

Understanding The Nature Of Christ #2

Introduction. We studied in our previous lesson that we must believe that Jesus is the "I Am" (John 8:24). Does it really matter? Jesus would send the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin because they did not believe on Him (John 16:9). Wrong belief can be sinful (2 Timothy 2:17-18).

We need the faith of Phinehas. He was commended because he was "zealous for his God" (Numbers 25:11-13). Let's see more ways in which some are changing the nature of Jesus and emphasizing His humanity far above His deity.

I. ***How Did Jesus Empty Himself?***

- A. Paul used the example of Jesus to teach the necessity of humbling ourselves to look after the needs of others (Philippians 2:4-5).
- B. Jesus emptied Himself of the glory connected with His deity in heaven to take on the form of a servant.
 - 1. "Form" is that which strikes our sight in appearance (Mark 16:12). The word "always signifies a form which truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it."
 - a) In Genesis 3:1, Satan took the form of a snake. Was he just a snake?
 - b) In John 1:32, the Holy Spirit took the form of a dove. Was He just a dove?
 - 2. An ancient position, called the kenotic concept (from the word *kenosis* ["reputation"] in Philippians 2:7), appeared in England in 1889, taught by Bishop Charles Gore.
 - a) Gore used this to try to explain why he felt Jesus was "ignorant" of many facts, and that Jesus had given up divine knowledge and attributes.
 - b) The kenotic concept exists among our brethren today.
 - (1) Jesus gave up all rights to divine attributes while on earth. He emptied himself of the form of God, the power of God, and His equality with God.
 - (2) His mind was erased like a tape, without any pre-earth memory, so that He could be just like us and walk by faith, not by sight.
 - (3) Jesus did not know everything while on earth. He studied to learn, like you and me, from His parents and His elders.
 - 3. Jesus left the glory He enjoyed in heaven, and He prayed to receive it again (John 17:5; 2 Corinthians 8:9; cf. Matthew 17:2).

II. ***What Did Jesus Know Of His Deity?***

- A. Some teach that Jesus learned that He was the Son of God, and therefore deity, by His mother and father telling Him. He was sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions in order to learn "just like you and I do."
 - 1. They believe that those who heard His questions, and how He answered questions put to Him by the elder scholars of the law, no doubt impressed them with the quick understanding and perception of one so young.
 - 2. They believe that Jesus was not a man in a child's body. He grew in wisdom and grace by asking questions, studying the scriptures, and the exercise of mind and soul.
- B. But this cannot be the case because Jesus was teaching others and did so by asking questions (Luke 2:46; cf. 5:17, 22-23; 6:6-9). They were amazed at His understanding and answers (Luke 2:47). Moreover, Jesus knew of His unique mission and relationship with His Father (Luke 2:49; cf. John 5:17). His parents did not teach Him this for they did not understand. How do you teach what you do not understand (Luke 2:50)?
- C. What did Jesus know? How did He obtain this information?
 - 1. Jesus knew Nathanael's character before meeting him (John 1:47-48).
 - 2. Jesus "knew all men" and "knew what was in man" (John 2:24-25).
 - 3. Jesus "knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him" (John 6:64).
 - 4. Jesus had personal and direct knowledge of heaven (John 3:31-32; 8:38).
 - 5. Jesus knew "whence I came, and whither I go" (John 8:14).
 - 6. Jesus knew that the Father had "given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God" (John 13:3).
 - 7. Jesus knew "all things that should come upon him" (John 18:4).
 - 8. Jesus "knew all things" (John 16:30; 21:17).

III. ***Did Jesus Have To Sin?***

- A. Jesus was tempted "in all points like as we are" (Genesis 3:6; Matthew 4:1-11; Hebrews 4:15; 1 John 2:16).
- B. Does man have to sin? How did Jesus keep from sinning? These questions form the heart of the controversy, and they perhaps are the hardest to reconcile.
 - 1. Theoretically, one could say that man does not have to sin because he is a creature of choice. Therefore, a choice could be made to not sin.

- a) However, we know practically that this is not the case (Romans 3:23; 1 John 1:8). Mankind chooses to do their own will instead of the will of God.
- b) If we say that man had to sin, does not the blame lie with God who created all men upright (Ecclesiastes 7:29)?
- 2. Jesus knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). Could He have yielded to temptation? Theoretically He could have, but then He would not have been a perfect sacrifice and the plan of God would have failed.
 - a) How did He keep from sinning? No scripture definitively tells us if Jesus resisted temptation as a man or as God in the flesh. No divine prerogative is necessary to withstand temptation
 - b) Did Jesus have an "edge" because of His deity? If Jesus could resist because He was deity, then His temptation would not have meant much to us (cf. James 1:13). Jesus kept from sinning because He chose to do the will of the Father (John 8:29).
- 3. The simple fact of the matter is that no one has ever existed upon the earth with a dual nature except Jesus. We simply accept how He lived perfectly by faith. Jesus shared in "flesh and blood" and His suffering allows Him to be our merciful and faithful high priest and allows Him to aid those who are tempted (Hebrews 2:14-18).

IV. *How Did Jesus Perform His Miracles?*

- A. A common argument as to how Jesus accomplished this is the "pattern" argument.
 - 1. For instance, since baptism is a burial (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12), then a burial is understood wherever baptism in the name of Jesus is mentioned.
 - 2. This pattern is correct. But then these men try to show that when Jesus worked a miracle by the power of the Holy Spirit, it established a pattern; so wherever Jesus did a miracle it was to be understood that He did it by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 5:19, 22, 26, 30, 36, 43; 8:16, 18, 26, 28-29, 38, 40, 42, 55; 10:25, 29, 32, 36). They also teach that He was led by the Spirit while on earth (Luke 4:1, 14, 18).
- B. The flaw in this "pattern" is seen when it is said that Jesus sometimes did a miracle by the power of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:28 [compare "the finger of God" in Luke 11:20]; Acts 10:38), sometimes by the power of the Father (John 14:10), and sometimes by His own power (Mark 1:34; Luke 10:19; John 10:18). If baptism was spoken of as a burial, a sprinkling, and a pouring in three different passages, there would be no pattern for burial!

- C. There are other important powers which Jesus possessed demonstrating that He was not dependent upon the Holy Spirit for His miracle-working powers.
1. He could raise Himself (John 2:19; cf. Acts 2:24, 32, God; Romans 8:11, Holy Spirit).
 2. He could forgive sins (Mark 2:7-10; Luke 7:48; John 5:21).
 3. He knew the minds of men (Matthew 22:18; Mark 8:17; Luke 6:8; John 2:25).
- D. Furthermore, whatever the limitations upon Jesus prove about Him, the limitations upon the Holy Spirit prove the same about Him (John 12:49; 16:13-15).

Conclusion. Men have paid lip service to the fact that they believe in the "deity of Christ" but every argument they present is one proving Jesus to be only a human being. How many of God's attributes can He give up and still be God? If you take everything away, is Christ still what He claims to be? This ultimately lowers Jesus down to the level of nothing more than a "super apostle" and is "preaching another Jesus" (2 Corinthians 11:4).

No one is saying that the nature of Jesus is simple to explain (1 Timothy 3:16). If Christ did the miracles solely through the Holy Spirit, then how did He prove that He is God in the flesh and that the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily (Colossians 2:9)? If you prove that Jesus depended upon the power of the Holy Spirit, you have proven that He was inspired, but not that He was the Son of God. We must be content to just teach what the scriptures say about both the humanity and the deity of Jesus without feeling obligated to make an explanation of how it all worked together within Him.