



The Gospel of Jesus

- I. Introduction. In Philippians 1:27, Paul calls the Christians to become unified as the body of Christ. In 2:1-4, Paul vividly explains the process for unity: Humble yourself and put the interests of others before yourself. In 2:5-11, Paul gives the perfect illustration of his principle. Follow the example of your leader Jesus. Paul quotes an early Christian hymn, and this hymn has become one of the most powerful passages of scripture in the entire New Testament. This passage gives us the solution to conflict and dissention.

- II. The Hymn of Christ
 - A. Jesus is God- the Diety of Christ- Philippians 2:6.
 1. Being in the very nature God. This phrase literally means “being already in the form of God.” Possession of the form of God includes the essence of God. It is obvious that these words confirm the pre-existence of Christ. John 1, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 1 all confirm that Jesus is God and creator of the world. First century Christians had no problem “combining heavenly pre-existence with a human genetical inheritance.”
 2. Did not consider equality with God. Existing with God before creation and being involved in the creative process (Genesis 1:1,26), Jesus is equal with God. The Hebrew suffix “im” makes a Hebrew word plural. The Hebrew word for “God” in Genesis 1:1 is Elohim which is the plural form of the word “God.” The Father, Son, and Spirit were all involved in the creative process according to Genesis 1:1. Jesus is co-creator and equal with God. Jesus is unique in personality but one in essence with God.
 3. Something to be grasped. The word grasped in Greek is “harpagmos.” The word means to “snatch or seize.” Jesus is equal with God, but he did not seize this equality and hold onto to it refusing to let it go; rather he willingly laid it down for the best interest of mankind. There is an interesting contrast here. Jesus was equal with God but refused to hold on to it. He laid it down to become human. Adam was created human but forfeited his godly nature and life in Eden through trying to seize equality with God. The result is that Jesus is exalted and Adam is humbled. This is still the tension of humanity today.
 4. Why is it important that we know that Jesus is God? How does this doctrine define Christianity for us? What are the implication for our lives as believers?

 - B. Jesus is human- the humanity of Christ- Philippians 2:7-8.
 1. But made himself nothing. This phrase literally means “he emptied himself.” Instead of exploiting his equality with God for his own advantage or seizing it and refusing to let it go, Jesus divested himself or emptied himself of the privileges of Diety.” It is important to note that Jesus gave up the prerogatives of Diety not the actual divine nature. That is impossible. He didn’t give up being God to become man; He gave up the benefits of being God to become man. He is still 100% God and 100% man.

2. Taking the very nature of a servant. This phrase literally means “the form of a slave.” This does not mean that he exchanged the nature (form) of God for the nature (form) of a servant; it means that he displayed the nature (form) of God in the nature (form) of a servant. The best example of this was in John 13 when he washed his disciples’ feet.
3. Being made in human likeness. Being made refers to the fact that he was born from a woman like other humans. In human likeness in no way suggests that Jesus’ humanity was only a semblance of humanity and not real humanity. Rather the phrase confirms Jesus came in the perfect “likeness” of a human. He was human through and through, and his humanity defines what the human existence should be. Jesus’ life in this world defines authentic life. Paul adds to these comments with “he was found in appearance as a man.”
4. He humbled himself. No one else humbled him. He made the decision to humble himself coming to this earth and living as fully human, and he further humbled himself by dying on a cross. The cross was so offensive in the Roman Empire that Romans refused to say the word crucifixion. It was considered an obscenity. So, they took the Latin form of the word and abbreviated it to “crux.” That is the extent of the humiliation associated with the cross. That is how far Jesus humbled himself. In this process, Jesus was obedient to death, even the humiliating death of crucifixion.
5. Why is it important that we believe Jesus was completely human? What are the implications for us as fellow humans with Jesus? How does the death of Jesus serve as a paradigm for our daily human experience?

C. Jesus is Lord- the reign of Christ- Philippians 2:9-11.

1. God exalted Jesus to the highest place. “Whoever humbles himself will be exalted” Matthew 23:11. Jesus did not seize the benefits of Deity; he let go and became a servant who willingly sacrificed his life for all mankind. Therefore, God returned Jesus to his rightful place as King and Lord over all creation. He gave Jesus the name that is above every name. In the first century, someone’s name (title) carried with it the authority associated with it. Jesus name or title is Lord, which carries with it the authority over all creation.
2. At the name of Jesus, every knee will bow (both human and spirit) and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord over all his creation revealing the greatness of God. This will happen at Judgement Day. Every entity in all creation will bow before Jesus as Lord. Key: We want to bow before our Lord before death, not after.
3. Here is Paul’s message. Jesus gave up all his rights and privileges of Deity to love you and serve you and die for you. As a follower of Jesus, you signed up for the same path. How does a Christian handle conflict and strife? You give up your privileges and authority, and you humble yourself before others and die to your selfish agendas. You die to yourself to give others life. Jesus is your illustration. Wow!
4. How would you summarize Paul’s teaching about Jesus? How do we apply this teaching to our lives? How does this principle play out in our relationships? What are some keys to walking in humility? What is your takeaway from this study?

