asked questions of* the teachers. If Jesus is God (despite His age), why does He need to listen to and ask questions of others in order to learn about Scripture?

The second text to examine immediately follows this story of Jesus at the temple with the teachers. Luke 2:52 is the only verse that tells us anything about the time between Jesus at the temple and the beginning of His earthly ministry in John chapter three. The verse is as follows:

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man."

Though *knowledge* is not specifically mentioned in this verse, *growing in wisdom* by definition includes growing in *knowledge* so we can safely conclude that Jesus grew in knowledge as well. Jesus increased in both. Again, we are left asking ourselves, how did Jesus grow in knowledge and wisdom if He is God?

The third text to examine is found in Mark 13:32 and Matthew 24:36. Both passages give the same account of Jesus teaching His disciples about the unknown timing of His return. Mark 13:32 says as follows:

> *"But concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, not the Son, but only the Father."*

If the previous verses did not put the problem front and center then this one surely does. Here, Jesus Himself clearly admits to *not* knowing something—more specifically

the time of His return to earth. This time we might ask ourselves, how did Jesus even consider Himself to be God if He did not possess omniscience? After all, to be omniscient, one must possess knowledge of everything. To not know even one thing is to be less than omniscient. One can see why this is a classic text that people use to deny the deity of Jesus. But as we will see later, we must not be afraid that we are inconsistent in our affirmation that Jesus is God and yet did not know something.

As we can see from the above verses, the God-man grew in knowledge and wisdom and therefore did not know things. He was certainly the smartest person, greatest theologian, and most knowledgeable Bible Scholar to ever walk the earth. However, He still did not know things at one point in His life that He later learned—His return being the primary example. In fact, Jesus even grew in knowledge of Himself! To help us understand this mysterious concept, author Mark Jones explains how Jesus grew in His own self -identity as He read and learned Scripture:

> *Jesus came to a growing understanding of his Messianic calling by reading the Scriptures. He had to learn the Bible* [or Holy Scriptures] *just as we must. Of course, he is the greatest theologian who has ever lived. His reading of the Bible would have been free from the problems that beset Christians who wrongly interpret passages and bring their own sinful dispositions to the text. Nevertheless, we must not imagine that Christ had all of the answers as a baby and merely waited to begin his ministry at the age of thirty without putting in hard yet delightful work on a daily basis in obedience to his Father's will. As Christopher Wright notes, the Old Testament enabled Jesus to understand himself. The answer to*

> *his self-identity came from the Bible, 'the Hebrew scriptures in which he found a rich tapestry of figures, historical persons, prophetic pictures and symbols of worship. And in this tapestry, where others saw only a fragmented collection of various figures and hopes, Jesus saw his own face. His Hebrew Bible* [Scriptures] *provided the shape of his own identity.' …he had to study to know what to do. While he was never ignorant of what he needed to know at any stage of his life, he nevertheless was required to learn.*

As with many tensions and mysteries in Scripture, it becomes clear in reading the text that the writers themselves do not seem to feel the tension the same way we do as readers. Those who saw Jesus and heard testimony of His words and works were no doubt amazed by Him. But the writers of the New Testament do not seem to share our same perplexities in understanding the mystery that is Jesus Christ as both God and man. Even Jesus Himself does not express confusion over His possession of two natures, and this should encourage us.

Looking Toward An Answer

With the problem before us how can we pave the way for a solution? Without over simplifying the answer, I want to propose that the answer is in fact quite simple. The answer, as alluded to earlier, lies within the unique human/divine nature of Christ. While Jesus as the God-man is not necessarily a simple concept to grasp, it does give us the answer as to how Jesus can be 100% God and yet be limited in His knowledge as 100% human, in need of learning and growth in knowledge and wisdom. The definitive text for this is Philippians 2:5-8:

> *Have this mind among yourselves, which is your in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.*

While there is a lot of good theological content packed into these few verses we will confine ourselves to a few thoughts. First, it is from this passage that we get what many call the *kenosis* theory ("self-emptying") which is "the theory that Christ *gave up* some of His divine attributes while He was on earth as a man" (emphasis added). The words "*gave up*" seem to unintentionally communicate something about Christ that is not true and unnecessarily complicate our understanding of the human/divine nature of Christ. With context as our guide, we can see that the *self-emptying* that Christ did was not the laying aside (or giving up) of the independent use of certain divine incommunicable attributes (omnipotence, infiniteness, omniscience, etc.). Rather, His self-emptying is accomplished by humbling Himself to take on human form and likeness so that He can humble Himself so much that He can die on our behalf. As God, Jesus did not *lay off* attributes to become man, but, rather, He humbly *took on* humanity so that He can identify with us in our weaknesses (Heb. 4:15). Michael Bird aptly expresses the concern with the usual way of understanding the *kenosis* theory:

> *The emptying of Christ Himself is not the grounds for a so-called kenotic Christology, whereby Christ left behind certain attributes such as glory, omniscience, or powers, like someone stripping off before climbing*

> *into a dirty pit. The emptying occurred not by what He left behind but through what He took on, humanity – humanity in humiliation no less.*

Without belaboring the issue, the point is clear – Jesus did not leave part of His deity in heaven, but rather covered deity with humanity on earth.

Second, this slight change in our understanding of the self-emptying of Christ helps us to understand how Jesus could still be God and yet need to grow in wisdom and knowledge. Throughout the Gospels we see Jesus acting as God would and as a human would. As God He commanded the sea to be still (Mark 4:35-41) and forgave sins (Luke 7:48). As a man He was born naturally from a woman (Matt. 1:23-25; Luke 2:6-7), He was hungry and ate food (Matt. 4:2; Luke 24:42-43) and He slept (Mark 4:38).

It is interesting that as we consider all of the divine attributes and the limitations of humanity that we are so easily distracted by Jesus' limited knowledge. Here are a few other mysteries within the person of Jesus that we more easily accept:

- To be God is to be infinite but in taking on humanity Jesus took on *finiteness*.
- To be God is to be eternal but in taking on humanity Jesus took on *perishable form*.
- To be God is to be spirit but in taking on humanity Jesus took on a *body of flesh*.
- To be God is to be all-present but in taking on humanity Jesus took on the *limited presence of humanity*.

It is clear throughout the Gospels that Jesus is both God and man. It is a mystery to behold and ponder, and one in

which we will never completely grasp. However, its mysterious nature does not detract us from understanding and proclaiming what Scripture does reveal to us about how Jesus can be deity and yet be limited in knowledge as humanity.

One Last Reminder...

We can rest assured in proclaiming that Jesus is 100% deity and 100% humanity. In humbling Himself by leaving His heavenly throne, Jesus did not leave behind any of His deity nor did He lay aside the use of any of His attributes of deity while on earth. He clearly exercised His attributes of deity at His own discretion. Yet, He also withheld the use of some of His attributes of deity as He saw fit. In whatever divine attributes He exercised, He did so as God. In whatever divine attributes He did not exercise, we see Him acting in His humanity, which (among other things) means He had to and was able to grow in wisdom and knowledge. As God, Jesus is omniscient, and as a man His knowledge was limited—but this does not lessen either of His natures. We must remember that there are some mysteries of God that are yet to be revealed to us while we're on this earth, and Jesus' dual nature is one of those unfathomable secrets of the Almighty.

Craig Hurst is the Book Review Editor for Servants of Grace Ministries.

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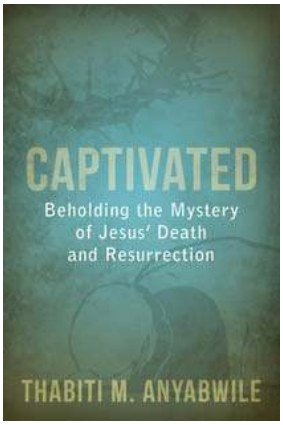
A Book Review:

Captivated: Beholding the Mystery of Jesus' Death and Resurrection

By Matthew Sims



Captivated: Beholding the Mystery of Jesus' Death and Resurrection is a book of collected sermons on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. One that succeeds in being unified, engaging, and evenly-paced as a book. Thabiti M. Anyabwile starts by pleading with us to stop and gaze at Jesus, to slow down and really stare; letting truths that are familiar captivate us once more. The size and steady pace of the book compliment this urging from its author; you can soak the truths in as you read, the page count won't drown you. This balance provides a sense of gravity and freshness to the historical truths of Jesus' death and resurrection.

The first chapter examines the question, "Is there no other way?" Mr. Anyabwile shows why the cross was absolutely necessary, not only for our good, but God's maximum glory (17) and for His own holy justice. The second chapter plows the question, "Why have you forsaken me?" This chapter yielded one of the most poignant quotes in the book.

> *Egypt lays in darkness for three days, Jerusalem for three hours. After the darkness, Egypt's firstborn sons were killed; in Jerusalem the only begotten Son of God was slain. In Egypt, a lamb's blood covered the doorposts of homes. In Jerusalem, the Lamb of*

God's blood covered the sins of the world. (27)

The parallels between the Exodus and the passion of Jesus outlined in *Captivated* draw the reader to a greater understanding of the crimson threads which unite the Old and New Testaments. The next chapter examines Jesus' victory over death and the subsequent triumphant over it that we enjoy as His followers. The fourth chapter encourages us to spend as much time meditating on the truths and promises of the resurrection as we do on the cross. Thabiti says, "All life lived apart from the resurrection is a really slow death" (65). The last chapter tackles the difficult topic of knowing the resurrection as truth. Thabiti reminds us the Spirit sovereignly opens our eyes to the truth of Gospel, which doesn't diminish the absolute necessity of the gospel's truth claims. You cannot deny the resurrection and have salvation (88).

***Captivated* is pound for pound one of the strongest books on the topic of Jesus' death and resurrection** ever written. Thabiti Anyabwile succeeds in his goal of causing to the reader to "stop and gaze". He provides the church with a gift—an approachable book that doesn't intimidate and doesn't pull punches. This is a book is one that you can confidently hand out to new believers as a gospel primer and be assured that it will also encourage the mature saint.

Mathew B. Sims *is the author of* A Household Gospel: Fulfilling the Great Commission in Our Homes *and a contributor in* Make, Mature, Multiply (GCD Books). *He is in the process of earning a degree from Geneva Reformed Seminary. He also works as the managing editor at Gospel-Centered Discipleship and the assistant editor at CBMW Men's Channel. He regularly writes for a variety of publications.*

Jesus on Every Page – An Author Interview with Dr. David Murray

By Craig Hurst

Dr. David Murray is Professor of Old Testament and Practical Theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, and recently also became Pastor of the Free Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, MI. He was ordained to the ministry in 1995 and pastored two churches in Scotland for 12 years. He is the author of *Christians Get Depressed Too* and *How Sermons Work* and regularly speaks at conferences in North America and beyond. David and his wife Shona have five children and they love camping, fishing, boating, and skiing in the Lake Michigan area.

When Dr. Murray wrote his newest book, *Jesus on Every Page: 10 Simple Ways to Seek and Find Christ in the Old Testament*, it sparked an interest within the Christian community to know and understand how Jesus is connected to both the Old *and* New Testaments. Our team decided it would be great to interview the man behind the revolution, so we asked the tough questions…and here's what he said…

T4L Magazine: ***Why is a book about seeking and finding Jesus in the Old Testament necessary?***

Dr. Murray: It's necessary for three reasons. First, there has been much bad practice in this area, which has put people off from considering this as a valid and reasonable way of interpreting the Old Testament. When people "find" Jesus via leaps of logic and speculative imagination, it gives Christ-centered Old Testament interpretation a bad name and people don't want to be associated with it.

Second, many academics have labored to discount and discourage Christ-centered Old Testament interpretation. Perhaps reacting against reason #1 above, many scholars minimize or reject the idea of Christ in the Old Testament.

In response to these two trends, I've tried to write a book that calls people away from fanciful interpretation and provides clear and sane principles for seeking and finding Christ in the Old Testament.

The third reason is that if we don't find Christ in the Old Testament, we are going to miss out on the blessed Emmaus Road experience of spiritual heartburn through seeing Christ in all the Scriptures (Luke 24:32). The New Testament church was built on the preaching of Christ from the Old Testament. Who knows what we might see in our own day if we returned to such apostolic methods again.

T4L Magazine: ***How did Abraham see Jesus in the promises God gave him about a future redeemer?***

Dr. Murray: We are told that Abraham saw Jesus "down the road" as it were, and rejoiced in that sight (John 8:56), but we are not told the specifics of how. On the basis of the biblical material, we can make some educated guesses though.

For example, Paul tells us that God preached the Gospel to Abraham when He promised that through Abraham all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gal. 3:8). That doesn't sound like the Gospel to us, but Paul says it sounded like it to Abraham. It was using Old Testament language

and concepts to communicate the Gospel to Abraham and his generation.

We're also told that Abraham's faith in God's covenant promises was a justifying faith (Gen. 15:6). As Paul uses Abraham's justifying faith as an example for all New Testament believers (Romans 4:9ff), we surely must conclude that there was some believing sight of Jesus involved in this faith.

But perhaps the clearest sight of Christ and the time of Abraham's greatest joy was his experience of substitution on Mt. Moriah when God substituted a ram for Isaac at the last moment.

It's also likely that Abraham was given knowledge of the first Gospel promise in Genesis 3:15.

T4L Magazine: ***What is the unifying principle of interpretation that helps us see Jesus in all of the Old Testament?***

Dr. Murray: The key principle for interpretation is to follow the example and methods of Jesus and the New Testament authors in finding Christ in all of the Old Testament. That's our warrant and that's our guide.

However, we must also note that they did not see Jesus in the Old Testament in the same way all the time. He is in the Old Testament in different ways – in picture, in prophecy, in personal presence, and so on.

T4L Magazine: ***What are some ways in which seeing Jesus in the Old Testament can be abused and might there be some places where He is not in the text of the Old Testament?***

Dr. Murray: Probably the most common area of abuse is typology, where people think that any analogy or parallel is typology. For example, just because Noah's ark was

made of wood, does not make that a type of the cross. Just because Rahab used a red cord does not mean she understood Christ's sacrificial death. In the book, I give a definition of typology and outline a step-by-step method that I hope will help people mine all the riches of Christ in the Old Testament while avoiding the most common pitfalls.

Another area to watch is Old Testament history. There are many verses and even chapters in the Old Testament that simply recount the history of Israel or narratives of Old Testament characters. Some of these chapters are simply linking chapters and are not necessarily full of Christ.

We might be able to say Christ is there in the sense that all biblical history is redemptive history, it's all leading up to the coming of Christ, it's all history under our Savior's control, but we shouldn't squeeze Christ into or out of passages where He is not.

T4L Magazine: ***Based on your personal journey to seeking and finding Jesus in the Old Testament, what are some words of advice to people who might be new to this kind of thinking but willing to try it?***

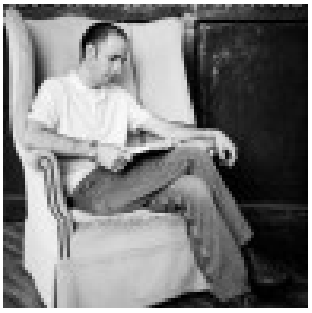
Dr. Murray: I would start, as I do in my book, with the New Testament's view of the Old Testament. Consider how Jesus and the Apostles read and used the Old Testament and use their example as your encouragement.

Next, I would start with a couple of the easier approaches. I wouldn't plunge into all the intricacies of typology but I'd start with some of the clear Messianic prophecies.

I'd then study the Angel of the Lord passages where the pre-incarnate Son of God appears with messages of grace for His Old Testament people. That for me was perhaps the most revolutionary insight I enjoyed into the Old Testament and changed the way I read it.

My next stepping stone would be a study of the Psalms to see how Israel's poets looked forward to their coming King.

The ESV Study Bible also has some excellent helps for seeing the Gospel throughout the Old Testament. Above all, we need to pray for the help of the Holy Spirit to open the Scriptures and open our eyes to see Christ wherever He is to be found in the Bible.



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Arianism: Early Church Heresy and the Doctrine of Christ

By Brian H. Cosby

We often take for granted various biblical doctrines of the church. For example, if you are a professing Christian, you believe in the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. But *why* do you believe that? Have you actually analyzed and evaluated all of the biblical evidence? Most Christians haven't; they simply stand on the shoulders of the great cloud of witnesses who have gone before them. The same could be said for why we call the Holy Spirit the third "Person" of the Trinity. We simply take for granted the hard exegetical work of others.

The doctrine of Christ is no different. The early church heresy, *Arianism*—named after its founder, Arius (c.250–336)—became a catalyst for the *development* of the doctrine of Christ. Nothing can spur the formulation of biblical creeds and confessions of faith like good, old-fashioned heresy. You might be surprised, however, that hundreds of years later, we still see vestiges of Arianism and it still causes us to consider the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Arianism Explained

Arius affirmed the absolute uniqueness and transcendence of God, the un-originated source of all creation. He acknowledged one God, who alone is self-existent, eternal, true, good, sovereign, and without beginning. And because God is indivisible, the being (*ousia*) of God cannot be shared. If God were to impart his substance to some other being, that meant that he must change, which is impossible. Thus, whatever exists apart from God must have been created out of nothing. Arius did not claim originality for

his views; most of these were developed more fully by him, but the original work is usually accredited to Lucian the martyr, his teacher.

From this foundational premise—namely, the one transcendent and unique God—Arius developed several conclusions. First, because there is only one Creator God, the Son must be a *creature* whom the Father created. Arius did note that the Son was a perfect creature incomparable to the rest of creation, but he is not self-existent like the Father.

Second, the Son must have had a beginning. From this particular idea, the Arian slogan, "There was when He was not," became quite popular. If two self-existent beings existed, according to Arius, then there would exist two gods, thus breaking away from monotheism completely.

Third, the Son can have no communication and, therefore, no knowledge of the Father. The Son is a creature and bears the name of the Son only because he participates in the Father's Word and Wisdom, but he is distinct in the fact that he does not possess that Word or Wisdom. Thus, Christ does not share the Father's *essence* and, because the Son is finite, he cannot comprehend the infinite Father.

Fourth, Arius taught that the Son is called *logos* ("word") only conceptually, but is not actually the Son of God in his nature. He is called the "*Son of God*" simply because he was a creation of God; the title "son" was nothing more than a courtesy title. Jesus, therefore, is *not* truly God.

Arius knew his way through the Scriptures and used their content to defend his theological propositions. Several of these include, most significantly, Proverbs 8:22: "The Lord created me…" (LXX), Acts 2:36: "God has made him both Lord and Christ…" (ESV), and Colossians 1:15: "He is the firstborn of all creation" (ESV). Other texts that paid particular interest to the uniqueness of the Father *apart* from the Son include John 17:3: "That they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have

sent" (ESV). Still other texts used by Arius implied Christ's inferiority to the Father such as John 14:28: "For the Father is greater than I" (ESV). Probably the most used passages related Christ's weakness, ignorance, and suffering. Because of his knowledge and use of Scripture, Arius enjoyed a considerable following who continued propagating his teachings long after his death. The ultimate outcome of Arius' teachings viewed Christ suspended between God and man, related to both, but identical with neither.

Arianism and the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.)

The conversion of Emperor Constantine to Christianity (312 A.D.) marked a turning point in the history of the church. Alongside the end of formal persecution, the emperor became increasingly involved in the affairs of the church, and thus the church became more important in higher political decisions. Constantine wanted to keep the church united, but when he moved his new capital city to the East and began visiting the Greek churches, he was troubled by the dissention that arose out of a controversy between Alexander of Alexandria and his presbyter Arius.

Hearing of differing doctrines coming from Arius, Alexander called upon several presbyters, including Arius, to give their interpretations. The theological quarrel began on a local small-scale, but with the influence of powerful bishops, it soon spread. Problems continued when Alexander excommunicated Arius in 318 A.D., causing even more dissention within the Eastern churches. Alarmed at this drastic action, the Emperor Constantine called a council to Nicomedia (near Constantinople, his capital city) so that he could personally control the meetings.

On the opening day of the Council of Nicaea (May 20, 325 A.D.), the emperor urged the bishops to achieve unity and peace. Nearly 320 bishops attended the council, most all of them Greek with a few from the Latin West. The Council at Nicaea was the first of seven ecumenical councils—the

term *ecumenical* being used due to the broad range of representation being in attendance.

The council focused their attention on two very significant concepts in their discussions: "only begotten" and *homoousios*, meaning "of the *same substance*". The council claimed that Jesus was of the *same*—not a similar (called *homoiousios*)—substance with the Father, thus making the Father and the Son equal in essence.

Some of the key biblical arguments came from the prologue of John's Gospel. Verse 1 reads, "The Word was God" and then verse 14 states, "The Word became flesh." These passages explicitly, among others (cf. Rom. 9:5; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:3), united the Father and Son in substance—making them distinct in name, but one God in essence.

There were many questions that plagued the Council about the teaching of Arius: *What right does Jesus have to forgive if he is not God? Why did Jesus tell people to follow him if he was not God?* Finally, and most important: *How are we forgiven? How can a finite, created being make an eternal atonement?*

A significant distinction that Athanasius—the leading prosecutor against Arius—expounded upon was the difference between *homoousios* (of the "***same*** *substance*") and *homoiousios* (of a "***similar*** *substance*"), the "iota of difference." Arius believed that the Son was *similar* to the Father, but not begotten *of* the Father. Here, Athanasius expressed the importance of the Son's nature being *homoousios* as the Father's nature. He explicated in his *Four Discourses Against the Arians* (356-360), using the passage from John's Gospel 14:9, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father":

> *Very Son of the Father, natural and genuine, proper to His essence, Wisdom Only-begotten, and Very and Only Word of God is He; not a creature or work, but an offspring proper to*

> *the Father's essence. Wherefore He is very God, existing one in essence with the very Father.*

Athanasius leaves no ambiguity to his firm conviction that Jesus was God and not created by the Father—they had the same divine essence. To Arius' motto, *"there was once when the Son was not"*, Athanasius' responded:

> *But if ye say that the Son was once, when He Himself was not, the answer is foolish and unmeaning. For how could he both be and not be? Jesus speaks that 'Who is and who was and who is to come.' And where the sacred writers say, "Who exists before the ages,' and 'By whom he made the ages,' they thereby as clearly preach the eternal and everlasting being of the Son, even while they are designating God Himself. The phrase 'I am,' is signified that the Son is eternal and without beginning (for He did not say, 'I became.'). In maintaining, 'Once the Son was not,' they rob God of his Word…and openly predicate of Him that he was once without His proper Word and Wisdom…*

At the end of the day, Arius refused to sign what has become known as the *Nicene Creed*, along with two others at the council, and he was promptly condemned. Today, when you see the phrase "of the same substance" (*homoousios*) in the Nicene Creed, you can know that it was a direct attack on Arius' teachings.

Arius' Influence

There are three major ways that Arianism has influenced the centuries after Nicaea: (1) it aided the development of the Trinity doctrine, (2) it has provided a fertile ground for modern Unitarian thought, and (3) it has be-

come a precursor to modern cults. The Nicene Creed—together with the addition of doctrine regarding the Holy Spirit from the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D.—continues to stand as a monument to the reaction against Arius. They developed—together with other early church fathers (e.g., St. Augustine)—a well-defined understanding of the Trinity that evangelicals still believe today.

A second influence of Arianism may be seen in what is known today as *Unitarianism*. Unitarians believe that God is one in both nature and person, opposite of Trinitarian theology, which views God as having one substance, but with three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

During the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, some of the more racial Reformers adopted a form of Unitarianism. Why? Because the Bible does not use the word "Trinity". Rather, it stressed the "oneness" God (cf. Deut. 6:4). Socinus, a leading advocate of Unitarian thought in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, used parts of Arius' teachings to develop his own theology. By the end of the 18th century, Unitarianism had become a formal denomination continuing in the forms of the American Unitarian Association and the Universalist Church in America.

Third, modern-day cults, like Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses, regulate the Son of God to a lower place than the Father. They will not affirm the absolute divinity of Christ; he is simply the highest being in the hierarchy of creation. These cults are simply rehashed Arianism.

Whether directly or indirectly, Arianism has had significant influence on the history of the church. The development of doctrine—especially that of the Trinity—owes much to the debates over Arius' teaching in the third and fourth centuries. In this way, Arianism sped up the development that may have taken several centuries to unpack. Looking back, we should confidently stand on the shoulders of those, like Athanasius, who have gone before us, but not without a sense of gratitude. The hard work of the Council of Nicaea, as just one example, allows us to appreciate, know, and love the living and true God.

Brian Cosby is pastor of Wayside Presbyterian Church (PCA) on Signal Mountain, Tennessee, and author of God's Story: A Student's Guide to Church History (Christian Focus, 2014).

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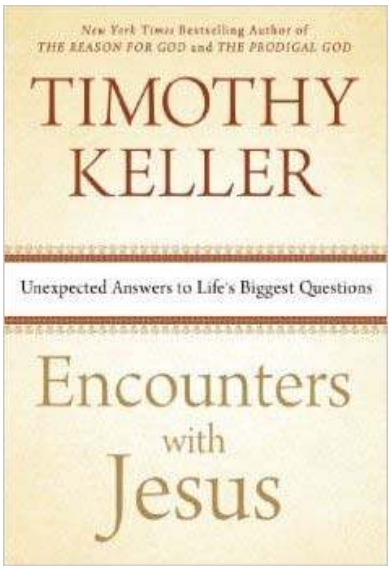
A Book Review:

Encounters with Jesus: Unexpected Answers to Life's Biggest Questions

By Dave Jenkins



It's common in our generation to hear people say, "It is fine that you believe what you believe, but I don't believe that." When you ask those people to elaborate on this statement and the reason why they believe differently, however, you are likely to get a response to the effect of, "I feel this way [insert belief statement]". This begs the question, "Are our beliefs based on *only* on our feelings (or what we *think* is truth)?" This isn't the extent of their objections, however. Many people also state that religion is private and doesn't need to be shared publically. Others earnestly contend that Jesus is just another religious teacher or prophet.

So who is Jesus and what has He come to do? Does it even matter if we believe in Jesus at all? The historically Biblical answer to that question is, *YES*, it *does* matter. It matters because Jesus came as the God-man (God incarnate)

to live a sinless life, to bleed as a sacrificial lamb, to die for our sins, to rise from the grace, to ascend into Heaven, and serve as the Mediator of the New Covenant, Intercessor, and High Priest of His people. Since all of that matters, what better way is there to share that information than through a book that tackles not only what our culture is saying about Jesus, but also what Jesus said about Himself and the Word of God!

"With the narrow lens, Keller takes us into the world of the Bible..."

Dr. Tim Keller's book, ***Encounters with Jesus: Unexpected Answers to Life's Biggest Questions***, tackles these important questions, illuminating the truth and giving answers to those whose lack of understanding has led them to place their trust in a shaky *feeling*.

Encounters with Jesus is essentially a collection of ten encounters with Jesus as seen through the eyes of the people in the Gospels. As Dr. Keller examines these encounters, he examines the text through both a wide and narrow lens. With a wide lens, he extents our perspective to enable us to see what the culture is saying about Jesus. With the narrow lens, Keller takes us into the world of the Bible, allowing the reader to step into the Gospel narrative as one witnessing the encounter firsthand. The combination of understanding what people are saying about Jesus, and what Jesus Himself has said, is a potent and explosive formula that will help both Christian and skeptics better understand the works and personhood of Jesus. Now more than ever our culture needs to hear this message; therefore, I'd like to focus on two specific reasons why I think everyone should read this book.

First, reading this book will help one understand that Jesus is not just some teacher or prophet. Keller takes the reader on a journey that unequivocally demonstrates that Jesus is the Son of God, Son of Man, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. Keller shows that Jesus was not defeated at the Cross, but rather rose from the dead and now serves as the High Priest and Intercessor over His redeemed people. As more and more biblically uneducated people step into churches, this information is especially critical for them to understand because it enables them to see how Jesus desires to invade their lives with His story of redemption and why he seeks reconciliation of them with Himself.

Finally, many Christians—even those with a background in the Church—do not understand what our culture is saying about Jesus. Keller does a masterful job with keeping one ear to the culture, and his eyes firmly set on the Word of God. The culture today is rapidly changing, but the Church has a timeless message in the Gospel, and behind that message is an unchanging God whose promises are true. As Keller engages the person and work of Jesus Christ, his model for how we engage others with the Gospel is noteworthy. He demonstrates the need for not assuming anything, to be as clear as possible, and above all, to be explicitly biblical and gospel-centered. *Encounters with Jesus* is an excellent book because it helps seekers and those who think Jesus is just 'some teacher' or 'merely a prophet' to understand that He is, in fact, who He claimed to be: the Son God and the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is precisely for these reasons that Keller's book, *Encounters with Jesus*, is so important and relevant for this age.

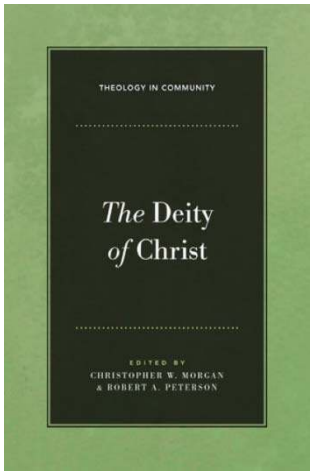
To read *Encounters with Jesus* is to step into a world where Jesus is King, and to come to grips with who He is and what He has done, and His claims on all of our lives. The Puritans taught that Jesus often divided the audience between those who were playing religious games and those who were serious about following Him. It is in this spirit that *Encounters with Jesus* shines the brightest and why I recommend that anyone read it. Keller's effort will help you understand the claims of Jesus, the person of Jesus, and why all of this matters. Even as a Christian of many years, I was challenged and blessed by this book and firmly believe that everyone who reads it will greatly benefit from it as well. Dr. Timothy Keller has provided a tool to light the way to Jesus with his new book. I'm certain that *Encounters with Jesus: Unexpected Answers to Life's Biggest Questions* will give everyone something to think about, and hopefully point those who rely unsteadily on their own feelings to the surety of the Gospel.

Dave Jenkins is the Executive Editor of Theology for Life *and faithfully serves at Ustick Baptist Church, in Boise, ID.*

A Book Review:

The Deity of Christ (Theology in Community Series)

By Craig Hurst



We live in an American culture, where it is fashionable to make Jesus everything you want Him to be. Unfortunately, the 'Jesus' of too many Americans, some of whom are professed Christians none-the-less, is not the Jesus presented in the Bible. If the Burger King slogan, "Have it your way!" was to have a Christological bent, then the slogan for the 'Jesus' of America would be "Jesus—have Him your way!" *The Deity of Christ (Theology in Community Series)*, edited and co-authored by Christopher Morgan and Robert Peterson, is a clear call amidst the often confusing voices claiming to present the Jesus of the Bible and history. Amidst the quagmire of the 'everyone Jesus', and in a world where Jesus has been reduced to "my homey" and "BFF", this book brings us back to the center of Christology. The authors draw us to one of the most foundational attributes of the Jesus Christ the Son of the living God – His deity.

In the opening chapter titled, *The Deity of Christ Today*, Stephen J. Nichols bounces off the work of Stephen Prothero (a strong advocate of Biblical literacy in public schools and renown author) and argues that we have gone from a creedal Jesus, to a human Jesus and ended up with a Jesus that has liberated itself from Christianity and the Bible (p. 27). Stephen points out that there have been many attempts within our American culture to

present Jesus. Movies like *The Passion of Christ*, consumerism and our nifty slogans, and even politics where Jesus is somehow on "everyone's side", show us that our cultural attempts to display Jesus have left us with "personal Jesuses who look far more like their makers than like the Jesus of sacred Scripture and the historical creeds (p.31)."

So how do we save ourselves and our culture from the Jesus of our own making? Nichols suggests that we need to get back to the tradition of the creeds and Scripture. We need the creeds because they have helped to solidify the teaching of Scripture pertaining to, among many things, the deity of Christ. While creedal tradition can help, we must ultimately rest our understanding of Christ on Scripture. When we rest on Scripture we cannot help but conclude that Jesus is God.

In *The Deity of Christ* there is much that is to be commended. In his chapter, *The Deity of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels*, Stephen J. Wellum rightly points out that it is Scripture that gives us the material from which we formulate our articulation of Jesus, and not the fashionable opinions of the day. Wellum states,

> *Scripture provides not only the raw data for understanding who the historical Jesus is but it also provides the God-given interpretive framework, structure, and categories by which we grasp his identity and thus construct an objectively grounded and warranted Christology. In this way, Scripture serves as our epistemological norm for understanding who Jesus is apart from all historical-critical reconstructions of the text (p. 64).*

Wellum's no-nonsense words set the foundation for the rest of the book. It is Scripture, and not man's culturally changing opinions, that shape and inform our understanding and presentation of Jesus. Of particular notice is Stephen J. Wellum's chapter entitled *The Deity of Christ on the Apostolic Witness*. Among many things, Wellum does an excellent job explaining the Christological aspects of Philippians 2:5-11. His explanation of the *kenosis* is spot on and even well-informed readers will find it helpful.

Concerning Christology within church history, Gerald Bray presents an even-handed description and explanation of the Church's formation and articulation of the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Bray's argument is a dose of good medicine for those who want to cast doubt on whether or not the early church fathers 'invented' the deity of Christ. Bray rightly points out that their debates were not hinged on questioning the deity of Christ, but rather they assumed and affirmed the deity of Christ. "The issues debated during the decades of classical creedal formation were more about how belief in his deity should be expressed and harmonized with monotheism then whether he was divine at all (p. 169)." Concerning the correlation between the churches formation and development of the doctrine of the deity of Christ Wellum's words are worth quoting at length:

> *If human beings had invented the deity of Jesus, we would expect them to emphasize his miraculous deeds as the main evidence for this, and the more improbable the miracles were, the better. There would have been little reason for them to have added the more mundane details found in the Gospels if they had not been part of Jesus' claims about himself. The conclusion must be that Jesus taught these things about himself, and it was for that reason that his disciples worshiped him as God. For all their reflection on the person and natures of Jesus Christ, none of the fathers of the church ever believed that, in confessing the deity of Christ, he was adding anything to the teaching of Jesus himself. Their aim was to explain the evidence that had been set before them in the historical events of the life, death and resurrection of the man whose claims they believed and who's teaching they followed. What that explanation was is the substance of the development of the doctrine of Christ in the history of the church (p. 175-76).*

The concluding chapter by J. Nelson Jennings tackles the ever timely issue of the preeminence of Christ among the religions of the world. Jennings challenges the church and

the missionaries abroad to proclaim Christ as God in the flesh and as the only God worthy of worship. Christ is *not* the 'god' each religion worships for this demolishes the imminent need of missions, not to mention the many aspects of the doctrine of Christ and salvation. "Rather, the relationship between Christ's deity and Christian missions consists primarily in Jesus Christ—the ascended God-man—orchestrating, empowering, and intruding into people's lives through his followers' cross-intercultural witness (p. 267)."

In regards to religious pluralism, Jennings addresses its foremost contemporary proponent John Hicks. Hicks contends that there are many ways in which people can find a point of contact, through which they can be saved and know God – not just Jesus. Hicks further believes that each religions communication of truth demonstrate the many ways in which divine truth can be believed and found (p. 278). Jennings rightly counters Hicks by reminding us that man does not have to search in his own for his own truth formation of God and salvation. The Bible clearly teaches us that God has come in the flesh for all through the incarnation of Jesus Christ (John 1 & 1st John 1). The counter claim to religious plurality is the incarnational reality that Jesus is God! Overall, *The Deity of Christ* is an engaging, insightful, and reader-friendly guide through the multifaceted doctrine of the deity of Christ. This is not an esoteric work, but rather a book that is aimed at the layman, pastor, Sunday school teacher, and student of the Bible. This book serves as both a refresher course on the deity of Christ, as well as a timeless reference guide to explaining many of the great Christological passages and phrases of Scripture. As the third contribution to the *Theology in Community* series from Crossway, *The Deity of Christ* is a welcome addition to the much needed area of contemporary expressions of the doctrine of Christ. This book will serve the church well for years to come.

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The Incarnation: Jesus Fully God and Fully Man

By Dave Jenkins

The doctrine of the Incarnation is very important to Christianity. It reminds us that Jesus is both God *and* man, which makes it possible to speak meaningfully about who Jesus is and what He did. Around the turn of the 19th century, **James Denney**, a professor at the United Free Church College in Glasgow, Scotland, wrote the following on this matter:

> *Christ is the only person who can do this work [salvation] for us. This is the deepest and most decisive thing we can know about him, and in answering the questions which it prompts we are starting from a basis in experience. There is a sense in which Christ confronts us as the reconciler. He is doing the will of God on our behalf, and we can only look on. We see him in judgment and the mercy of*

> *God in relation to our sins. His presence and work on earth are a divine gift, a divine visitation. He is the gift of God to men, not the offering of men to God, and God gives himself to us in and with him. We owe to him all that we call divine life. On the other hand, this divine visitation is made, and this divine life is imparted, through a life and work which are truly human. The presence and work of Jesus in the world, even the work of bearing sin, does not prompt us to define human and divine by contrast with each other: there is no suggestion of incongruity between them. Nevertheless, they are both there, add the fact that they are both there justifies us in raising the question as to Jesus' relation to God on the one hand, and to men on the other.* [1]

The Reason for the Incarnation

What is the function of the Incarnation in Christianity? A classic statement on why Jesus became man and its answer is found in Anslem of Canterbury's theological masterpiece, *Cur Deus Homo?* (or "*Why Did God Become Man?*"). This book deals with the question of the Incarnation. Anslem stated that God became man in Christ because only one who was both *God* and *man* could achieve our salvation. The Incarnation—Jesus taking on a fully human state—shows us that God has not abandoned us, but rather loves and values us, even in our fallen state.

Why Did God Put on Flesh?

The *atonement* is the reason God came as man. Consider these verses:

> *Hebrews 10:4-7, "For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, 'Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book."*
> *Hebrews 10:10, "And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus*

Christ once for all."
Matthew 1:21, "She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Jesus spoke of his coming suffering, thus demonstrating his foreknowledge of the events.

Mark 8:31, "And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again."
Mark 9:31, "for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him. And when he is killed, after three days he will rise."

He linked the success of his mission to the crucifixion:

John 12:32, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

Also, in several places in John's Gospel the crucifixion is spoken of as that "vital hour" for which Christ came (John 2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1). The death of Jesus is also a major theme throughout the Old Testament: first, in regard to the meaning of the sacrifices (the meaning at the heart of the law); then in regard to the prophecies, which focused increasingly on the promise of a Coming Redeemer. Isaiah 53 and other Old Testament texts speak of the suffering of the deliverer to come.

In Galatians the apostle Paul teaches that even Abraham, who lived before both the law and prophets was saved by faith in the Lord [Jesus] (Gal. 3:8, 16). Furthermore, Jesus told the downcast disciples on the Emmaus Road that the Old Testament foretold His death and resurrection:

Luke 24:25-27, "And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the

things concerning himself."

In light of these texts and many others we can acknowledge that the atonement of Christ is the primary reason for the Incarnation. It is the explanation of the two-fold nature of Jesus and the focal point of the world and biblical history.

Is the doctrine of the atonement central to the Scriptures? Why must Jesus, the God-Man, be the one to provide salvation? In the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin argues that this is how God has chosen to do it and, therefore, it is impertinent of us to ask if there could not be some other way. Salvation had to be achieved by God, for no one else could achieve it. Certainly men and women could not achieve it without Him, for we are the ones who have gotten ourselves into trouble in the first place! We have done so by our rebellion against God's righteous law and just decrees. We have suffered the effects of sin to such a degree that our will is bound, and therefore we cannot even choose to please God, let alone actually please Him. If we are to be saved, only God has power to save, and must save us.

Remember These Gospel Truths

First, it is God who initiates salvation for man. If this is forgotten, it is easy to think of God as somehow remote from the atonement and therefore merely requiring it as some abstract price paid to satisfy His justice. In that view God appears disinterested, legalistic, and cruel. In actuality, God's nature is characterized by love, and it is out of love that he planned and carried out the atonement. Through Jesus Christ, God Himself was satisfying His own justice. It's easy to see why the Incarnation and the atonement must be considered together if each part is not to be distorted.

"...therefore we cannot even **choose** to please God, let alone actually please Him."

Secondly, there is no suggestion that human beings somehow placate the wrath of an angry God. Propitiation does refer to the placating of wrath, but it is not man who placates God. Rather it is God placating His own wrath so that His love might go out to embrace and fully save the repentant sinner. A proper recognition of the connection between the Incarnation and the atonement makes the Incarnation understandable. At the same time it eliminates the most common misunderstandings of (and objections to) Christ's sacrifice of Himself as the means of salvation.

The divine Son, one of the three persons within the Trinity of the One God, is He through whom—from the beginning of the creation—the Father has revealed Himself to man (John 1:18). He took man's nature upon Him, and so became our representative. He offered himself as a sacrifice in our stead, bearing our sin in His own body on the tree. He suffered, not only awful physical anguish, but also the unthinkable spiritual horror of becoming identified with the sin to which He was infinitely opposed. He thereby came under the curse of sin, so that for a time even His perfect fellowship with His Father was broken.

Thus God proclaimed His infinite abhorrence of sin by being willing *Himself* to suffer the cross in place of the guilty, in order that He might justly forgive us all. Thus the love of God found its perfect fulfillment because He did not hold back from even that utmost sacrifice, in order that we might be saved from eternal death, through what He endured. Finally it was possible for Him to be just and to justify the believer, because—as Lawgiver and as Substitute for the rebel race of man—He Himself had suffered the penalty of the broken law.

The Centrality of the Cross

There are several explanations that follow from the foundation we have built on the doctrine of the Incarnation. First, according to the Scriptures, Calvary is the center of Christianity. Many consider the Incarnation to be the most important thing. In other words, they consider God identifying Himself with man the most important, and consider the atonement as something like an afterthought. According to the Bible, the reason for the God-man is that it required just such a person to die for our salvation. J.I. Packer said, "The crucial significance of the cradle at Bethlehem lies in its place in the sequence of steps down that led the Son of God to the cross of Calvary…and we do not understand it till we see it in this context." To focus on the Incarnation apart from the cross leads to false sentimentality, and neglect of the horror and magnitude of human sin.

Second, if the death of Christ on the cross is the true meaning of the Incarnation, then there is no gospel without the Cross. Christmas (or the birth of Jesus) by itself is no gospel. The life of Christ alone is also no gospel. Even the resurrection, important as it is in the total scheme of things, is no gospel by itself. The good news is not just that God became a man, nor that God has spoken to reveal a proper way of life to us; the good news is not even our great triumph over that great enemy we call death. Rather, the good news is that sin has been dealt with (the resurrection is proof of this); that Jesus has suffered its penalty for us as our representative, so that we might never have to suffer it, and therefore all who believe in Him can look forward to Heaven. The other biblical themes must be seen in this context, as we have already seen of the Incarnation. Emulation of Christ's life and teaching is only possible to those who enter into a new relationship with God through faith in Jesus as their

> "…just as there can be no gospel without the atonement as the reason for the incarnation, so also there can be no Christian life without it."

substitute. The resurrection is not merely a victory over death, but a proof that the atonement was a satisfactory atonement in the sight of the Father (Romans 4:25); and that death, the result of sin, is abolished on that basis.

Any gospel that talks merely of the Christ-event, meaning the Incarnation without the atonement, is a *false* gospel. Any gospel that speaks about the love of God without pointing out that His love led Him to pay the ultimate price for sin in the person of His Son on the cross is a false gospel. The only true gospel is of the "One Mediator" (1 Timothy 2:5-6), who gave Himself for us.

Finally, just as there can be no gospel without the atonement as the reason for the Incarnation, so also there can be no Christian life without it. Without the atonement, the Incarnation becomes a kind of deification of the human and leads to arrogance and self-advancement. With the atonement, the true message of the life of Christ, and therefore of the life of the Christian man or woman, is humility and self-sacrifice for the obvious needs of others. The Christian life is not indifference to those who are hungry, sick, or suffering from some other lack. It is not contentment with our own abundance, neither the abundance of middle-class living with homes, cars, clothes, and vacations. Nor is it satisfaction with the abundance of education, or even the abundance of good churches, Bibles, biblical teaching, or Christian friends and acquaintances. Rather, it is the awareness that others lack these things and that we must therefore sacrifice many of our own interests in order to identify with them, and thus bring them increasingly into the abundance we enjoy.

Paul writing on the Incarnation said in 2 Corinthians 8:9, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich." Also Philippians 2:5-11, he states, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of

men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." This is a strong reminder that we must emulate Christ in every way.

What Does the Bible Teach About the Incarnation?

Philippians 2:5-11 describes the ultimate example of humble service—Jesus left his throne and became like us in order to serve us. This passage is often referred to as the "hymn of Christ". In these verses, Christ's example of service is depicted through a stirring poem that traces His preexistence, incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God. Paul wrote this magnificent theology to encourage the Philippians to consider other people's interests first (v.4). Jesus is the paradigm of genuine spiritual progress; not a self-aggrandizing struggle for supremacy, but a deep love for God and neighbor shown in deeds of service. Verses 6-11 have some clear indications of poetic structure, leading some to believe that this is a pre-Pauline hymn adapted by Paul. It is just as likely, however, that Paul composed the hymn for this setting. In view of the myriad theological questions that arise in these verses, it is critical to keep two things in mind: 1) these verses were written not to spur Christians to theological debate, but to encourage greater humility and love; and 2) the summary of Christ's life and ministry found here is not unique to the book of Philippians. The same themes are evident throughout the entire New Testament.

Prior to the incarnation, Christ was in the form of God (Greek, *morphe theou)*. Despite the assertions of some scholars to the contrary, this most naturally refers to the "preexistence" of Christ—he, the eternal Son, was there with the Father (John 1:1; 17:5, 24) before he was born in Bethlehem. "Form" here means the true and exact nature

of something, or possessing the characteristics and qualities of something. Therefore having the "form of God" is roughly equivalent to having equality with God (*isa theo*), and it is directly in contrast with having the "form of a servant" (Phil. 2:7).

The Son of God is and Always has Been God

Form could also be a reference to Christ being the ultimate image of God, "the exact imprint of his nature" (Heb. 1:3). It might also refer to the fact that he is the visible expression of God's invisible glory (Col. 1:15). Remarkably, Christ did not imagine that having "equality with God" (which he already possessed) should lead Him to hold onto His privileges. It was not something to be grasped, to be kept and exploited for His own benefit or advantage. Instead, He had a mind-set of *service*. "Christ did not please himself" (Rom 15:3). In humility, He counted the interests of others as more significant than His own (Phil. 2:3-4).

"Made Himself Nothing"

"*Made himself nothing*" has occasioned much controversy. The Greek word, *keno,* can mean "empty", "pour out", or also (metaphorically) "give up status and privilege." Does this mean that Christ temporarily relinquished His divine attributes during His earthly ministry? *No.* The theory of Christ's *kenosis* or "self-emptying" is not in accord with the context of Philippians or with early Christian theology. 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 e saying that Christ ever gave up on 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. Christ "made himself nothing" by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. While He had every right to stay comfortably where He was (in a position of supreme *power* and *authority*) His *love* drove Him to a chosen position of weakness for the

sake of sinful man (2 Cor. 8:9: "though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich"). In other words, the "emptying" consisted of His becoming human, not of His giving up any part of His true deity.

Above Arrogance

It is remarkable enough that God the Son would take on human form (Greek *schema*, "outward appearance, form shape," a different term from *morphe*, used in vv.6-7 for "form of God" and "form of a servant"), and thus enter into all the mess of a fallen world. But Jesus went much farther than just condescension, He also became obedient even to the point of death, even death on a cross (Romans 5:19). Crucifixion was not simply a convenient way of executing prisoners, it was the ultimate indignity, a public statement by Rome which said 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 (Matthew 27:35). The cross 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.

Jesus' humiliation and humble service became the foundation for His exaltation. By humbling Himself on the cross out of love, He demonstrates that He truly shared the divine nature of God, who *is* love (1 John 4:8). For this reason God raised Him to life and highly exalted Him, entrusting Him with the rule of the cosmos and giving Him the name that is above every name. In the *Septuagint*, God's personal name is translated as "*Kyrios"*, which means "Lord", which is the name specified in Philippians 2:11. Paul indicates that the eternal Son of God received a status and authority (Matthew. 28:18; Acts 2:33) that had not been His before He became incarnate as both God and man. The fact that Jesus received this name is a sign that He exercises His messianic authority in the name of Yahweh.

While Christ now bears the divine name

Yahweh (Hebrew for "Lord"), He is still worshiped with His human name, Jesus. The astounding union of Jesus' divine and human natures is reinforced by the allusion to Isaiah 45:23 in the words, "every knee should bow and every tongue confess", which refers exclusively to *Yahweh* (Isa. 45:24). The fact that these words can now be applied to God's messianic agent—*Jesus Christ the Lord*—shows that Jesus is fully divine. But the worship of Jesus as Lord is not the final word of the hymn. Jesus' exaltation also results in the glory of God the Father. This identical pattern is found in 1 Corinthians 15:23-28, when God gives Jesus messianic dominion over all creation and declares that everyone will one day rightly give praise to Him as their Lord. In this passage, we learn that when Jesus' kingdom reaches its fullness, He does not keep the glory for Himself. Instead it says, "The Son himself will also be subjected to him who puts all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all…" (1 Cor. 15:28). Even in His exaltation, Jesus remains the model of loving service to God.

One Last Glance

Throughout this article, we have examined what the Bible says about the Incarnation and what influential theologians have said about it. The Incarnation is vital to a robust understanding of the Gospel as we have seen. In the Incarnation, God became a man and was born from a virgin in Bethlehem. Above, all the Incarnation proves to man that God is not disinterested in the affairs of sinners, but rather he came to deal with the problem of man's sin. This flies right in the face of the modern belief that God is "disinterested in mankind".

The doctrine of the Incarnation demonstrates that God doesn't simply "talk a big game", but actually offers a solution to man's problem of sin. God, in His love, sent Jesus into the world. Jesus lived a sinless life as a man, all the while experiencing all the temptations that mankind faces. And yet, He lived a sinless life in the midst of people who constantly criticized Him, but begged Him for

miracles. The people during Christ's ministry spit in His face and ridiculed Him, but all the while Jesus demonstrated that He cared for people by teaching, healing, setting the captives free, raising the dead, and so much more. All of this disproves the modern notion that God is *not interested* in man. By becoming a man, God demonstrated that He was interested in mankind through His own willingness to step into our time and space and die for our sins. So when we consider the doctrine of Incarnation, let us worship the God of the Bible—**the Creator of all and the Redeemer of sinners who alone is worthy of all praise, honor, and glory.**

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