

Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 29 Issue 711

Was Jesus Christ Alive Before His Life on Earth Began?

Part 5 of 12

by — Aaron Welch

A Consideration of Passages
Thought to Reveal the
"Preexistence of Christ"
Paul's Letters to the Body of Christ
(Continued)

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8

For let this disposition be in you, which is in Christ Jesus also, Who, being inherently in the form of God, deems it not pillaging to be equal with God, nevertheless empties Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming to be in the likeness of humanity, and, being found in fashion as a human, He humbles Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, also, God highly exalts Him, and graces Him with the name that is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should be bowing, celestial and terrestrial and subterranean, and every tongue should be acclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God, the Father.

In a Nutshell:

In :6-8 Paul had in view the "disposition" which was in the Man, Christ Jesus during His lifetime on Earth. Despite Christ's superior, elevated status as the Son of God (a status which was expressed in the words "being inherently in the form of God" and being

"equal with God"), our Lord "emptied Himself"
(i.e., abased Himself), living a life of humility
and servitude (John 13:1-17; Luke 22:27;
Matthew 20:26-28; Mark 9:35). Christ took
"the form of a slave" by serving those of
inferior status to Himself, and – in doing
so – came to be in the "likeness of humanity"
(which – being constituted by those humans

for whom Christ gave Himself as a "correspondent Ransom" – are inherently inferior to Christ). Christ had every right to be served by humanity during His time on Earth, but chose to humble Himself and "take the form of a slave" on their behalf instead. It is this humble and servant-minded disposition that belonged to Christ which Paul wanted to be in us as well.

Expanded Explanation:

In reading Philippians 2:5-8, it's important to keep in mind that the entire passage is based on Paul's exhortation in :5, which itself is a continuation of what he'd said in the preceding verses of this chapter:

If, then, there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any communion of spirit, if ▶

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any compassion and pity, fill my joy full, that you may be mutually disposed, having mutual love, joined in soul, being disposed to one thing – nothing according with faction, nor yet according with vainglory – but with humility, deeming one another superior to one's self, not each noting that which is his own, but each that of others also.

In light of how Paul wanted the saints to relate to each other (:3-4), he presents Christ Jesus as the ideal example of someone whose disposition (or mindset) was – and is – characterized by humility and a willingness to serve others.

Presenting Christ as an example for the saints to follow is, therefore, the primary aim of the passage. Moreover, given the practical basis for what Paul went on to say in :6-8, it may be helpful to consider the degree to which one's interpretation of :6-7 best answers the practicality of Paul's exhortation to the saints. Although such a consideration cannot, of course, be a determining factor in how we understand the verses that follow, I think it's an appropriate mindset to have as we approach the text in order to figure out just what, exactly, Paul was saying.

Who, being inherently in the form of God, deems it not pillaging to be equal with God (:6).

Before we consider the meaning of the above words, let's first consider what it is that Paul *didn't* write. We're not told that Jesus Christ "**preexisted** inherently in the form of God." If one believes that Paul had in mind Christ's preexistence in this verse, it's not because this is actually stated in the verse. The concept of preexistence must be imported into this

verse by those who, for other reasons, already believe (or are inclined to believe) that it's true. Neither the word translated "inherently" in the CLNT (huparchō) nor the word translated "form" (morphē) tells us when Christ came into existence.

Thus, this verse is entirely consistent with the view that Paul was talking about what was true of Christ Jesus as "the Man, Christ Jesus" (i.e., the fully human being who was generated by God in the womb of His mother), as opposed to a pre-human celestial being which most Christians believe Christ Jesus existed as before He became a human being.

So what does it mean for Christ Jesus to have been (and to be) in the "the form of God?" In his commentary on this passage, A.E. Knoch remarked that the word translated form denotes "outward appearance," and referenced II Timothy 3:5 in support of this fact ("having a form of devoutness, yet denying its power"). I agree with Knoch, and believe there's more than sufficient scriptural evidence to support this understanding of "form." Given the assumption that God lacks a visible, "outward appearance," Christ's being in the "form of God" can't be understood as involving anything other than Christ's being **the one who represents God to others.** This is precisely how I understand how Christ was (and is) "inherently in the form of God."

Being the Son of God, Christ Jesus was invested with the privileged authority to be His Father's representative on the Earth (which involved speaking and acting on God's behalf), such that when one saw Jesus, one saw the Father (John 12:45; 14:9). It was this unique and elevated status that I believe Paul had in mind when he wrote of Christ's being

Salvator Mundi: Is Christ the Savior of All Men?

by — Samuel Cox (1826-1893)

(New Enlarged Type Edition) "Salvator Mundi" means "Savior of the World." First published in 1877, the main object of this book is to encourage those who "faintly trust the larger hope" to commit themselves to it wholly and fearlessly, by showing them that they have ample warrant for it in the Scriptures. Reprint of the 1899 Eleventh Edition.

176 pp, PB

See order form.

"inherently in the form of God" (and, as we'll see, the words "equal with God" can be seen as supporting this understanding as well).

However, what about the word translated "inherently" (huparchō)? Does this word suggest that Christ has, in a fully realized and active sense, been "in the form of God" since the very beginning of His existence? If Christ's existence began at the moment of His conception (as I believe), wouldn't this imply that Christ was speaking and acting on God's behalf from the moment He was conceived? Not at all.

Using the same word *huparchō*, Peter declared that David was "*inherently a prophet*" (Acts 2:30). This, of course, doesn't mean that David was prophesying from the moment he began to exist. Similarly, James declared that the believing Jews in Jerusalem were "*all inherently zealous for the law*" (Acts 21:20), while Paul elsewhere wrote that Abraham was "*inherently somewhere about a hundred years*" old when he received God's promise concerning his son (Romans 4:19).

There are other similar examples that could be provided in which someone is said to have been "inherently" something without there being any implication that they were, from the beginning of their existence, actively being or doing whatever is associated with what they were "inherently" said to be, but I think the above examples will suffice.

Thus, when used in reference to Christ's being "in the form of God," the word translated "inherently" simply means that Christ was (and is) in the form of God "in a permanent, essential or characteristic way"

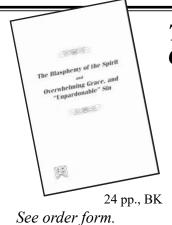
(which is what the English word "*inherently*" means). Understood in this way, the word is easily applicable to Christ during His lifetime on the Earth.

As far as Christ's being "equal to God," this is, I believe, connected with His being "inherently in the form of God." Contrary to the beliefs of Trinitarians and Modalists, we shouldn't understand Christ's "equality with God" in an absolute sense; the meaning of this expression (or, at least, an important clue as to its meaning) can, I believe, be found in John 5:18.

Therefore, then, the Jews sought the more to kill Him, for He not only annulled the sabbath, but said His own Father also is God, making Himself equal to God.

I think that both the context and the verse itself give us enough information to draw some conclusions concerning what sort of "equality" is in view here. It would seem that this "equality" has primarily to do with Jesus being the Son of God, and God being Jesus' Father (and, in connection with Jesus being the Son of God, it most likely further involves Jesus having been invested with the authority and prerogative to speak and act on God's behalf).

In any event, I think it's reasonable to conclude that Jesus being "equal with God" has to do with Jesus' superior status as the Son of God. That is, Jesus' equality with God (as referred to in both John 5:18 and Philippians 2:6) should best be understood as involving the status that belonged (and belongs) to Jesus, and which is based on His unique relationship with God (a relationship that the rest of humanity didn't – and doesn't – have).



The Blasphemy of the Spirit and Overwhelming Grace, and "Unpardonable" Sin

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965) and James Coram

Probably most people under biblical influence have been either perplexed or distressed by the alarming phrase, "the unpardonable sin." How many have morbidly imagined that they had committed this sin and spoiled their whole career! To the contrary, since Christ died for all that all might live, and all who will be saved will be saved by grace, it follows that eventually all will be saved, that God may be All in all. Two studies in one booklet.

So far, then, we have seen that there is no reason whatsoever to believe that Paul was trying to say anything at all about Christ's having preexisted the time when He was generated by His God and Father.

However, what about :7? This is, apparently, when those who affirm the doctrine of Christ's preexistence think the doctrine virtually "jumps off the page." However, those who see this verse as implying preexistence have completely missed the point here, and are simply reading their own doctrinal bias into the text.

Nevertheless empties Himself, taking the form of a slave, coming to be in the likeness of humanity (:7).

What does it mean for Christ to have "nevertheless emptied Himself?" We know that the expression "empties Himself" is not to be understood literally, for no one can literally "empty themselves"; it's figurative imagery. Strong's defines the word translated "empties" (kenoō) as, "to make empty, that is, (figuratively) to abase, neutralize, falsify."

The first definitions provided by Bill Mounce (a scholar of New Testament Greek) are, "to empty, evacuate; ἑαυτόν, to divest one's self of one's prerogatives, abase one's self, Philippians 2:7" (emphasis mine).1

What Paul went on to say immediately after declaring that Christ "empties Himself" can be understood as further clarifying what he had in mind here, and as giving us the sense in which Christ "emptied Himself": Christ took "the form of a slave." What does it mean for Christ to have taken "the form of a slave?" As

https://www.billmounce.com/greek-dictionary/kenoo

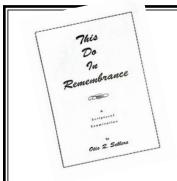
noted earlier, "form" refers to "outward appearance." If this is the case, then how does a person come to have the "outward appearance of a slave?"

Being a slave is not about having a distinct physical appearance or particular physical constitution, and so "taking the form of a slave" has nothing to do with that. Rather, having the form of a slave concerns one's actions in relation to others. The "job description" of a slave is to serve the one to whom one belongs as a slave. Merriam-Webster defines "slave" as "a person held in **servitude** as the chattel of another."

Slavery is all about servitude, and the lack of liberty that a slave has is only a means to an end (the end being, of course, servitude). For someone to take the "form of a slave," therefore, is for them to serve others, treating them as if they were superior to oneself in status. It is, therefore, serving others that gives one the "form" (or "outward appearance") of a slave.

This fact should have led A.E. Knoch to question his belief (as expressed in his commentary on Philippians 2:7) that Christ's "taking the form of a slave" took place "at His incarnation" (i.e., when Jesus was conceived and His mother became pregnant). Knoch should have reasoned, "Since taking the form of a slave involves having the *outward appearance* of *a slave* – and since having the outward appearance of a slave involves serving others as if they were superior to oneself - then how could Christ have taken the form of a slave "at His incarnation?" Apparently Knoch, too, was in the grip of his theory and was reading this verse through the lens of his doctrinal bias concerning the preexistence of Christ.

The fact is that a person being conceived and "taking the form of a slave" have nothing to do with each



This Do in Remembrance

by — Otis O. Sellers

A scriptural examination of a common church custom, by independent student and teacher of the Word of God and editor of *The Word of Truth.*

60 pp., PB

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other, and such an interpretation introduces only confusion and absurdity into what Paul wrote. To refer to a human zygote (or an unborn child at any stage of development) as being "in the form of a slave" – i.e., as having the "outward appearance of a slave" – is to empty the words "form of a slave" of any clear and intelligible meaning, literal or figurative. Yet, this is precisely the interpretation that Knoch's doctrinal bias forced him to adopt when commenting on this particular verse.

In contrast with Knoch's interpretation (according to which an unborn child is to be understood as being in "the form of a slave") Christ's "taking the form of a slave" is better understood as involving the way in which our Lord voluntarily conducted Himself during His time on Earth and which was so clearly put on display during – and especially at the end of – His public ministry, as described in the four Gospel Accounts.

Again, to "take the form of a slave" involves assuming the outward appearance of a slave with regards to how one relates to others. It involves treating others as if they were superior to you, and serving them rather than expecting – and demanding – that they serve you. Despite Christ's superior, elevated status as the Son of God (a status which was expressed in the words "being inherently in the form of God" and being "equal with God"), our Lord emptied Himself (i.e., abased Himself), living a life of humility and servitude (John 13:1-17; Luke 22:27; Matthew 20:26-28; Mark 9:35). Christ's taking the form of a slave (which, again, meant serving others) was no more clearly manifested than Christ's death on behalf of sinners:

And, calling them to Him, Jesus is saying to them, "You are aware that those of the nations who are presuming to be chiefs are lording it over them, and their great men are coercing them. Yet not thus is it among you. But whosoever may be wanting to become great among you, will be your servant. And whosoever may be wanting to be foremost among you, will be the slave of all. For even the Son of Mankind came, not to be served, but to serve, and to give His soul a ransom for many" (Matthew 10:42-45).

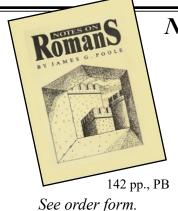
"The Son of Mankind came, not to be served, but to serve, and to give his soul a ransom for many." The very one whose elevated status made Him deserving of being served by humanity chose to "abase Himself" and humbly "take the form of a slave" on humanity's behalf, and – in the words of Paul – give Himself as "a correspondent Ransom for all." By taking the form of a slave, Christ came to be in the likeness of those who were (and are) inherently inferior to Him.

In light of what has been said above, we are now in a better position of understanding the last part of :7.

Coming to be in the likeness of humanity.

The word translated "humanity" in the CLNT (anthrōpos) is simply the plural of "human" (or "man," considered as a kind of being) and is translated "men" in the Dabhar translation, Rotherham's, Young's, and in nearly every other translation I've looked at (the NET Bible translates it as "other men," which – although not literal – is, I believe, accurate with regards to the meaning).

The word translated "humanity" in Philippians ▶



Notes on Romans

by — James G. Poole

Fundamental doctrines of the faith are made known in Romans. If our understanding is based solely on the four gospels, we have no justification, no (re)conciliation, and only an earthly expectation of the Kingdom of God. "In Christ Jesus" is a doctrine exclusive to Paul's ministry. Paul tells us that God sees us in Christ, and not as we are in ourselves. We are shown in chapter 8:28-39 our place in God's purpose, and that God is "for us."

James Poole was a contributor to Grace and Truth magazine.

2:7 is also the same word found in I Timothy 2:5, where we read that "the Man, Christ Jesus" is the "one Mediator of God and mankind." The "humanity" in whose "likeness" Christ came to be is the same "humanity" or "mankind" of which Christ is the Mediator. It is that group of people constituted by

translation "other men" in the NET Bible).

every human being except Christ Himself (hence the

The humans for whom Christ died (and of whom the "humanity" of Philippians 2:7 is constituted) are, of course, inferior to Christ with regard to status and rank. Despite being Himself a human (as Paul notes in :8), Christ is on a completely different level than every other human; no other human could, for example, be said to be "inherently in the form of God," or could "deem it not pillaging to be equal with God." Yet, Christ Jesus - the One Who was and is inherently superior to all other humans ("humanity") - conducted Himself in such a way that He took "the form of a slave," and, in doing so, He "came to be in the likeness" of those inherently inferior to Him (which, again is the same "humanity" or "mankind" of which Christ is the "one Mediator").

This, I believe, is the simple and beautiful truth being expressed by Paul here, and powerfully illustrates the humble disposition of Christ that Paul wanted to be in the saints. Despite being superior in status to the rest of mankind, the Man, Christ Jesus, lived in such a way (expressed in the words, "taking the form of a slave") that gave Him the "likeness" of those who were inherently inferior to Him. Rather than expecting and demanding that humanity serve Him during His time on Earth, our Lord "emptied Himself" and became like a slave to the very ones whose sins were the reason He ultimately had to lay down His life in obedience to God ("And whosoever may be wanting to be foremost among you, will be the slave of all. for even the Son of Mankind came, not to be served, but to serve, and to give His soul a ransom for many"). That is true humility.

This verse, then, need not be understood as having anything at all to do with a celestial, non-human person becoming a human. It was those humans who did not share Christ's superior status in whose likeness Christ came to be by "taking the form of a slave" and humbly serving those inferior to Himself. Thus, in whatever way that Christ can be understood as having "taken the form of a slave" during His mortal lifetime (and as having acted as a servant on behalf of those who were inferior to Himself), He thus came to be "in the likeness of humanity," resembling those inherently inferior to Him (which, again, is in accord with Paul's words in :3-4: "nor yet according with vainglory ... but with humility, deeming one another superior to one's self, not each noting that which is his own, but each that of others also").

And, being found in fashion as a human, He humbles Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (:8).





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I feel that what's been said so far has sufficiently demonstrated that the common use of Philippians 2:7 as a "proof text" for the doctrine of the preexistence of Christ is completely unjustified. It is simply not necessary to understand :7 as having anything at all to do with Christ's having preexisted the life that began when He was generated by His God and Father. What Paul wrote in this verse makes perfectly good sense apart from the doctrine of preexistence being read into it. If :7 doesn't support the doctrine of the preexistence of Christ (and it doesn't), then :8 certainly doesn't.

After referring to Christ's "taking the form of a slave" and "coming to be in the likeness" of those inherently inferior to Himself (i.e., "humanity" or "mankind"), Paul then makes the point that Christ was no less human in nature than those individuals constituting the "humanity" on whose behalf He took "the form of a slave." That is, despite His superior status as the Son of God (being "inherently in the form of God"), the One who humbled Himself by "becoming obedient unto death" was just as much a human being as the humans of inferior status on whose behalf He died. Thus, rather than having anything to do with Christ's having preexisted His life on Earth, the words "being found in fashion as a human" have everything to do with the simple fact that Christ was, and is, a human.

In conclusion, Philippians 2:5-8 has to do with the fact that Christ Jesus – the (human) Son of God – humbled Himself *rather than* exalted Himself, and became a servant to those of inferior status who

ought to have been serving Him. Jesus exalted His God and Father but humbled Himself. He humbled Himself by "taking the form of a slave" on behalf of humanity, both before, during and at the end of His public ministry (when He voluntarily submitted to a humiliating death on the cross). It is this humble and servant-minded disposition that belonged to Christ which Paul wanted to be in us as well.

(to be continued)

About the Author: see part 1, *Bible Student's Notebook #707*, page 6077.

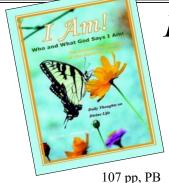
TOPICS:

Major: Jesus Christ (Pre-Existence of); Trinity

Note to the Reader

In previous issues of the *BSN* an index was given as a tool for the many abbreviations and study references that are included in the articles. However, due to space constraints in order to present as much study material as possible, it became necessary to remove the index.

Now, with the new *BSN* format it has become possible to provide the index, but in a new location, now in the back of the BSN on the last page, after the order form.



See order form.

I Am! Who and What God Says I Am!

The Divine Reckoning of the Renewed Mind; Daily Thoughts on Divine Life

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

People are always talking about their attempts to discover their true selves – of trying to "find themselves." The believer in the Lord Jesus Christ needs to find out who they *really* are. This doesn't need to be such a difficult search. All that is really needed is a careful look at the Scriptures, and a simple faith in the words of who and what God says we are. God knows who we are; all we need to do is to *believe Him*. This book catalogs the Divine Record of who and what God says that you are. It is a short ency-

clopedia of faith – the truth about you. It is the truth about you, simply because it is *God* Who has said it. God has spoken these truths concerning you – the *real* you. Believe His record! Refuse to be the shell of a person, pushed into a mold of Adamic conformity. Be the real you that God has uniquely designed you to be. Refuse to be bullied out of your divinely designed identity that our Father has given you.

Û,

Samuel R. Price

October 8, 1939 - February 16, 2018

of our dear brother and faithful supporter, Sam Price of North Fort Myers, FL. He was granted to study the Bible dispensationally for well over 45 years. He had been mentored in the truth by Lonnie and Heloise Vickers of Flagler Beach, FL. He would describe, a few years ago, how the message of God being All in all,

... came in the bottom of the ninth, game tied and hit a home run. Your books and writings are scripturally understandable and helpful.

I came out of religion many years ago after trying to be what I thought the Lord wanted me to be. Even after I came out it took a while to finally get away from being religious. Since then, the Lord has been very generous toward me, continuously opening my eyes, my heart and my mind. Not until recently have I really understood the power, ability and most of all the Sovereignty of God.

Ironically, even though we did not know him at the time, for 8 years Sam was only about 30 minutes from us in Twin Rocks, near Nanty Glo, PA.

Sam's steadfast support and constant encouragement over the past few years will truly be missed. With his earthly enlistment now over, he now sleeps awaiting Christ's appearing.

Topics:

Major: Biography; Obituary

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Bible Student's NotebookTM

Paul Our Guide - Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360 Volume 29, No. 711 – May 7, 2018 Scripture education in a semi-weekly format!

This *free* electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 1:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);

- union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);adult sonship position (Galatians 4).
- We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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For definitions of abbreviations/acronyms, see index after the order form.

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ABBREVIATION KEY

Scripture Version

CV: Concordant Literal Version

DAR: Darby Translation DT: Dabhar Translation FF: Ferrar Fenton Bible KJV: King James Version **NET:** New English Translation RE: Rotherham's Emphasized Bible

WT: Weymouth Translation *YLT*: Young's Literal Translation

Reference Sources

AA: Analytical Analysis (Welch)

BDB: Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon CB: Companion Bible Notes & Appendixes (Bullinger)

CC: Concordant Commentary (Knoch)

CKC: Concordant Keyword Concordance (Knoch)

CL: A Critical Lexicon and Concordance

(Bullinger)

CWS: Complete Word Study Dictionary (Zodhiates)

FoS: Figures of Speech (Bullinger) SEC: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance TGL: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon

UR: Unsearchable Riches

VED: Vine's Expository Dictionary YAC: Young's Analytical Concordance

Reference Notations

cf. – compare *e.g.* – for example et al. - and others

etc. – et cetera (and so on) ff. – and the following

i.e., – that is