

The Incarnation: Tradition and Truth

Lesson 2: A Witness of Light

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God in the Flesh (Part 2)

Kenosis

Definition:

At the Incarnation, Jesus gave up not only the environment of the Godhead and his position as Ruler, but also the use of his divine attributes. (If you fail to say "use," you are using heretical language and your answer will be counted as wrong!!!)

By taking on human nature, he accepted certain limitations upon the functioning of his divine attributes. These limitations were not the result of a loss of divine attributes, but of the addition of human attributes. (OLYMPIC SPRINTER IN 3-LEGGED RACE; CHAMPION BOXER FIGHTING WITH ONE HAND TIED BEHIND HIS BACK; PARENTS BATTING "LEFT-HANDED" AGAINST KIDS)

Support:

a. He gave up a perfect environment.

(John 1:1,14) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . (14) And the Word became flesh . . .

The emphasis here is on Jesus exchanging his perfect environment of being with God (the Father) in order to enter the environment of fallen and sinful humanity to be our Savior.

b. He gave up his position as Ruler.

(Phil. 2:6,7*) . . . who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

Phil. 2:6,7* states that Jesus did not "hold on to" (*harpagmos*) his equality with God. The context emphasizes that he relinquished his position as Ruler, and exchanged it for one of a servant.

c. Jesus demonstrated nonuse of:

1a. Omniscience

(Matt. 24:36) "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."

(Luke 2:52) And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

1b. Omnipotence

(Mark 6:5) And He could do no miracle there except that He laid His hands upon a few sick people and healed them.

(John 5:19) Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."

1c. Omnipresence

(John 4:4) And He had to pass through Samaria.

1d. Righteousness

(Heb 9:14) . . . how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

1e. Self existence

Lk. 4:2 - Jesus began to starve at the end of his 40 day temptation.

1f. Justice

(John 5:30) "I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

1g. It is possible that Jesus exercised his infinitude while on the cross, so as to bear the infinite wrath of God in a finite period of time.

"How then did Jesus perform miracles?"

Both Jesus and the apostles provide a positive answer (both specifically and generally)—that he performed these works by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Lk. 4:18, Jesus declares that the anointing of the Holy Spirit empowers his public ministry. In Jn. 5:19, Jesus states that he "can do nothing of himself."

(Luke 4:18) "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE DOWNTRODDEN . . .

In Jn. 14, Jesus states that "the Father abiding in me does his works" (vs 10). He also tells his disciples that they will be able to perform the same works that he has performed because they will receive the same source of empowering—the Holy Spirit (vs 12-17).

(John 14:10, 12, 16-17) "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works . . . (12) Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father . . . (16) And I will ask the Father, and He will give you

another Helper, that He may be with you forever; (17) that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you."

Luke explains the power source of Jesus' healings in Lk. 5:17 - "the power of the Lord was present for him to heal."

(Luke 5:17) And it came about one day that He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing.

Peter, in summarizing the entire miracle ministry of Jesus, states that God empowered him through the Holy Spirit.

(Acts 2:22) "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know . . . "

(Acts 10:38) "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him . . . "

NOTE: We are not saying that Jesus never performed a miracle by his own authority or power (see Mark 1:23-27; Luke 8:24). If he did, the Father certainly gave him authorization to do so (Jn. 5:19).

Importance:

Jesus loves us very much to give up these prerogatives to be our Savior.

Jesus lived just like we do—by dependence on God and by the empowering of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 14:10-17).

In Phil. 2:3-13, Paul argues that we can live a life of other-centered, sacrificial love (like Jesus lived) because we have access to God's motivation and empowering (like Jesus did). It is striking that Paul emphasizes living lives of sacrificial service, rather than emphasizing that we can do miracles.