

Philippians 2:6-9 What does it mean to say that Jesus "emptied Himself"?

1. Some say he emptied Himself of His divinity or Deity
2. Some say he abandoned a position of sovereignty.
3. Did Jesus give up voluntary use of His divine attributes?
4. Did Jesus restrict use of his divine attributes when he took on the form of man? Did he become less than omnipotent, omniscience, or omniscient?
5. Was the son of man downsized to become flesh?

Did Jesus know his future? Did he no longer sovereignly rule the universe? Did He continue his divine nature when he became human?

Here are some views, (only one of these is correct):

1. Jesus was a hybrid with a human soul to which divinity was added little by little till he became fully God.
2. He gradually developed His self-consciousness but his human consciousness never really attained full realization or self-identity as the divine Logos (Word)
3. When he became a man he set aside his deity and sovereign dominion which was restored at his ascension.
4. He abandoned certain divine attributes (omnipotence, omniscience) to become human.
5. He still possessed his divine attributes but he voluntarily gave up the use of them.
6. He continued as both God and man but did not know consciously anything of his divine Trinitarian existence.
7. His attributes were limited to a time-form appropriate to a human mode of existence...His attributes could only be expressed in relation to the human time and space his human form could experience.
8. He gave up independent exercise of the divine attributes. The Holy Spirit descended upon him at baptism and that empowered him for ministry. All He did was by the power of the Spirit and not by His own divine nature.
9. He retained his divine nature but it was concealed by his human nature.

The Creed of Chalcedon says, Christ "must be acknowledged in two natures, without any commingling, or change, or division or separation." Athanasias says, "As a rational soul and flesh are one man, so God and man are one Christ."

Certain statements are true of Christ only if ascribed to the appropriated nature. For example, because Christ is God He could say, "You are of this world, I am not of this world" (John 8:23). This is NOT true of Christ's human nature. If we make the mistake of attributing this to His human nature then he is not bodily and we make the mistake of the Docetists, that Christ was only a spirit. But because he is man he says "Of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the son, but the Father alone" (Mt. 24:36). If this was true of his divine nature then as God He did not know when He would return; this is OPEN THEISM. He would not be omniscient and would be less than God like the Arians said.

Some are deceived into thinking He gave up His sovereign dominion. Then how is He God?

Here is the best and clearest explanation. **IT is NOT what Christ was, but it is about how Jesus acted. To consider that Jesus emptied Himself of His divine nature is to not read the passage in context!** We must consider the passage in the light of Christ's two natures. 6a who although He existed in the form of God, a statement of His divine nature. Jesus Christ was and is God. While human He remained fully God – this cannot be compromised. 6b did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped. This refers to his human nature. Would it make any sense for Paul to state that Christ as God did not regard equality with God as a thing to be grasped since He was already God? Is the idea of God regarding equality with God a thing to be grasped a sensible issue to raise? It is only as man that He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped. IT only makes sense this way.

7a As man he emptied himself "ekenesen".

7b "taking the form of a bond-servant" – Another clear statement of Christ's humanity

7c "and being made in the likeness of men" - A clear statement of Christ's humanity.

8a "being found in appearance as a man" an obvious reference to his humanity.

8b "He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." He died as a man not as God.

Confusion over the proper understanding of the person of Christ due to the difficulty of understanding how 1 person can have 2 natures. It's Biblical but a mystery – beyond my ability to grasp. Before there was a human nature, there was a 2nd person of the Trinity, begotten not made- very God of very God. God was capable of taking on a human nature. It could never be reversed! No human can take on divinity or become a God; Deity cannot be added to humanity. And it is not that God changed into the man Jesus. He did not change deity into humanity. Often people will think this great God set aside His Godness and became a human being.

The Bible teaches the eternal God took on human nature. In 451 the Council of Chalcedon met and confessed Jesus is *verus homo*, *verus Deus*- truly human and truly God. This set the boundaries of how the natures related...in perfect unity, without mixture, division, confusion, or separation. We can distinguish them not tear them apart.

In the 19th century great controversy over what "Emptying" meant? The popular view was that he set aside some of his divine attributes so he could become a man: his omniscience, his omnipotence, his self-existence, or other divine characteristics. If God laid aside one of his attributes, the immutable undergoes a mutation; the infinite suddenly stops being infinite; it would be the end of the universe. God cannot stop being God and still be God. This is why truly man and truly God is the right position

John Calvin correctly writes, "In order to exhort us to submission by His example, he shows, that when as God he might have displayed to the world the brightness of His glory, he gave up His right, and voluntarily emptied Himself; that he assumed the form of a servant, and, contented with that humble condition, suffered His divinity to be concealed under a veil of flesh." This is an allusion to Hebrews 10:19-20, "...we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh".

IF we do not get this right we:

1. Undermine the atonement which required the blood of a perfect human as the unblemished lamb, but also a sacrifice that was infinite in every way, i.e. divine or "the blood of God" (Acts 20:28). Limiting his Godness or separating His nature leaves us subject to wrath.

2. It distorts the Incarnation. It is then not the eternal Word becoming flesh (Jn. 1:1) or the Word remains separate from the flesh. To be the Son of God is to have the same nature as God. 1 Tim. 3:16, "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." How could he give up His attributes or nature and still be "Immanuel", God with us?

3. It would deny God's immutability or unchangeableness. Could the immutable mutate?

4. It denies MONOTHEISM (one God). The only way one could limit the attributes of one person of the Trinity would be to actually separate them making more than one God creating polytheism (many gods).

Emptied Himself – poured out, took on a lower position, took on a place of lesser authority, became dependent and reliant. Made himself nothing, stripped himself of his glory.

Kenoo – means to empty, to make void or vain. Bring to nothingness or emptiness. He assumes a more humble rank. It is to humble but more than just humbled.

It cannot mean that he divested himself of his divine nature or imperfections. That was impossible. He could not set aside his divine attributes and become less essentially God.

He could set aside his divine manifestations of his glory. He could choose to not depend upon his power. When the sun is behind a cloud it doesn't cease to shine. It's glory is only temporarily hidden or obscured.

He could appear as a servant and have the rank of one. He descended to the lowest condition of humanity.

Took upon himself was not obliged; it was voluntary. The change was a change of state. His personality continued the same. His self-emptying was not self-extinction. He was not changed into a mere man for He retained the consciousness of deity. Not divine sovereignty but divine service. He became the servant of men to share the disgrace and suffer the punishment.

In the transfiguration (Mt. 17:1-13) we see the invisible divine nature break through as visible; it is an unveiling but generally he concealed his glory; He hid his glory. This is the meaning of Philipians and of Christmas: The eternal God, son of God, 2nd person of the Trinity, remaining fully God became fully human took on a veil of humanity hiding himself in lowly Jesus of Nazareth. And in Philipians, Paul is saying that we're to imitate a willingness to relinquish our own glory our own privileges and prerogative. Let us be reminded of this at this Christmas time.