

The title of this morning's sermon is, "*The Birth of Christ.*"

When we think of Jesus' birth, our minds probably go to the early chapters in Matthew and Luke, but if you really want to understand the Incarnation, I don't think you can beat these verses in **Phil 2**. They help us see what it meant for God to become a Man in the Person of Jesus Christ.

Let's start with **verse 6**...

^{6a} **who** (this is speaking of Jesus), **being** (or existing) **in the form of God**,

Please pause right here...

The word **being** – or **existing** as it's translated in some bibles – speaks of Jesus' pre-incarnate existence:

- Jesus didn't come into existence 2,000 years ago in a manger in Bethlehem.
- He has eternally existed as God.

And it's not just that Jesus existed as God it's HOW He existed as God. That's what Paul is discussing in this verse...

I've shared w/ you before that the Greek language has different words for some of our English words, and there are two Greek words for **being**:

- The usual Greek word for **being** is *ōn* (pr: *own*) and it means **being** something w/ the potential to change in some way. For example:
 - **Matt 1:19 Joseph...being a just man** – Joseph could've stopped **being** a just man.
 - **Mark 8:1 The multitude being very great** – if people left, the multitude would stop **being** as great.
 - **Luke 22:3 Judas...being one of the twelve** – we know Judas stopped **being** one of the twelve.
- But the Greek word Paul uses in **verse 6** for **being** is *hyparchō* (pr: *hooparko*). It means **being** something w/ no potential to change in any way:
 - *Hyparchō* means something stays the same regardless of the circumstances.
 - It describes what something IS and always will be.

Paul wants his readers to know Jesus didn't stop **being** God at the Incarnation when He became a man.

So you might wonder why it says Jesus is **in the form of God**, versus saying **Jesus is God**...

The Greek word for **form** is *morphē*. It's a very unique word that only occurs 3 times in Scripture:

- Twice in this passage in **verses 6 and 7**.
- Once in **Mark 16:12**. After Jesus' resurrection **He appeared in another form (*morphē*) to two of them as they walked and went into the country.**

We think of **form** as the shape of something, but *morphē* doesn't have that idea. It means the essence or nature of something w/o referring to the outward appearance. Saying Christ existed in **the form of God** is saying He had the same nature and essence of God.

With that in mind, look at the rest of **verse 6**...

^{6b} **[Jesus] did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,**

LESSON 1: JESUS' BIRTH (PART I) MEANT LETTING GO OF HIS EQUALITY WITH GOD.

First let's talk about the word **equal** and then we'll talk about the word **robbery**...

The Greek word for **equal** means, "*Same in quality and character.*" Paul is saying Jesus is equal with God in every way.

Listen to these verses discussing Jesus' equality w/ God:

- **John 5:18 [Jesus] said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.**
- **John 8:58 Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." Then they took up stones to throw at Him.** Why'd they want to stone Him? B/c His grammar was so bad, b/c He said "**Before Abraham was, I AM**" instead of "I WAS?" No, b/c they knew He was claiming equality w/ God, b/c "I AM" is the ancient name for God given to Moses.
- **John 10:30, 33 "I and My Father are one."...The Jews [said], "[We want to] stone You...for blasphemy...because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."**

So Jesus had this equality w/ God, but He was willing to let go of it.

The Greek word for **robbery** is *harpagmos* (pr: har-pog-moss) and this is the only place it occurs in Scripture. It means, "*the act of seizing, a thing seized, or to be seized.*" It means holding on to something:

- The idea is Jesus wasn't intent on clinging to His equality w/ God the Father:
- He was willing to let it go for a season when He became a Man.

Hopefully you can see the great contrast this makes between Jesus and the devil. The Devil did the opposite...

Isa 14:13 For you have said in your heart:

'I will ascend into heaven,

I will exalt my throne above the stars of God;

I will also sit on the mount of the congregation

On the farthest sides of the north;

¹⁴ **I will ascend above the heights of the clouds,**

I will be like the Most High.'

The devil is the opposite of Jesus in that he thought he could be equal w/ God.

Now Paul elaborates on what it means that Jesus didn't hold on to that equality...

^{7a} **but made Himself of no reputation,**

Notice the words **made Himself**. This is what Jesus did; nobody did this to Him.

The words **of no reputation** are 3 words in English, but they're one word in Greek: *kenoo* (pr: ken-ah-oh). This is where we get the theological term: **kenosis**. It literally means *to empty*, or *make empty*.

And this brings us to the next part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: JESUS' BIRTH (PART II) MEANT EMPTYING HIMSELF.

At the Incarnation Jesus emptied Himself of certain rights and privileges. If your bible doesn't say "**emptied himself**" I'd like to encourage you to circle these words and write "*kenosis - emptied Himself.*"

Let me give you an OT illustration of how I think of the Kenosis...

When David brought the ark into Jerusalem, **2 Sam 6:14** says he **wore a linen ephod**.

- He was king and he had all the rights and privileges that came along w/ being king.
- But he was willing to take off his royal, kingly garments and appear in the humble apparel of the priests.

Did He look like He was still king? No, but was He still king? Absolutely.

So the obvious question is: what exactly did Jesus take off, or empty Himself of?

First let me tell you what Jesus DIDN'T empty Himself of. Since we've already talked about Jesus having the unchanging nature of God, it means He didn't empty Himself of deity.

But He did empty Himself of a number of other things...

1. First, Jesus emptied Himself of His heavenly glory. He definitely didn't look on earth like He looked in heaven. When Jesus prayed for Himself in **John 17:5** He said, "**Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory WHICH I HAD WITH YOU BEFORE the world was.**" Basically He said, "Give me the glory I used to have!"
 - a. There was one time during Jesus' earthly ministry though when He did put His heavenly glory back on and that was at The Transfiguration.
2. Second, Jesus emptied Himself of omniscience; He emptied Himself of knowing everything. Most obviously He didn't know the day or hour of His return. He limited Himself to knowing only what the Father wanted Him to know, and for whatever reason, the time of His return wasn't one of those things He needed to know during His earthly ministry.
3. Third, Jesus emptied Himself of eternal riches. While on earth He owned very little: **2 Cor 8:9** **Jesus Christ, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich**

4. Fourth, Jesus emptied Himself of His honor. In heaven He was loved and worshipped, but that definitely wasn't the case on earth:

- a. **Psa 22:6 He is a reproach of men, and despised by the people**
- b. **Isa 53:3 He was despised and rejected by men**
- c. **John 1:11 He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him**
- d. He gave up all the honor He had in heaven for this kind of treatment.

Jesus emptied Himself of all that to become a man.

And in giving all that up, look what He became...

^{7b} **taking the form** (again this is *morphē*) **of a bondservant,**

Notice the words **taking the form**. These words are important b/c they imply an adding, not an exchanging:

- Jesus didn't exchange His deity for humanity; He added humanity to His deity.
- Theologically this is known as the **hypostatic union**.
- Jesus has two natures – human and divine – that are inseparable.
- He will forever be the God-man, fully God and fully man, not 50-50.

And this brings us to the next part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: JESUS' BIRTH (PART III) MEANT BECOMING A SERVANT.

This is the same Greek word for **form** that was used in **verse 6** when it says Jesus was **in the form of God**...but now it says He's in **the form of a bondservant**. Just as much as Jesus is God at the Incarnation He also became just as much a **bondservant**.

In **Matt 20:28** Jesus said, "**the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.**"

Since the word for **form** refers to the inward nature, it means Jesus wasn't pretending to be a servant or simply acting like one. He WAS a servant! There's no hypocrisy.

When you read the Gospels, it's the exact opposite of what you'd expect...

God came to earth, but...

- It's never about Jesus being served by people.
- It's always about Jesus serving people:
 - He was available to fishermen, harlots, tax collectors, the sick, the possessed, the hurting, the hungry, the sorrowing.
 - When the disciples needed their feet washed, Jesus got down and washed their feet.

The word for **bondservant** is *doulos* (due-loss), and it means, "voluntary slave." Paul used this word to refer to himself a **bondservant of Jesus Christ**.

Jesus willingly gave up His will to do the will of another, and that's His Father. This is also part of the *kenosis*: Jesus emptied Himself of His will to do His Father's will.

Jesus communicated this regularly:

- **John 5:30** "I can of Myself do nothing...I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me."
- **John 6:38** "I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."
- Probably most famously, right before the crucifixion Jesus prayed, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

All of this reveals just how much of a Servant Jesus was!

The rest of **verse 7** says...

^{7c} **and coming in the likeness of men.**

When we hear the words **like** or **likeness** we tend to think of things being SIMILAR w/o actually being THE SAME, but the Greek word for **likeness** is *homoiōma* (pr: homo-you-muh). It means "resemblance, such as amounts to equality."

So it's not saying Jesus was LIKE a man. It's saying He WAS a man. He experienced everything men experience:

- **Mark 3:5** Jesus got angry
- **Mark 11:12** Jesus was hungry
- **John 4:6** Jesus was tired
- **Luke 19:41** Jesus cried
- **John 19:28** Jesus was thirsty
- He experienced sadness, grief, betrayal, hurt, everything men experience.

Heb 2:17 in all things He had to be made like His brethren.

Then **verse 8** says...

^{8a} **And being found in appearance as a man,**

The Greek word for **appearance** is *schema*, related to our word *schematic*, meaning diagram or drawing. It refers to the way something looks. Consider these differences between the words *morphe* and *schema*:

- *Morphe* deals w/ internal nature or essence that's unchanging.
- *Schema* refers to external or physical appearance that changes.

Let me give you an example to understand the difference between the two...

We just had our son Noah. He's born as a baby. Then he'll become a child, then a teenager, and

finally a man:

- His *schema* or **appearance** will change throughout his life.
- But he'll always be a human male. His *morphe* – or nature or essence – will remain the same.

Paul's point is Jesus' physical **appearance** or *schema* changed as He grew older, but His *morphe* or nature as God remained the same throughout His life:

- This is why Jesus could say, “**I and My Father are one**” instead of “**I and My Father USED TO BE one.**” Even though Jesus changed physically, His nature or essence as God didn't change.
- This is also why Jesus could say, “**If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father.**” Have you ever thought about how amazing this statement really is? We know God the Father is Spirit, so how can Jesus say, “**If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father**”?
 - He clearly didn't mean they looked the same physically.
 - He meant if you've seen Me, you've seen the deity that also belongs to the Father.

Jesus appeared throughout the OT as God. It's known as a Theophany or Christophany. Jesus' *schema* was changed, but His *morphe* remained the same:

- He appeared as a pillar of fire at night and a pillar of cloud during the day.
- He appeared to Moses as a burning bush.
- Most commonly He appeared as the Angel of the Lord.
- At times He even appeared as a man, like when He went down to see the wickedness of S&G or when Joshua spoke to Him and He identified Himself as the Commander of the army of the LORD.

All these times the *schema* or **physical appearance** of Jesus was different, but His *morphe* or **form** as God was the same.

Finally, look at the words **appearance as a man**...

This sounds like what we just read, but there's a significant difference:

- **Coming in the likeness of men** – this has a heavenly focus, describing what Jesus did: He came as a man.
- **Being found in appearance as a man** – this has an earthly focus, describing how Jesus looked to those who saw Him.

The point is He looked just like every other man!

- He didn't have a halo or a golden aura.
- He didn't wear a perfectly white robe; He wore the normal, average clothes of the day, and those clothes got dirty.
- He didn't float a foot off the ground; He walked around like everyone else.
- He didn't have an angelic voice; He had a man's voice.
- He had a man's job for most of His life: He was a carpenter.
- He didn't look like the attractive, blue-eyed, blond-haired pictures we've seen; He looked like the average, ordinary Middle Eastern men of the day

Basically, you wouldn't know Jesus was God by looking at Him; there was nothing physically that distinguished Him:

- This is why Judas had to tell the chief priests, “**I’ll give Him a kiss so you’ll know which One He is**” b/c He looked like everyone else.
- **Isa 53:2 He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him**” While we can't say Jesus was unattractive, we can at least say He wasn't attractive; He was humble looking.

Now look at the rest of **verse 8**...

^{8b} He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of death*, even the death of the cross.

Again, notice this is what Jesus did. Just like...

- **He made Himself of no reputation**
- **[He] took the form of a bondservant**

He also humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death on a cross.

This brings us to the next part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: JESUS' BIRTH (PART IV) LOOKED FORWARD TO HIS DEATH.

Consider something for a moment...

- Most of us are willing to serve to some extent. Rare is the person who won't serve at all.
- So it's not really a question of whether we'll serve. It's a question of how far we'll go in our service.
- And at some point almost all of us say, “I'm not going any further!”

This verse shows how far Jesus was willing to go in His service: all the way to **death on a cross**.

Paul has been describing everything Jesus was willing to do in ever-increasing terms:

- He didn't cling to His equality w/ God...
- He emptied Himself...
- He became a man...
- He became a servant...
- He humbled Himself...
- He was obedient...

Then it culminated w/ these words, that not only was He willing to die, He was willing to die the most shameful and agonizing death imaginable: crucifixion. Our word excruciating is related to this word.

One commentator said the crucifixion was, “*The bottom rung in the ladder from the Throne of God. Jesus came all the way down to the most despised death of all, a condemned criminal on the accursed cross.*”

The obvious question is, why would Jesus endure something like this?

- He would say, “I went through all this, so the next time someone says, ‘Does God really love me? Does God really care about me? Does God really know what it’s like to suffer?’
- I’ll say, ‘Yes, I really love you, and yes I really care about you, and yes I really know what it’s like to suffer.’”

This is the pinnacle of Jesus’ humility and suffering. Now that Paul reached this point, the entire direction of the verses changes. Everything has been about Jesus’ humility and suffering, but now everything will be about His exaltation.

Look at **verse 9**...

^{9a} Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

Christ’s humility is directly linked to His exaltation, and this brings us to the last part of Lesson 1...

LESSON 1: JESUS’ BIRTH (PART V) LED TO HIS EXALTATION.

In **Matt 23:12b** Jesus said, “**He who humbles himself will be exalted.**”

Has there ever been a greater example of someone humbling himself than what Jesus did in these verses? No. Not even close. As a result the greatest exaltation is also reserved for Him.

But you notice one huge change w/ **verse 9**...

- Previously Jesus was the initiator:
 - **He made Himself of no reputation...**
 - **He took the form of a bondservant...**
 - **He humbled Himself...**
 - **He became obedient to death,**
- But when it comes to the Son’s exaltation, God the Father is the initiator.

And notice this is all past tense:

- **He HAS BEEN highly exalted**
- **God HAS GIVEN HIM the name above every name.**

This has already taken place. It happened at Christ’s ascension.

But now Paul moves from the past to the future. Look at **verse 10**...

¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹ and *that* every tongue should confess (or acknowledge or affirm) that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The whole world is not submitted to Christ...but it will be!

Please notice the two titles for the Son of God in **verse 11**:

- **Jesus** is the name He received at His birth.
- But **Lord** is the title He received at His resurrection.

The name Jesus received that **is above every name** is not Jesus. Many people have that name, but there is only one **Lord**.

If you write in your bible you might circle the words **every knee should bow** and write, “*Isa 45:22.*” If you have a study bible it probably already mentions this verse. Listen...

Isa 45:22 “**Look to Me, and be saved,
All you ends of the earth!
For I *am* God, and *there is no other.*
²³ **I have sworn by Myself;
The word has gone out of My mouth *in* righteousness,
And shall not return,
That **TO ME EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW,******

In **Isa 45:23** God says **every knee will bow to Him and every tongue will make confession**, but in **Phil 2** it shows that taking place w/ Jesus, identifying Him as God.

The combination of **every knee bowing** and **every tongue confessing** pictures a complete submission to Jesus in word and action:

- The way this it’s described leads some commentators to picture this taking place in a formal way after the final judgment.
- Picture every creature bowing together and making this confession.

And this brings us to Lesson 2...

LESSON 2: CONFESS JESUS AS LORD JOYFULLY IN THIS LIFE OR DESPARINGLY IN THE NEXT LIFE.

Even though it says every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Christ, it’s not talking about universal salvation:

- Everyone will recognize Christ as Lord...that’s not the difference.
- The difference is: some will do it willingly in this life, while others will be forced to do it in the next life.

Some of you here this morning might be considering whether to recognize Jesus as Lord. Perhaps you think...

- Jesus was just a good Man...
- Or just a good Leader...
- Or just a good Teacher.

I want to share something w/ you that I hope helps you make the right decision and avoid the very foolish thinking that Jesus could be a great man w/o also being Lord...

C.S. Lewis wrote a famous book titled, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. There are four siblings, and the youngest, Lucy, walks through a wardrobe into a different world called Narnia. She comes back and tells her older siblings what happened. The two oldest, Peter and Susan, become very concerned about her claim. So they go to talk to the wise, old Professor.

They explain the whole situation to the Professor and he says there are only three possibilities...

1. Lucy is crazy! She thinks she visited some other land...when she really didn't!
2. She's lying. She says she visited some other land, but she made it up.
3. Or she's telling the truth.

He says there's really no in between: it's one of these three.

Through the situation w/ Lucy, C.S. Lewis was illustrating something he called, "The Trilemma." He was drawing a parallel between Lucy and Jesus.

Here's the idea...

- Lucy made what seemed to be a very outrageous claim.
- Jesus also made what seemed to be a very outrageous claim:
 - He's the Son of God.
 - He can provide people w/ eternal life.

Just like with Lucy, there are only three possibilities w/ Jesus:

1. He's crazy. If you think you're the Son of God, but you're not, you've got to be crazy!
2. Another possibility is Jesus was a liar. This would be much, much worse than being crazy, b/c this means Jesus deliberately deceived millions of people:
 - a. Thousands of martyrs have gone to their deaths b/c of Jesus' lie.
 - b. Billions of other people have spent their lives believing lies.
 - c. Jesus would literally be one of the vilest Men in history.
3. The third possibility is Jesus was telling the truth. He is the Son of God.

And if Jesus is telling the truth, and He's the Son of God, then He has to be recognized as Lord:

- He's either liar, lunatic, or Lord.
- But there's no such thing as Him being only a good Man or only a good Teacher.
- He hasn't left us w/ that option.

Let me briefly tell you a story from a teacher training I attended 11 years ago...

[STORY]

Finally, on Friday, the last day of our training, we start discussing Jesus. Very boldly she says, "I believe Jesus was a good teacher and I believe He was a good man, but I DON'T believe He was the Son of God."

The problem for this woman is Jesus didn't leave her w/ this option:

- He also hasn't left you w/ this option either.
- You need to decide if Jesus is a liar, a lunatic, or He's Lord.

If you do not confess Christ as Lord in this life, then you are still making a confession about Him: you're confessing He's a liar or a lunatic.

Phil 4:10 says **at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,**¹¹ **and *that* every tongue should confess.**

If you don't confess Christ joyfully as Lord in this life, you will still confess Him as Lord.

- But you'll do it in the next life, and it will be done w/ terrible regret and despair.
- Those who don't confess Christ as Lord face eternal punishment in hell.

But let me remind you what we celebrate today...

- We celebrate God becoming a Man in the Person of Jesus Christ.
- We celebrate God emptying Himself.
- We celebrate God becoming a Servant.
- We celebrate Jesus being born so that He could die as our substitute and take our punishment so we can avoid this eternal punishment in hell.

In **John 14:6** Jesus said, **"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."**

Come to the Father through Christ.

If you have any questions about anything I've said this morning, please come see me after service. I would consider it a great privilege to be able to speak to you.

Let's pray.